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ENABLING PARTICIPATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH: THE POTENTIAL FOR CHANGE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Social Policy and Social Work at
Massey University

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

1. **EVALUATION TOOL DEVELOPED BY RESEARCH GROUP AS A FINAL STAGE OF ACTION RESEARCH:** Please refer to Page 309 Appendix Seven (questions identified with research group). All participants did an individual evaluation and presented their personal evaluation to the group. Evaluation of training is found in Appendix Six.
2. For discussion around research with other groups and consultation on action research processes writer is available at the following:

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Abstract

Enabling Participation Through Partnership

This thesis presents an example of emancipatory research used within the field of disability studies. It argues that research can be conducted in a way which more directly addresses the needs of disabled people and involves them in its design and delivery. The key questions examine the role of emancipatory research in enabling disabled people to take control of their lives and to accomplish change in their immediate environment. Secondary questions explore the contribution of critical theorists Brian Fay and Stuart Rees in informing a model of emancipatory research and their work has been adapted to act as a framework for the thesis. The challenges researchers face when embarking on this type of research are confronted in a realistic and constructive way. It is argued that the achievement of a definition of 'emancipatory' more often depends on the attitudes and values of the researcher and the resulting impact on those whose lives are central to the research.

The thesis describes how a group of twelve disabled students formed the Disability Action Research Group (DARG), identified some goals for change in their immediate environment and subsequently developed a disability equity training package to be delivered to the staff of Victoria University. The journey from action research group to the development of a training group with a legal status instigated by the students of DARG is presented, offering some landmarks for others wishing to engage in similar activities.. The key theme of partnership represents the potential for alliances between disabled people as well as with their nondisabled allies. "Enabling participation through partnership" underpins every aspect of this thesis and reflects its fundamental principles.

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Listen

I said- "this is what I need to enable me to participate"

They thought they had to find out how

And they were scared and did nothing

And I said - "This is what I need to participate"

They decided there was a better way

And they took over and I was alienated

I said - "this is what I need to participate"

And they thought I was ungrateful and demanding

They suggested counselling and support

And I was misunderstood

I said "this is what I need to enable me to participate"

And they listened

We talked

And together it worked

- for partnership

(Written by an ally of the Disability Action Research Group)

CHAPTER ONE

Emancipatory Research: The Potential For Change For Disabled People

Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to make a contribution in the way research with disabled people is conducted. This chapter will introduce the central research questions, the integral themes of this thesis as well as provide definitions of concepts used. It will subsequently outline the format and structure of the thesis. The thesis aims to explore an example of a research process which other researchers could adapt when working alongside disabled people. The research questions will examine the power of research to promote participatory collaborative approaches in the development of an emancipatory model in work with disabled people. The description and analysis of this process will, I hope, be of use to other researchers in the disability field who wish to engage in research and programme planning based on participatory principles. The analysis of the formation of a disability training group central to the study, will demonstrate its role as a catalyst for a unique, empowering group experience, as well as a means to achieve concrete change of a far reaching nature for disabled students in higher education.

The research questions

The main research question is: what role can an emancipatory model of research play in enabling disabled people¹ to take control of their own lives and accomplish change in their immediate environment? Another key research question asks: what are the challenges facing researchers in conducting this type of research? This question will underpin the description and analysis of each aspect of the research process in order to present a realistic appraisal of the inevitable pitfalls involved in this kind of research.

A model of research will be described which is based on emancipatory principles and which could be adapted for use in other settings. This aims to facilitate the involvement of disabled people more directly and effectively in decision-making processes on their own terms. This research has been conceptualised in response to calls from the disability community and disabled writers (Morris, 1990, 1992; Oliver, 1990; Wicks and Terrell, 1992; Boyles, 1994) for more appropriate collaborative models of research. These would be focused on the most important agendas identified by disabled people and the actual process of discovering those agendas is as significant as the subsequent exploration of them. A secondary research question is the extent to which critical theorists Brian Fay and Stuart Rees have contributed to an understanding of the evolution of an emancipatory model. Their work will be critically examined and its effectiveness in providing an evaluative tool for the

¹ See end of Chapter One

planned research will be explored. Rees's steps to empowerment (Rees, 1991) have been adapted by myself to form an analytical framework for a methodological critique of the research to be described. The ability to adapt ideas and models is crucial in the development of emancipatory research. Tried and tested methods and theories offer a safe platform from which to explore the unique needs of individuals and groups newly embarking on a research process. To offer participants a choice of approaches and methods encourages maximum exploration of ideas and experiences. From here they can name the most appropriate method for them and adapt the process accordingly, supported by the researcher. The framework which has incorporated the theses of Rees and Fay with key research principles provides an example of the value and process of adaptation.

The central thread linking the different strands of the thesis is the personal experience of each participant and the way their stories perform a key educative role in all aspects of the research. The value of contextualising the researcher's own experience in relation to his/her research has been demonstrated as a means of enhancing the relationship between researcher and participants (Reinharz, 1992; Munford, 1994; Townsend, 1994; Wight Felske, 1994; Bishop, 1996; Hera, 1996; Perkins, 1996;). It can be argued that research is always conducted through the lens of the researcher (Bryson, 1979; Du Bois, 1983; Munford, 1994, 1995; Bishop, 1996). Disabled researchers have brought or advocated the value of direct personal experience to disability research (Browne et al, 1985; Fine and Asch, 1989; Morris, 1989, 1991, 1992; Georgeson, 1994; Oliver, 1987, 1992, 1996; Sullivan, 1992; Ward and Flynn, 1994; Wicks, 1992; Zola, 1982, 1994; Barnes, 1992; Barnes and Mercer, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996). My own thinking has been particularly influenced by the writing of disabled people.

I am a disabled woman who is a professional in the disability field. Within my life and work I seek to both define emancipation and to achieve it, not only on my own behalf, but in partnership with others whose experience is also one of oppression, created by a disabling environment. My theoretical perspective has evolved from my study of critical theorists (Agger, 1991; Fay, 1987; Freire, 1972, 1987; Oliver, 1990; Rees, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). My writing also reflects feminist contributions incorporating some elements of the post-modern tradition in recognition of the value of multiple subject positions. The blend of these perspectives with critical theory has informed an emancipatory approach to research which challenges the constraints of the positivist and postpositivist traditions. In this sense it is characterised by the "methodological and epistemological refutation of positivism" (Lather, 1986:439) and the destructive effects of this on those involved in research. I aim to increase the visibility of research designs that are "interactive, contextualised and humanly compelling"(Lather, 1986:439) in the way that they invite joint participation in exploration of research issues (Reason and Rowan, 1981; Reinhartz, 1992; Reason, 1994; Treleaven, 1994; Doyle, 1996; Fook, 1996;). These ideas have informed the articulation of the research questions and research process.

Twelve disabled students (including myself) have participated in the case study which will be described. They are all currently undertaking tertiary education at undergraduate and postgraduate levels at Victoria University of Wellington and the Wellington College of Education and they will introduce themselves at the beginning of the methodology chapter. Their perspectives have been reflected directly in their written evaluations and indirectly in the development of the research model. The group members are unique in that they belong to a minority of disabled people who have succeeded in accessing higher education and have, therefore, already overcome many barriers facing them. While they have much to offer as a result of their experiences, they do not claim to represent a wider disability community who are often considerably disadvantaged within the education system. The presence of two participants who are Maori has enhanced our ability as a predominantly Pakeha group to integrate the spirit of partnership promoted by the Treaty of Waitangi as an important element of our action research. The research group consisted of eight women including myself and four men. The central focus has been the capacity of a group of disabled people to work together to claim a positive identity and accomplish change through research.

I have been particularly inspired by the potential of research to accomplish social change and especially the way this could be used to benefit disabled people. Disabled people have critiqued approaches to research which have been designed with the interests of only the researcher at the forefront (Finkelstein, 1990; Oliver, 1990; Morris, 1992) and which can even be seen to directly conflict with the interests of disabled people. It is essential to acknowledge where the power lies within the research process and the way this can influence the outcomes. Potential imbalances of power can occur where a more powerful group supports a particular point of view over another which can mean that the interests of one group of people can be furthered at the expense of another (Bryson, 1979:88). It is important therefore, to acknowledge the highly political nature (Shakespeare, 1996; Bury, 1996) of research. The choices of which research is funded, what topics are explored and how the research is carried out are often made by those who already have considerable knowledge and power in their own area of expertise (Bishop, 1996). To redress this power imbalance disabled people need to build on their own research knowledge, develop credible processes which stand up to scrutiny and produce tangible quality outcomes leading to social change.

This thesis will present a case for emancipatory research which has laid a foundation for my work. The key terms and baseline definitions will now be presented which is central to an understanding of what this thesis is about. Below I lay out these definitions in relation to the literature and concepts informing the work.

Defining key concepts

Action Research

The research project to be described has been based on and informed by action research principles and models. The concept of action research has its origins in the work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1946) who developed it and applied it in a range of settings where a need for social change had been identified. Two central ideas were crucial to Lewin's work: the idea of **group decision** and **commitment**. Other researchers (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988) have built on these fundamental concepts and have emphasised "the use of collectively and strategically planned change to enhance understanding of what might be achieved in a particular situation (McTaggart, 1991:21). A distinctive feature of action research is that those affected by planned changes are involved in the monitoring of those changes (Wadsworth, 1984; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Reinharz, 1992; Fook, 1996; Treleaven, 1996). Action research is distinctive for its collaborative approach although its success depends on the critically examined action of individual group members. Action research based on emancipatory principles aims to facilitate full involvement in the setting of research questions as well as in the implementation and evaluation. This is known as praxis-oriented research and the extent to which this has been emancipatory for participants will be explored in Chapter Seven.

An action research approach was chosen for the following reasons: to provide a way of thinking and acting systematically about the issues facing disabled students, to implement critically informed action where changes were thought to be possible, and to monitor and evaluate the effects of the action with a view to facilitating ongoing change (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988).

Emancipatory Research

A definition of emancipatory research will provide a context for subsequent discussion in the thesis. In this thesis an emancipatory model is one where the participants take charge of the initial agenda, facilitate the process on their terms, decide on appropriate evaluation criteria and directly benefit from the outcome. In the research which has been developed there are many aspects of traditional action research based on collaborative principles where:

The people studied **make decisions** about the study format and data analysis. This model is designed to create social and individual change by altering the role relations of people involved in the process (Reinharz, 1992: 181).

This type of research can also be described as "participant driven" (Bishop, 1996:66) where the research aims to "recognise and promote self-determination" through full consultation with research participants. An important initial step is where the research group is allowed to set the agenda, the parameters and the direction of the study (Bishop, 1996:66).

The thesis explored whether the project to be described has combined elements of action research and participant driven research and can be constituted as emancipatory action research. It has aimed to cultivate the themes of participation, partnership, consultation and transformation by making visible the lives of individuals involved as well as by promoting political awareness of disability within a powerful institution.

Emancipatory research in relation to working in the disability field has also been explored. Ward and Flynn (1994) provide a theoretical explanation of an emancipatory research model in the following manner:

One which places people with disabilities and their concerns central stage at every point in a research process aimed at facilitating empowerment (Ward and Flynn, 1994:31).

The rationale for such an approach within the area of disability is well documented. (Wight Felske, 1988, 1994; Morris, 1989, 1992; Wicks, 1992; Oliver, 1992; Zarb, 1992; Zola, 1994; Ward & Flynn, 1994; Boyles, 1994; Bach, 1994; Rioux, 1994). The practical problems involved in implementing this approach are highlighted especially in relation to funding and other aspects of involving disabled people in a research process.

Praxis

What is the concept of praxis within research and what relevance has this to the research question? This thesis seeks to explore how "praxis-oriented" research models can inform the development of an emancipatory model for a piece of disability research. Research projects centred on praxis in Lather's terms, are those which clarify the critical and empowering roots of particular approaches to inquiry, "openly committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society" (Lather, 1986:258). In other words, research which claims to be based on emancipatory principles reflects in the methodology an active interpretation of those clearly pre-defined principles.

The thesis explores the range of research paradigms which claim to be based on emancipatory principles. To this end the important work accomplished by Esterson, (1972, 1981), Heron (1981), Maruyama (1981) and Madison (1981) Reason and Rowan (1981), and more recently, Treleaven, (1994) Doyle (1996), and Fook, (1996) have all contributed information and experience which have informed the construction and subsequent analysis of the research methodology to be described.

The various features of each of the research models named by these authors will be highlighted to reflect their contribution to this research and the critical analysis of the methodology contains some features of Heron's experiential research model. The similarities lie in the fact that in this study all students have participated equally in every facet of a research process, from construction of initial research propositions, mapping of the research agenda and procedures through to evaluation and decisions on future modifications to the research process (Heron, 1981). The research philosophy

is relevant to disability research in that it values the in-depth knowledge of the participants and names three types of knowledge - propositional, practical and experiential (ibid). These will be defined in relation to disabled people undertaking research in the following ways: propositional knowledge will provide an understanding of the key issues to be addressed including access issues and peoples' attitudes and theories on this; practical knowledge offers an understanding and day-to-day knowledge of the practical implications of both undertaking the research and, in the case of our research group 'an on the ground' knowledge of the details of the exploration and the key players; finally, experiential knowledge is defined by a high degree of insight based on direct experience of the impact of an inaccessible environment (Heron, 1981).

My account of the methodology will incorporate as part of the deep group encounter the concept of participatory consciousness (Heshusius, 1994) where the group process quietly embraces the experience of researchers and those participating in a group experience. This makes use of the experience often shared between members of groups of common experience. For example, women who have been sexually abused have a shared understanding of the isolation and low self-esteem caused by an early experience of abuse. This creates a language of experience which is often unspoken (Butler and Wintram, 1991). The language of the disability experience is often one involving physical and emotional struggle, social alienation and uncertainty for the future. Irrespective of the degree to which one experiences disability, there is usually an ability to empathise with other disabled people which nondisabled people often find difficult. In the description of the group process and, subsequently, in the evaluation of the research, this is described in depth.

In this project the research approach facilitated a process whereby the group has formed a sense of community. Focus group literature provided further understanding of the methods used (Glassman and Kates, 1990; Frey and Fontana, 1993; Morgan, 1993; Padilla, 1993). Furthermore, community development literature has informed the analysis of group dynamics and has been useful in determining the value of structural analysis in the context of this kind of research (Friere, 1972,1987; Barndt, 1990; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Hope and Timmel, 1991; Kenny, 1994; Ife, 1995; Doyle, 1996; Fook, 1993,1996; Hawkins, 1996; Lynn, 1996; Treleaven, 1996).

The key theorists who have contributed to the methodology provide a foundation for the subsequent literature review in Chapter Three. Fay's basic scheme has been adapted to provide a theoretical explanation for the research design based on the social theories of disability and is a tool for an extended guided theoretical plan of action. Rees's steps to empowerment offer an accessible tool by which people without extensive research experience can understand both their own experience and ways in which this can be interpreted in a research setting. Heron's experiential model of research has been referred to in order to further clarify the mechanisms of the group process and to offer a specific contemporary example of a new approach to research. Freire's pedagogic methodology has informed some of the methods chosen and enabled development, particularly of the training package which has been the focus of the action research. Examples of

educational action research based on emancipatory principles facilitated by Carr and Kemmis (1986) as well as the work of McNiff (1993) which describes action research in the classroom setting provide helpful insights. An emphasis on the above named theoretical models in no way ignores the impact or influence of other models which are also acknowledged throughout. The concept of praxis depends on an active understanding of partnership and participation and these are central themes.

Central Themes

Partnership

Partnership is a significant concept and is a central theme of this thesis, both in the model of research used, and the project which was conducted with disabled students.

Partnership implies equality, collective wisdom, listening to the other side of the issue. Partnership means strength: strength for the common good, rather than for a minority fringe group (Blundell, 1990:35).

Selby offers further insight into potential difficulties involved in her statement: "Partnerships are not always equal and it is important that both sides have sincere intentions" (Selby, 1995:20). The term partnership has been exploited and tainted particularly in the context of the Treaty of Waitangi as well as within other legal agreements including marriage. Some common notions of partnership will be explored before looking at the significance for the research question.

A commitment to partnership would be a sound basis for a working relationship (ibid) but it is important to acknowledge where the power lies within the relationship. For example, the key to power in contemporary Treaty negotiations is in the location of resources (Selby, 1995). An analysis of partnership as experienced generally in our day to day living will facilitate further understanding of the power dynamics involved.

Personal and professional partnerships are often negotiated by drawing up mutually negotiated legal agreements which dictate the parameters of the partnerships accordingly. This may not prevent an imbalance of power within the partnership based on gender (for example within a marriage), financial resources, physical or mental ability and/or societal status or class. This imbalance which influences the ability and motivation of all parties to address it, may be implicit or explicit.

Inequality within and between groups can be minimised in the following ways: partnership is defined and owned by all group members, on the terms of each group and within the context of the life experiences of individual members. Another way is to ensure imbalance of power is acknowledged openly and dealt with realistically and consistently. Where power dynamics are explicit (where it is clearly accepted that one party has more authority and influence than the other)

the effects of inequality may be minimised and indeed the more powerful partner may be able to use their advantage (outside of the partnership) to further the interests of the partnership. In this way, the maintenance and development of personal as well as group autonomy and integrity is assured and the sense of identity of each individual is never threatened by the nature of the partnership chosen.

While this approach to partnership protects the interests of the more vulnerable members, it also ensures a partnership where all parties involved, irrespective of their experience are challenged to clarify very clearly who they are, what their motives are and where they stand personally and politically.

Where a researcher enters into partnership with a research participant, the same process can occur (Treleaven, 1994; Tiernan et al, 1994; Reason, 1994; Doyle, 1996). In orthodox research, although a type of partnership is being entered into, the researcher as “the expert, the intellectual or the academic is seen as the most suitable person to generate research questions, to select or construct research methodologies and to construct meaning from the data that is gathered” (Bishop, 1996:56). In this way the research focus and process are defined, thus setting the parameters of the partnership. The result can be research which not only fails to address the needs of those central to a study but the process itself may disempower them. The question for this research is: can a more emancipatory approach change the nature of the research partnership to address the interests of all involved? In this example of research a facilitated group process using a clear theoretical framework has ensured sensitivity to the needs, abilities and interests of each person involved. The partnership in this context has been continually evaluated and re-negotiated within a safe forum where internal power imbalances have been consistently acknowledged and redressed.

In the context of emancipatory disability research the above principles require application. Two central issues emerge: the partnership which exists between disabled people who are central participants in a research process, and second, the essential partnership which exists between disabled participants and nondisabled allies. In each, the power dynamics, and therefore the terms of the partnership, are completely different.

Firstly, inequality can only be minimised where all participants acknowledge and value the differences which exist among them (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Brown, 1992; Kenny, 1994). This includes an analysis of power inequity and its influence on group dynamics. As stated previously, inequity can result from differences in degrees of ability and disability, differences in gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity. While this diversity can enrich the experience of partnership, should the source and dynamics of power imbalance not be recognized in the research process, the partnership may contain hidden inequalities. A process where each person is able to assert their personal and cultural identity within the group experience and express their expectations of the partnership, will lay the foundations for a positive experience.

Secondly, the issues of negotiating partnerships are quite different. The power imbalance between disabled researchers and nondisabled allies is more overt and even more difficult to minimise. Social systems are constructed on discrimination in the guise of meritocracy and the power to define the nature of the partnership lies inevitably with the more privileged group. Disability groups generally are fighting to ensure they maintain control of their organisations but inequality can be maintained through organisational policies and practices. An example of this is where nondisabled members maintain equal voting rights and often outnumber disabled members, thus ensuring they retain the balance of power. An example of this is the Assembly of People with Disabilities (DPA), which is based on a partnership model, but where nondisabled service providers still have more influence on organisational direction.

The research to be described will incorporate a number of approaches to partnership and will test out the efficacy of a community of partnerships based on Peck's concept of community building (Peck, 1987), recent approaches to collaborative research (Reason, 1994; Treleaven, 1994; Fook, 1996), focus group literature (Glassman and Kates, 1990; Frey and Fontana, 1993; Padilla, 1993; Morgan, 1993; Zeller, 1993) and feminist group work literature (Shields 1991; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Brown, 1992). What the group has aimed to explore is the construction of more equal partnerships wherein all seek to define their role and consistently negotiate the terms of that partnership. Consideration is also given to the inequality between disabled people. In this context, my own power as principal researcher and my work role at the time as senior lecturer was acknowledged as a potential imbalance and open to abuse if ignored.

This definition achieves a number of objectives of importance in an emancipatory context. The first is that it addresses and acknowledges power imbalances which threaten true partnership within any group of people as well as between groups where the power held by a dominant group is more visible. The second is that it avoids any notion of assimilation (sometimes mistaken for partnership) where the interests of any stronger more powerful group engulf and invalidate those of others, thereby losing the value of the less visible perspective. The third is that this definition exceeds the more commonly understood definition of integration and/or main-streaming. For example, disabled people are allowed to participate in the community or in the classroom, provided resources are made available. Finally, the definition lays a clear framework for negotiation of terms of participation, ensuring each party is not only forced to confront what they bring to the partnership for themselves, but that the value of that contribution is also acknowledged by all participants. Partnership may be damaged where the agendas of one party are not clearly stated and can at any point override the interests and agendas of the other.

This leads to a secondary question of what role participation plays in partnership and what this means in the context of a research process.

Participation

Participation in the context of this thesis is the act of collaboration between people to achieve an agreed aim. The extent to which this can occur equally depends on the nature of the partnership agreed. In other words the collaboration discussed is impossible without a clear negotiation of the nature of the partnership. It is only on this basis aims can be fairly identified to meet the needs of all parties. Participation will be explored within two different contexts: in terms of its role in relation to partnership and also the role of participation within emancipatory action research.

There is evidence in the activities of disability agencies and in recent government documentation that policy makers are recognizing the “resources that clients bring to their own situation and to the organisation” and the value of the “inside story” (*Consensus Development Report*, 1993) which it would be unwise to ignore. This, however, tends to result in well-meaning rhetoric about consultation and “client-oriented” services and an attempt is made to allow the service user to define the terms of this participation. Agencies such as CCS (formerly Crippled Children’s Society), a large organisation catering for people with physical disabilities, have consistently attempted to address these issues within their organisation.

A conference in 1990 was entitled “Partnership through Participation”, an indication of the changing philosophy of disability services (CCS, 1990). Such organisations are now actively working on ways to ensure decision-making is more accessible to the people who use their services. Disability services are being challenged to find a mechanism through which the “voice” of people who may be non-verbal can infiltrate the infrastructure. Evidence suggests that the voice of disabled people is still under-represented and this research seeks to address ways in which this can be changed.

If we are all striving for the same end what needs to be done differently to achieve it? The group formed to conduct the research to be described has explored the notion of participation through partnership. This suggests that successful co-operation may be based on defining in practice the nature of partnership **before** attempting to achieve the ideal of participation. This research seeks to develop and explore a participatory model of research which is also emancipatory. I would therefore argue that the message behind what appears to be simply a tiny difference in word order, can explain the inadequacy of superficially participatory approaches to policy-making.

Oakley and Marsden, (1984) have done extensive work in the area of participation in rural development and gives a useful analysis of the deficits in existing developmental methodologies currently being used. He blames this failure on what is known as “dependency theory” which points to the need for maintenance of a subordinate group to enhance the power of the more dominant partner (Oakley, 1984). This is accomplished by the absence of self-reliance within members of the

weaker group who lack both the belief in their abilities and the organisational tools to change their situation. Oakley's approach depends on shifting resources where he says:

Emphasis is placed on an empowering process which through organisation gives people strength to create a space for themselves and to build up material assets to support their own self-reliant development (Oakley and Marsden, 1984:15).

However, material resources alone will not enhance the ability of a group to participate. As Selby points out, participation, like partnership, must be negotiated on the terms of the more vulnerable group using language and a process which is accessible. For example Maori have been consistently disempowered by ill defined partnerships. The subsequent process of participation is often conducted on non-Maori principles with a more individual focus (Selby, 1995:20). To extend this discussion it has been important to define exactly what people are participating in. The key issue is that they are choosing the nature of the participation as opposed to being coerced into participation by some pre-existing organisations which have been established by white, male, able-bodied, middle-class people. One must question always who has set the agenda, what institutions supported them, on what terms and how this affects those who participate. A further question is the effect of lack of institutional support in terms of quality outcomes identified by participants.

This same theoretical approach could be usefully applied to disabled people within the research context and this is apparent in the wide range of participatory models of research which have achieved emancipation with varying degrees of success. The secondary question of how the approach can succeed in a cost-cutting environment, for example within the education system, is also addressed. The value of a research partnership is analysed, based on the combined daily lived realities of the participants and the extent to which full participation can be achieved.

What is to be explored is a model of "participant driven research". The question is: what can be learnt from the activities of a research group where the driving force has been to learn about research, to make changes in an educational institution and to grow personally and professionally as individuals? The partnership on which the model has been developed is defined at an early stage, evaluated through an experiential group process and participation subsequently monitored and recorded. Participatory or collaborative research as a vehicle for creation of the emancipatory methodology is described in Chapter Two.

It can be argued that not only is participation and partnership a central strand of this thesis, but that the research participants have reclaimed this terminology and modelled in their actions the expectations disabled people hold for future research and policy making. The students involved have redefined partnership for themselves as a primary task and subsequently developed a participatory model which may have a significant impact on disability research and social policy.

Theoretical Frameworks

Critical ideas on disability

Disability has been traditionally defined within categories such as those offered by the World Health Organisation (impairment, disability and handicap). This debate has been thoroughly explored by a number of writers (Finkelstein, 1975; Blaxter, 1976; Connors, 1985; Fine and Asch, 1988; Boyles, 1994; Munford, 1992; 1994; 1995; Morris, 1992; Sullivan, 1991, 1995; Barnes and Mercer, 1996; Beatson, 1996, 1997; Oliver, 1990, 1992, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996; Bury, 1996; Munford and Sullivan, 1997). A simple definition which is used in disability equity training is that adapted from Finkelstein: impairment is what you have: for example loss of a limb or functional loss; disability is what happens as a result of that loss (Boyles and Perkins, 1994).

Discussion of the nature of impairment often over-emphasises individual deficit and the concept of personal tragedy. However, there are often significant challenges faced in the negotiation of an environment which is physically inaccessible and in exposure to negative attitudes to impairment. In this way the struggle faced by individuals with significant physical, sensory, intellectual or psychiatric impairments are compounded.

Disability research and policy literature in recent years has been based on a medical model of disability. Examples lie in the following sources: research undertaken by the Central Regional Health Authority (1993) in discussion of purchasing directions and research into the needs of people with head injuries (1994); in the various reports of the National Advisory Committee on Core Services (1992, 1993, 1995); the Department of Labour Research (Gray and Neale, 1992); Ministry of Health reports (1994, 1995a, 1995b); and Quine and Cameron (1995) working with disabled older people. Theorists such as Glass (1977), Salzinger, Antrobus and Glick (1980) and Skirtic (1986) have been influential within special education; subsequently, participatory research within rehabilitation such as that conducted by Mangham (1993) and Coggan and Norton (1994) has illustrated the effect of a theoretical approach based on a medical model.

The question for the research group central to this thesis is: what theoretical framework can be applied which takes into consideration every aspect of the experience of disability? The key guiding theories which have been used as a foundation are the social construction and social creation of disability (Oliver, 1990). Initial definitions of both of these theories adapted from Oliver (1990) provide a useful foundation: the social construction of disability means that the barriers people with impairments face in their environment are embodied in the attitudes, values and customs of those around them. Furthermore the social creation of disability explains the way barriers to full participation and quality of life are created in the built environment, systems, structures and related practices of those institutions which hold together the very fabric of our society. This can also be known as institutional disableism (Bourne, 1981; Ballard, 1994).

These theories alone have been seen as problematic by some writers. Morris (1992), Georgeson, (1994) Shakespeare, (1996), Bury (1996) and Munford and Sullivan (1997), have reiterated that it is important to confront the often painful reality of impairment for some people and the way management of many conditions might demand a complete re-organisation of one's existence. According to Munford and Sullivan:

Even if disableism was eliminated from society, the physical, sensory and cognitive dimensions of disability would still exist (Munford and Sullivan, 1997: 20).

A critical approach to the design and evaluation of the research will aim to take account of impairment by enabling participants to define and redefine their own concept of disability which is central to an empowerment process.

The significance of critical theory

Good theory will illuminate aspects of social reality heretofore unseen or unexplained (Agger, 1991:11).

The theoretical base of this thesis is founded on the explanatory framework of critical theory blended with the insight and vision provided by the work of selected feminist theorists in recognition of their contribution to an understanding of emancipatory research. The significance of critical theory will be explored in Chapter Three.

This thesis builds on and adapts the contribution made by Fay and Rees to the evolution of emancipatory research and explores the extent to which their theoretical frameworks can provide an explanatory tool for the process to be described. Fay's thesis does not mention the impact of impairment or disability but a research objective in this thesis has been to explore the extent to which his basic explanatory framework provides a tool which can incorporate the social theories of disability.

I was inspired by Rees and Fay in my postgraduate studies and I have made useful, positive connections within the context of both models to my personal experience of disability and to my professional role as a community worker, trainer and lecturer in disability studies. I was struck by the accessibility of Rees's steps to empowerment in their clear analysis of the experience of marginalised groups and I have subsequently adapted them as a contemporary social work translation of the scheme to enlightenment. I would argue that the steps provide in a multi dimensional approach to empowerment the essential elements of critical theory.

This research project has explored how an adaptation of the models presented by Fay and Rees can be used as a tool in facilitating transformation of the social situation of disabled people and a more active voice in their immediate environment. The research students having been presented with the option of Rees's steps, had a key role in deciding to adapt the model as a structure to work with; the

nature of the steps ensures that they will either facilitate self-understanding and dialogue or they allow people to opt out. The steps will be used to critically evaluate the research process in Chapter Seven. They will in turn be critiqued in Chapter Nine with a view to highlighting the pitfalls in their use as well as the advantages. The steps to empowerment have powerful implications for policy and practice in both social research and in the formation of social policy. These will be summarised in the final chapter.

Both Fay's basic scheme and Rees's steps are presented in detail in Chapter Three where the main elements of each component of both theories are constructed in diagrammatic form (Figures One, Two and Three).

Some issues to consider for myself as researcher

Because there is no perfect research design, I will acknowledge some of the potential difficulties I have faced as a researcher, including my responsibility, and the negotiation of that responsibility in writing up this thesis. The challenges I faced as a facilitator will be consistently addressed and will be analysed in detail in Chapter Nine. These difficulties and challenges are often as useful as our 'successes' in creating knowledge.

I have identified four central concerns on which I expand below. One of my strong beliefs is that research in this field should contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life for disabled people. This action research has aimed to address the needs of the participants as well as, to some extent, those of other disabled people within the tertiary system. The first issue of concern is my responsibility to carry that principle through into the writing up of the thesis.

As a disabled researcher I am committed to making this thesis acceptable and accessible to a wide range of people. My role, therefore, as writer, is to ensure the voices of those involved in the research and the writing up are clearly understood. As far as possible I have sought to write in clear language and where language is difficult I have translated. In this sense, the students participating have monitored the text and it will be shown that it is possible to write up a text based on the requirements of academia but which is also a living document the disability community can access.

The second issue is what Said describes as the writer's 'strategic location' (Said, 1978:56). Clarification of my own position as writer in relation to the material about which I am to write is, therefore, essential. I have stated my own position as a disabled woman and the impact this has had in breaking down barriers. I have also acknowledged the power that I do possess as a PhD student, an experienced lecturer and a writer. The issues this raises are discussed in depth in the thesis but in terms of the writing up, I have followed deconstructive textual practices to reduce appropriation of material (Opie, 1990).

In the context of this second issue, three key aspects of the approach can be identified: the first will clarify the constraints the theoretical perspective of the researcher can place on interpretation of data. An in-built evaluation ensuring self-reflexivity at every stage will be part of the structure of the thesis. Where the first person is used, the statements made will be clearly my own thoughts, feelings and perceptions which I claim have validity in my role as researcher and facilitator. When using the third person or when directly referring to the common group experience, the material is a result of the findings or perceptions of the research participants and will always have been checked out via the chosen evaluation mechanism.

A second aspect of the deconstructive approach is that it has sought to ensure the direct or indirect empowerment of participants, since within the text, a range of subject positions have been represented. It has been demonstrated that the voices of disabled people are often contradictory as well as able to speak together in unison. The writing up of the thesis as well as the focus of action itself is aimed at: "making the invisible visible, bringing the margin to the centre, rendering the trivial important" (Reinharz, 1992).

Within the third aspect of the deconstructive approach, power and responsibility have been shared in the research process and written as well as spoken dialogue have formed the methodological framework. So too, the research participants have had the opportunity to contribute to and even challenge the way this thesis has been presented. In this way the emancipatory ideal can be carried through into reality since textual appropriation can be disempowering in the most insidious way.

The third issue in terms of the writing-up process is the vast amount of data generated, much of which records the group process as it has evolved. I have been clear from the outset that the process is inextricable from the outcome since the methodology must be the tool of empowerment. The self-discovery of the research group as well as that of individuals within the group is a process of such depth and richness it is difficult to report and measure. It has equal importance to the concrete outcomes of the action research so I have had to make difficult decisions about how much should be included. The thesis contains, therefore, aspects of this process based on my own decisions about which material most successfully meets the emancipatory goals of the research.

For the purposes of providing an emancipatory model of research in this field, the methodology describes the process in detail and the material generated, for example the disability equity training kit is appended (Appendix Ten). Group consultation has aimed to ensure that work of greatest significance is presented.

A final point is the placement of the introduction of the student participants. After much deliberation it seemed appropriate to place them in the opening to the methodology since the concept of ownership of the process is as important as any ownership of the content of the thesis itself. Pseudonyms were finally decided as appropriate to protect people in the future since the work

may become well known. This maintains the “notion of choice” (Rees, 1991) and leaves control, to some extent, in the hands of the participants. They have understood, however, that I have ultimate responsibility for the thesis and am likely to receive the most concrete benefits from its completion.

Format of this thesis

The thesis is divided into eleven chapters. The first three chapters, including this one, will provide a theoretical framework of the research and a literature review demonstrating past and contemporary research which has value in mapping a road to an emancipatory approach. Examples of relevant historical and contemporary research which I have drawn on to enable the development of the methodology are described. The difficulties in adaptation of such models for disability research are highlighted. The literature which reflects aspects of more emancipatory approaches will form the foundation of the methodology created by the research group. A range of writers has been drawn on to ensure gaps in the research literature have been clearly established. In terms of relevance for disability research, Chapters Four to Eight describe and subsequently analyse the research process followed by a substantive analysis of research findings in Chapter Nine, a description of the outcomes of the research in Chapter Ten, followed by an analysis of the implications of the research in Chapter Eleven.

Chapter Two provides a rationale for emancipatory research in more specific terms, explores the roots of emancipatory research and critiques relevant research literature which has impacted on this project. Chapter Three explores the role of critical theory with particular reference to the work of Stuart Rees and Brian Fay. Their theoretical frameworks are described, analysed and subsequently presented in relation to each other (Figure Two and Three). The works of other theorists such as Freire and Agger are interwoven into this discussion.

Chapter Four is devoted to a detailed description of the principles behind the development of a new emancipatory methodology. Figure Three defines the adapted framework of the models of Fay and Rees in relation to those principles. The ethics of selection of participants are discussed, followed by a summary of data collection methods. Chapter Five presents an analysis of the group by exploring group dynamics and issues arising. This includes some of the issues facing a facilitator of this kind of research. The chapter ends with the introduction of participants. Chapter Six further describes the research process followed by key research findings with particular reference to group development. Extracts of the research diary illustrate the extent to which the participants contributed to the evolution of the research process and the challenges which were faced during the course of the research. Chapter Seven describes the focus of the action research, an account of the disability equity training programme presented to the staff at Victoria University and an initial analysis of events. This is described as a case study and is set against a background of disability equity training as a tool of education and emancipation in the disability field.

Chapter Eight is devoted to a critical evaluation of the research experience, using Rees's steps to empowerment as a tool of analysis. Evaluations of student participants are combined with my own as researcher to reflect on the process described in Chapters Five and Six. The extent to which the principles presented in Chapter Four have been incorporated is analysed establishing the emancipatory value of the process. Chapter Nine returns to the key research questions and reviews the crucial role of group work and group dynamics in the development of this example of emancipatory research: the extent to which an emancipatory model has been achieved will be discussed, including the limitations of this model. The research kit presented to students after the research had finished is critiqued as a tool which aimed to enhance the long term benefits of the research process for the individuals involved. Chapter Ten explores the formation of DARG Inc and represents an example of what is possible in this type of research. This forms an extension of the research process itself and raises the issue of the role of the researcher subsequent to an intensive research experience including the responsibility in the long term. Chapter Eleven concludes this thesis and explores the possibilities for emancipatory models, the use of Rees's steps and Fay's basis scheme as evaluative tools and the way workers in the disability field in general can adopt an emancipatory approach to practice. The principles behind emancipatory models are revisited.

In conclusion, all themes are woven together and the key questions summarised. The significance and impact of both the approach to the research as well as the outcomes of the research action are defined in terms of the future for disability research in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

¹ A Note On Language: The use of language is controversial within the disability field and there is a wide range of views as to the nature of politically correct language. A preliminary note on the use of the term "disabled people" which has been used throughout in the interests of literary consistency. It must be stressed that usually the terms disabled people and people with disabilities are used interchangeably reflecting the ongoing debate in the disability community. What is important is to respect the wishes of the person or people concerned, that language in no way takes away from the dignity or sense of identity of a person and respects their personal wishes. I have referred to people who do not have impairments as "nondisabled" people, the absence of a hyphen being deliberate to create a new term. I also name people who are deaf as "Deaf" when talking about the Deaf community as a group with an individual culture.

CHAPTER TWO

Emancipatory Research And Disability: Roots And Branches

Tunga te Ururua

Kia tupu whakararitorito te tupu o te harakeke

Burn the overgrowth

so that the flax may grow new shoots,

Get rid of old habits and ideas,

So that new ones can develop

(Metge, 1990:30).

Introduction

In order to address the role of emancipatory research in enhancing the lives of disabled people, it is important to explore the roots and branches of an emancipatory model including the range of works which have aimed to address the needs of marginalised groups. The work to be described has been inspired by the need for change, for a re-definition of empowerment and a recognition of the powerful role of research. The image of the flax is pertinent to this discussion since it is seen as strong and ageless, always allowing for new growth. The representation of the flax denotes respect for tradition, culture and existing knowledge. The shoots emerging would be those of new research methods and methodologies which are based on partnership, participation, consultation and transformation. The overgrowth in this context represents those approaches to research which are seen to be inappropriately based on a medical model of disability and implemented accordingly. This thesis aims to combine these concepts to weave an emancipatory model of research which can achieve change for disabled people.

This chapter will explore firstly a rationale for emancipatory research, followed by a section which builds on the concept of participation as a central theme in the evolution of emancipatory research. A cross section of research projects which are based in terms of their design and analysis on participatory approaches and which aim to accomplish change will be explored, including some early research. This will demonstrate the foundation for my own research project highlighting the

contribution of early and contemporary research centred on social change, to my own understanding and interpretation of what constitutes emancipatory research. In this way emancipatory research for the purpose of this thesis will be defined through the presentation of a cross section of action research projects which have served to improve the lives of those central to them. This will include chosen feminist research projects as well as other work conducted with marginalised groups. These examples have been conducted from a range of cultural perspectives and highlight the importance of flexibility in methodological approaches. I will conclude the chapter with a critique of research by disabled people for disabled people.

Philosophical Underpinnings: Why emancipatory research?

In this section I will begin with the argument presented by disabled people for a new model of research followed by a critique of a cross section of social research approaches over the last century. In this way the fundamental underpinnings of emancipatory research will be highlighted and identified aspects of the range of approaches named will be integrated into the model to be described.

Disabled People and social research

Increasingly disabled people are demanding to be heard, to be allowed to redefine disability on their own terms and to be included fully in the research process (Oliver, 1990, 1992, 1996; Morris, 1992; Ward and Flynn, 1994; Boyles, 1994, 1997; Barnes and Mercer, 1996; Bury, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996; Munford and Sullivan, 1997). In 1988, at a forum on inclusion of women in disability research a collective voice stated:

We are the sources of the research. We have the knowledge and we have the understanding of the life of being a woman with a disability (Women and Disability Research Forum 1988:1).

Research as the legitimization of knowledge is a source of power and people who are producers and participants in the creation of knowledge are defined as powerful in society (ibid). People with disabilities, along with other vulnerable groups such as older people, gay men and lesbian women and those not part of the dominant culture have been marginalised in society both in terms of resources and as owners of knowledge (Oliver and Zarb, 1989; Roeher Institute, 1991, 1992; Bury, 1996 Shakespeare, 1996;). As Finkelstein states:

We have noticed that it has always been others who have researched, written and analysed, examined our history, and proposed their knowing solutions for us.....Can it be that having others research on the lives of disabled people (rather than us expressing our own experience) has something to do with the very nature of disability. So what then is disability? (Finkelstein 1975:31).

Finkelstein opened the debate as early as 1975 around the part research plays in the social construction of disability. Oliver took up this debate and contributed to a change in attitude to disability within social science research by politicising the issue and naming the theoretical base (Oliver, 1990). Research has not only defined disability by focussing on deficit, traditional research processes exclude, and potentially abuse, the person with an impairment, demonstrating lack of respect for the individual and a general fascination with difference (Bury, 1996; Oliver, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996; Beresford, 1997).

I have stated in the introductory chapter that disabled researchers (Finkelstein, 1975; Oliver, 1990; Morris, 1992; Wicks, 1992; Boyles, 1994, 1997; Ward and Flynn, 1994; Zola, 1995) have been supported by nondisabled researchers (Ballard, 1993; Munford, 1995; Bennie, 1996; Perkins, 1996) in calling for research which challenges the "social relations of research production" (Oliver, 1992, 1996). Ballard claims that social political factors have been ignored in New Zealand disability research (Ballard, 1993) and it is attention to such factors which makes the difference between research as a tool of emancipation as opposed to one of control. What is required is a review of a range of examples of social science research in order to develop a model which is a synthesis of old and new approaches (ibid).

The Significance of dominant research traditions

It can be argued that social science research has been dominated by two traditions: positivism and interpretivism. Positivism attempts to apply methods from the natural sciences to social sciences to try and uncover natural laws. It is more often associated with quantitative methods and in essence the approach claims that the world can be broken into categories and measured; these measurements are then used to explain and predict events "independent of the cultural, historical and values concept of the research and the researcher" (Ballard, 1994:2). Interpretivism acknowledges the social world as a meaningful place, full of active subjects not passive objects; furthermore, it emphasises within research the meanings of events not their causes and that the research is a product of the values of researchers and cannot be independent of them (Bryson, 1979; Heron, 1981; Rowan, 1981; Oliver, 1992; 1996; Ballard, 1993; Munford, 1994; Kerr, 1995; Bennie, 1996). Interpretivism is more often associated with qualitative methods. Within positivist research, the researcher's reality is central and s/he is the expert who lays the ground rules. Within interpretivist research, the participants are respected as the "knowers" and their reality is explored as part of the process.

Qualitative research approaches, have a long history in the human disciplines and gained momentum this century through the work of the Chicago school in the 1920s and 30s where it was used to study human group life (Denzin, 1989, 1989a, 1989b, 1992; Barnes, 1992; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). They were also central to the work of anthropologists such as Malinowski, Mead, Boas and Said who entered into the lives of people from other cultures to study the habits, customs

and traditions of other societies. They recorded what they saw in painstaking detail. It was subsequently employed in other disciplines such as education, social work and communications. Qualitative research crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matter (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:1). Not only does the approach have its roots in social anthropology, it also emanates from symbolic interactionism and radical theory, where the emphasis is on studying social life in natural settings. The scholars who have used or contributed to this intellectual approach include: Dewey, Mead, Thomas, Znaniecki and later Blumer who builds particularly on the work of Mead. The popularity both of Goffman's work (1971) on stigma and the phenomenological perspective which derives from Schutz (1967;1972) are evident in social studies of the time and are seen as dramatically different in theoretical and methodological orientation from 'the old sociology' (Reynolds, 1980:80).

Phenomenological approaches are defined by their focus on the individual daily lived experience with a focus on the significance of the fine detail of a person's world. Such approaches have immense value for groups of people whose experience has previously been owned and interpreted by researchers: While more traditional approaches aim at generalisation of experience (applied across the board), phenomenology is "a theory of the unique" (Van Manen, 1990:6) where the value of difference is emphasised and made visible. Phenomenological analysis attempts to explain meaning as we live them in our everyday existence, "in our life world" (ibid). A systematic, explicit self critical analysis is achieved by a dialogic approach where the researcher develops a concept of the meaning of the human world in partnership with the "phenomenon" the subject of the research. A phenomenological approach taken from a critical perspective, I would argue, plays a role in the development of an emancipatory methodology and this is explored in Chapter Five.

Approaches to research have been debated by researchers over the years who come from different philosophical viewpoints. It is important to be clear for the purpose of explaining the rationale behind emancipatory research the central tenets of that debate to which I will now turn.

Quantitative/Qualitative debate

This section will explore the debate around methodological approaches including the fundamental criticisms of qualitative methods. This is necessary to demonstrate possible pitfalls in the use of such methods in the design of an emancipatory model as well as the limitations of any one approach. Negative reactions from orthodox researchers whose orientation has been grounded in predominantly positivist approaches to research, are based on the accusations that qualitative research is thought to be 'unscientific', or politically motivated and therefore overtly biased (Du bois, 1983; Cook and Fonow, 1984; Barnes, 1992; Reinharz 1979, 1992; Shakespeare, 1996). A number of feminists such as Stanley and Wise and Harding have begun to focus more on methods and the use of a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches in ways consistent with feminist principles. Moreover, combining methods sometimes termed triangulation (Denzin, 1989, 1992, 1994), permits researchers to capture a more complete, holistic and contextual portrayal. For

example, to use a range of methods such as story telling, diaries, historical sources and unstructured interviews allows a more complete analysis of a person's situation - in Denzin's terms, a "thick description" and "thick interpretation" (Denzin, 1989b:31) enhancing the quality of the picture presented and can raise the likelihood that the research process itself can be empowering for the participant.

Although there is increasing consensus among researchers that quantitative methods are legitimate research tools, there are clearly definitional difficulties with the terms "quantitative", "qualitative", "method" and "methodology" (Finch, 1986; Stanley and Wise, 1990; Reinharz, 1992). In other words, taking any of those definitions and discussing them in isolation from a research context, can lead to assertions which reflect a limited perspective. When one speaks of qualitative research, one must look at such issues as the power dynamics involved, the type of questions, who sets them, who benefits from the research and who claims ownership of the outcomes (Bourne, 1981; Barnes, 1992; Barnes and Mercer, 1996; Teariki and Spoonley, 1992; Wicks and Terrell, 1992; Bury, 1996). Although the research to be described has used only qualitative methods, the broad range of approaches includes policy analysis which incorporates a certain amount of quantitative analysis. A comprehensive range of data avoids narrow interpretation and lack of integrity in research findings. The power to design research and interpret findings has major significance for disabled people participating in research in terms of whose reality is being investigated and who has the right to define this reality. The focus on "methods" and therefore research design can obscure the real challenge of questioning the epistemology underlying traditional social science although the research tools do require attention and will be discussed later.

Limitations of qualitative methods in the context of emancipatory research

Qualitative approaches, in addition to wholly positivistic approaches, have been subject to some criticism from many sources such as critical theorists and Marxists (Barnes, 1992, 1996; Oliver, 1992, 1996; Bury, 1996). These writers have claimed that such approaches have the potential to maintain some of the more destructive elements of positivism. For example the researcher may retain control of the agenda, there is scope for exploitation of participants and participants may be disadvantaged by their lack of insight into their real situations due to their relatively powerless situations. One of the main concerns cited, lay with the fact that the researcher using qualitative methods, had greater access to the 'research subject'. While a qualitative approach had the potential to be more collaborative, to address more directly the felt needs of the person being interviewed and demonstrated greater respect for the views of the individual, the power of interpretation still lay with the researcher (Barnes, 1992; Oliver, 1992). In this way whatever the political stance and

personal agenda of the researcher, the outcome of the research was more likely to reflect their own priorities. As Finch stated:

there is a strong likelihood that the political stance adopted will be oppositional, perhaps subversive, in respect of the status quo, since the methods used get close to the people studied and are very likely to challenge the 'official version' of their situation (Finch, 1986:210).

This would obviously pose a threat to people in positions of power in any organisation whose less positive practices may be uncovered (Shakespeare, 1996). Not only does the power remain with the researcher in terms of interpretation and action as well as the funder, there may be serious implications for vulnerable people.

Researchers committed to the need for emancipatory methodologies have, at times, rejected the indiscriminate use of approaches based within the dominant traditions which have the potential to only "advance the interests, concerns and methods of the researcher and to locate the benefits of the research at least in part with the researcher, other benefits being of lesser concern" (Bishop, 1996:15). The basic argument for a new emancipatory methodology is about "the facilitating of the politics of a possible by confronting social oppression at whatever level it occurs" (Oliver, 1992: 110). Exploitation in research can occur either directly via methodology used or indirectly through choice of topic indicating the needs and priorities of the researcher. Many researchers have argued that in mainstream research, exploitation is the norm while reciprocity is an unconventional concept (Morris, 1992; Oliver, 1992; Reinharz, 1992). It is clear that in some examples of sociological research when empirical data is collected, it is taken from relatively powerless sources and can reflect the tendency to 'study down' (Bryson 1979:96). Direct access to the powerful is difficult to obtain as "powerful people can protect themselves from the intrusion of social scientists" (ibid). Bell comments on this practice in sociology and suggests that were sociologists to 'study up', sociology would be more relevant and less harmful than it is today but that: its "scientific legitimacy would be threatened, such is the power of the ideology of science" (Bell and Newby, 1977:28). Unless hard data and figures are used the label 'scientific' is harder to claim. To build on this discussion, the tendency more recently, to study sideways has also created the possibility of unrepresentative research. For example while in-depth analysis of small homogenous groups is a key to "discovering the unique quality of subjects' lives", (Cannon et al, 1991:110), it can also block discovery of the diversity of human experience. For example the needs of working class and black women are often ignored.(ibid) in research conducted within such limited boundaries. Some effort is made to redress power imbalances by ensuring that the researcher is from the group represented but the researcher's experience will often be too limited to be representative of the group interests. Cannon et al (1991) suggest that researchers who are committed to incorporating subjects of different races and classes in their research designs must look at increased time and resources (Cannon et al, 1991:111).

The importance of emancipatory research lies both in its attempts to study the other end of power relations and in its attempts to challenge them (Oliver, 1992). Disabled people and their allies have challenged research conducted within these traditions saying that there is little evidence of resultant change in community attitudes and actions on disability (Oliver, 1992; Ballard, 1993; Bury, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996). Morris (1992) and Oliver (1992) claim that such research where the subject and their experience is absent and invisible, is alienating. Only researchers benefit from such studies "and what accrues to them is status and related outcomes provided by the powerful resources of the research world" (Ballard, 1993:2). The development of a dialectical model of research is needed which requires a synthesis of both traditional and contemporary approaches to social science and a recognition of the way different styles and traditions of social science research relate to one another (Rowan, 1981). In other words, the most productive components of both dominant traditions can be incorporated to develop a new model. Within the interpretive model, the focus on the individual is central to the research process. Recognition of the significance of their view of reality as the key as opposed to that of the researcher is an important feature which fits well with the emancipatory model. Within positivism, the analytical approach has advantages and the ability to stand back and critically reflect on what has been learnt/observed blends well with the more subjective responses achieved within a qualitative framework. A researcher check list to alert to the potential difficulties as well as to measure the extent to which emancipatory principles are being adhered to will address the previous issues raised. This check list appears in Appendix One.

The contribution of feminist researchers

Feminism has made a significant contribution to an understanding and definition of emancipatory research and some elements of their work has been drawn on in this thesis. In the 1970s feminists raised concerns about the absence of women's voices in research about them (Lorber, 1975; Finch and Groves, 1982) as well as the question of who can be a 'knower' (Jordan, 1977; Cook and Fonow, 1984). Feminist writers in the last two decades have led the way in advocating research which emphasises collaboration, co-operation and mutual respect (Mies, 1983; Oakley, 1987), necessary formulae for outcomes relevant to the needs of all participants. Furthermore, feminist research is characterised by methods which ensure the presence of the previously absent subject and facilitate the voices of women speaking in terms of their daily lived experiences (Smith, 1988; Munford, 1989, 1994, 1996; Morris, 1992). More importantly in terms of this research is the commitment feminism made to personal, political and social change and the power of women organising together to achieve social change. Fay has highlighted the huge contribution feminist critical theory and the resultant women's movement has made to an understanding of the power of marginalised groups to achieve lasting social change (Fay, 1987). Morris, a disabled feminist social researcher, has recommended that disability research incorporates feminist research methods in order to develop an emancipatory model of research for disability (Morris, 1992). Feminist principles have been thus adapted into a set of principles for disability research to be described in Chapter Four. Examples

of feminist research significant within the context of my own research will be cited later in this chapter.

Summary

Disabled people have recognized the medical and individual ideologies underpinning orthodox approaches to research and have sought to demonstrate that disability cannot be abstracted from the social world which produces it. Research is a key to change and empowerment as it represents a legitimization of knowledge which is a source of power. People are defined as powerful in society, not only in societal resources, but as producers or participants in the creation of knowledge, “ways of knowing” themselves and the social structure within which they live (Wight-Felske, 1994). Many people have been excluded and even alienated from the research process to the extent that their needs and their very identity are defined by nondisabled researchers. “If disability research is to be emancipatory research then it must be part of disabled people’s struggle to take over ownership of the definition of oppression, of the translation of their subjective reality” (Morris, 1992:162). This statement has represented a fundamental aim in the development of an emancipatory paradigm. Other groups have approached research as praxis which has aimed to address the above issues and it is to these examples I will turn later in this chapter. Firstly, a brief journey back in history will explain past and current difficulties facing disabled people in the context of research and policy development and further clarify the need for an emancipatory model of research.

The evolution of disability research

The earlier part of this century saw a research agenda driven by bio-medical concerns and the control or eradication of disabled people. This was embodied in the research first by the eugenicists followed by that which developed both inoculation against deadly diseases such as polio and tuberculosis (both of which cause long term disability) as well as techniques for pre-natal diagnosis. Another feature of this era especially with the onset of the industrial revolution was the growth of compulsory institutionalisation since disabled people had increasingly less value and families were increasingly encouraged to place their children in hospital and to get on with earning a living (Connors, 1985; Oliver, 1990). The second half of the twentieth century has been dominated by service delivery models (Rioux, 1994; Radford, 1994) given the pre-occupation with de-institutionalisation and the evolution of group homes in the community.

Eugenic scientific theory in the 1920s, 30s and 40s underpinned policy and research practices internationally. The objective of an “Imperial Race in Britain to defend and maintain the Empire” (Williams, 1989:126) resulted in the development of the eugenics movement “which saw the need to encourage the breeding of the fit and intelligent and discourage the production of the weak of body and intellect” (ibid). Laws enabling those labelled as “idiots” or “imbeciles” to be sterilised without consent were put into effect. Eugenicists, at this time were working on postulated causal links made by scientists such as Langdon Down in the mid nineteenth century, between intelligence

and a supposed hierarchy of racial groups. To the old hypotheses were added a new faith "in the explanatory powers of measurement and unprecedented levels of funding from major corporate benefactors for eugenic research" (Radford, 1994:16). Credited academic protocols were used for publicizing groundless and frightening statistics on the prevalence of 'mental deficiency' along with questionable intelligence tests (ibid).

An example of early research based on this philosophy lies in that carried out in Germany in 1939 by the Committee for the Scientific Treatment of Severe Genetically Determined Diseases under the influence of the Third Reich.² This programme was later extended to exterminate all unwanted races (Morris, 1992:53) and is an example of how research became the tool for the justification and implementation of a so-called logical social policy based on the dominant ideology of the time.

The assumptions that disabled people did not have lives worth living, would contaminate the race and would be too costly to support, combined with social Darwinism in a medical context, led to the belief that for society's sake a whole group of people should be destroyed (Morris, 1992:55). This links with the previous discussion about the potentially destructive nature of positivism where the power of science is such that those who are the 'knowers' within science particularly medical science could determine the nature of a worthwhile, productive and even 'perfect' human being.

Eugenics as a theory became discredited in the wake of the Holocaust and a return to the earlier studies found fault with the methods and conclusions of the original research (Davies, 1959: 84).

Thomson reports in her research:

New research was establishing a variety of causes of 'mental deficiency' other than inheritance. The widely held belief that the "mentally defective" reproduced more prolifically than other groups in society was also disputed (Thomson, 1995:107).

There was some evidence that educational researchers had begun to implicitly identify the social construction of disability in the way they viewed intellectual disability. Many writers began to describe the concept of 'mental retardation' as a social construction which exists in the minds of mental health professionals and others (Braginsky and Braginsky, 1971). They claimed individuals with intellectual disability were labelled according to some arbitrarily created and applied criteria (Bogdan and Taylor, 1976). Their inquiries became as a result more focussed on environmental issues. Thomson cites Gollay's report (Gollay et al, 1978:12) that researchers had begun to find "that many of those considered to be 'feeble-minded' in fact were often of normal intelligence, but of a working class background and thus disadvantaged by their poor socio-economic background" (cited in Thompson, 1995:107). The social construction in this context was the product of 'knowers' who

² An extreme example of exploitative research lies in that carried out by the Third Reich. All doctors and midwives were asked to register children born with congenital deformities and those in their care up to the age of three (Morris, 1992:52).

actively benefited from social inequality and had a tendency to 'blame the victim'. In terms of rehabilitation research there was a shift to issues of adjustment, adaptation and coping, away from the exclusive focus on the damaged individual to a need to understand the resulting behaviour.

The operationalisation and instrumentalization of this approach became the "Activities of Daily Living Scales" (Zola, 1994) where the impact of disability on one's daily survival became the central focus. The significance of this change in theoretical perspective had significant implications for the care, planning and policy related to disability post World War Two. With the return of injured service men disabled people had a higher profile and were generally perceived to have a right to education and community integration. In the context of this thesis, this era saw a turning point in the way research was viewed in its ability to inform disability policy, and scientific research was important to the political enterprise of the time. This shift, it must be noted was in no way complete in its influence across social science research nor indeed did it represent an all-embracing change in attitude to disability research.

Although the world now condemns the activities of the Third Reich, later generations across the world have recognized to some extent the presence of the same underpinning philosophy within their own societal laws, attitudes and practices. For example, the Council of Europe has produced a draft convention on bio-ethics allowing 'low risk' scientific medical experiments on incapacitated people even if there are no benefits for the disabled person (Rock, 1996:121). Furthermore, forced sterilisation is still commonplace and the woman is often unaware of what is happening (ibid).

This concentration on disability research in the area of biological and genetic research continues to be highly funded, controversial and a research priority (Rioux, 1994). Rehabilitation and medical research consistently now seek answers to the prevention or eradication of disability. People are subject to expensive rehabilitation aimed at improving their ability to function in a 'normal' way and return to work. There is a limit to the amount of resources which are allocated to maintaining one's quality of life while living with the reality of impairment. Rioux states that the preponderance of research in the field now looks very much like that into measles, aimed at prevention! *Disability is not Measles* (Rioux and Bach, 1994) is an appropriate tongue in cheek title for a ground breaking text exploring this area.

Heshushius, while advocating the eradication of the more oppressive elements of positivist research approaches, does not deny the need for other types of research into conditions such as autism (1994). Much medical research could claim to be emancipatory in the liberating effect of freedom from 'unnecessary' physical impairment which can result. A good example of this is the work of Fred Hollows whose extensive research into the incidence of cataracts in third-world populations as well as among the aboriginal population succeeded in increasing the quality of life for thousands of people. This is not a suggestion to seek solace in the medical model of disability. What was most striking about Hollows's work, was his attitude to people and the way he conducted his research.

Very early on in his career, he challenged the use of the word 'patient' in research programmes, demonstrating unusual sensitivity as a young doctor. When he described one of his first most successful glaucoma projects, he recognized he would acquire a prestigious academic reputation; this was less important to him than the philosophy behind his research:

The credo of this survey was 'no survey without service'. Careful recording of results, humane and considerate treatment of the people, and action on the problems disclosed (Hollows and Corris, 1993:78).

The Aboriginal participants to his team: "knew that they were not just the objects of another scientific survey for the benefit of a few white sinecurists and careerists" (Hollows and Corris, 1993:151). This example is introduced in the context of this discussion, in order to strengthen the argument that every researcher has a responsibility to work in an emancipatory way where peoples' lives are involved, even within strict medical methodology.

Human interaction of any nature can be of reciprocal benefit. With this aim, people whose daily experience is one of devaluation and humiliation, can have a highly positive experience of even medical research if a humane and honest approach is taken. I will now turn to some examples of early research which aimed to represent the views of vulnerable people and which can be defined as an attempt to empower people through research. I will then describe an early piece of qualitative research with disabled people.

Early research aimed at social change

It is important to recognize the efforts of social researchers historically to achieve social change. Such research is usually characterised by its use of a range of qualitative methods and has thus occupied a secondary place to the dominant models of research which have been essentially quantitative in technique and positivist in epistemology. An alternative tradition can be identified in the 19th and 20th centuries which, at the level of methods, appears to make more use of qualitative techniques, and at the level of epistemology is concerned with understanding and uncovering the subjective reality of the people being studied (Finch, 1986; Barnes, 1992). The work of early social explorers reveals that qualitative analysis has been valued historically to reveal a richer picture of the human experience and the examples below have contributed to my own understanding of the evolution of emancipatory research.

The work of Henry Mayhew (1812-1887) has considerable importance in its influence on the development of an 'alternative tradition'. Mayhew had recognized the abusive nature of the research which was being conducted on the poor by government commissions³. These commissions

³ Examples include the Factories Commission Report 1836; the work of Dr. Andrew Ure: *The Philosophy of Manufacturers* 1836 which promotes the cause of the Bourgeoisie and report of the poor law commission on Ireland, 1837.

approached the work from the perspective that poverty was due to lack of moral discipline and the fault of the poor themselves, indicating the Darwinist thinking characteristic of eugenicists previously described. He also challenged their motives for conducting the research:

Hence none but the worst classes came to be experimented on. It would seem that, this overweening disposition to play the part of pedagogues (I use the word in the liberal sense) to the poor proceeds rather from a love of power than from a sincere regard for the people (Mayhew 1851: xvii).

He saw himself as a pioneer describing his work in 1851 as:

The first attempt to publish the history of the people from the lips of the people themselves - giving a literal description of their labour, their earnings, their trials, their sufferings, in their own 'unvarnished' language; and to portray the condition of their homes and their families by personal observation of the places and direct communication with the individuals' (ibid).

Significance of mass-observation

A pattern was developing where researchers were beginning to use research to make the lives of people more visible and to engage them in some way in the research process. The development of the organization called Mass-Observation represents the first serious attempt this century to inspire social change through a team-based action research approach. This movement was started in 1937 by Tom Harrison and Charles Madge who set out to develop the 'Science of Ourselves' drawing upon the model of anthropology (Finch, 1986). It was given credibility by the acceptance of the most famous British anthropologist of the time, Bronislaw Malinowski, who provided a lengthy final chapter in Mass-Observation's account of its first year's work (Malinowski, 1939). Others, such as Mark Abrams, wrote it off as misguided (Journal of Contemporary Research, 1985) due to its complex methodology and chaotic approach to data collation. It was seen by those who participated as a way of finally having a legitimate voice:

The invitation to send in their most intimate thoughts and feelings and what they knew of others around them must have given them a sense of being listened to to which was in itself a counter to powerlessness (Summerfield, 1985:442).

To summarise, the significance of Mass-Observation lies in its attempt to intervene in the political processes through which knowledge and, therefore, power is distributed. Its distinctive use of social research very much reflects the view from below in its commitment to the role of the amateur. Stanley argues that in some ways this was methodologically naive but is important in that their use of a volunteer panel represents a genuine attempt to provide an actor's perspective on events and represents Mass-Observation's greatest achievement which has never been reproduced (Stanley,

1981). It should be further acknowledged that like all approaches which so directly impact on peoples' lives, some participants of the mass observation approach to research were reported as being suspicious of the technique and considered that it may have been used as a means to spy on them (Finch, 1986).

I will now critique a piece of early disability research which similarly aimed to represent the voices of a particular group of disabled people.

The work of Robert Edgerton

A classic work by Robert Edgerton *The Cloak of Competence* has significance as one of the earliest pieces of research which set out to record directly the voices of disabled people. The *Cloak of Competence* was an attempt to demonstrate that a study of the cultural and social phenomena related to "mental retardation" could be deemed a legitimate anthropological exercise which would also explore an area about which very little was known.

The aim of this research was specifically to allow people with intellectual disabilities their own voice, but as Gerber points out: "in effect, Edgerton's theoretical and narrative strategies serve to deny them the authority to analyse their own circumstances" (Gerber, 1990: 6). If one investigates as Edgerton does not, the larger context of the lives of those in his samples through historical social and structural analysis, and evaluates on their terms their personal testimonies, the identification of disability becomes questionable. However, this only serves to deepen the contradiction of his argument. One would wonder on viewing the evidence how so called 'retarded' people could command such a range of demanding roles which require considerable self-scrutiny and insight into the behaviour of others. As Gerber states:

We are ultimately led to wonder also whether they might have the fullest view of both their situation as people bearing a discrediting label and personal history and of the assistance they require to take control of a normalized existence (Gerber, 1990:7).

The people in Edgerton's sample do not deny their limitations, but they do seek, with considerable plausibility, to explain and interpret them and reject the label of mentally retarded. However, the tone of the research report repeatedly casts doubt on what the people are saying. For example, in the section describing Hank's self perception, Edgerton describes his own observations of him. He begins with a relatively, though qualified, positive statement: "Hank is fairly competent in the conduct of everyday matters....he performs relatively well" (Edgerton, 1967:33). He continues then to describe in detail his limitations discussing his inability to do the simplest of tasks. He follows this with Hank's own spoken testimony which describes himself as a skilled person, a jack of all trades whose only difficulty is a lack of education. This directly conflicts with Edgerton's previous statements, one of which spoke of his inability to cope with the special education class which has been

offered. This is a classic example of how the researcher's narrative can undermine the story of the person being interviewed.

Edgerton was incapable of understanding the life world of the participants. His own narrative indicated a total lack of dialogue with those interviewed and an insistence on the imposition of his own life world perspective. Edgerton in his follow-up research a decade later was forced to re-evaluate his ideas since those researched were in many cases leading a high quality life style. However, he did not have the courage to confront the issue at that time. Instead, he deferred the matter of ascertaining the principles by which appropriate therapeutics were to be determined pending still more research. This influential early work set the tone for other social science research and its impact is seen in research into and evaluation of service provision.

The ethical issues involved in emancipatory research will be explored more deeply in Chapter Four. All the examples of research cited above are significant in the context of this discussion in terms of their contribution to a more human and innovative approach to research of the daily lived experiences of vulnerable people. They have been conducted in a climate which favoured the more objective scientific approach and which reflected the values (particularly in the 19th and early 20th century) of the eugenicists. They represent just a sample of studies which illustrate the recognition of peoples' own stories as a source of invaluable information and the root of the narrative tradition in research.

This thesis will now turn to the more contemporary examples of research as praxis which have directly informed a new model for disability research to be described.

Research as Praxis in a contemporary context

This section will provide a background to the development of contemporary praxis-oriented research before the presentation of an analysis of significant examples. The concept of research as praxis defined in Chapter One is central to this thesis and examples of such research represent the contemporary roots of emancipatory research. To return to Lather's definition as cited in Chapter One praxis oriented research models are those which are "openly committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society" (Lather, 1986:258).

A key component of research as praxis particularly in a contemporary context is the range of participatory approaches. These are particularly effective when linked with action research in their combined ability to achieve change at the level of the individual and at a societal level.

Feminist writers have aimed to develop models of research which permit women to express their experience fully in their own terms (Jayaratne 1983). Feminists are primarily responsible for the development of research as praxis in the present day but it must be stressed that such examples have relevance to others, particularly those groups who are marginalised in society by virtue of race,

disability, age, social status as well as in many cases gender. For this reason such models are directly applicable to the development of a new paradigm for disability research. The source of enthusiasm for these approaches lies in the potential for a more empowering, less mechanical interaction between researcher and researched. Oakley (1987), has suggested that the process of 'collecting data' in the traditional numerical sense should be replaced by a process of interviewing women in which "personal involvement is more than dangerous bias - it is the condition under which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives" (Oakley, 1987: 58). What she is describing is the framework of an emancipatory approach which enables women to more fully participate in research. Opie also has suggested a number of approaches to ensure more active involvement of participants in a research process where the researcher does not use rigid interview schedules to control the outcomes. She gives examples of the way she has achieved this with carers who can be empowered through their participation in the following ways: firstly by taking part in the study they contribute significantly to the description and analysis of a social issue; in this context they have lifted the veil of invisibility surrounding carers' everyday lives; secondly, there was a built-in therapeutic dimension to the process which Opie characterizes as empowering in that participants have been able to reflect on and re-evaluate their experience as part of the interview process; thirdly, research which incorporates marginalised voices can become 'subversive' in a number of ways, for example, the exposition of carers' experiences can challenge the widely held beliefs about the nature of carers and caring (Opie, 1990). It could certainly be argued that to enable carers to participate more fully in research will equally benefit those they support. Each of the above assertions have been taken into consideration in the development of an emancipatory model for disability.

Similarly, Maori are calling for methodological guidelines for good practice in the research community. They are, for example, clear that the ability of non-Maori in researching Maori issues is far outweighed by the knowledge and experience Maori people themselves bring to bear (Roa, Ropiha and Wilkinson, 1992). In this sense it is recognized that the people who have the greatest level of expertise in research about Maori experience are those for whom being Maori is a daily lived experience (Bishop, 1996).

Basic questions concerning social research hinge upon who is paying for it and what use the research will be put to. Underlying these are concerns about the motivations of researchers, including their techniques and values, how accountability will be ensured and to whom (Spoonley and Teariki, 1992; Bishop, 1996). Bishop describes how knowledge is now being reclaimed by Maori and that research is now being conducted within Kaupapa Maori cultural discourse:

Kaupapa Maori research is based on a growing consensus that research involving Maori knowledge and people needs to be conducted in culturally appropriate ways, ways that fit Maori cultural preferences, practices and aspirations... in order to develop and acknowledge

existing culturally appropriate approaches in the method, practice and organisation of research (Bishop, 1996:15).

In this way the devolution of power and control within research is essential to the empowerment of participants. Similar concerns have been raised by Pacific Island researchers Toa'aiga and Peteru (1992) who similarly advocate involvement of Pacific Island peoples whose experience in New Zealand is also one of marginalisation and disadvantage. They have critiqued researchers for the assumptions and inappropriate approaches used which have tended to alienate research subjects and lead to inaccurate research reports (ibid).

So in the light of this rationale, what exactly constitutes emancipatory research and what can be learnt from contemporary participatory research in the development of a model for disability? Chapter One presented a basic introduction to emancipatory action research. I will now cite those examples of participatory action research which have challenged the power relations in research and on which I have drawn to develop an emancipatory model for disability.

Examples of research as praxis

This section is divided into two parts. The first section presents definitions of participatory action research which constitutes research as praxis and thus contributes to a working definition of emancipatory research. The second section concludes this chapter by presenting research conducted with disabled people by disabled people.

A definition of action research was presented in Chapter One and compared with emancipatory action research. These definitions will now be enhanced by naming five different approaches to action research identified by Reinharz (1992). While Reinharz is not necessarily an expert in the area of action research, I have found the thoroughness of her definitions useful as a foundation for the critique of a range of approaches and on which to draw for the development of a new model. All draw on techniques employed by praxis-oriented researchers and the examples cited contain features which have contributed to the development of the research project to be described. While each one will be briefly described using examples of research conducted within the named approach, the chapter does not set out to critique the methodologies in detail. It must also be noted that it can be argued that any one of these approaches alone does not constitute a fully emancipatory model of research within the definition presented in Chapter One. To present the range below is an essential foundation to an understanding of the work which will be described.

Action research

Action research is defined as research where "action and evaluation proceed simultaneously" (Reinharz, 1992:180). Paulo Freire developed Lewin's concept of action research which has been referred to in Chapter One. His work described in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has significantly

informed research literature and has value in the development of any emancipatory paradigm. Lather claims that the openly ideological goal central to Freire's action research, serves to blur the distinctions between research, learning and action. It provides conditions under which participants' self determination is enhanced in the struggle toward social justice (Lather 1986). Freirian action research focuses on promoting liberation and growth within a society assumed to be class divided and therefore inequitable. Its conceptual framework lies in the democratization of knowledge and in the goal of self determination through the challenge to dominant ideology (Lather, 1986a). Much of the empirical work within this research programme is conducted with adult populations in third world countries. Freire began to formulate his pedagogic ideas in literacy work and the researcher's role is clearly redefined as that of a catalyst in enabling research participants to formulate the problem, discuss solutions and interpret findings (Hall, 1975; Padilla, 1993). Freire claims that action must provoke critical reflection and that the only effective instrument is a humanizing pedagogy in which the researcher establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed (Freire, 1972). Freire's work has been based on the premise that unless people's world view is respected any programme implemented will fail.

The methods and methodology Freire employs have particular significance in terms of emancipatory research with disabled people as he has used a range of methods: codification of data described is visual (either pictorial or graphic), auditory and tactile; themes have been extracted and topics have been chosen from fundamental nuclei of themes as defined by participants; furthermore, he has ensured that everyone involved can fully enter the research process which is totally accessible. The techniques described and the principles on which the work is based will be closely referenced in the methodology chapter. The features most relevant for emancipatory research in the context of disability will be defined and demonstrated in practice. (Figure Three which features in Chapter Three, Chapter Nine and Chapter Eleven presents some aspects of Freire's methodology to illustrate conceptual links to the theses of Fay and Rees).

Examples of feminist action research for the purposes of this discussion include the work of Mies, 1984 and a project by Jalna Hamner and Sheila Saunders (cited in Reinharz, 1992:180), in which forms of violence against women were studied using a range of action methods. Maria Mies adds to the research debate in both her analysis and practice of the research process. In her work *Towards a Feminist Methodology* she puts forward an argument for the feminist standpoint approach to research free from androcentric bias. She is clear that women are well equipped to work with other exploited groups and that the 'double consciousness' they have is a positive tool in emancipatory research. She lays down valuable methodological guidelines for research which stress such issues as the need for conscious partiality as well as the substitution of a 'view from above' with a 'view from below' (Mies, 1984).

A New Zealand study undertaken by the Otago Family Network (Ballard et al, 1992) used an action research approach to address the issues of exploitation of vulnerable groups such as Maori people

and people with disabilities and the emphasis was on collaboration in order to solve organisational or community problems. Techniques of data collection included among others, field work notes; interviews; written responses to questionnaires; newsletters and submissions. Information was obtained through the generation of “descriptive data, people's own written and spoken words and observable behaviour which were analysed for underlying patterns or themes” (Ballard et al, 1992:26). Analysis is characterized by ongoing monitoring and evaluation on many levels since dialogue occurred regularly between researchers themselves, between parents participating and between researchers and participants. A new Otago Network has been set up as a result of this study which is just one example of the potential of such research to achieve change (catalytic validity).

Participatory or collaborative research

The second approach named by Reinharz is participatory or collaborative research which is central to the methodology to be described in that it is designed “to create social and individual change by altering the role relations of people involved in the project (Reinharz, 1992:181). The advantages from the researcher perspective is that barriers are broken down facilitating an environment of “openness, mutual disclosure and shared risk” (ibid).

An example of such research lies in work carried out by a group of Maori women into the Educational and Lived Experiences of Maori Girls and Women (Irwin, 1992). The importance of this research was that it was initiated by the Maori community in response to a need for educational policy development and was carried out in full consultation with that community. The key points were: a broad definition of issues within a holistic context; a completely positive focus for example identifying opportunities rather than barriers; the establishment of a data base by Maori for Maori; a reflexive feedback procedure with the Maori community and full collaboration in the research process.

A second example lies in the work of Bishop who has recently collated a set of stories recounting the experience of a number of researchers “working within a Kaupapa Maori framework” (Bishop, 1996:11). He was interested in exploring how other researchers made sense of their experiences since he had recognized the danger of researcher imposition into the process. He did not set out with his own set of criteria but rather his wish was:

That together we could engage in a process of critical reflection and build on the formal and informal meetings that were part of each of the projects...the idea of researching researchers and the process of research was also suggested (Bishop, 1996:21).

I have been personally excited to discover this work since Bishop has successfully achieved within a Maori context what my own research has set out to achieve with disabled people using an emancipatory framework. The methodological framework was designed by the research participants and he identified that the analysis of the process itself “might turn out to be the most

valuable study of the lot" (ibid). This is in keeping with the thesis that any knowledge can be invalidated by the way it has been obtained. This project is a significant challenge to those committed to emancipatory research approaches and the outcome without doubt has been a comprehensive, highly professional and ground-breaking piece of research.

A third example of such research in an educational context, is one instigated by the Department of Youth Affairs piloted for Pacific Island students at Victoria University in 1994. The rationale for the project was based on concern for high failure rates of Pacific Island students in certain subjects, for example Maths. The research aimed to identify a solution to this problem using an action research approach based on a model used by the USA Professional Development Programme implemented with African Americans (Fullilove and Treisman, 1990). The key principles of the project were based on the Pacific Island method of working collectively, the accent on achievement for Pacific Island students and the use of the skills and resources of a number of agencies, Pacific Island leaders and parents of the students (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Megan Clarke, 1994).

All of these examples resemble experiential research defined by Heron:

Experiential research is the kind of research on persons in which the subjects of the research contribute not only to the content of the research ie the activity that is being researched, but also to the creative thinking that generates, manages, and draws conclusions from, the research (Heron, 1981:153).

Heron suggests that all participants can be fully fledged co-researchers where they are involved in every aspect of research construction. It is known as a strong contribution if all are taking an equal part in the creative thinking that generates, accompanies and concludes the research. This type of research approach would qualify as emancipatory provided all participants gain as much from the research as the principal researcher and in this sense are not exploited by the researcher. The research model I have explored contains some features of Heron's model and I will refer to those specific aspects which are relevant in the methodology chapter.

Where possible and practical, this is a good model for disabled people involved in research since it would allow them to define the research question and carry the process through to conclusion, including owning the findings. There are examples in research literature of what Heron describes as 'weak' versions (Heron, 1981) where participants are involved in some parts of the research construction, but the researcher is ultimately in charge. This approach can still be construed as emancipatory as long as the participants can choose the parts they wish to take responsibility for. The work of Bishop is an example of a strong contribution. This thesis aims to describe only some aspects of this model employed in the research in that although the participants have made a strong contribution within the case study to some parts of the research in terms of their ownership and responsibility, it has always been clear that the purposes of the research are for gaining a PhD and

that I potentially benefit most from its completion. I also have taken most responsibility for the writing up of the thesis while that of the design and delivery of the training kit has been fairly equally shared. Heron's warning has nevertheless been heeded, that "the discipline and rigour involved in this sort of research is formidable" (Heron, 1981: 164) and I have been careful to closely monitor and evaluate with respect to this concern.

Prevalence and needs based assessment

This third approach "seeks to determine the absolute or relative number of people with a particular experience or need" (Reinharz, 1992:186). It is argued that it can have a "change-outcome simply by disrupting the status quo" (ibid). Reinharz makes the comment that to achieve this the reluctance of study participants to challenge the status quo needs to be overcome.

An example which falls into this category is seen in the work of The Hillary Commission and Workbridge who conducted a survey of the extent of the participation of people with disabilities in employment and recreation. The title of the project *Listening to People with Disabilities* suggested an acknowledgement of the need for information to be provided by people themselves and they were certainly directly involved. The research succeeded in collating a large amount of data which indicated high unemployment and low participation in recreation, providing the necessary evidence to apply for more resources. A wide range of options was offered to enable people to participate including face-to-face interviews, written and telephone questionnaires.

A second example in a New Zealand context, is the research conducted by the Head Injury society in 1993, entitled *Head Injury: The Silent Epidemic: research into the needs of New Zealand individuals and their families with head injuries*. The Report provided important information about the needs and priorities of those with head injuries and also clarification on the definitions of head injury. The methodology consisted of a range of approaches: a postal survey of Area Health Boards, ACC and Head Injury Society regions to identify current service providers; consultation meetings and interviews with service providers and Head Injury Society branches and support groups; a postal survey of a random sample of ACC claimants with head injuries and their family members. A postal questionnaire and a literature review were also conducted. Again the emancipatory potential lay in the flexible approach to data collection.

Evaluation research

Evaluation research aims to identify "the effectiveness of different types of action in meeting needs or solving problems" (Reinharz, 1992:189). It is used to evaluate behaviour at individual and organisational level as well as the way the research itself has been designed and delivered (Gothing, 1995). The first example is that of a case study conducted with Australian Aboriginal people with disabilities. The author conducted a four day field trip to New South Wales to document the needs and determine the views of consumers and service providers about how to enhance effectiveness of

and access to services. The participatory methodology ensured sensitive acknowledgement of the different needs of Aboriginal people with disabilities as well as yielding rich and accurate information based on the direct experience of participants.

The researcher was careful to work within aboriginal networks and to consult with elders on the appropriate ways to approach their communities. The research meetings were subsequently held in a relaxed and informal way. A significant aspect of the findings worth mentioning in addition to gaps in services was the definition of disability held by Aboriginal people. Similar to other cultures such as Maori and Pacific Island, the concept of disability was not recognized in the same way as in Pakeha society where it is viewed as a visible deficit. The meetings facilitated an understanding of a range of impairments and the factors which created disability for those people. This encouraged the development of an approach which enabled the social and political structures to take responsibility for enabling full participation on behalf of those with impairments.

A final comment on this research example is that it was conducted mainly by non-Aboriginal researchers which is one factor which detracts from its identification as a fully emancipatory project. However, the consistent and appropriate consultation with the different communities balanced the effect of that and similar issues have been discussed in relation to nondisabled researchers. Bennie, (1996) acknowledges in his research into supported employment options with disabled people, the potential limitations of a nondisabled researcher with regard to the development of an emancipatory model of research. He stated in Chapter Two of his thesis, that owing to the strong feelings of some disabled people about disability research, any talk of an emancipatory model of research was inappropriate in the context of recruitment of participants. Bennie's research project however, undoubtedly qualifies as emancipatory due to a sensitive empowering approach to the interviewing of participants and the focus on using peoples' stories to shape an emancipatory model of supported employment (Bennie, 1996). The outcomes also have been emancipatory in the achievement of concrete change as a result.

The evaluation approach is often seen within the disability field in terms of service evaluation and aspects of such an approach are used by research and evaluation teams. Additionally, the way information is collected from people and the methods services use to involve service users in the operation of the services is crucial to an understanding of empowerment practices. Qualitative methods are often used to solicit feedback from service users but participants can be constrained either by the style and perceived relevance of questions or they are afraid to critique the services they receive in an honest way.

There is evidence that people within services have limited control within those services on which they are dependent, which influences their willingness to participate in surveys of any sort. For example, a recent letter to the *Evening Post* (June 1996) described the experience of a woman who wished to visit her friend in a residential home owned by a large organisation supporting people

with intellectual disabilities. On arrival she had been told she should have asked the manager's permission. The woman challenged the organisation on its commitment to integration given the attitude expressed. Another example lies in the experience of the New Zealand People First movement. An attempt to become independent has been thwarted by the service organisations on which many of the people are dependent. Their conference was dominated in 1995 by management of one organisation which insisted on having control over events. The conference proceedings were recorded in *Barriers to a Dream* (Gosling and Gerzon, 1995) as well as letters in the appendix illustrating some issues of power and control which arose. For example, the following letter written mid July 1994 by a participant advocate of a previous consultation meeting:

If the day had been reported it would have looked like a perfect consultancy process - the organisers frequently stated that the people should choose support workers. Of course they choose IHC staff - what else do they know? I felt they had been manipulated without them suspecting a thing - it left me shocked and shaken. (Extract from letter to the national committee advisers to national advisers around New Zealand).

This has implications for the future of service evaluation based on participant feedback. If advocacy groups representing service users feel unsafe or unable to have their voices heard, service evaluation will always be based on biased interpretations of service excellence. Perkins (1996), speaks of the domination of nondisabled service providers and the suppression of the voices of people using services. Her own research told the stories of a group of intellectually disabled people. This work graphically illustrated the fear of speaking out, the expectations of compliance created by the service systems and the futility of quality of life surveys in the assessment and evaluation of services (Perkins, 1996). This imbalance in power relations is picked up by Zola in his research with the people in a disability village in Amsterdam: "Many are truly grateful and feel the situation at Het Dorp to be so much better than they experienced before, that any present lacks can be lived with" (Zola, 1982:168).

Another example of this is one which remains an issue in disability services, the use of satisfaction surveys. As Ward and Flynn state:

Satisfaction surveys are hardly pertinent to those who use services unwillingly...satisfaction is an inadequate indicator of service quality if people with disabilities are cautious in expressing their vulnerability to the goodwill of the service providers (Ward and Flynn, 1994:40).

The research agenda in this case would certainly conflict with the needs of those using the services. Clearly from the other side, those who design and conduct research inquiries into and evaluation of services may ignore such information and discredit it as subjective, value laden and unprofessional. This may be because those responsible for conducting such evaluation may lack the resources and expertise to address the issues adequately.

A further example of an evaluation approach lies in a project conducted by Brereton (1994) which assessed the influence of New Zealand's legislative environment on human resource management practices in the employment of people with disabilities. The research succeeded in highlighting the difficulties which were created by employment policy and, accordingly provided useful data. The perspectives of all people involved were acknowledged and the use of focus groups for disabled people was the key feature in terms of the most accessible form of participation. The theoretical perspective of the researcher allowed maximum flexibility for establishing the enabling and disabling aspects of the legislation in question.

Demystification framework

The final approach named by Reinharz focuses on telling the stories of groups who are socially invisible. She argues that the very process of obtaining knowledge is a political act and creates change in the way it challenges the myths surrounding those groups. The demystification happens on more than one level in that it can impact on societal attitudes "by exposing the contradictions and manipulations contained within a bureaucratic society, one can demystify the theory and practice of that society" (Ferguson, cited in Reinharz, 1992:192). On another level it can mean "the change in consciousness that occurs among the relatively powerless when they consider their situation in a new light" (Reinharz, 1992:192).

The style is also akin to ethnography where the researcher seeks to record the culture as it is lived and spoken (Malinowski, 1978). An additional methodological feature of story-based studies is the receptivity of the investigator and the acknowledgement of the validity of self-knowledge. The work of Hilary Graham is significant for its emphasis on story-telling as a research technique. The stories are a vehicle through which everyday struggles can be conveyed to sceptical outsiders; in the context of this particular piece of research the more uncertain, largely untrodden ground of social research is explored, where the central focus is on such issues as poverty as well as the social relations of gender and generation which determine the experience of caring. In this sense story-telling can be seen as a "methodological catalyst" (Graham, 1984) where the research process itself is transformed into a more empowering experience. The technique contains some aspects of the naturalistic mode of enquiry developed by Denzin (1989, 1989a, 1989b) where peoples' experiences must be fitted into a theoretical framework which reflects their everyday realities. Respondent generated accounts are well established in the naturalistic tradition and written and spoken narratives are identified with the 'life history method' (Becker, 1966) Graham makes a useful reference to an alternative proposed by Armstrong to the long life history "to collect multiple biographies within the same or similar area of research" (Armstrong cited in Graham, 1984:109). The strength of this lies in the ability of the researcher to extract dominant themes to illustrate the common elements of different biographies.

Graham's research represents an example of this approach as she explores in depth the value of story-telling in collection of data. In her own analysis she draws on the research she and Lorna McKee did on the experience of early motherhood where she argues that the use of narrative in social research can be a device to overcome the tendency to 'fracture women's experiences inherent in the traditional question and answer approach (Graham, 1984).

Graham explores the power of story-telling via methods such as-diary keeping, letter writing and later, taped interviews. It is significant that access to literature is potentially elitist and can exclude some groups of women (Graham, 1984). Graham speaks of the needs of working class women but the point is equally relevant to people with different physical and sensory abilities since mainstream literature is geared to the needs of hearing, sighted able-bodied people. Story telling can provide a way of confronting crucial issues of misrepresentation and exploitation which are central to the concerns of those who work in the frontline of social research (Graham, 1984; Ballard, 1994a; Munford, 1994).

In a bi-cultural context this approach could be appropriate given the Maori tradition of story-telling. A piece of research conducted at Victoria University (University Teaching Development Centre 1992) represents a specific example in this context. Students' stories provided rich information regarding the experiences of Maori students in the tertiary setting and the participants were very much present in the research report. They were introduced by self-portraits which included full details of their whakapapa. The report was broken down into some key areas and extracts of the interviews provided rich qualitative data. There was no discussion in the report about the necessity of using only Maori interviewers. Only one of the named researchers was Maori and the absence of a critical analysis which included the discussion on appropriateness of researchers was significant. Power differentials between Pakeha interviewers and Maori students would inevitably affect the interview process. In terms of the emancipatory value for participants; one of the key statements was as follows:

You gave me the chance to tell my story. I've never done that before at the university. I thought a lot of people just wouldn't be interested...when you tell your life as a story you can re-invent new endings. New beginnings too (Hinemoa's story: Kidman et al, 1994:42).

For me this particular statement indicates the significant emancipatory value of the research. If this project had been conducted fully on emancipatory principles, I am convinced that the outcomes would have been even more positive for the participants. There was anecdotal evidence, as a result of the research, of greater awareness among staff of the situation facing Maori students but to date, no further follow up research has been undertaken. The potential for drawing groups of Maori students together to act on research findings and to identify key areas of change could be the way in which this research could have a truly emancipatory outcome.

There are many examples of research in the disability field which resemble this approach, for example Munford's research into the daily lived experiences of people caring for disabled children (1989), the work of Ballard (1994) who collated a range of stories from carers and advocates of people with disabilities in *Disability Whanau and Society* and Kerr (1995) in work with parents. Research conducted directly with disabled people includes *Know me as I am*, research telling the stories of people with intellectual disabilities (Atkinson and Williams, 1990); the compilation of the stories of disabled women *Able Lives* (Morris, 1989); a study in the Netherlands by Zola into the experience of institutional living (Zola, 1982) and Susan Hannaford's compilation of stories from disabled women, *Living Outside Inside* (1987). More recently, Perkins in her Masterate research collected the stories of a group of people with intellectual disabilities who had been involved in services over a long period of time (Perkins, 1996). Bennie's work (1996) previously cited also looks at the experiences of disabled people from a wide range of backgrounds in relation to employment.

Reinharz (1995) has provided a useful framework for a thorough evaluation of participatory action research approaches and I have emphasised those approaches which have most relevance to the development of an emancipatory model. I have previously referred to the limitations of the use of one person's definition and the fact that I see Reinharz's work simply as a valuable foundation. All of these examples contain additional features of participatory collaborative research and the methodology can also be described as dialectical which is an essential feature of emancipatory research. A dialectical approach will now be explored in more detail since praxis oriented research emphasises the value of dialectical theory underpinning participatory methodology.

The significance of the dialectical approach in emancipatory research

A dialectical approach is one which promotes ongoing joint evaluation of hypotheses and data collection and analysis by researcher and participants. The need for a dialectical approach and its value in disability research has been discussed previously (Chapter One). The main basis of this assertion is the way this approach deals with contradictions:

Dialectical theories are always looking for contradictions within people or situations as the main guide to what is going on and what is likely to happen; dialectics talk a lot about opposition, and really tries hard to understand it (Rowan, 1981; 128).

The dialectical approach fits well with the critical approach to research in that a mechanism for in-built reflexivity is present which ensures that everything is interpreted from a multi-dimensional perspective. This has been demonstrated in the above examples in the approach to research interpretation and dissemination where participants have been consulted. Within this, the importance of **hermeneutics** is emphasised which can be defined by its concern with a process of

recording the detailed description of the meaning of human experiences. The combination with a dialectical approach allows marginalised groups to redefine their identity on their own terms:

Feminists, for example, are reinterpreting the position of women in history and in culture in the light of their present understanding of the position of women; in re-interpreting history, they give themselves new possibilities as women in the future (Rowan, 1981:133).

The value of a dialectical approach lies in its ability to contribute to an in-depth interpretation of meaning is clear. This is particularly appropriate for the development of an emancipatory research model for disabled people. Their history, their culture, their experience, as well as their own interpretation and realisation of the impact of the social creation can be the key to their emancipation through research action. Since the themes of peoples' stories are woven through the research plan the dialectical approach is inevitable. This approach can also be termed **holist**:

The holistic standpoint includes the belief that human systems tend to develop a characteristic wholeness or integrity. They are not simply a loose collection of traits or wants or reflexes or variables of any sort... they have a unity that manifests itself in nearly every part (Diesing, 1981:184).

The basis of a holist approach no matter what method or theory chosen is the "general attitude of respect for human beings" and "even a scientific reduction of a person to a set of variables is in a way disrespectful because it mutilates integrity" (Diesing, 1981:185). Diesing argues that this approach has a logic and rigour of its own but involves the researcher entering the situation totally or in a marginal role which is named and being bombarded with themes which are then interpreted. The issue of validity in the traditional scientific sense is meaningless to the holist - he relies instead on a form of contextual validity which involves actively seeking different perspectives on the same situation. As an approach for an emancipatory model it has value in its willingness to take every aspect of a person or situation and interpret it accordingly. I have explored the efficacy of holistic epistemology in research development as will be described in the methodology chapter.

The philosophical concept involved is illustrated by Heron in the following way:

Exhibits the most respect for human dignity and freedom because it enables a person to work with, not on, his case, to treat him (or them) as beings rather than as things (Heron, 1981: 188).

Parallel research action has been conducted in the collation of the stories of the research group which will be discussed in Chapter Four. In the light of this discussion certain themes are emerging characterising the accumulation of data in the context of emancipatory research: first, research has been oriented to the interior of people's lives focusing on the so-called mundane everyday experiences; active participation in action movements replaces spectator knowledge; the change of

the status quo becomes a starting point; the documentation of peoples' social history and culture becomes a vehicle for combatting oppression (Mies, 1984). Examples include the disability rights movement, the history of Maori people and the quest for self-determination and the women's liberation movement. The analysis presented above, taken in conjunction with that of a phenomenological perspective has been discussed earlier in this chapter. It is presented to consolidate the picture of which fundamental research approaches, taken from a critical perspective have contributed to the evolution of the emancipatory model to be described in this thesis.

The key points within this section will now be summarised. It has been argued that approaches to research which aim to represent the voices of participants and where the researcher has controlled the methodology, are just as likely as more overtly positivist approaches, to yield information which justifies certain actions (Barnes, 1992, 1996; Oliver, 1992; Shakespeare, 1996). These can include policy decisions which reflect the interests of the principal stakeholders. In this sense many examples of participatory research projects are set within a positivist framework indicating the complexity of the issues involved in research design. The question is raised about who conducts research and the impact of the researcher's perspective and experience (Munford, 1994; Barnes, 1996). The significance for disability research is therefore threefold: firstly, more active involvement of disabled researchers may have some impact on the research outcome whatever methods or methodology are chosen. Secondly, the acknowledgement of those at the centre of the research process as the experts about their own realities is a crucial step forward, as well as the need for research inquiry to focus on the way reality is created by the dominant environment (Barnes, 1996; Oliver, 1996). This would leave room to explore the way disability is both constructed and created in the natural and social world and to make visible the impact of this on people who have impairments. Finally the recognition of multiple-subject positions rejects the attempt by orthodox research to generalise all research findings and enhances the validity of research based on grounded ideological discourses (Munford, 1994, 1995; Bury, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996).

An essential component of emancipatory research has been the identity of the researcher with the group being researched. For example research by women for women (Oakley, 1987) has been particularly emphasised as has that by Maori for Maori (Teariki and Spoonley, 1992; Bishop, 1996). Disabled researchers, while they value partnerships between allies, like other groups, are increasingly involving other disabled people in research of interest to them. In recognition of their work to create change, the next section is dedicated to them and will emphasise the emancipatory value of research which is carried out by those who closely identify with the experience of disability. This has particular significance in the context of this thesis since the uniqueness of the research model I explored has been based on its development solely by a group of disabled students.

Research by Disabled People for Disabled People

There are examples of research models being developed by disabled people themselves which will model a way forward. An example of a recently completed thesis by Debbie Lawrence, a Masterate graduate in Hamilton, will illustrate this point. She conducted a survey around the needs of disabled people within the transport system in Hamilton. The report was entitled *Who Disables Who?* Encouraged by what I had previously depicted as the value of the dual perception of the disabled person and the researcher (Boyles, 1995), she analysed the value of her perspective and used the insight to develop a model which directly involved disabled people from Hamilton in a small transport survey. They had input into the development of the methodology and three different approaches were taken. Questions were based around their direct experience of the transport system, not on their own impairments. For example:

If public buses in Hamilton were wheelchair accessible would that have a significant impact upon your participation in activities outside of the home/independence/income/study etc?
(Lawrence, 1995:127)

The results, therefore, reflected the social construction and creation of disability in the identification of a disabling transport system and an unwillingness on behalf of the bus owners to act to change that.

A second example of such research is a Masterate project conducted by Terrell, a disabled woman, whose work, it can be argued, has also proven to have emancipatory value. The research report was entitled *Who Learns to Drive?* (1992) and collated the views of 55 people with cerebral palsy on the issue of driving. Terrell was careful to construct the methodology to ensure maximum access for participants given that many with cerebral palsy have speech difficulties and the researcher herself acknowledged that in an interview situation she can be difficult to understand. In this situation maximum participation was achieved through postal questionnaires with telephone backup to provide points of clarification.

What was particularly notable about this project was the focus of the questions which were geared towards identification of the social barriers to learning to drive, the low expectations of people with cerebral palsy (held by themselves and others) and the subsequent internalised low self-esteem. In this sense, people were encouraged to explore social barriers and causes of their disability rather than over- emphasise their individual impairments and lack of ability. What is important to note is that Terrell's project has great emancipatory value: a good level of participation was achieved through questionnaires given the attention to the context and the needs and abilities of the researcher and participants; the information gained provided valuable information on the specific barriers to learning to drive faced by people with cerebral palsy; the personal experience of the researcher meant there was a full understanding of access issues and the relationship with participants was equalised.

A further example of a New Zealand study which had significant input from disabled people in the construction and implementation was the recent research into disability in three tertiary settings (McKay, Rowlands, Ballard, Smith and Gleason, 1995). They set out to challenge the research community to respond to the real issues of disabled students "by bringing together a core research team in which the authentic voice of disability was the key component" (McKay et al:6). I am heartened by the partnership approach exhibited in this research. Although the project was funded by the Ministry of Education and hence was constrained in some ways by its criteria, this in no way detracted from the goal of making the experience of disability within tertiary education visible on the terms of students and staff themselves.

All these approaches can be described as endogenous which is rarely used in its purest form:

Endogenous research is conceptualised, designed and conducted by researchers who are insiders of the culture, using their own epistemology and their own structure of relevance (Maruyama, 1981:231).

Clearly, the analogy in terms of disability research, is to a group of disabled people as having an identified culture of their own and where the researcher is disabled. Maruyama states that rarely have efforts been made to conduct research in this format but gives the example of a project by Worth and Adair (1972) who:

Had Navajos take films of their own life and edit them themselves, in order to study whether there were differences between the film the Navajos made and a film a white anthropologist would make (230).

Maruyama asserts that the less trained and academically oriented the researchers, the more insightful and interesting their projects turned out to be! It is my intention to demonstrate the potential for such an approach within an emancipatory paradigm.

Emancipatory research approaches, based on the range of examples above can thus be used within large and small studies. The methodologies described contain some of the features necessary to the development of a fully emancipatory model. They have represented landmarks on the map which has been carved out to guide the example of research to be described. A model which has been designed by and developed for a group of disabled people can now be a bridge to a new place.

In Conclusion

Throughout this chapter certain themes have emerged in the context of the research process which address questions of epistemology, methodology and method within an emancipatory framework. The chapter began with a rationale for emancipatory research which explored the potential of research to empower disabled people to challenge the way orthodox research has been conducted and even used against them. The historical trends which have influenced disability research were

followed by an overview of early research which aimed to increase the visibility of disadvantaged groups. The growth of qualitative research and its relevance to emancipatory research was subsequently explored followed by a discussion presenting examples of research as praxis. This included participatory action research carried out by feminist, Maori, Pacific Island and disability researchers. Specific methodological approaches have been named and integrated into the discussion on the link between participatory research and emancipatory research. Finally, disabled researchers had the last word in the presentation of contemporary disability research. Attention was drawn to some of the difficulties experienced by researchers in an attempt to include disabled people within a research process and to accurately reflect their lives. The value of research by disabled people for disabled people was finally presented highlighting the significance of researchers from marginalised groups working with those groups as an important theme of emancipatory research. Within the disability field there are limited examples of research based on emancipatory principles and the research to be described has aimed to incorporate a number of emancipatory features into the research design. Chapter Three explores the next key question regarding the contribution to emancipatory disability research of the theoretical models of critical theorists Rees and Fay.

CHAPTER THREE

The Contribution Of Critical Theory To A Model Of Emancipatory Research

Introduction

This thesis explores the significance of critical theory in the development of emancipatory research. Critical theory can be used to explore issues from a variety of perspectives. It has the ability to explain and interpret one's personal and social situation in terms of daily lived experience. This can provide an accessible evaluative framework within which to work as demonstrated within the examples of praxis-oriented research in Chapter Two. The works of Brian Fay and Stuart Rees are particularly significant here as explained in the introduction and they are now examined with view to their incorporation into a model of research designed by and for disabled people. The question is posed: how can the work of Fay and Rees contribute to the development of a framework for critical emancipatory research? Other contemporary critical theorists of significance have been introduced in Chapter One. These include Freire (1972), Heron, (1981), Agger (1991), Van Manen (1990), Fairclough (1995) and Bishop (1996). Reference to their work will be made in this chapter as well as throughout the thesis.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. It will begin with an analysis of the influence of critical theory on changing research traditions including the way critical theory has developed and influenced research geared to social change. A specific consideration of the writings of Brian Fay and Stuart Rees whose work has significantly influenced this thesis, will then be presented. This will lay the groundwork for addressing the research question named above. Finally, the two models, the basic scheme of enlightenment and the steps to empowerment, will be critiqued. The ways in which they interlink to form a model which has been used as an explanatory tool within the methodology chapter will be explored. Figure Three will outline the way the theories have been linked to key emancipatory principles to be outlined in Chapter Four thus enhancing the potential validity of research conducted on this foundation.

The Significance of Critical Theory

Good theory will illuminate aspects of social reality heretofore unseen or unexplained (Agger, 1991:11).

Critical theory is associated with the Institute for Social Research established in Germany in 1923 which was staffed principally by Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse. Their work is significant for the early challenges to positivist thinking and critical theory now entering its third generation,

extending the later work of Adorno (1973) Horkheimer (1972) and Marcuse (1973) followed by the communication theory of Habermas (1984) which informed second generation thinking.

Critical theory was originally conceptualised to explain the failure of the Marxist social revolution (Agger, 1991) but builds in some respects, on the work of Marx. Critical theory as interpreted by contemporary writers such as Fay (1987), Agger (1991) and Fairclough (1995), I would argue, is more accessible when applied to working with vulnerable groups. A less determinist analysis in terms of social theory allows more flexibility, particularly within a research context, for participants to develop their own theories based on their daily lived experiences. To be constrained by a purely materialist analysis would unduly influence and limit the process of theory building. This does not mean that a materialist analysis has no place. Indeed to be poor and to have a significant impairment considerably contributes to the experience of disability particularly where people may need expensive equipment to live an independent existence. It is acknowledged that some of the terminology is Marxist in origin which will be addressed in terms of the assumptions implied. For example, the concept of false consciousness (that is the idea that people are unaware of their own oppression and its causes) of oppressed peoples is frequently referred to as a means whereby domination of one group over another can be sustained. This is discussed in more detail later in the chapter with a view to exercising caution against an over-literal interpretation which may affect adversely the process of data analysis. Writers, such as Agger and Fay, have built on fundamental critical theory "to move scholarship on critical social theory from the realm of explication and interpretation towards practical diagnoses of real social problems (Agger, 1991:19). Agger particularly uses the contribution of poststructuralists in highlighting the revelation of how language itself constitutes reality and the power of language is a consistent theme throughout this thesis.

This thesis has been inspired by my study of critical theory, followed by that of its practical application by writers such as Freire and Rees who apply the theory in the third world and social work contexts respectively. Agger uses theory to critique life as a text, thus raising the debate around use of and power of language written, read and spoken to contribute to both social oppression and social change. Agger refers to the textuality of public life and his work has significance in his emphasis on recognition of the authorship of texts: "Texts exist in con-texts; they are given their sense only by having readers participate in them as full authorial partners" (Agger, 1991:11).

Agger and Van Manen (1990) have adapted critical theory to a form of radical critical hermeneutics where the creation of a phenomenological text is the object of the research process. A central theme of this thesis is dialogue and pedagogy and both of these writers have contributed valuable insights into the development of an emancipatory methodology which I will analyse in the methodology chapter. Van Manen also analysed the use of anecdote as a research tool and presented examples of its use in research. This has provided good links to the theme of story-telling as a means of

handing over control to disabled people and of reclaiming both the definition and experience of disability. This serves the purpose of challenging an aspect of the alienation previously described:

Anecdotes express a certain disdain for the alienated and alienating discourse of scholars who have difficulty showing how life and theoretical propositions are constructed (Van Manen, 1990:119).

Fay and Agger both attest to the contribution of critical theory to the development of a post-positivist philosophy of science in the challenge to measurement and quantification of research data and suggest the efficacy of critical theory to facilitate radical social change. Agger's thesis forms a valuable foundation to build a more detailed plan of action:

A critical theory informed by feminism, poststructuralism and postmodernism interrogates all dualities of public/private, reading them for the secret hierarchies encoded in them. Feminism takes the lead in politicizing aspects of the putatively personal... feminism helps reconstruct Marxist critical theory in light of its deconstruction of the public/private duality (Agger, 1991:48).

A detailed exploration of the role of critical theory in emancipation of the individual is presented by Fay in his basic scheme of critical social science (Fay, 1987). This is presented in Figure One. The next section explores the value of Fay's basic scheme in the development of an emancipatory model of research for disability.

Figure One: The basic scheme of Enlightenment

The following diagram is a direct reproduction of Fay's basic scheme and no adaptation has been made at this stage. Figure Three integrates this model in terms of its relationship with Rees's steps to empowerment and the research principles. It is presented precisely as it is in the original text.

Taking together the elements of critical social science, it is evident that any social scientific theory which tries to be scientific, critical, practical and non-idealistic all at once, must consist of a complex of theories which are systematically related to one another. Specifically, a fully developed critical theory would comprise all of the following:

I A theory of false consciousness which:

1. Demonstrates the ways in which the self-understandings of a group of people are false in the sense of failing to account for the life experiences of the members of the group, or incoherent (because internally contradictory), or both. This is sometimes called an ideology-critique;
2. Explains how the members of this group came to have those self misunderstandings, and how they are maintained;
3. Contrasts them with an alternative self-understanding, showing how this alternative is superior.

II A theory of crisis which

4. Spells out what a social crisis is;
5. Indicates how a particular society is in such a crisis. This would require examining the felt dissatisfactions of a group of people and showing both that they threaten the social cohesion and that they cannot be alleviated given the basic organization of the society and the self-understandings of its members;
6. Provides an historical account of the development of this crisis partly in terms of the false consciousness of the members of the group and partly in terms of the structural bases of society.

III A theory of education which

7. Offers an account of the conditions necessary and sufficient for the sort of enlightenment envisioned by the theory;
8. Shows that given the current social situation these conditions are satisfied.

IV. A theory of transformative action which

9. Isolates those aspects of a society which must be altered if the social crisis is to be resolved and the dissatisfactions of its members lessened;
10. Details a plan of action indicating the people who are to be the 'carriers' of the anticipated social transformation and at least some general idea of how they might do this.

Source: Critical Social Science Brian Fay 1987.

Fay's Basic Scheme and its relevance to disability

A useful starting point is Fay's definition of critical theory and an analysis of its relevance to the theme of emancipation. Fay sought to construct a theory which explained the nature of the social world and by doing so make explicit a conception of what human beings are and what they might become. Fay believes that a comprehensive critical theory which explains every dimension of existence, revealing to each individual their personal and political status, will provide a practical tool with which to transform their existence and the social world around them. The theory may therefore have revolutionary value:

Understanding the revolutionary temper of our times requires understanding the notions of ideology, false consciousness, alienation, emancipation, autonomy and a host of related ideas in which a good deal of political activity is conducted today (Fay, 1987:2).

Critical social science explains the suffering people experience leading sometimes to political activity and for many he claims it has replaced religion, linking "the revelation of truth about the human condition, the overturning of social orders, the proclamation of a new day to come, and the promise of felicity" (ibid). Fay claims that people are subject to "self estrangement theory" where they see themselves as fallen creatures powerless to resist in the face of events beyond their control through the ages. Critical social science demonstrates to them their own capacity to transform their lives but does not ignore the very real impact of the opponents of change who are present within the social and political systems. Fay defines critical social science in the broadest sense as:

An attempt to understand in a rationally responsible manner the oppressive features of a society such that this understanding stimulates its audience to transform their society and thereby liberate themselves (Fay, 1987:4).

The difficulty in attaining this vision is in the difficulties human beings have in shedding illusions which may have provided a kind of security all their lives. Fay claims that the only theory which can have true value and be usefully adapted, is one which will simultaneously explain the world, criticise it and empower its audience to overthrow it. In this sense what is required is "a proper science" which is both measurable and at the same time critical of current practices and institutions in the sense of exposing the extent to which they maintain a false image of helplessness and create barriers

to action. It will also be one which has the practical resources to lead to social change as a result of awareness-raising. Thus, such a theory needs to not only be able to expose the way society functions “but also show the ways it is fundamentally unsatisfactory to those who live in it” (Fay, 1987:23). It must also achieve both of these things in a way that the theory itself becomes a moving force to transform the world described into something radically different.

Fay acknowledges that people cannot change their lives simply on the basis of newly acquired knowledge. This would be viewed as idealism. People are able to perceive that the suffering they experience is often a result of domination by others and systems which inhibit positive action. Fay further acknowledges that people are not always willing (or able) to change their situation once they have acquired this new knowledge. The theory must also be non-idealistic in its acknowledgement of both of these issues.

Fay's work, has not been directly applied to disability or disability research. However his analysis alludes to many similar issues to those impacting on disabled people in the context of liberation of marginalised groups. In summary, in the context of Fay's work applied to disabled people and disability research, a theory of emancipation must contain four key elements. It must be **scientific** in the provision of comprehensive explanations in terms of a few basic principles which are subject to public evidence. Emancipatory action research in the field of disability, seeks to address the concrete impact of disability policies and practices created in our major institutions. (It is acknowledged that the term scientific has some unfortunate connotations especially with regard to disability research which will be addressed) It must be **critical** in that it offers a sustained negative evaluation of a disabling environment on the basis of explicit research principles and rationally supported criteria for operationalisation. A third essential element is **practical** in the active participation of disabled people in the transformation of their own situation and in that of others similarly oppressed through concrete action facilitated by new self-knowledge. Finally the theory must be **non idealistic**, in that it has been recognized that the social construction of disability alone is inadequate in its focus only on attitude change and education as a tool. Emancipatory action research employs a comprehensive approach to methodology ensuring structural change in conjunction with individual growth and attitudinal change. In Fay's terms the power of critical social science is proven:

When people gain a genuine appreciation of their place in history when they learn the genuine narrative of their lives - they will achieve the self clarity so essential to enlightenment (Fay, 1987: 74).

Fay's basic scheme of enlightenment has built on the work of the Frankfurt school and its explanatory potential will be combined with the work of others such as the emancipatory methodology of Freire (1972) as well as examples of research from a range of cultural perspectives named in the previous chapter. Lather's exploration of feminist research, neo-Marxist critical

ethnography and Freireian “empowering” research has also drawn on the work of Fay. Other writers are now working constructively with critical theory and recognizing its value as a tool in emancipatory research, particularly with Maori people (Ruwhiu, 1995; Selby, 1995; Bishop, 1996; Walsh-Tapiata, 1997) and with disabled people (Bennie, 1996).

Fay argues that the basic scheme can be the catalyst for radical change in society (see Figure One). So how can this be of further value in relation to the experience of disability? Each element of the basic scheme has been taken and a specific link suggested. The role research can play has been briefly added in each section in order to evaluate the efficacy of critical theory in the provision of a framework for an emancipatory research methodology.

The basis of critical theory in the context of emancipation from the disability experience is the social construction and social creation of disability. Fay's introduction to critical theory states that to be effective this theory should offer the following five key elements. The first is, “a critique of the self understandings of the members of its audience” (Fay, 1987:31). Any group which has experienced oppression should have the opportunity to explore the origins of their self-image and suffering and become aware of the distortion created by outside influences. For people who have a lifelong experience of disability their identity is often tied up with the negative attitudes and misconceptions of others. They are often taught to be compliant and rewarded accordingly (Perkins, 1996). Isolation from other disabled people prevents exploration of the disability experience and an identification of the fundamental nature of that experience. A forum where people can tell their stories and share experiences leads to a form of participation where “powerlessness can be replaced with some sense of power, confusion can give way to a feeling of coherence” (Rees, 1991:21). A shared clarity about the ways in which disability is mediated by social structures represents a growing understanding of the impact of the social construction and creation of disability. People have the opportunity to examine the relevance of a medical model of disability and the extent to which this may be at the root of their own oppression. This encourages a sense of responsibility for their own inability to fully participate in their personal and social lives. By sharing stories they can identify a range of themes and commonalities which demonstrates the illusory nature of a deficit perspective as well as the very real impact of that on their lives and experience.

A second element of critical theory offers “an explanation of why these self understandings, though in some sense false, continue to be employed by these members” (Fay, 1987:31). In a general sense people belonging to marginalised groups come to understand some of the perceived benefits of their situation of oppression. For example people in receipt of a government subsidy either through unemployment or illness, often receive more than those on low incomes. This provides no incentive to achieve an independent income. The security of dependency can outweigh the humiliation. This element allows disabled people to explore how they have traditionally been treated in society, and to acknowledge the power of society's attitudes values, systems and structures to determine the way

they think and behave. They also see the limited options they have had. All members of society are subject to the same influences and are similarly disabled by them.

Third, "critical theory offers an account of why these understandings can now be undermined and how this specifically can be done in present circumstances" (Fay, 1987:32). This can be interpreted as a reflection on the nature of the issues one is facing which can result in a more realistic analysis of where problems lie. Applied to the women's movement, women recognized the injustice of their situation and they began to ensure the visibility of their daily lived experiences through literature, research and a range of other avenues. An example in the context of disability research is presented by Oliver who demonstrates the power of the social construction and creation of disability by giving an example of a research questionnaire with a focus on deficit placing blame on the individual. He then compares a questionnaire which focuses on social structures, access issues and barriers to integration imposed from outside (Oliver, 1990). This explicit analysis can expose the contradictions in one's previous self-concept, and new consciousness may be a first step to change. In the context of research, this element would offer disabled participants the opportunity to reflect on the nature of these problems and together develop a strategy for action in the appropriate context.

A fourth element of the theory is that it offers an "alternative interpretation of the identity - the capacities and real interests of this audience, a demonstration of the crisis nature of the workings of the society under discussion" (Fay, 1987:32). To stay with the example of the women's liberation movement, women joined together in self-help and consciousness-raising groups to ensure a full understanding of their real potential was accessible to all women irrespective of class or race. The very nature of the theories at the heart of the disability experience point to an alternative state where structures can be challenged to incorporate the needs of disabled people. An interpretation of Fay's basic scheme in this context may subsequently lead to an alternative individual and group identity and, most importantly, an awareness of the way the experience of living with a disability has so far informed their life experience in a positive way, equipping them with knowledge and skills of value to others. A pedagogical approach provides space for critical reflection and informed action, ensuring maximum opportunity to use and build on those skills.

Finally, the theory offers "an identification of those aspects of society which need to be changed if the crisis is to be resolved in a positive way for its audience" (ibid). The emphasis here is on change and revolution. Fay has presented examples of liberation as cited in the bible with the Exodus and he later refers to the effect of oppressive regimes. Apart from the actions of the women's liberation movement, which Fay has described as a successful "education based revolution" (Fay, 1987:172), we have seen this element in action in South Africa, East Germany and in the growing strength of Maori in New Zealand. In the context of disability the explicit nature of critical theory points to specific elements of their experience which can be readily changed. For example, the Human Rights Act gives people a tool by which they can fight for their legal rights to necessities such as employment

support and accessible housing.⁴ Access issues can be addressed in many ways ranging from an attitudinal level, through disability equity training to change at the level of government. Many changes which benefit disabled people also benefit the whole of society facilitating an all-round positive outcome. The question is raised as to whether emancipatory research incorporating the social theories of disability has been a catalyst for achieving such an outcome.

By offering this complex set of analyses to the relevant group at the appropriate time in the appropriate setting, a social theory can legitimately hope not only to explain a social order but to do so in such a way that this order is overthrown (Fay, 1987:31).

The complexity of empowerment theory, application of critical theory and its interpretation in the context of emancipatory action research has provided the framework for an emancipatory methodology. I will return to this analysis when I link the work of Fay and Rees. Fay subsequently critiques his own model by building the following theories onto his basic scheme.

I will again link those theories to the experience of disability to reiterate the relevance as well as the limitations of Fay's work in this context. They can further be aligned with the possible limitations and pitfalls of emancipatory research.

The Limitations of the Basic Scheme

Fay identified a number of potential problems with the basic scheme (Figure One) and amended it accordingly (Fay, 1989). The amended scheme addresses, in more depth, the problems facing people in achieving power. He attempts to account for the failure to achieve true emancipation in many instances. For me, in terms of disability research, it particularly relates to the challenges which may face a group of disabled researchers in achieving transformative action. It could be argued that some aspects of this amended scheme are particularly pertinent in research action with disabled people, since the basic scheme in reality is explaining the social construction and creation of oppression. Among those most vulnerable in this context are disabled people whose experience is compounded within every example proffered by Fay even though he makes no mention of this particular group.

To explain this more fully the following section will analyse the four theories identified: *a theory of the body*, *a theory of tradition*, *a theory of force* and *a theory of reflexivity*. Examples of their relationship to the social construction and creation of disability will be offered. Some aspects of Fay's analysis particularly clarify the nature of a disableist society and the impact on the individual underlining the value of a comprehensive theory of disability. To facilitate the links to the research to be described, some specific examples will be alluded to where appropriate.

⁴ Disabled groups are testing the Human Rights Act to challenge organisations to comply. For example the Accessible Buses Campaign. However it is still easy for employers and government organisations (who have just requested an exemption) to argue that it is not relevant to their situation.

A Theory of the Body

Fay's first amendment in relation to the body is particularly pertinent to disabled people in terms of a crucial determinant of their oppression. Fay speaks in a general sense of the impact of culture, physical and social structures on the learning and socialisation of a growing individual and the restraints this can impose. He argues that critical theory denies the effect of somatic learning in that it is based on a cognitivist theory:

Human activities and arrangements are thought to result from interiorising discursive rules or distinctions which lie beneath them and make them what they are (Fay, 1987:146).

Fay argues that this concept is superficial since people have bodies which internalise learning and he uses the example of the school setting where students and teachers are influenced by the physicality of schools and the "education of bodies is every bit as important as the education of minds" (Fay, 1987: 147) Fay goes on to describe the full extent of this somatic learning in response to the construction for example, of buildings:

Most obvious is the arrangement of rooms and hallways: they form an orderly grid which determines the movement of people throughout the building (Fay, 1987:147).

The detailed explanation he launches into to illustrate his point is interesting in that I would argue this level of analysis has a particular relevance to the social construction and creation of disability. It reinforces the power of environmental factors to control people's lives including their growth, development and actions. When one considers the environment of for example, Victoria University which is built on hills and where people with asthma often have to struggle up several steps to reach lectures, one can measure the full impact of this concept. Students at the University automatically adapt their activities to accommodate an alienating environment and any action to counter this is necessarily reactive. Examples of how this theory has been incorporated will be presented in Chapters Five and Six.

An example of the above phenomenon is the recent move of the Department of Social Work and Social Policy at Victoria University to an inaccessible venue which can only be reached via steps. This fact was accepted by many departmental students and staff even though a student using a wheelchair was enrolled in the department. The message was given that as a social worker, you must be able to access such buildings or you are not suitable social work material. The message in this case is internalised in the learning and externalised in the resulting attitudes exhibited by staff and students. This goes further than a simple case of access and reflects an acceptance of a medical model of disability.

Morris (1992) and Sullivan (1995) speak of the reality of disability in terms of the limitations of the body. For some people this involves constant physical pain and an inability to ever achieve independence on the terms of an individualist society. The social theories of disability have largely

ignored this reality and disabled writers are now challenging theorists to acknowledge that if one were to eradicate disability that would in fact mean either preventing the birth of (through genetic engineering or abortion) or hastening the death (through euthanasia) of people with impairments. I would argue that Fay's theory acknowledges this without making the connection directly to a disabling society. A disabled person certainly experiences somatic learning in the relations with society, where the expectation of exclusion is experienced within every facet of existence. What is developed is a disabled identity which is so integral to one's being that as Fay asserts education in itself will not be sufficient to change their perceptions of the world. As their identities are embodied, "people require something more than insight in order for them to be suitably enlightened" (Fay, 1987:154).

Fay suggests body therapies to overcome the effects of negative learning and I would argue that this emanates from a disableist analysis of oppression. The danger of reverting to this kind of solution to enhance the experience of disabled people is a reversal to a medical model of disability centred on 'fixing' the individual. However, it could be agreed that a negative disabled identity at that deep level would need to be changed to a positive and that this could be achieved by ensuring that disabled people were allowed to experience their bodies on their terms without the pressures of an inaccessible, unsupportive, unaccepting, environment.

The implications of this for emancipatory research lie with the ability of each individual participant to deal with their own concrete reality. For some, this is characterised by a lifetime of learning which convinces them they are incapable of making decisions for themselves, that they are likely to fail at anything they do, and that disabled people are not welcome in a conformist individualist society. The step "resisting a return to powerlessness" (Rees, 1991) is an option for all individuals in the process of emancipation and for disabled people it means taking refuge in a world where at least they can be sure all their basic physical needs are met. Emancipation for disabled people will always be distorted by the contradiction of a world which continues to deny their inclusion, identity and very existence. One of my secondary research questions is: could an emancipatory research process validate and create a concept of disability pride? Also, outside that process, would emancipation have to be continually renegotiated as new situations are faced and how could research incorporate this? In this sense, I would argue that Fay has in no way directly addressed the particular situation facing disabled people, but the concept of embodiment provides the opportunity to consider the compounding effect of a physical or intellectual impairment and I have taken this up in the context of this research project.

A Theory of Tradition

Human beings are forever set within particular traditions which, in being appropriated, partially define their identity (Fay, 1987:164).

Fay refers to the importance of a respect for tradition when one plans transformative action and in many ways this has been addressed within the research process. The fact that Victoria University is an old university by New Zealand standards, built on tradition and long-standing academic practices was acknowledged at an early stage and the value and limitations of such factors were explored by the student group. There are two levels at which the impact of the theory of tradition can be assessed. The first is at the level of an individual and the culture of which they are a part. Each individual can be expected to have a different notion of what they consider is emancipation and those who have lived with a disability from birth may have a different cultural experience of the world which affects the way they participate. For example, some come from families who discourage requests for support. In my personal experience of working with and teaching disabled people, cultural pride can be at the heart of the resistance of others to demand their rights and this pride is a central and important part of their make-up. Emancipation based on finally accepting support, even that which is considered to be a human right, is contradictory to their deepest held beliefs and could certainly not be authentically described as true emancipation. In another context, the disabling effect of cultural oppression within a research context must be clarified. Bishop points out that a research process can have all the hallmarks of a participant-driven 'empowering' methodology but still deny the cultural context of those central to the process. He challenges its validity in terms of the consequent imbalance of power relations. He advocates research where:

Power is constituted within the research community, here termed the whanau of interest, but only in so much as the research whanau is constituted by Maori cultural practices and social processes. It is Maori cultural aspirations, preferences and practices which define the boundary lines of acceptability and non-acceptability, not outside researcher determined/defined criteria (Bishop, 1996:228).

Tradition on a second level is that which is central to many longstanding institutions such as universities. Some inaccessible practices stem from what has always been done but the effect has been to make disabled people invisible. University hierarchy would argue that there has been no deliberate attempt to exclude or alienate even though other marginalised groups have been similarly affected (Bishop, 1995; Walsh-Tapiata, 1997). The question can be asked within a research process, how can any action focused on changing such practices respect those aspects of the traditions which can be important and of value to the individuals attending the institution? Fay's theory suggests identifying the importance and value of those traditions and facilitating change only within those which are essential. It is not worth challenging tradition just for the sake of it. On an individual level researchers are challenged to respect the beliefs and culture of each participant and to learn about those beliefs where the learning process itself becomes part of the emancipatory experience for all involved.

A Theory of Force

This is Fay's third amendment to the basic scheme highlighting the gap in the original basic scheme. Fay considers that the original scheme fails to address the concept of force in the process of empowerment in terms of its ability to be used to quash people's will to challenge authority. On the surface one may argue this has limited relevance in the context of emancipatory research and disability. However, when one explores the issues more deeply, the theory can apply, again not in the way that Fay envisaged in his analysis since he limited his theory to the more obvious examples of violence in the context of oppressive practices.

Many revolutions have been thwarted by force or threat of force, for example, the massacre in Beijing (1990) and the many massacres reported in South Africa during apartheid. Both of these examples represent authority taking advantage of the physical and emotional vulnerability of the individual in the face of oppression. I referred in Chapter Two to the experience of disabled people who, although enlightened and able to identify the true nature of their oppression (Sobsey, 1994; Gosling and Gerzon, 1995; Perkins, 1996;), have been too afraid to speak out or demand their rights. This most often occurs when people are totally physically dependent and a challenge to the immediate support system would mean withdrawal of support and the danger of starving to death or living in squalor.

Researchers need to acknowledge the potential vulnerability of those participating in research which potentially exposes unsafe or abusive practices. I can remember the frustration I experienced when I stood at a National Disabled People's Assembly meeting and attempted to motivate 300 disabled people to defend their rights and fight. They voted to maintain full power of the nondisabled membership and I could only conclude that this was the result of fear. Many had spent much of their lives in institutions and were terrified of being deserted by the carers who now often controlled their lives. While only a minority of nondisabled people would abuse their power by withdrawing care or becoming openly abusive, that fear of losing what little one has is a very real one for all of us. In this sense, the range of theories Fay analyses to address the process of empowerment in more depth allows exploration of its relevance to the situation of disabled people as well as within an emancipatory research process.

A Theory of Reflexivity

Fay considered that his basic scheme (Figure One) lacked reflexivity in its constitution and this amendment could be construed as serving to draw together the previous three. It ensures that each situation of liberation is contextualised according to the needs of those central to the liberation. For example, a plan which aims at liberation of a particular group must be placed in an appropriate cultural context in order to speak to the daily lived experiences of that group. In the context of emancipatory research and disability, this is particularly pertinent. Again Fay has not alluded to the needs of disabled people but the framework he offers has value in the context of their needs. He

considers the creation of emancipatory theory as a dialogic enterprise requiring consistent redefinition of themes and specification of problems as Rees has recommended (Rees, 1991). Emancipatory research can seek to address this in its design. As Lather points out:

Dialectical practices require an interactive approach to research that invites reciprocal reflexivity and critique, both of which guard against the central dangers to praxis-oriented empirical work: imposition and reification on behalf of the researcher (Lather, 1986a: 445).

The gaps in Fay's amendments and basic scheme, I would argue, can be in part addressed by Rees's steps to empowerment which will be analysed later in this chapter. An assessment of their potential, when used reflexively, will be offered to address Fay's concerns regarding the inadequacies of critical theory. Fay is saying that the significance of the individual cultural experience and identity of each person requires attention. Translated into the context of disability research a recognition of multiple subject positions which include a disabled identity would be crucial. Of key importance would be the recognition of the heterogeneity of the disability community and the right of groups within this community to reject the definition of empowerment offered by one group of disabled people. Of all Fay's amendments, I would argue that the theory of reflexivity is the one which comes closest to implicitly encompassing the needs of the most vulnerable and invisible of groups such as disabled people. I have built on the fundamental principle offered, will describe the extent to which a reflexive research process has been used and examine the evidence as to whether emancipation has been achieved in subsequent chapters.

Both the basic scheme and the amended basic scheme have provided a fundamental explanatory framework for the research undertaken. By working through each aspect of both, and making links to disability, it is clear that it is possible to build a comprehensive framework for a practical application of critical theory in the context of emancipatory research with disabled people. The question as to what extent Rees's steps to empowerment provide coherence to an emancipatory model will be addressed within the methodology in terms of their ability to address many of the issues Fay raises. The process of incorporation of the two frameworks is illustrated in Figure Three where Rees's steps are systematically compared to the adapted basic scheme. It is now time to specifically discuss Rees's work. To maintain cohesion of this discussion those elements of both the basic scheme and the amended basic scheme will be cited when relevant to the point of discussion. The final part of this chapter will discuss the adaptation in more detail.

Figure Two: Rees's Steps In Achieving Power

- Understanding Themes
- Evaluating Self Image And Knowledge
- Specifying Problems
- Developing Awareness Of Policies
- Experiencing Solidarity
- Acquiring And Using Language
- Resisting A Return To Powerlessness
- Developing Interactive And Political Skills
- Evaluation

SOURCE: (REES, 1992:89) Achieving Power Practice and Policy in Social Welfare

The Contribution of Rees

The work of Rees in conjunction with the work of Fay have provided tools and concepts for use in my model of disability research. The steps to empowerment (**Figure 2**) have been used as a tool which has made a significant contribution to the methodological design. The steps have been useful as a framework to facilitate theory building by all research participants filling many of the gaps highlighted within the basic scheme and subsequently in the amended basic scheme. In order to explain Rees's steps in their own right and their relevance to disability research, the main focus of the following section will be on Rees with minimal reference to Fay's critical theory. The overlaps and comprehensive combined analysis will be subsequently presented in the final section where all key links will be drawn together.

Rees attempts in his writing to challenge the preoccupation with control that has "been a priority of governments and bureaucratic organisations, including those representing welfare interests" (Rees, 1991:3). He also clearly explains the consequences of separating people and ideas, for example:

When policy makers have little to do with practitioners, when welfare is discussed as though it has little to do with economics, when art is kept distinct from science, and when politics is seen as a grubby business engaged in by politicians (ibid).

His assertion is that such separation disempowers and compounds other forms of powerlessness. This leads to an identification of a need for coherence where ideas are drawn from a number of

sources. The objectives are for workers and those they support, to identify common goals, develop social analysis and skills, to achieve ends identified by a wide range of stakeholders, and in doing so, also achieve political literacy (Rees, 1991:3). Rees contends that if social workers, policy-makers, researchers and other key professionals involved the people they serve in their work and decision-making, their practice would be more likely to be appropriate and effective. This would involve building a relationship with people rather than acting in isolation from their reality. Rees identifies a range of marginalised groups for whom the achievement of empowerment would be effective in their subsequent ability to challenge powerful people and institutions. As Fay's first step in the basic scheme suggests, Rees advocates:

The process in achieving these goals involves an improvement of people's image of themselves, the acquisition of tangible resources such as money or shelter and intangible resources such as information and the creation of supportive social networks (Rees, 1991:5).

I would argue that the strength of Rees's analysis of power lies in its central focus of the needs of the most vulnerable. Furthermore, the emphasis on equipping people with skills to become more aware of their own situations via an analysis of social and political conditions impacting on their lives ensured that change could occur at a personal and political level. He acknowledges the reality of social workers who are often as disempowered by the system as the people with whom they work. His steps to empowerment have been offered as a possible framework for everyone involved irrespective of their status. He is clear that the same theories and strategies, while applied in a social work, community work and educational context in his writings, can also be used in other human service situations. In subsequent work he has applied empowerment principles to an analysis of economic rationalism and its impact on social (in)justice. The power of market rhetoric is explained, demystified and a creative strategy for empowering minority groups to discover "different ways of relating to one another, and of contributing to individuals' mental health or communities' political stability" (Rees, 1993:293) is proffered.

Rees draws on the work of three theorists to demonstrate a range of examples of the empowerment process. He first looks at the research of Freire, (1972) with peasants in South America and illustrates the process of teaching literacy in relation to the steps to empowerment. He compares the work of Rose and Black (1985) who used a process of steps when identifying the process of de-institutionalisation of people with psychiatric disabilities. The third comparison cited comes from Rosenfeld (1989) who describes work with the "poorest of the poor" known in France as the "fourth world" (Rees, 1992:86). This thesis explores the efficacy of the steps to empowerment in the context of emancipatory research. Figure Two shows Rees's steps which will now be briefly evaluated before turning to a combined model of the work of both Rees and Fay.

The steps emphasise the value of the knowledge and experience of marginalised groups, the power of partnerships based on this recognition and the identification of mutual benefits. In order to

explain the steps each is summarised below, giving examples of how each is applicable within a research process. Although presented in linear form, the steps interlock in an evolutionary process contributing to a multi dimensional approach to analysis. The steps below have been used as a theoretical framework for the research group to explore their own experience. They have also provided an additional explanatory framework for both the students concerned as well as for my own critical analysis of the general process. The way both Fay and Rees have been directly used with and by a group of disabled students will be demonstrated in Chapters Four, Five and Six. This chapter will concentrate on an initial critique of the theses of the two writers. As each step is addressed my interpretation of the corresponding elements of Fay will be referred to before turning to a detailed comparative framework later in the chapter. This will clarify the mechanisms by which a tool for emancipatory research has been developed.

Understanding Themes

A process of understanding themes corresponds with the first step in the basic scheme (the theory of false consciousness) where a process of consciousness-raising highlights a state of false consciousness and deals with its effects. Themes refer to those aspects of biography which depict experiences of power and powerlessness, explained perhaps with reference to relationships of relative equality or those characterised by feelings of being dependent or being controlled (Rees, 1991:90).

Powerlessness can manifest itself in numerous ways and lack of knowledge and information can contribute. Rees describes the importance of telling stories linked to a concept of biography as a foundation on which to build. Telling one's story, Rees says, raises self-confidence through the knowledge that "one is being listened to and taken seriously" (Rees, 1991:92). In the context of an emancipatory research model, the role of biography would be central to understanding themes:

The unravelling of bits of biography is a way of beginning the process of empowerment with those people who have felt powerless for a long time. In that process a marking of small victories will include the replacement of ignorance with information, and fear with a willingness to challenge authority (Rees, 1991:28).

The above quotation has particular relevance to many disabled people. Biography within the individual and group research process undertaken by DARG has certainly performed the function of validating and informing peoples' lives. While denial of peoples' experience has been seen as a mechanism of exclusion and separation, the recognition of the role of biography and story telling in reclaiming research can be examined as one of potential emancipation.

The integral role of people's personal experience in the shaping of the research agenda and process is explored. The contribution and story of each participating individual is described as central to a group process as well as that of a number of other disabled people whose stories have also

inadvertently set the research agenda. This includes via their published works, verbal accounts and unpublished work including poetry and art. In this sense, emancipatory research can incorporate disability culture which for some is integral to the experience of living with disability. Individual stories are recorded and their use in the overall analysis will be further examined in subsequent chapters. This step also acknowledges the concept of tradition identified by Fay in the placing of participants firmly within their own cultural context and valuing their experience without outside interference or judgement.

To build on the concept of Understanding Themes, other writers engage a similar process using biography. Examination of the mechanism of story telling and its role in the research process has been seen as important by other writers as a tool of emancipation. Feminist researchers such as Graham have adopted story telling as a research technique to more effectively involve women in the research process (Graham, 1984). Within the disability field there are now a range of examples where this is being used constructively to enable disabled people and their families to have a voice (Munford, 1992; Ballard, 1994; Kerr, 1995; Bennie, 1996; Perkins, 1996;). Munford discusses the process of “story telling”:

The telling of their story’ was the first opportunity for many of these women to talk at length of their perceptions of what was happening...it is in this way that women began to name their world and take control of their lives (Munford, 1992:83).

Understanding themes links with the first stage of Fay’s basic scheme where people become aware of their true reality on their own terms. This is explored in more detail in Chapters Seven and Eight.

Evaluating Self-Image and Knowledge

Rees identifies the lack of self-respect which accompanies dependency and the recognition that true partnership cannot occur unless both parties have sufficient self respect.

Without some evaluation of people’s image of their ability to act in their own interests, goals may be generated which are unrealistic because they have overlooked people’s aptitude for solving problems (Rees, 1991:91).

This self-disparaging view is well known to disabled people who have internalised negative images about themselves (Oliver, 1991; Morris, 1992; Munford, 1995; Bury, 1996; Perkins, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996; Munford and Sullivan, 1997) and who feel subsequently ill equipped to say what they want, let alone what their abilities are. Lerner refers to this as “surplus powerlessness” (Lerner cited in Rees, 1991:92). Rees has suggested that in order to evaluate self- image, not only does an exchange of biography have to take place but information about services, rights to resources and ways to address problems also have to be provided. This shared evaluation can generate ideas and create hope (Rees, 1991:92). A theory of the body identified by Fay can be incorporated within this

analysis in the recognition of the real effects of struggling with a significant impairment through one's life and the powerful effects on self-image. An emancipatory research process has been developed on this basis where identification of themes is combined with an evaluation of self image and assessed in relation to their potential to enrich the participation of all involved.

Specifying Problems

People with long experiences of powerlessness are likely to have had their problems defined for them (Rees, 1991:92).

Rees recognizes the dependency and disempowerment which accompanies contact with services and service professionals and underlines the importance of identification of problems by encouraging people to have their say "not by the tradition of anticipating what they think the professional wants to hear" (ibid). Again, the compliance characteristic of relationships disabled people can have with their support workers has to be acknowledged (Sobsey, 1995; Perkins, 1996) in consideration of an emancipatory research model. A researcher (disabled or nondisabled) engaged in work with disabled people may hold the power when initiating a research project to either manipulate and pre-empt a research agenda or to include as Rees has suggested within the process itself, education around the "art of conceptualising problems and sorting them one from another" (Rees, 1991:92) which carries the seeds of self learning. A mutual evaluation of problems where the researcher consistently checks out understanding may ensure the agenda reflects the reality of problems specified linking back to Fay's theory of reflexivity and Rees's final step *evaluation*.

To incorporate Fay's amended scheme, a theory of force can be recognized as having validity in this context. The potential outcome where researchers have conducted research according to their own agendas can be destructive depending on the extent to which power has been abused and those subject to such practices have had their interests denied. A detailed analysis of this step in Chapter Eight will address the reality outlined.

Developing Awareness of Policies

The predicament of powerless people is likely to be affected by social and economic policies and the professional services which are delegated the responsibility of implementing those policies (Rees, 1991:92).

Rees asserts that policies which ignore practical reality and exclusion of those affected from a policy-making process disempowers them. He also speaks of the oppressive effects of the language of economic rationalism and the need for a partnership approach to an alternative policy-making process (Rees, 1993). There are two identifiable elements within this step: the first is the need to enable people to know that services and other resources exist to which they are entitled; second, "the

act of demystifying what policy is about becomes part of an overall educational and political process. A well informed public is seldom a powerless or helpless one" (Rees, 1991:93).

In relation to an emancipatory research process with disabled people, the implications are that a researcher has the role of facilitating information sharing, an educational role in the demystification of policy and jargon and a responsibility to ensure all involved have the opportunity to acquire sufficient confidence to engage with authority in their own right.

Fay's theory of crisis is linked within the adapted framework to this step. It enables a spelling out of the mechanisms of oppression which include the negative effects of certain social policies designed to meet the needs and agendas of a limited but powerful group of people. A theory of tradition demands acknowledgement of the reasons policies exist and recognition of the issues facing policy-makers. While the latter needs to be addressed within any realistic plan, *developing awareness of policies* ensures that those moving towards personal emancipation gain a comprehensive understanding of the rationale behind certain policies thus facilitating strategies to address the perceived difficulties. While Fay's Basic Scheme has offered a possible way forward, the theory of tradition almost gives a reason for not progressing or for accepting at least some aspects of the status quo. Rees manages to offer a solution which has the potential to address the needs of all parties involved by facilitating a partnership in the policy-making process. The final section of this chapter will address this in more depth and the final chapter will return to this analysis.

Developing the Notion of Choice

Some people with a disability who have lived in institutions have spent years being encouraged to accept decisions being made for them but their changed lifestyles in group homes, in the community, provides incentives to act as citizens with a variety of rights and entitlements (Rees, 1991:93).

It is recognized that an effective transition to an environment where choice exists, requires an understanding of the importance of choice and a degree of assertiveness to act (ibid). Even the thought that one no longer has to accept one's lot and that "deliberation over what might be possible" is encouraged, can be a frightening concept to a disabled person who has led any kind of sheltered lifestyle.

Within the context of an emancipatory research model, exercises in assertiveness and support to exercise choices would be necessary to ensure true participation. At the same time the process needs to allow for evaluation of personal and political factors which facilitate and hinder choice. To make an implicit link to Fay's amended basic scheme, the concepts of choice and control are discussed within a theory of force and tradition where the limitations to the power people can truly have are imposed by the reality of potential violence and the attraction of resistance to change. Rees's step explicitly incorporates a notion of choice in a practical sense for vulnerable people. It is argued that

it offers hope to overcome the barriers which are inevitably put forward to maintain their state of powerlessness.

Experiencing Solidarity with Others

Rees advocates the power of the support group and the sharing of common experiences as a path to confidence trust and solidarity. He also recognizes that a support group which shares grievances and does not act has limited emancipatory value. This has been recognised by those engaging in this research project and consistent action has accompanied a group process. It has been recognized that disabled people often have support groups but are frustrated by lack of energy, motivation and organisation to act. It could however be argued that the support group itself is adequate for some at certain stages of their lives and a general value judgement should not be made. In Chapter Eight the research group evaluation is testimony to the power of the bond between group members.

In the context of this research, the group formed has asked the question what are "the political processes which affect status and resources" (Rees, 1991:94) and how can energies and skills be combined to act to achieve necessary change? The extent to which this was achieved has been consistently evaluated against Rees's steps which will be shown throughout the methodology section. To return to Fay's basic scheme and amendments, he would argue that the group revolution is thwarted by the limitations he spells out, again raising doubts about the true power of marginalised groups to liberate themselves. In terms of this research, the strategies suggested above for achieving and monitoring change have been incorporated to consider the barriers highlighted by Fay and enabled group members to successfully capitalize on their solidarity and mutual strengths.

Acquiring and Using Language

Language is not merely a tool for communication but also a means of creating social relationships and realising the self involved in those relationships (Rees, 1991:95).

Language can be enabling or disabling in the way it is used. For example, people can be described in a positive way and be enhanced by that. Alternatively, they can be described in terms of their deficits and a different picture is presented. Similarly, language can be clear and accessible or confusing and jargonistic. The effect of the latter is the exclusion of many from an interaction.

Language is, therefore, a tool of power and Rees particularly critiques the language of economic rationalism which has enhanced the status (and, therefore, power) of economists and facilitated narrowly conceived policies with limited scope for flexibility. He speaks of being "liberated by language" (Rees, 1993:294) which represents aspirations for a literacy about justice. He has suggested an alternative discourse to economic rationalism which indicates concepts of "'empowerment', 'caring', 'making choices', 'the promise of biography', 'solidarity,' and 'action'" (Rees, 1993:297).

In the context of emancipatory research, difficult terminology can be explained to participants in plain language, thus ensuring they would be no longer intimidated by such language. The theme of language in relation to disability is more fully discussed in Chapter Four in relation to group analysis

Resisting a Return to Powerlessness

At some point in the process of growing stronger, some people may experience doubts about the action they have taken. These doubts may prompt a reconsideration of the benefits of returning to former lives and lifestyles: for example, toleration of incest, domestic violence or return to an institution (Rees, 1991:96).

A certain security can lie in powerlessness and a return to powerlessness is often in evidence in our systems. An example of this lies in the 'revolving door syndrome' where people with psychiatric disabilities are given a measure of independence and insufficient support to cope with it. Rees refers to the example of the work of Rose and Black who have identified a necessary process for people who have been de-institutionalised and who have described a complex process of empowerment where people slowly achieve the courage to live independently. At a middle stage in this process the responsibility for one's life becomes too great and a return to former self-destructive behaviours can sabotage recovery. Where people and those who support them recognise the reality of this and develop strategies accordingly, they can prevent long term damage.

Rees questions the efficacy of assertiveness training which may be rewarding for workers in the services but may have brought punishment for service users. "Being given permission to develop new roles is not always accompanied by the protection to do so" (Rees, 1991:96).

Chapter Two discussed the perceived dangers in speaking out where people are dependent on services. There will often be a fear in moving forward and Rees suggests that the risk involved should be acknowledged (ibid). Fay offers a more basic individual analysis of the temptation to return to powerlessness in his reference to a man who is attached to his old habits and the benefits of such behaviours in spite of the barriers to change they impose (Fay, 1987). The amended scheme in part recognises the impact of deeply ingrained experience but does not offer a way forward or hope for change for those who fall into the trap of such negative security. Within an emancipatory research process, it is essential to deal explicitly with this step in order to increase participant awareness of the possibility of a return to powerlessness. This would ensure that it remained a theme confronted within a research agenda.

Developing Interactive and Political Skills

As with the conditions which facilitated learning a new language, so the unexpected experience of solidarity with group members contributes to the development of political and interactive skills (Rees, 1991:97).

Disabled people, like other vulnerable groups and those who work to support them, have been depoliticised and deprofessionalised. Demystifying skills required in support work, research or in any other political context is achieved by naming them as they are identified. Rees enters into detail about how this is achieved in the training of social workers and the approach he has taken could have value in up-skilling disabled participants within a research process. This would be achieved by a formal teaching session where people are allowed to work through scenarios where they have to negotiate a position or represent a group at a committee. The active educational process where specific skills equip people with the practical and theoretical tools to contribute to their own empowerment, again challenges the difficulties raised within all elements of Fay's amended scheme. I will reiterate that Fay has made no explicit analysis in relation to disabled people and Rees has made minimal references in relation to some isolated examples. Creativity and adaptability has been required to make links between the schema presented and the principles on which the research has been built laid out in Figure Three and described in detail in Chapter Four. It will be demonstrated that the development of political and interactive skills has been central to the achievement of emancipatory objectives.

Evaluation

The final step identified by Rees has a number of far-reaching implications for this research. Rees refers to the importance of evaluation:

One test of evaluation is whether the themes with which this process began have been redefined. Has alienation and isolation been replaced by involvement and participation? (Rees, 1991:97).

As Fay identified a central need for reflexivity, in amendments to his basic scheme, Rees also advocated an integral evaluation process. This would involve a consistent renegotiation of themes where, in the context of research, questions are consistently asked around each of the above steps. An example of such a question is: "has the tendency to see problems only as the product of individual shortcomings been overcome by an understanding of structural issues and by the beginnings of pertinent social analysis" (Rees, 1991:97). The application of this question in relation to the medical model of disability yields some similar answers.

A self-reflexive process on behalf of the researchers as well as the facilitation of a reflexive analysis against the framework of Rees's steps could be a useful way of measuring the emancipatory value of a research process. I will describe a series of reflexive mechanisms in Chapter Four. The

emancipatory principles against which the project to be described will be measured, are laid out in Figure Three. I will first discuss the usefulness of a combined framework of Rees's steps to empowerment and Fay's basic scheme.

The Adapted Schema: an explanation

Rees's steps have laid the foundation for this thesis, since I would argue, they represent in the context of this research a translation of the scheme to enlightenment. They contain in a multi-dimensional analysis of empowerment all the essential elements of critical theory. A second central question in relation to Fay and Rees lies in the efficacy of their combined models as an evaluative tool within the context of an emancipatory research project. Figure Three demonstrates how the key components of the two models link together to achieve emancipatory principles which will be defined at the beginning of Chapter Four. Figure Three also represents a synthesis of each of the models presented to contribute to an appropriate model for emancipatory research. An evaluation of each aspect has been interpreted by myself in the context of disability. As discussed previously, Fay does not refer to disability specifically and Rees makes intermittent reference to disabled people in a social work context. This section draws these themes together. Figure Three tables the main elements of each component of both theories translated into the context of social theories of disability. The table illustrates how each element of Fay's scheme corresponds with the steps to empowerment and a further analysis of the steps relates to methods. In terms of this thesis, aspects of Freire's methodology which have been of value are highlighted and the key research principles have been added. These will be subsequently described in the next chapter, precisely in relation to each stage. It is argued that this presents a cohesive picture with which to test the analytical value of the models presented. The main elements will now be analysed to more fully set the scene for the methodology which has been developed.

The combined theories focus on the power of the individual to achieve his/her own emancipation and are based on four critical elements which have been translated into the theoretical framework of this work. The first element of the basic scheme refers to *the theory of false consciousness*, the foundation of the model. The entry into analysis of this is known as 'ideology-critique' and in this context the role research, science, medicine and education have played in feeding the illusion of deficit and maintaining the reality of domination become clear. Rees's steps, *understanding themes, evaluating self-image and knowledge and specifying problems*, are the tools which facilitate this awakening to the social theories of disability. Where research participants have the opportunity to relate their own stories and clarify the themes in their own lives, they enter into comparisons with others with similar experiences. From this they may develop awareness of this 'false consciousness' and the part it can play and has played in contributing to the experience, often of daily grind, associated with disability. This involves separating out what can change, the difficulties which are created within systems and structures, directly from what cannot. For example, if one has a significant impairment, the effects can often be alleviated but not eradicated.

FIGURE THREE

The Basic Scheme of Enlightenment, Rees's Steps to Empowerment and Their Role as an Explanatory Tool

THE BASIC SCHEME	REES'S STEPS TO EMPOWERMENT	PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH IN THE DISABILITY FIELD
I A theory of false consciousness 1) Demonstrates the ways in which the self concept of disabled people is false in that their understanding is based on Perceptions of deficit and dependency imposed on them. (They engage in ideology critique.) 2) Greater awareness highlights how research, science and the medical profession creates and perpetuates this ideology. 3) Exploring the social construction and social creation of disability places the 'blame' firmly within societal attitudes and practices.	Understanding themes (power of biography). Liberation through dialogue, investigation through words (Freire). Evaluation self image and knowledge. Evaluation of words and themes (Freire). Specifying problem, setting the research questions. Codifying themes (Freire). Presenting the codes by reflecting self needs.	The role of Emancipatory research in personal liberation, awareness and understanding of world view: recognition of social construction.
II A theory of crisis 4) Further exploration spells out the mechanisms of oppression, eg the systematic exclusion of disabled people from education employment etc. 5) On examination of the isolation and discrimination experienced by disabled people become aware that current structures are based on the dominance of an ableist society: a competitive education system, a discriminatory medical system, an individualist economy. 6) Greater awareness and education explores the roots of the oppression in the policies and practices of the systems which impact, eg inflexibility of assessment.	Developing awareness of policies: Learning about the system. Analysing and decoding (Freire). Developing the notion of choice: exploring educational options. Externalising: Making links to wider contexts (Freire). Acquiring and using language. Further decoding using interdisciplinary studies (Freire).	Research as an educational experience and the role of non-disabled researchers (alliance between disabled and non-disabled). Research by/for the disability community (issues of importance to disabled people - building networks).
III A theory of education 7) Increases understanding action identifying precise areas for change. 8) The emergence of disability pride.	Experiencing solidarity with others. Resisting a return to powerlessness.	Empowerment through education within research of the need for concerted process (consciousness raising, community education: education of teaching staff).
IV A theory of transformative action 9) Identifies specific policies and practices which create disability and suggest ways they could be changed. 10) A combination of all of the previous elements fulfills a plan of action.	Developing interactive and political skills. Evaluation. Preparation of didactic materials (Freire).	Research as a catalyst for change and partnership.
Achieving real change within the University.		

Key themes potentially emerge in this sharing of experiences similar to the first stage of Freire's methodology where photographs and key words facilitated people beginning to relate their stories and break down the wall of silence which engulfed them (Freire, 1972). Within this research process this stage creates space for the research agenda to be set and the "phenomenal categories to be mapped out" (Heron, 1981). This fits with the first two principles for conducting disability research (Figure Three) which refer to the role of emancipatory research in achieving personal liberation and to the importance of the person with a disability as "the expert".

The second phase is the *Theory of Crisis*, which enables a spelling out of the mechanisms which maintain the experience of oppression. An example lies in evidence of the systematic exclusion of disabled people from the education system and its short and long-term impact on individuals. Critical analysis allows a clearer concept of the benefits this can inadvertently offer to some members of society and the ways this is maintained in the acceptance of competitiveness and an over-emphasis on independence as opposed to interdependence.

The extent to which this stage is further explained by and corresponds with Rees's steps has been explored. In the context of the University environment the development of awareness of policies such as awareness of inflexible assessment systems, may highlight the reality of this stage. It may also offer an understanding that everyone has the right to choice and the ramifications of those choices. Both learning and respecting institutional language may enable the research participants to enter into a dialogic relationship with the system in order to challenge the structures on an equal basis with those in power. Many other aspects of language are also explored in Chapters Four and Five. The *theory of crisis* and the corresponding Rees's steps, fit with the third and fourth key principles. Within this thesis, they relate to: research as an educational experience in the sense of political literacy, an acknowledgement of the value of nondisabled allies and learning to use research by disabled people as a tool to achieve change for them.

The third stage, *the theory of education*, builds directly on the second and explores the role of consciousness-raising to lead to concerted action and a mutual educational process. *The experience of solidarity* is the corresponding step, which could be both instrumental to this process as well as incidental. This may lead to the emergence of disability pride, where people experience finally wishing to stand up, be counted and 'own' their impairment, an experience which is central to a sense of growing emancipation. The inevitable fear which accompanies this stage should be acknowledged and shared as part of the group experience. It seems appropriate to compare *resisting a return to powerlessness* with this stage. A fifth key principle refers to the power of education in achieving emancipation. It highlights a two-fold educational process including participants themselves, others such as educators and all who have the power to define people's reality.

The fourth stage, *the theory of transformative action* is the key to the research plan and represents the process of change which occurs as a result of actions taken. The development of political and

interactive skills will be analysed in relation to this process. The extent to which the research participants are able to empower themselves to become catalysts for this transformative action will be measured. Examples of the ways in which the research group sought to achieve this will be presented in subsequent chapters. This represents a culmination of all the key themes: of dialogue, empowering pedagogy, and the need for emancipation of all subject to disabling systems. This final stage potentially links to a sixth principle which is that of emancipatory research acting as a catalyst for change and facilitating working partnerships.

Freire's work is referred to in Figure Three to emphasise the significance of social change within a research process. Freire developed research materials based on the daily lived reality of the people whose lives were central to the research creating a catalyst for transformative action. This was only possible where the participants themselves had full access to the process and were thus able to benefit from the outcomes in their new-found ability to read and in turn pass on those skills to the rest of the population. The integral *evaluation*, (Rees's final step) represents the critical reflection characteristic of research based on participant experience and all of these stages are to be covered in detail in this thesis.

Conclusion

This chapter began by presenting an overview of the origins of critical theory. This provided a context for an exploration of the specific works of Fay and Rees as well as highlighting the efficacy of critical theory as an explanatory tool in relation to achievement of social change. This was followed by a review of firstly, the basic scheme and amended basic scheme offered by Fay. Subsequently, the work of Rees was presented within an overview of the steps to empowerment. Finally, Figure Three outlined the ways in which both models contained conceptual links to each other as well as to the key principles which have been evolved for emancipatory research on the basis of this literature review. The next step is to discuss each of the principles in detail in terms of emancipatory research and to present a summary of the research undertaken.

CHAPTER FOUR

Research Principles And Validity

Introduction

An emancipatory intent is no guarantee of an emancipatory outcome (Acker, Barry and Essweld, 1983:431).

The above statement sums up the reality of the difficulties involved in critical inquiry which underlines the importance of clarifying a set of emancipatory principles. In the first part of this chapter the principles which are listed in Figure Three will be summarised and linked with the work of Fay and Rees. The role of dialectical theory in emancipatory methodology previously discussed in Chapter Two has been incorporated within the research framework. The research principles have been developed and adapted from literature previously cited in Chapters Two and Three. The difficulties involved in their implementation in this kind of research will also be addressed. They have served as a foundation on which to build the actions of the research group who will be introduced in the next chapter. A clear statement of principles is a necessary precursor to a discussion on validity which is subsequently explored relative to this research in the second part of this chapter. Lather's reconceptualisation of validity in terms of face validity, construct validity and catalytic validity is used as a framework for the discussion. In this part the difficulties of measuring validity in emancipatory research are acknowledged along with a review of the concept of validity in such a research context. This is seen as different from a positivist view of validity where the rigour and measurability of data are the central focus. In Chapter Five the formation of the research group will then be described, including the way the ethical concerns raised here were addressed.

Principles for development of an emancipatory paradigm for disability research

The work of Fay on critical inquiry has formed the foundation in conjunction with the empowerment principles of Rees, to develop six guiding principles for an emancipatory model of research. These principles were conceptualised by myself in the research proposal and presented to the research group in conjunction with Rees's steps to act as an evaluative tool throughout the research. The research principles were reviewed at the end of the research not with the intention of changing them but of using them to develop an evaluation framework at the end of the research. While the principles remained relevant to our work, the way participants interpreted their meaning had to some extent changed in the light of new knowledge. While the language of critical theory has been adopted, the dialogic nature of the design demands that the messages for disabled people are accessible and practical within a participatory research process. The following principles have been conceptualised in conjunction with the theses of Fay and Rees (see Figure Three) and have also incorporated some feminist principles as stated in Chapter Two. They have integrated the

recommendations of Morris (1992) for achieving emancipatory research in the disability field. The adapted schema (Figure Three) formed the basis on which the validity of the project was measured. The six principles were particularly useful as a guide to the setting of an integral and post research evaluation framework.

1. The Role of Emancipatory Research in Personal Liberation

Free people are those who shape their lives in accordance with laws they prescribe for themselves (Fay, 1987:75).

A fundamental principle on which the project was developed was the key role of emancipatory research in the achievement of personal liberation. This thesis examines the extent to which the example of emancipatory research to be described has contributed to personal liberation for the participants in this project. A key objective was to enable them to take charge of a research process, to define disability on their terms and in that way to redefine their own reality by “challenging the oppressive images of disability” (Morris, 1992:163). A process was initiated in order to facilitate a response to the needs, wishes and experiences of a group of disabled people. The first stage of the research provided a forum and resources to enable participants to clarify their “world view” (Fay, 1977). The first element of the basic scheme (*the theory of false-consciousness*) enabled an understanding and identification of the causes of the distorted self perceptions of a group of people (Fay, 1987:37) and was linked to **understanding themes** (Figure Three) where areas of commonality have been identified. At the centre of this objective has been a research design based on dialectical principles (Lather, 1986:448), where all participants were actively involved in the process of exploring research questions and interpreting them in, as Lather says, the “construction and validation of meaning” (ibid). Participants were able to analyse the value of the coherence of the personal and political domains of their lives in order to achieve liberation which is also addressed by Agger:

People’s minds are opened to the possibility that they can participate in their own liberation, located in the life worlds that matter to them. We discover that the realm of the private has become intensely political whereas the realm of traditional politics has been drained of relevance (Agger, 1991:14).

The integration of these domains was discussed as being essential in the development of an emancipatory research process generally which can constitute a political act, in itself, of relevance to the lives of disabled people. For the research participants the very act of telling one’s story and sharing understandings of current problems was empowering and in Rees’s terms this approach has the potential to: “lead to a small sense of victory if it generates ideas and creates hope” (Rees, 1991:92).

The research to be described has aimed to achieve a concept of liberation defined by those participating through the development of an emancipatory research project. They aimed to move beyond enlightenment which is in Fay's terms, not enough in that liberation comes in his view only as a result of revolutionary action (Fay, 1987). I was aware as principal researcher that if the research was to be truly empowering a process was required which enabled people to not only understand their situation, but to engage in a critical analysis which would ensure that they also discovered the means to act on the new knowledge and take back power. As Fay states:

To have the practical force it requires, critical theory must become an enabling motivating resource for its audience - it must, in short empower them. This empowerment has emancipation as its goal (Fay, 1987:29).

The principle of the role of emancipatory research in personal liberation ensured that this research aimed to provide a catalyst for personal, social, political and cultural transformation. At the core of this was a mutually reciprocal relationship in terms of an educative process where all shared information and experiences enriching the group knowledge. Each member had an investment in and responsibility for the outcome. Some key questions have been explored in relation to these concepts. Three elements are visible. Firstly, can emancipatory research create an environment where the social construction of disability can be understood and challenged, where all involved can identify the reality of their oppression in terms of the social creation of disability and where they also recognize and fulfill their potential for change? Secondly, can critical theory become a catalyst for change and in Fay's terms, an enabling, motivating resource for its audience (Fay, 1987)? Thirdly, the difficulties in the implementation of this type of research are explored. Three other questions emerge within this inquiry: how can the research be carefully negotiated to ensure: full input from other disabled people; that there have been identified outcomes which do not impact negatively on the participants; and that clearly defined accountability procedures have been established? The exploration of each of these questions has been seen as essential to a concept of personal liberation.

2. The Personal Experience of Disability

A second key principle on which the research was built was the need to acknowledge and respect the value of the personal experience of disability to inform the research process. Questions in relation to these principles were formulated: how can the personal experience of disability be seen as central to an emancipatory research process and be made visible on the terms of this research group? Secondly, how difficult is this to achieve? All participants were enabled to think critically about the issues and act accordingly, highlighting the fundamental contradictions on which each person's experience of disability was based. Awareness was raised of such aspects as the impact of the cultural construction of disability (the myth of bodily perfection). The social theories, that is the social construction and creation of disability as defined in previous chapters and to some extent analysed in relation to Fay's basic scheme, succeeded in making the personal political. It was equally

important, however, to include another central aspect of this which is clearly identified by Morris: "that is owning, taking control of, the representation of the personal experience of disability, including the negative parts of the experience" (Morris, 1992:164). It was acknowledged that if we failed to recognize the limitations many impairments impose on us, the experience of disability would remain an isolated one. As Morris states: "the experience of ageing, of being ill, of being in pain, of physical and intellectual limitations, are all part of the experience of living." (ibid). Munford and Sullivan remind us that:

While the social theory of disability allows us to understand how the social, political and economic contexts define the nature of disability, one must also incorporate an understanding of the reality of living daily with an impairment in order to gain a complete picture of disability (Munford and Sullivan, 1997).

This thesis explores the extent to which participants in the research process were able to confront the contradictions highlighted in an evolving understanding of social theories of disability, while also dealing with the daily grind of disability. Part of the personal stories disabled people generally often have to tell is the struggle with a body which does not work. In the research, participants have had the opportunity to share this experience individually and as a group. As Rees says, "any interaction which assesses people's image of themselves and in so doing begins to channel it in a positive direction, promises an unexpected achievement, however small" (Rees, 1991:91). Every aspect of a person's personal experience was seen as a contribution to the research and what has been offered by their personal stories will be explored in this thesis. The extent to which each person felt they both understood the social theories of disability and the personal experience was respected is discussed in Chapter Eight within the participant evaluation. This was a key to the measurement of the validity of the project in terms of its emancipatory value.

3. Research as an Educational Experience and The Role of Nondisabled Researchers

The motives to reform social policies and practices can spring from the intended beneficiaries, even if historically, the professionals have not seen fit to consult and some people have been compliant in their acceptance of not knowing (Rees, 1991:93).

This research explored the potential of emancipatory research as an educational tool by which participants could learn about their political situation, but which they could also use to educate others about disability. The research process to be described in Chapter Five and Six undertaken by the Disability Action Research Group aimed to facilitate reciprocal partnerships among people. In this research students educated staff around disability who, in turn, educated other staff to facilitate change which also aimed to improve the experience of disabled students in the tertiary setting. The extent to which this further achieved a balanced partnership between disabled and nondisabled people was realised through further education facilitated by more training and a contact network of staff, negotiation with the University hierarchy and as a result a general recognition of the

benefits of change for all. An important aspect of the validity of the research included an evaluation of the educational value of the learning process from the perspectives of staff and students.

The action taken by the research group aimed to provide nondisabled allies and student participants/researchers with tools to first recognize and then challenge direct and indirect discrimination as it occurs. As Morris (1992) states, many people do not even recognize how discrimination against disabled people operates in their work-place. Disabled people participating in this research were able to present through their chosen action a more constructive, informed viewpoint which gently educated those in their immediate environment who had power to change policy and practice.

Critical social science research including emancipatory action research, views education as an historical and ideological process... it is pre-disposed towards ideology-critique: the recognition and negation of educational ideologies which serve the interests of specific groups at the expense of others and which mask oppression and domination with the appearance of liberation (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 188).

This research also explored the role of those who do not identify as disabled, particularly those who work in the field of disability, to identify ways they could begin to enable disabled people to participate in all levels of decision-making (for example specific representation on academic boards and consultation in course development), selection and the development of research criteria. The project facilitated reflection on their own attitudes to disability and the opportunity to find ways in which they could challenge the negative stereotypes held by others. Again, the central role of partnership between disabled and nondisabled people was examined.

4. Research By\For The Disability Community

The concept of research by/for the disability community has been central to the development of the methodology of this research since every participant including myself as principal researcher identified as disabled. The process of engaging in participatory action research aimed to facilitate a strong mutually supportive group of disabled people, which is also educated about disability issues, politicised and able to act on its own research findings.

The principle of research by/for the disability community has underpinned the exploration of a model of research where those students participating were able to define its terms, explore the value of critical theory and subsequently, name their own theoretical perspective. The personal experience of disability in relation to the political was seen as a possible way in which research could be used to accomplish this. The contribution to our learning by women and Maori was acknowledged. They have similarly aimed to reclaim research to enhance the visibility of their own experience and their own power.

In keeping with **understanding themes** as well as **experiencing solidarity**, before developing a research process which would enable their participation, the research group had the opportunity to express feelings about previous experience of research and attempts to 'consult' with them. As stated in Chapter Two, any research process can be potentially exploitative and alienating

(Finkelstein, 1975; Oliver, 1990, 1992, 1996; Morris, 1992; Bury, 1996 Shakespeare, 1996;). Identifying the positive impact of previous research is also important in terms of acknowledging other ways to provide a vehicle where individuals participating can identify their situation for themselves perhaps for the first time. For example, Lang's research (1994) was cited by one person as the first time she had felt safe to openly identify as disabled. This indicates that research has been a tool to facilitate an appreciation of disability pride which led to an openness to be involved in my research. The question, which is central to the ethical concerns in approaching emancipatory research, is as much one of ownership and initiation of the process (Heron, 1981; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Reason, 1994; Treleaven, 1994; Bishop, 1996) as of particular methods. In this sense there are some key aspects of the research project which were clearly owned by the research group. These include the disability equity training kit they developed and student evaluations have formed a framework for the critical analysis of the research process.

5. Empowerment Through Education Within The Research Process

This research has directly explored its role in empowerment for individuals within the research group as well as both disabled and nondisabled people in the wider group. Fay speaks of his own theory of education in relation to the basic scheme:

The theory of education tries to spell out the mechanism whereby the enlightenment of the audience it seeks to foster can occur (Fay, 1987:39).

A number of issues were explored and evaluated in relation to this principle: the extent to which participants have learnt about the research process itself; the appreciation of difficult research terminology as well as that used to define impairment and disability, the extent to which participants were able to choose from a range of approaches based on their new understanding, and to subsequently use this in their own studies; the significance of naming a clear theoretical perspective on which the work is based and explicitly working with this in order to contribute to the achievement of this principle; finally the efficacy of critical theory to act as a catalyst of an "educationally based social revolution" without the participants necessarily learning the structure of the theory or theories which have formed the framework of the research. As Fay states : "It is not a question of learning *about* the theory so much as it is about learning to conceive of oneself *in terms* of the theory" (Fay, 1987:114) [*italics in original*].

It is important to examine the ways in which disabled people could empower themselves in terms of this theory. As Agger states "the only genuine education is self-education which sparks self-

emancipation" (Agger, 1991:15). The education process, as stated previously, seeks to encompass the personal experience, and the value of people's stories as an educational publication. What has been explored is to what extent these can perform an educative role for disabled and nondisabled people alike.

This principle was specifically addressed within an educational setting where educators were educated by disabled students about access, attitudes, disabling structures and the link among all three. This will be described in Chapter Six. The example cited in Chapter Two of the student facilitators who were appointed by the Pacific Island Reference Group (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 1994) provides a good model of a critical theory in action in education and illustrates its versatility to be applied in different settings. The need for disabled people to have education as well as to be educators is explored with a view to achieving the objective of change in the immediate environment.

6. Research As A Catalyst For Change And Partnership

The theory of transformative action attempts to reveal to this audience those aspects of their lives which they must change to free themselves from their dissatisfactions, and it also must provide an action plan indicating how and by whose action this change is to take place (Fay, 1987:39).

Finally, the research process has sought to develop a theoretically guided extended plan of action. The same process is used to critique the extent to which the research has qualified as emancipatory in terms of the way it was carried out as well as the outcomes. The extent to which the time frame and pace of the research process were partially or totally defined and initiated by disabled people in partnership with myself as researcher and nondisabled allies was examined; also, how new knowledge, in Fay's terms 'enlightenment' (Fay, 1987:39) potentially leads to group emancipation where the group can be empowered by its new self-understanding, and radically contribute to change in the immediate environment which "thereby alleviates its sufferings" (ibid). The fourth element (*the theory of transformative action*) has been explored to address the extent to which research "explains the conditions which must be altered if the social crisis is to be resolved in the requisite manner" (Fay, 1987:37). Thus within this plan a two-fold question is posed: has there been acknowledgement of the cultural diversity of all participants, enriching the research process and outcome? Have others within the tertiary environment been challenged to recognize the parallels between the experiences of oppression of other groups? The research which informed the way this question has been addressed is presented in examples cited in Chapter Two. The catalytic value of the interlinking of process and outcome have been also discussed in Chapter Three in discussion of Rees's steps and in the comparison between Rees's steps and Fay's basic scheme.

These explicit principles have given rise to the issues named above and have been used as a mechanism of reflexivity with which to monitor the research process and outcomes. A description

of the research methods will now ensue in order to explore the extent to which these principles have been incorporated. What is consistently questioned throughout this research is: the role I personally, am taking, and the extent to which my own voice may be the one heard over and above that of others. This leads to the question of how one can ensure validity of value-explicit research while maintaining the emancipatory integrity of the work. Other writers previously cited in Chapter Two (Reason and Rowan, 1981; Lather, 1986, Heshusius, 1994) have recognized this need and have called for a reconceptualisation of what is meant by validity which I will now explore in the context of this example of emancipatory research.

To Redefine is to Reclaim Validity in Disability Research

Valid knowledge is a matter of relationship - and of course this validity may sometimes be enhanced if we can say **we** know rather than simply **I** know; we can move towards an intersubjectivity of valid knowledge which is beyond the limitations of one knower (Reason and Rowan, 1981:242).

So how can validity be redefined and how can this example of research contribute to an understanding of this? Writers in the field of disability have advocated the use of research to enhance the visibility of the daily lived experience (Munford, 1992, 1994, 1995; Morris, 1992; Oliver, 1992; Ballard, 1994). One of the ways I have personally addressed many of the above-named principles (research by disabled people for disabled people, the personal experience of disability) is by entering a fully participatory process as a disabled person with other disabled students. I will discuss in Chapter Seven the extent to which this has impacted on the research process and I acknowledge throughout the discussion my own partiality, the power differentials which exist and the way reflexivity has been a central focus.

While literature has explored the difficulties in assessing validity in new paradigm research (Heron, 1981; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Lather, 1986; Donmoyer, 1990; Eisner and Peshkin, 1990; Reason, 1994), the particular concerns where research involves disabled people requires some specific attention. If one is thinking in terms of 'valid knowledge' the first question must be how valid could be the assertions, findings, feelings and actions of a group of disabled researchers? Does the **we** have the same credibility as nondisabled **we**? No matter how 'rigorous' our process is proven to be, one cannot avoid this central social construct with regard to disability in general. Research is a potentially powerful medium for ensuring the voices of disabled people are heard in **their own language**. Rees's steps to empowerment and Fay's basic scheme have been chosen for their potential to enable disabled people to access the research process and to examine the social theories of disability. A potential weakness in Fay's approach is the analysis of the impact of "false consciousness" (defined in Chapter One) which raises doubts on the ability of research participants to evaluate their own situation (Lather, 1986). While it has been acknowledged that people are a product of their own life experience and that they may be unable to see the true extent of their marginalisation, it is

important to respect the reality of those perceptions while offering alternative analyses of one's situation. Validity in the context of emancipatory research would depend on the ability of researchers to place equal value on all perspectives without imposing their own preferred viewpoint.

Research participants are not seeking one 'truth'. Indeed, they are challenging by their very existence the concept of one view of reality as the only valid view. Before offering a definition of validity, three key underpinning factors in the context of this example of research should be highlighted. The first, is the extent to which each person has been able to explore their reality and discover their own potential **within** the group process. This includes the way in which the dynamics of the participatory model contributed to this development as well as the absence of manipulation of any kind by myself as the group facilitator. The second is the extent to which the social construction and creation of disability have been challenged by both the group process and group research action. Every facet of the research process, from inception through to the research conclusions, have reflected this challenge. The third underpinning factor is the concrete change which the research accomplished within each participant and within their immediate environment, in this case an academic institution. The central strand which weaves all these aspects together is our own definition of 'emancipation'. Validity can only be proven if the participants have been able to define the concept of emancipation for themselves and are free to critique and reconstruct any aspect of the methodology which falls short of this. I will complete this chapter by providing a basic working definition of validity and an analysis of how this has been applied in the context of this research project built on Lather's reconceptualisation of validity (Lather, 1986)

Triangulation

Triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources and I cited a definition offered by Denzin (1989, 1994) in chapter Two. In Lather's terms triangulation ensures that counterpatterns as well as convergences are explored in research findings (Lather, 1986:69). The research to be described has been based on a number of participatory action research approaches named in Chapter Two mainly those conducted with other marginalised groups. These include the use of individual stories, the research into University policies, interviews with staff, workshops to explore the efficacy of disability equity training and research into other projects undertaken by disabled students. The research findings have reflected a wide range of perspectives on the issues explored.

Construct Validity

Construct validity is concerned with "the need to have our empirical work consciously generated within a context of theory building. The need to let data speak for itself, and of not violating the reality of the participants" (Hera, 1996:72). The dangers of theoretical imposition have been well documented by researchers concerned with emancipatory methods (Reason and Rowan, 1981; Opie; (1990); Lather, 1991; Boyles, 1994; 1986; Bishop, 1996; Hera, 1996). A critical theoretical

approach enables a reflexive approach to theory building and facilitates a thorough critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the theoretical base of the work.

In my account I have certainly felt the need to consistently acknowledge my own power and the dangers of negatively affecting the process by inadvertently denying any aspect of that. Indeed, Heshushius, in her call for "self-forgetfulness" is not advocating the denial of self in any way and the value of the perspective and contribution of the principal researcher:

Nor am I presenting an argument that the personal reactions and related values and emotions one can run up against in research are irrelevant. To become aware of them is crucial indeed (Heshushius, 1994:18).

We have used clearly defined research cycles where we have begun with a theoretical perspective based on the social theories of disability. Rees's steps to empowerment and Fay's basic scheme have provided a framework to test out those theories consistently throughout the research process using the mechanism of the intense group process. The analysis/action/ reflection /evaluation cycle was explored each time we met, we verbally theorised and planned alternative action and we critically reflected verbally and in writing to ensure adequate reflexive mechanisms were in place to monitor the actions we were taking (Fook, 1996). The group forum ensured that we checked our impressions, tentative conclusions, concepts and areas of priority concern and like Madison "refining and clarifying and deepening and differentiating them "(Madison cited in Reason and Rowan, 1981: 248).

The individual differences and backgrounds of each group member have been constructively used in the group process as well as the fact that the whole research action has centred on multiple partnerships. Within these, the input of everyone is valued and integrated, demonstrating the recognition of multiple subject positions. Furthermore, a range of methods have been employed, including the use of individual interview and oral history to enhance the validity of the actions taken. Contradiction has been actively used to test hypotheses (Reason and Rowan, 1981). The questions raised by people inside and outside the group who held opposing views were used to critically examine the research plan. One example of this is the way some key members of the University administration became allies who were actively involved in the first phase of the action research process. This links to the principles of the role of research in personal liberation and respect for the personal experience of disability. The construct validity of the research has been explicitly tested in the evaluation process by the setting of questions specifically related to the group understanding of the social theories of disability. This will be explored in Chapter Seven.

Face Validity

This is closely related to construct validity and is concerned with the thorough recycling of data by consistently referring back to research participants for feedback and then refining the findings in the light of that feedback. As principal researcher, I was careful at all times to ensure that anything I had concluded personally, or any of my critical reflections, were discussed with the group and refined in the light of their reactions (Reason and Rowan, 1981:248). I return to my assertion that the validity has been based on a non-intrusive structure which became an integral part of community building, corresponding to what Reason and Rowan describe as:

A rigour of softness, of discovery, of turning things over. Instead of an 'unstructured' approach, which simply leaves the way open for all the cultural expectations to get in the way of finding anything out, there needs to be an approach which deliberately opens up the area, and gives explicit permission to explore usually unacknowledged realities (ibid).

In this research, the multiple cycles of data collation were structured around the central focus of Rees's steps which have been previously described. These cycles have formed the face validity of this project and can be summarised as follows: the research began with the identification of thematic concerns, exploration of students' own stories, initial analysis of language and discourse, discussion of contradictory views and interpretations of such discourse, the naming of the institutionalisation of disability in the University policies and practices and scrutiny of the baseline knowledge of each individual and that of the group. The relationship of the group to Victoria University was analysed with a view to an exploration of some of the strengths inherent in that relationship as well as the various disadvantages individuals were exposed to. The precise activities and practices were then explored in more detail which will be described in Chapter Five, identifying areas of necessary change before a third stage of planning for action. Each phase was fully evaluated including the staff training process itself which was followed up using the same principle of research cycles where all problems and actions were revisited six weeks after the training. A small working group with the University administration represented a sub-sample through whom all data generated within the training process was recycled and necessary action identified. A full evaluation occurred where the research group returned to the very beginning with a task around Rees's steps to empowerment. At each meeting the group moved around the research spiral with the steps to empowerment providing a useful background. This was achieved by setting tasks around reflection on Rees's steps, by using the reflections recorded in the research diary, which were subsequently analysed as a group and action evaluated. Group work analysis enabled me as the principal researcher to identify the stage of action or to interpret the phase of group development (Heron, 1981; Peck, 1987; Glassman and Kates; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Padilla, 1993; Frey and Fontana, 1993; Ife, 1995; Fook, 1996). The level of 'empowerment' experienced by each individual participating was measured in their own evaluation and has equal validity to any additional hard data collected as a result of the

research action. This links to the principle of research by/for the disability community as well as the role of nondisabled allies in achieving an emancipatory model.

Catalytic Validity

A dialectical view of truth as becoming must include the notion that there are always emerging possibilities which are not yet included. This can be called *possibilia mapping* (Heron, 1977a) or *catalytic validity* (Reason, 1981:243).

The examples of catalytic validity in operation have already been described in the examples cited in the research literature in Chapter Two and will be described in detail within the evaluation of the work of the research group. This is akin to the process of conscientisation described by Freire (1972) and is seen to be the most unorthodox of the guidelines to validity as it directly challenges the positivist demand for research neutrality (Lather, 1986). The argument for catalytic validity in the context of disability research lies in its aim to both challenge the reality of social oppression and to enhance the understanding, skills and self-determination of disabled people within the research process.

The concept of ever emerging possibilities draws on and raises expectations of the immense potential which exists within disabled participants as well as generally within the disability field. This potential is hitherto untapped within research. "Efforts to produce social knowledge that will advance the struggle for a more equitable world must pursue rigour as well as relevance" (Lather, 1986:67). It is essential that disability praxis-oriented research is 'rigorous' (in terms of its accountability to the participants and its reflexivity) in order to overcome the immense scepticism which exists inside and outside the scientific community. The previous invisibility of the disability experience provides an added barrier to the acceptance of research which challenges such deep-rooted sources of oppression. As a passionate researcher I have welcomed rigorous, agreed-upon procedures which subject research to close scrutiny. Lecourt calls for an "ardent text" tied to passion as other works are to "objectivity" (Lecourt, 1975, cited Lather, 1986:452). The energy and time devoted to this endeavour will surely have far reaching benefits for disabled people.

To revisit the central questions will clarify the context of this discussion: how can this approach to emancipatory research enhance the lives of disabled people and promote change in their environment? Can this subsequently be used by others either in part or in total in disability research? Does the framework of Rees's steps and the explanatory framework of Fay (1987) make the methodology accessible to even inexperienced researchers? Can the principles of empowerment previously defined easily be actively applied in a range of disability settings? There are no rights or wrongs in the outcome of such research and the results achieved by someone else using the exact same model (in an educational institutional setting), if completely different, would serve to enhance our knowledge of the experience of disabled students in the tertiary sector. It is against these questions that the validity of the project will be measured.

Contradiction, in terms of responding to challenge from each other and from outsiders, has enhanced the quality of the analysis offered. In order to arm ourselves when dealing with institutional personnel and practices, the group addressed all sides of the arguments. While each participant was certain about particular facts and experiences, the group was not so arrogant as to negate the value of other points of view. For example, accusations are often laid against disabled students that they “*use their disability to gain privileges such as essay extensions!*” (Research Diary, Nov. 1994). This forced the research group to explore the issues involved and acknowledge that while this statement may be true for a minority, ‘using one’s disability’ had to be deemed unacceptable whatever the reason. It would undermined the integrity of the group to deny abuse of the system or to appear to be apologists for irresponsible behaviour. For every assertion the group made, contrary views and perceptions have been explored. This enriched the learning process for all involved including myself as principal researcher and group facilitator. Examples of catalytic validity of the research in terms of concrete outcomes of the work carried out, included: the appointment of seventeen liaison officers for disability across departments, a contribution to the 50 per cent increase in students approaching the disability support person and finally the testimonies of each of the student participants to their own personal growth and political empowerment.

Finally, this aspect of validity refers to the principles of empowerment through education within the research process and research as a catalyst for change. This analysis creates the cohesion between those principles initially identified in this chapter and the link to validity in emancipatory research with disabled people.

This framework has a value in enabling researchers to take up more confidently, an emancipatory research model with the ability to address issues of validity and to specifically counter the actual or perceived threats to their validity. In addition, the listing of specific research principles of relevance to whichever group is concerned form the benchmark for an accessible contextual definition of validity. The concept of triangulation and the multi-dimensional approach, while derived from a positivist approach to research, can be constructively applied without imposing undue researcher ideology. This leads to what Denzin has described as a “thick description” (Denzin, 1989:84). This is achieved by set of experiential statements which “are sound and adequate and which can be substantiated” (Denzin, 1989:84), thus enhancing the validity of the account in its detailed analysis. These will be reported in Chapters Six and Eight.

Conclusion

To summarise the issues raised, what has been advocated, is high quality awareness, with the recognition of tacit and somatic levels of knowing (Heshusius, 1994); a structure which maintains the group process in a non-intrusive way but which uses a ‘soft rigour’; “going round the research cycle several times” (Reason and Rowan, 1981:250) by returning to original concepts and consistently recognising additional and growing knowledge; the use of contradictory arguments, particularly to

educate and equip the group with the ability to cope with challenge and conflict (Reason, 1994); the input of several different perspectives, for example, the partnership with non disabled people is crucial. This is in keeping with the approach of a number of other researchers. These include : Blumer who speaks of a notion of "joint action" (1969) which refers to the creation through interaction of a common set of meanings to describe a situation; Donmoyer who compares the student teacher relationship to research scientist and subject reclaiming the process as an empowering mutual learning interaction (Donmoyer, 1990). Others constructively use research partnerships (Maruyama, 1981; Treleaven, 1994; Archer and Whitaker, 1994; Reason, 1994; Bishop, 1996) as well as those examples previously cited in detail in Chapter Two. A final issue is the value of some form of replication as opposed to generalisation associated with traditional research (Reason and Rowan, 1981; Donmoyer, 1990; Reason, 1994). Each of these components adhered to, potentially ensure the recognition of the emancipatory value of the research, especially in the concept of validity as "achieving power" in the multi-dimensional sense. By highlighting threats to validity, an evaluative framework has been provided for a research methodology which can be seen to enhance visibly the lives of individuals and accomplish social change. To conclude this section, the last word goes to Reason and Rowan:

And finally we have shown that if we think of the validity of knowledge in process, which is tied up with a particular knower, there is an awful lot we can do to increase the validity of our inquiry (Reason and Rowan, 1981:250).

The next chapter will introduce the research group, describe the research methods and explore approaches to data analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Research Group Formation

Introduction

This section will be presented in two parts. The process of forming the research group will be described and the key issues for emancipatory research will be raised including ethical concerns. In the first part of the chapter, the group will introduce themselves using their own pen portraits. The research techniques used will then be summarised followed by a subsequent section on data analysis and the importance of the group process in an emancipatory research project.

As outlined in Chapter Two, two central frameworks were used as explanatory tools. The first represents the framework of Rees's steps which sought to create an accessible research tool within a focus group setting. The extent to which this provided a simple vehicle for the application and developing understanding of critical theory will be explored and the way I as principal researcher introduced the steps to the research group will be described. The issues raised by the presentation of a prescribed framework will be confronted and analysed in relation to emancipatory research approaches.⁶ The approach included use of personal examples to facilitate the initial process of theory building; a second avenue of exploration was that of the extent to which Fay's basic scheme facilitated an explanation of the social construction and social creation of disability as the critical theories on which the research was based. The basic scheme of enlightenment has already been summarised and a set of corresponding research principles (to both frameworks) have been developed in the context of emancipatory research and disability (Figure Three). The aim has been to demonstrate the potential of the basic scheme to underpin the work of Rees's steps which, in turn, provide a critical approach to empowerment. This has been done in a way which, it can be argued addresses the limitations of critical theory. The combined analysis of both theorists informed the process and analysis from the first stage which will now be described.

Making Contact: Identification of the Research Group

Within the process of making contact I sought to confront the ethical issues associated with forming a research group. I did this by utilising methods which built on other examples of emancipatory research. This deserves detailed review since the initial stages in preparation for an emancipatory project are crucial. The preparation can determine, by the nature of the approach, the extent to which the project is built on fundamental emancipatory principles. In order to lay a clear foundation for this chapter, I will restate the goals of this research based on the central research questions. Firstly, what role can an emancipatory model of research play in enabling disabled people to take control of their lives and accomplish change in their immediate environment? Secondly, what are the challenges facing researchers who set out to develop an emancipatory model. Finally, what contribution has the work of Fay and Rees made to an understanding of the evolution

of an emancipatory model? The process will be summarised below, making some comments on issues arising for myself as researcher during these initial stages.

The first step was in recruitment of tertiary students with disabilities (who I had decided would be my target group) in a way which ensured they did not feel in any way coerced or obligated into agreeing to participate. I had to be prepared to wait a long time for this to happen and could not be constrained by time-frames. This is the first difficulty which often confronts other researchers who either have their own submission deadlines for their academic qualifications or those imposed by funders who insist on a tight time frame to address their own research priorities. Although I was anxious to start, this was of secondary importance. I had decided to work with a group of disabled students from tertiary settings including Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington College of Education and The Central Institute of Technology. In preparation for recruitment of a research group I attended several meetings to become a part of the Can Do group⁵ since I did not presume to just be able to make demands on students I had not previously met. A certain amount of trust needed to be established first and I did this by participating in the work of Can Do and by talking a little at each meeting about what I was trying to do. I was known to some members of the group as was my work. After three months eight members of Can Do decided they wanted to have a more formal meeting and hear more about the potential research. During this period I had been talking to individuals outside of Can Do and explaining about the research and four students from other institutions elected to participate.

The first official recruitment meeting represented half an hour at the end of a Can Do meeting. I facilitated an open discussion on themes to address by saying what I was trying to achieve. My aim was to design a research project in co-operation with a group of disabled students where the research objectives were set by themselves through a process of identification of needs and priorities. I explained that the subject area could relate to any issue of concern they had. I related my reasons for wanting to design an alternative model. I asked for feedback on previous research projects they had been involved in or knew of as well as their perceptions of those either from personal or second hand experience. From there the process of conceptualising a model of emancipatory research began where some of the students present painted a verbal picture of what this model might be like and what part they may play. I resisted setting too many focus questions in order to avoid pre-empting discussion. I noticed that people were floundering when asked to reflect on ways in which research could help them. I explained the nature of “emancipatory research” and discussed the implications, both practical and ethical, for attempting to change the way research is conducted. Many already had taken part in a recent research project (Lang, 1993) which had yielded some excellent information on barriers within the system and were thus equipped with some prior research knowledge. However, this also meant that they had to consider making another major commitment to spend what might be considered extra time and energy. I suggested that the

⁵ The students with disabilities support Group at Victoria University.

research may become integral to their studies, providing a support for them and complementing their other activities. This aim was achieved in part or in total by the whole group which will be described in Chapters Six and Seven. I made a note at this stage in my reflection:

Even saying this in order to encourage participation is to some extent "controlling" the process. How people are recruited to participate in research projects is so often pre-empted and controlled by the researcher and the question must be asked, why should they wish to participate in my research? (Research Diary: July 1994).

Fook raised a similar concern in her work with research groups (1996) as discussed previously, and the question posed above is a pertinent one. Some of the arguments are personal: what personal support can I gain? Some arguments are political: how can we promote change for disabled people? Other arguments are professional: how can we pave the way for better education and employment opportunities for disabled people? These questions were gradually explored in group discussion at the beginning in order to enable an early identification of personal direction. I was aware of my key role as a researcher to motivate people to participate, to enable them to identify their contribution and needs in relation to the research process as well to allay their fears and concerns.

Exploring the research question

My first task in the formation of a group was to raise discussion with potential participants about research processes and their traditional understanding of them. I explained that rather than taking full responsibility for setting the agenda which was the usual task of the researcher, I wished to share that task in order to facilitate an identification of their own research agenda. I was challenged to maintain the emancipatory principle of research by disabled people for disabled people, in that my goal was to obtain a PhD. This inevitably imposed some constraints on the process in that I am forced to own this research. While I was able to offer space for decision-making, I was obliged to pose my own research questions which were about the use of emancipatory models of research and to be honest and clear with the group about my intentions in that context. It could be argued that a research project designed within such academic constraints could never be wholly emancipatory in that it is not uniquely designed by and for the disability community, rather by a Massey University postgraduate student. I could further argue, however, that I am a member of the disability community and that the main motivation has been to facilitate change for disabled people through a research process. The fact that I was a disabled student was instrumental in quickly breaking down barriers in spite of my potential position of power. I will return to this discussion in subsequent process analysis in Chapter Nine.

Having clarified the research objectives, I encouraged the co-ordinator of the Can Do group to take some initiative in suggesting topics of discussion which began a dialogue on the social construction of disability and an analysis of the status of disabled people in society. The hesitation and fear which ensued was significant when people were asked to set their own agenda. Clearly, to be directed is much less risk; the response was "it's exciting but frightening". Barriers in existence in the education

system were acknowledged and I explained how these linked to the social construction and creation of disability (Oliver, 1990) reflecting societal concerns and priorities. In our initial discussions we examined what these concepts meant for us in practice.

This was the first time many had the opportunity to name the theory in this way and translate it into reality for themselves. I was determined not to pre-empt the outcomes or to take any part in setting the agenda for our action; handing over power and responsibility in this way raised fears and a level of confusion since we as disabled people are often more familiar with direction and lack of control. The ensuing vagueness is a potential obstacle in this type of research particularly if working within set time frames; however sensitive, supportive facilitation overcomes this and the outcome is a research agenda genuinely decided by the group (Research diary: Nov. 1994).

People were inevitably wary of committing themselves especially to something so unstructured and vague. They were being asked what they wanted and the responsibility of choice was disturbing. From this point a range of themes was explored which I will expand on in the data collection section later in this chapter and in Chapter Six.

Summarising the Issues

I identified a number of issues from these initial stages which, I argue, have significance for this crucial process of forming a research group: Firstly, people find it difficult to commit themselves especially when it is so indefinite. This is the first hazard of trying to conduct such a research project since it may take a little while to formalize the foundation of the study. Secondly, I felt that I had to be content with informal commitment and allow people “to wander in and out”. Towards the end of the second meeting people had a clear analysis of their difficulty in accepting responsibility when they are accustomed to direction, and it was evident I, as researcher needed to provide more direction. Thirdly, it was clear that some of the insecurity experienced in making a commitment was compounded by practical circumstances such as ill health, examination pressures and the reality of daily living with a disability. It was difficult for the project to be conceptualised as anything other than my research, no matter how I approached the process of group formation and I had to accept that I would be obliged to work with that perception. (A diagram of research meetings from the first stage appears in Appendix Eleven).

On reflection, the first stage was frightening but stimulating and my own preconceptions began to disintegrate. For example, I had expected a much more enthusiastic response to the idea of being in control of a process like this since I had been so excited by that idea myself. It was clear that the amount of support and structure I would offer would have to be finally balanced with encouraging freedom of choice and independence. People could demonstrate interest but they wanted to wait around and see if there was anything in which they really wished to participate. This did not detract from the process since it was an integral part of it. However, as a researcher needing to form a group I admit to a degree of trepidation at the ‘hit-and-miss nature’ of this approach. Women attempting

to set up consciousness raising groups have cited similar issues seen to emanate from what Friedan (1963), describes as 'restless constraint' "felt by women whose lives are circumscribed within narrow confines" (Butler and Wintram, 1991:31). In other words the potential participants needed to know they could exercise their usually limited choices in this environment.

To summarise, students understood that they could withdraw from the project at any time, that they could participate on their own terms, and that they would have the right to have control over any material produced by the group or in relation to them as individuals. Confidentiality would be protected particularly in the writing up of the research and in the use of extracts of student stories for teaching purposes. The research group took five months to establish and eleven people signed their consent in January 1995. An application had been made to the Massey University Ethics Committee in the previous July and ethical clearance was gained in November 1994. This was compiled using the Massey University guidelines for human research. The information and consent forms given to participants are appended (Appendix Nine). Because I was working with students from Victoria University of Wellington and conducting much of the field work on their premises, I also sent a copy of the ethical clearance and the original application to the Victoria University Ethics Committee to ensure they were aware of the research being conducted on their premises. Those students who were studying at the College of Education were students for whom I had no direct tutor responsibility; hence no conflict of interest existed in relation to any course they were undertaking. As ex-students of mine, they were clear about our research relationship. The fact that I knew more about the individual lives of many students due to a past relationship as lecturer was acknowledged, and seen as an advantage in working with the research group. I was careful to assure those affected that I would only disclose information they had agreed to in writing and that mechanisms were in place to ensure that no-one would either unduly benefit or be disadvantaged by a previous relationship. All students were aware that the work when completed would be submitted for my PhD, would be held at Massey University for reference, and that work from the PhD would be published.

This is a suitable time to introduce the participants since all records from this point are compiled with the involvement of the research group. The ethical issues named above have led me to a dilemma as to what it is an acceptable level of disclosure regarding the individual situations of each student. I asked each of the participants to write a pen portrait of themselves which some found too difficult and asked me to do it for them. For those I wrote myself, I checked back with the students involved to comment on the accuracy and appropriateness of the information. Having been asked by my supervisor to produce more general information about the group, I felt I was not at liberty to write anything I had not previously checked out with them. The following summary has been edited by each member of the whole research group.

Participants: The Research Group

The group consisted of three men and nine women including myself. Those named below were the students who were most consistently involved and contributed most to the action research. However, three other students began the research who are not introduced here. One became ill and was not able to continue at University, one left tertiary education and began work and one remained intermittently involved and provided a useful Pacific Island perspective and a knowledge of research conducted in other universities. Ages ranged between 20 and 55 years. Impairments varied in severity and type and included dyslexia, lung diseases, lupus, back injuries and cerebral palsy. Half of the group came from middle-class backgrounds with professional parents while the other half identified as working class and felt that they were entering tertiary education late partly as a result of their disability and partly through lack of encouragement to study by their families. Two participants were Maori. Five students had acquired disabilities in later life which meant that their experience in some respects significantly differed from that of six who had lifelong disabilities and whose education had been affected, to some extent, by their experience of disability in their early years. Of those who had grown up with disability, three had been encouraged by their parents to succeed in a nondisabled world and all had been mainstreamed. This was in part due to the lack of special education facilities available in the areas they lived at the time of their early education. Four of this group came from middle-class professional homes where disability was either not accepted, "not an issue" or impairment was seen as a disability to be overcome. Two of these younger members succeeded well at University while two others struggled to complete courses and found the pressure too much. For one of this latter group, this was definitely a lack in his words of *internal motivation*. The encouragement he received resulted in an over-confidence in that he always believed he would become a famous writer or politician without any academic qualifications. Clear discrimination in the workforce resulted in the destruction of this fantasy. He subsequently joined the research group as a mature student (39 at the time of the research) and has used the research to reorientate himself into higher education. One other had an unspecified learning disability which meant that he was labelled as a slow learner in school but had not had a clear assessment of his needs. At the age of 26 he was undertaking the first year of Early Childhood training at the time of the research and was struggling with a system ill equipped to deal with his situation. One of the two identified as successfully dealing with higher education is a Master's student and the other at the time was a final year BA student with a record of high achievement. The remaining two with lifelong disabilities came from working class homes and grew up in country communities. Of these, one person's disability was undiagnosed until the age of thirteen years and, consequently, had been seen as an underachiever since her constant pain was overlooked and her instability as clumsiness. Once she was diagnosed, her teachers stopped expecting much from her and she left school at 16 years. She was in higher education (at the time of the research) as a mature student completing disability studies courses. The second person from a working-class home missed a huge amount of school because of badly controlled asthma and had attempted many courses after school which she

was too ill to complete. She overcame her lack of confidence academically, to go to University as a mature student to pursue part time study in religious and education studies, having brought up three children.

For the five who had acquired disability in later life, the issues were different. One young woman injured her back during her study which made an otherwise excellent academic track record more difficult to achieve. At the time of the research she was in the process of completing her Master's degree and had a good formal education. Four of the others were returning as mature students and had limited educational qualifications. All four were tackling higher education to some extent because of the challenges posed by their disabilities and the need to gain qualifications to work in less strenuous occupations. All of these students have disabilities which are highly debilitating, are, for some, at times life threatening, and some would consider they had limited social and family support. One of this group was a Maori woman who was an older person who identified age-related disability, had limited early education and for whom higher education was a great challenge. Another of this latter group was in her late thirties at the time of the research, was undertaking a law degree after many years of being a secretary in the work-force, whose experience of lupus and lupus related conditions forced her to re-evaluate her life and re-enter education. She also had limited previous formal qualifications. A third, in her late thirties has Multiple Sclerosis acquired in her twenties and has a young son. She had been working in the disability field without any formal qualifications and is now pursuing a Bachelor's degree at Victoria University.

I do not have permission to disclose any further details of the research group but they have introduced themselves below. While they do not claim to represent the disability community, they are a reasonably diverse group with a wide range of abilities and life experiences which have contributed to the outcomes recorded. I have noted that blind and deaf students are not represented and none of the research group had come through the special educational system, which I would argue is significant in terms of an analysis of the representative nature of the research group. They each acknowledged that they could be construed as having more power both individually and as a group than many other people within the disability community. This was due to their level of education (even though limited for some), their status as tertiary students, their ability to cope with the University environment and the fact that none were significantly disadvantaged by their extreme youth or old age. Their ability to participate in the development of an emancipatory model of research was certainly enhanced by these factors. The pseudonyms have been chosen by myself or in co-operation with them and this account has been checked by them as accurate and unlikely to breach the level of confidentiality required. They have introduced themselves as follows:

Sally

I have been at Victoria University for five years, the first four as a full-time student and the last year working in various positions at the university. My disability developed into a chronic condition in

my second year at university. I work with children with intellectual disabilities on a part-time basis and have a strong interest in alternative research methodologies and processes.

Jan

Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself. Born under a Scorpio star sign in the year of the rat, I am a 'Kiwi' with a British parent who has travelled, lived and worked extensively.

I am a gregarious "people's person" and an "ideas person" who enjoys working as a team member. I have a warm, friendly open manner. My interests include music, the arts, film, books, travel, people and their cultures. I have a particular interest in communication.

I have a postgraduate Diploma in Teaching English as a Second Language and trained primary Teaching Certification. I am a recent graduate with a BA degree in Education and Linguistics. I am currently enrolled at Victoria for a Master's degree in Linguistics. My research interests have been in policy and practice issues and language changes within continuing education and community disability training courses; examining cross-cultural, socio-linguistic differences in English as a Foreign Language (EFL); bilingual programmes and attitudes to bilingualism and the policy of internationalisation.

I have a cerebral palsy affecting my right leg and arm. This has helped make me a more determined, self reliant, innovative, versatile and resourceful person. I have had to find alternative routes to a solution to cope in a 'normal' world. I am also a practical person. I have had to learn to distinguish between my real limitations and those that were simply a little more challenging. I have learnt how to isolate personal skills, strengths and weaknesses both in myself and others. I am empathetic to those who are different and have a tendency 'to take each individual as I find them'.

The ability to see the world from multiple cultural perspectives, to express one's differing perspectives, opinions and values and to understand the limitations of viewing the world from one perspective is, I feel a necessity in our modern world. A two-way exchange is important and necessary to close the socio-linguistic and cultural gaps that contribute to misunderstandings, ignorance and fear of differences. I believe in the complementary nature of diversity and difference within a 'homogeneous' society.

Christine

I was diagnosed as having a chronic medical condition some twenty years ago. I had just turned twenty and spent the following three years undergoing intensive treatment including surgery. My employer supported me through that time until I was able to resume full-time duties. This was my first experience of an enabling practice.

In my thirties I realised I needed and wanted a new direction despite the seeming constraints of uncertainty, pain and tiredness caused by an impaired immune system. As I developed increasing understanding of the role I could play in my well-being I gained the courage to explore the previously other - and self imposed boundaries of my life. In 1991, I enrolled at Victoria University of Wellington. Initially I took papers towards a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy and Politics. In 1992 I applied and was accepted into the Bachelor of Laws degree course. I completed the requirements for the BA degree in 1995 and will finish the LLB degree in 1998.

I presently live in an inner-city town house and am a committee member and minute secretary of its Body Corporate Committee. I am also a student volunteer at the local community law centre. I particularly enjoy theatre, music, reading, classic cars, motor sport, travelling, trying new things (but draw the line at bungy jumping) and expanding my knowledge base. I am an active member of various groups including two classic car clubs, an 'investment' group, (strictly social), a book-reading group and of course, DARG (Disability Action Research Group).

Coral

Born June 1950, the oldest of four girls, I had asthma from a very early age. I went to school sporadically due to my illness until I was approximately ten years of age. I attended Oamaru Primary School at Mount Manganui and later college. I went nursing and became sick again and had to leave half way through my general nursing course.

I went to work for Scholls as a chiropodist assistant until I married and had my first child. I am the mother of three children, 21, 19 and 14, two boys and a girl. I now attend University part time, doing a double major in comparative religions and education. I am a member of DARG and Can Do and a committee member for the Sutherland Room.

I am also Vice President for the Wellington Teachers Dance competition Society Inc and have been a representative on Performing Arts 1996 which is the committee that ran the nationals in tap, ballet, piano and vocal.

Marie

I am 50 years old-I have CMT which is a form of muscular dystrophy. I have been married and I have three kids, all teenagers. I have been involved with the disability community for a long time and my son has the same disability. I have trained in disability studies and recently graduated from Wellington College of Education. I am very involved in sports with people with disabilities. I have worked with people with autism and I have a great interest in people in education for people with disabilities.

Malcolm

I am 40 years old. I have lived with disabilities all my life and I have come to understand the difference between being excluded and included in terms of physical disability. I am a cosmopolitan person and I enjoy the challenge of city life. I am deeply involved in left wing politics, even if it is now unpopular. I've always loved the masses but over the years I have come to love individuals as well. I enjoy communication and am currently a broadcaster by profession. I feel deeply about what happens to human beings.

Lunar

I am twenty five years old, was a disability studies student for three years and am now training to be an adult educator. I have a passionate sense of social justice for those whose experience is one of marginalisation and the work with DARG has provided the opportunity to strengthen that. I have felt empowered as a woman with a disability to be part of this process and it has significantly contributed to my learning about theory and research processes.

Patrick

I am twenty-five years of age and I have a lifelong disability. I am in my final year at Victoria and have been president of the Can Do group and other student groups over the years before joining DARG. I am committed to change for disabled students and I am actively working towards that in all I do. The work with DARG has increased my knowledge and self confidence. I saw the disability equity package as a positive initiative and I intend to stay involved.

Chase

I am forty-six years old and I have a child who is ten years old. I am studying at varsity full time. I am passionate about sport and wheelchair basketball and I am banging my head against a brick wall over the male attitude that dominates the sport. I love my son to bits and I would like to have more children. I take my mothering very seriously and it gives me insurmountable pleasure. My involvement with DARG and going to varsity has opened up career possibilities and directions.

Beryl

I am fifty years old and am a Maori mature student. I am currently undertaking the final year of my degree. The time with DARG was one of learning and I was able to make good connections between my experience as a Maori woman as well as a person with a disability. I was challenged by the task of working alongside other students to present a bi-cultural perspective on the training. The group offered a spirit of acceptance where I was able to be who I was without judgement.

Shaun

I am twenty seven years old and have been an early childhood education student. The time with DARG offered me the chance to be with students from other institutions and who identified as

having a wide range of impairments. My involvement with the research and the training has been a time of learning and personal growth.

Pauline

I am forty one years old and the research facilitator. I have a lung disease and osteoporosis which has been acquired as a result of the drugs I have been given. I came over from England alone in 1990 to start a new life in New Zealand which New Zealanders have helped me achieve. I live alone and benefit from the support of a large network of friends. At the time of the research I was a senior lecturer in Disability Studies at the Wellington College of Education. I now work as a manager for a disability organisation called DEALS and am Academic Director of a private training establishment called Learning Unlimited.

I have been privileged to work alongside such a stimulating and committed group of disabled students who have been my friends, colleagues and co-researchers. The experience of living and surviving with chronic illness and disability has given me strength and a determination to make achieving change for disabled people my life's work. The research with DARG and subsequently this thesis is a contribution towards that. I recognize the privilege I have been given in being able to conduct this research and I aim to ensure that disabled people generally benefit from the work done.

Data Collection

The data collection process spanned four distinct phases: defining objectives, development of a critical community and discovering a focus for action and evaluation. I will expand on each of these. I will now summarise the methods employed and make brief comments on their use.

Data was collected through the group process using diary entries based on critical reflection within Rees's steps to empowerment, investigation of current academic policies on assessment, access and proposed changes, searches on any previous research conducted with disabled people in other universities, interviews with academic, non-academic and support staff and integration of access audit findings into an overall research project. We ensured full participation by taping all meetings and making these available to all members, including those absent. Extra effort was made in co-ordinating action and facilitating dialogue with respect to the varying energy levels and access difficulties faced by disabled people in such an environment. We also developed a central audit file where all records of action/communication were kept. These were used to reflect on changes made, the progress achieved in meeting identified goals and recording developments. At each meeting, space was made for analysis and reflection around each stage of empowerment and the records reflect our findings. The aim of the presentation of the data was to demonstrate a model not only of successful emancipatory research but to provide a practical model of consultation. With a group this size democratic dialogue was possible. Like the research of the Otago Family Network (1992) what Carr and Kemmis (1988) call "symmetrical dialogue" was employed. This is the process

within a group dialogue where each participant has equal say in generating ideas and where decisions are genuinely made by the group. Part of the evaluation process was a corrective feedback process where there was ongoing reflection on partnership, control and quality of dialogue.

Emerging themes were identified with the research group via a brainstorming process, and were recorded on large sheets of paper. In this way they became central to group discussion and were regularly revisited. For example, as time progressed it was clear that a number of issues arising could be addressed by educating the staff and student body about disability. These were combined with those originally laid out in the group research diary at the beginning of the research where employment and access to a fairer examination process for disabled students was highlighted. Making the connection between the themes helped to facilitate a process of defining the social theories of disability using concrete examples. This was achieved on a personal and group basis as students began to relate their experiences and trust other group members. Group meetings were recorded from the beginning and transcripts prepared by myself as group facilitator/researcher which include my own reflection and evaluation. These were circulated to all research group members which they then used as the basis of their own research diaries. This provided the opportunity for all participants to comment on emerging themes, the group process and the planned actions. Space was made at each meeting for participants to comment critically on data summary, analysis and interpretation in order to establish how this matched their reality. Often a large component of the meetings would be used to discuss and build on the group reflections and views which became a good stimulus for settling down to the more arduous practical work of getting the training kit developed. This technique is known as “member checks” (Guba and Lincoln, 1981). The main research diary provided a central framework for data analysis and the opportunity for what our group named as the formation of a critical reflective community. This is discussed in-depth in Chapter Nine.

This feedback process comprised of three distinct phases: in the first, group members were encouraged to write responses to the questions raised in the diary or to challenge the accuracy of the account. These could either be sent to me between meetings, often after a telephone conversation, a medium students often used to deal with their reflections, or brought to the next meeting. It was important that all their thoughts were recorded as it would have been easy to lose important contributions as time elapsed; a second phase was a feedback process at the beginning of each meeting where each person made a statement regarding their own reflections on the research data to date and made suggestions as to changes in the main research diary. At this point, they would also report on any action they had been allocated to take on behalf of the group. This checking back was built into the group process and will be described in Chapter Six in detail. The third phase was the evaluation of the research process itself where each person presented their own perspective to the group and the dialogic approach facilitated open discussion and identified points of joint agreement on the nature of our conclusions.

A final phase ensured a more in-depth evaluation process where critical analysis of each part of the research process occurred. An integral evaluation process was woven through, but a two stage evaluation process was introduced after delivery of the training package by staff and students. The first evaluation measured the immediate effect on the perceptions and attitudes of staff in training as well as of facilitators. This had the added role of reporting to those who did not directly participate in the training allowing discussion around what could have been done better as well as evaluation of the obviously successful parts. The second stage ensured measurement of the impact of the training on the University environment. In this way the construct and catalytic validity (Lather, 1986) were addressed. The evaluation task initiated reflection around original objectives, the extent to which the group had achieved those objectives, the enhanced understanding of the social theories of disability and their impact in practice, and their awareness of different research approaches. Furthermore, the role of research itself in contributing to or challenging the social theories of disability was understood. They reflected in-depth on personal growth and learning sharing their perceptions of both their own changes and contribution as well as that of each other. They were able to trace group growth and changing dynamics as well as to overtly name the role each person had played within that process. The evaluation of the group experience in Chapter Eight describes this in detail and provides extracts of student input. They evaluated the research methodology itself, commenting on its value in achieving emancipatory objectives and in facilitating a fully participatory group process. Within their evaluation they each individually suggested a way forward for the group and stated the role they wished to play in the future of the research group. From these discussions, DARG Inc was born which will be discussed in depth in Chapters Eight and Ten.

A research report was made available to each participant (Appendix Eight) and I as researcher conducted a three hour session where all the different aspects of what we had done were explained in detail. This provided a forum where the accuracy of information and conclusions could be tested. More particularly, it became a teaching tool to explain and name the research process, revisiting difficult terminology and gave students a chance to look at ways they could use their learning in their own research. This will be critiqued in more detail throughout subsequent chapters and specifically in Chapter Nine.

The method of corrective feedback loops which identifies the influence of ideas on experience/action and vice versa (Heron, 1981), were systematically employed in the study to ensure accurate feedback between participants. For example, we reviewed the diary reflections sent out as a record from each meeting and compared those with the personal reflections participants had made at that time and subsequent to the last research meeting. The way the personal and group experience impacted on research action and vice versa was consistently analysed. This system of feedback provided a reflexive structure. I was careful as facilitator to minimise the imposition of unnecessary

structure which may have restricted spontaneity balanced with the need for clear boundaries to monitor the validity of the process.

The approach is built on Lewin's concept of action research as proceeding in a spiral of steps "each of which is composed of planning, action and the evaluation of the result of the action" (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988: 8). The action research spiral adapted by Kemmis and McTaggart was similarly used by the Otago Family Network and by Archer and Whitaker (1994). It was named as a process of analysis/action/reflection and used to positively inform the development of a more emancipatory methodological framework. This was further adapted by the research group to be defined as the analysis/action/reflection/evaluation cycle akin to Barndt's interpretation of the cycle (Barndt, 1990). Lewin's approach was characterised by the establishment of "self-critical communities of people" who finally succeed in "emancipating themselves from the institutional and personal constraints which limit their power" (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988: 23). The research group defined itself as a critical community which will be discussed in the evaluation in Chapter Eight. The diary formed a vital corrective feedback mechanism since whoever writes up the research must ensure that it is "the fruitful discussion of all co-researchers" (Heron, 1981:165). The records of meetings, the outcome of discussion and training seminars, all letters and memos written, as well as recorded dialogue with key University staff provided the ongoing account. This became a form of "audit trail" (Miles and Huberman: 28) similarly used by the Otago Family Network to check trustworthiness of data. Each participant has undertaken individually a form of final evaluation by completing a task agreed by the group to be shared in a process of critical reflection in the group context.

The research aimed to be firstly, practical, in terms of its accessibility and its day to day value for disabled students. This was demonstrated in the way the training kit raised and addressed issues of day-to-day concern for most disabled students. Secondly, it aimed to be collaborative, in that the structure facilitated joint decision making and easy access to and ability to challenge the process. This was achieved via the use of an agreed group approach which ensured all students were able to participate if they wished as well as to opt out if they so wished. Examples of the reflexive mechanisms included reviewing diary reflections, tape recordings of meetings made available to all participants and consistent checking out each person's views through a formalised group protocol as well as informal group monitoring. The latter was the specific responsibility of myself as facilitator although the students themselves took responsibility for the fairness of the group process. The collaborative and practical elements were maintained through group discussion around the research themes which were subsequently linked to examples from daily reality. Finally, objectives were regularly evaluated and monitored in conjunction with joint appraisal of outcomes. It could be argued that those elements contributed to the emancipatory value of the project.

To summarise, collaborative reviewing of problems facing participants was systematic within the framework of the group process. This meant that the combination of regular group meetings and

the diary records to encourage reflective feedback on the process, ensured a safe environment for discussion of issues arising and for the opportunity to change the research direction. Through this interactive approach to research, students gradually built on their understanding of critical theory in terms of their identification, personal and political, with the social theories of disability. Dialectical theory building occurred in that students related their changing understanding of the world around them, of the nature of the research process and the significance of their part in it. What constituted emancipatory research for this group became clearer for each participant as the process evolved. The interactive process encouraged positive skill sharing, exchange of critical viewpoints and reflections and a mutual education process between participants including that between participants and principal researcher. This is known as reciprocal reflexivity and critique and by rigorously adhering to this method, the danger of theoretical imposition and reification, on behalf of the facilitator was lessened (Lather, 1986). In other words the risk of unwarranted intrusion on, and alienation of, participants by myself as the principal researcher, through an over-concern with objectivity and my own pre-existing agendas was diminished. I have attempted within this process to describe reciprocity in practice in terms of the reality of the research process for a group of disabled people.

The evaluative process I have just described has been adapted from the combination of recommendations of writers previously cited (Fay, 1977, 1987; Lather, 1986; Opie, 1992; Fook, 1993, 1996) and can be summarised as follows. Firstly, the design was based on interactive dialogic individual and focus group interviews requiring intermittent appropriate self-disclosure on behalf of myself as facilitator. Secondly, regular evaluation meetings/interviews of both individuals and small groups (participants and research allies) facilitated the collaborative process and a deeper probing of research issues. Thirdly, joint consultation to define and interpret data with a working sub-group through whom data was recycled. The training session over the two days was planned in a small working party of disabled students representing DARG and the nondisabled partner. In this project I as researcher took responsibility for maintaining an emancipatory framework through ongoing collaboration with all research participants to build "empirically rooted theory" (Lather, 1986:446); finally, reciprocity was ensured through ongoing discussion of the key issues for the participating group. I, in partnership with the group, identified the need for the researcher to create a safe context for the enhancement of the conscientisation process (Freire, 1972).

Summary of Methodological Techniques

The thoroughness of the project evaluation and data analysis have been ensured by the blending of methodological techniques (named above) which can be described as multiple triangulation (Denzin, 1989, 1992, 1994; 1994; Morse, 1994). The complex process described involves: use of more than one method of data collection; multiple investigators (in this context the group at times acted as co-researchers); the theoretical framework has been approached from a multi-dimensional perspective; finally "between-method" triangulation (Denzin, 1989: 244) has ensured more than

one methodological approach. Morse advocates triangulation as a positive approach to action research:

Because different lenses or perspectives result from the use of different methods, often more than one method can be used within a project so a researcher can gain a more holistic view of the setting (Morse, 1994:224).

One aspect of the methodology was an underlying theme of biography which was used in a variety of ways implicitly and explicitly in story-telling. I will now briefly discuss the role of story telling in research.

The Role of Story-telling

The unravelling of bits of biography is a way of beginning the process of empowerment with those people who have felt powerless for a long time. In that process a marking of small victories will include the replacement of ignorance with information, and fear with a willingness to challenge authority (Rees, 1991:28).

The above quotation has particular relevance to many disabled people and biography within the individual and group research process has certainly performed the function of validating and informing people's lives. While denial of people's experience is a mechanism of alienation, the recognition of the role of biography and story telling in reclaiming research is one of emancipation. The stories were the method by which members of the group could have their unique voices heard. Issues of importance such as oral history as a methodology, my role as interviewer and the cohesion the story-telling process provided to the whole research experience, is explored within this thesis.

Biography has an integral role in relating people's personal experience to the shaping of the research agenda and process. Not only has the story of each participating individual been acknowledged within the group process, but also that of a number of disabled people who have thus helped inadvertently to set the research agenda. This includes through their published works such as their articles published in university newsletters and disability journals, their stories (Morris, 1987), verbal accounts and unpublished work including stories related in Masters' theses (Townsend, 1994), poetry and art. In this sense the research has been influenced by disability culture which is incidental to the experience of living with disability (Shakespeare, 1996). Stories were chosen as a formal research method in that I conducted an interview with each participant individually. I was interviewed by a group member for the purposes of her own research and that has also been brought together with the other stories. The stories, while they have been used in data analysis, have not been written up in detail in the thesis. It is intended that they will form a publication in their own right and stand alone, which has been a group decision. The process of collating the stories could not fail to impact on the outcome of the research in terms of the value of sharing them both for myself as interviewer and for the participants. Comments from the stories

have contributed to individual evaluations of the research process. In many ways by keeping any in-depth account of the stories out of this thesis respects totally the right of the group to own them and maintain control over their publication. Some aspects of their individual evaluations of the research process which were necessarily integrated to the process of relating them provide rich material within the evaluation section. The experience of collating people's stories is always a privilege for a researcher, one of which I was acutely aware.

Data Analysis

I have identified a range of methods by which data has been collated revolving around the central role of the group and group process. The research analysis was conducted critically in three ways: first, by myself as researcher using Fay's basic scheme and Rees's steps to empowerment; second, by the group via the group process which was also a source of data collection structured within Rees's steps; finally, individual participant evaluation of the experience made a substantial contribution to the overall data analysis. The question of the value of emancipatory research in facilitating change in the lives of disabled people has been encapsulated in a linked process of data collection and analysis mediated by an intensive group process. Some key aspects of the research analysis have included the integral value of finely balanced group work, the interpersonal dynamics and the key role of the researcher acting as facilitator of a group process including the need for a range of leadership styles in response to the needs of the group. I will summarise here the key areas to consider in data analysis. This will be followed by a summary to address those areas.

In the first part of this section, I will explore the approach to data analysis with an initial exploration of the key role of group work in emancipatory research. The significance of the small group will be explored and some issues of power imbalances within the group process will be addressed including the possible impact on data collection. The building of partnership in the group context will be reconceptualised as community building, and community development principles adapted from the work of Freire (1977), Peck (1987), and later, Ife (1995), will underpin the explanation of the dynamics occurring.

A second significant area for consideration within this research has been the importance of strong leadership to the project and how crucial I have been as researcher. Group members have explored their relative equality or inequality in terms of their positions of power and responsibility which it was recognized had been conferred at the institutional level. Another question for consideration in data analysis addresses the extent to which redress of power within a group process can also impact outside the group. This is at the level of the individual, for example, in terms of increased personal power, and of the group in its new-found ability to influence the political processes. How, having acknowledged one's power, can one set about challenging its significance within every action one takes beginning at group level? This question is crucial to an evaluation of how research has been conducted within an emancipatory process and achieved an emancipatory outcome. Within the

analysis, the level of skill required by a group leader to recognize the need to change and adapt one's role in response to changing group priorities, will be clearly identified.

A third key area for emancipatory research is the identification of the researcher. The question is asked how important is it that I as a researcher, in this example of disability emancipatory research, identify as disabled and what may be the difficulties faced or even disadvantages within the process of data analysis? For example is the critical analysis too limited or, can I as researcher over identify or unduly manipulate the process? A reflexive mechanism for participation within the group process and the reflective diary ensured that I had tools to monitor my own behaviour. I did share my story with the group during the course of the research at times when I thought it provided helpful examples to illustrate points being made. This was particularly true during the preparation of participants to enter the training process. My perception of the effect of this was that it broke down barriers and equalised power differentials in that I made myself vulnerable. I critique this aspect in more depth in Chapters Eight, Nine and Eleven since it is a key factor in determining the validity of the emancipatory process.

The final key area for consideration is the role of structure within the group and research process and the importance of clear boundaries to remove the danger of chaos and a lack of rigour in approach to data analysis. What will be addressed is the nature of the structure and who has the power to impose it.

The significance of the group process for data analysis

In this section, because of the importance of group analysis, I will discuss some key aspects of group work analysis. By doing so I aim to explore the central role of the group experience and its significance in the achievement of research outcomes. This will include the significance of the group experience in highlighting the challenges faced by researchers in initiating an emancipatory process. This will be followed by in-depth evaluation of group process in Chapters Eight and Nine.

I have previously explored (in Chapters One and Two) the notion of power and power differentials and the many ways in which power can be exercised. Within the layers of a pedagogical framework of power, the nature of the disabling systems within which we work have been explored. The exposure of inherent inequality at this micro level, in other words the effect of oppressive systems on the individual and its impact on the daily lived reality of a disabled person, has a number of more far-reaching objectives. By making this reality more visible in one environment, the group aimed to achieve a working model for a challenge at the meso level in the context of a tertiary environment. While the ultimate aim would be for transformation at a macro level in terms of impacting on government and social systems, this project has at least presented an approach which could be reproduced on a larger scale. The fact that the training kit developed by DARG is now being delivered in other tertiary institutions suggests change on a wider level subsequent to the achievements of the research group. The challenges faced by small groups in the face of attempts to achieve political

change have been recognized by women in the context of consciousness-raising describing the small group as "a small fish in a large ocean, a stormy one at that." (Butler and Wintram, 1991:31). However, the accomplishments of small self-help groups have been proven to have a significant political impact proven by the work of many. Examples of such self-help initiatives are those undertaken by women in the Australian suburb of Adelaide where community facilities were lacking and inaccessible (Egar and Sarkissian, 1985) and the work of the "Taboo Group" in Manchester. This organisation, of which I was an instigator, was set up for survivors of childhood sexual abuse and grew into a large service providing refuge for young women while maintaining its small group approach to support for those who required it (1983-1991). More recently Hera as part of a PhD project helped set up a home death group in Palmerston North (Hera, 1995). A critical analysis of the research in Chapter Nine expands on the role of group work in data collection and analysis.

It was in the context of the group dynamics that personal change could be analysed and the impact of the group activity could be measured within the University. The group process had a three-fold function in relation to the central research question. The first was to explore the possibilities of emancipatory research to achieve increased personal and political autonomy for a group of disabled people. Rees's steps to empowerment provided the foundation to explore the development of a community of partnership. This was achieved by referring to the steps in group discussion and by asking participants to reflect on the steps in relation to the stage of the research. This was then recorded in the research diary, circulated and discussed further at the subsequent meeting. The second aspect was to plan and carry out a piece of action research in collaboration with outside allies where the group process provided coherence and structure. The group was a working group where a systematic process of sharing responsibility for providing feedback was in place. This is discussed in more detail later in the next chapter. Students also shared different tasks in relation to the different components involved in planning the action research and wrote their own summaries and analysis of the process. This was part of the audit trail which was kept in a central group file. The third was to create a forum whereby student participants could assist me as the researcher with part of the data analysis. It was always clear that I was ultimately responsible for the analysis of the research case study as a whole even though they were at liberty to comment on and change any of my conclusions. This occurred throughout the research in terms of the monthly diary recordings through the established feedback mechanisms and overall analysis of some parts of the research data. The latter was achieved through a final evaluation of group process using a structured framework and through the encouragement of critical reflections on their own personal growth. At each meeting students made space for evaluation of the process to date both in terms of the theory and Rees's steps and also in terms of their own experience and personal growth. This was recorded as an integral part of the data analysis. The training programme was evaluated by those students who participated as well as by programme participants. The group process will be described in detail in Chapter Six and analysed in Chapter Seven using records of a joint evaluation process. The practicalities of data analysis are expanded on in the next two chapters.

The role of the researcher and the issue of leadership

Leaders who deny praxis to the oppressed thereby invalidate their own praxis. By imposing their word on others, they falsify that word and establish a contradiction between their methods and their objectives. If they are truly committed to liberation, their action and reflection cannot succeed without the action and reflection of others (Freire, 1972:97).

To clarify the issues in data analysis and the complexities involved in the process within an emancipatory framework, it is necessary to contribute at this stage a section on leadership and the role of the researcher.

A consideration of the concept of leadership will provide some clarification to this discussion. Leadership is more complex than one often perceives: management and community development literature names the range of styles of leadership: authoritarian, consultative or enabling (Hope and Timmel, 1991). It is often seen as a skill which some people have and others do not but it is a skill which can be developed. In terms of group interaction it involves: observing what is happening to individuals, identifying their needs and those of the group and learning ways of dealing with those needs (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Ife, 1995; Fook, 1996). In any analysis of the group process one has to start with the group leader by identifying the nature of the leadership style and the chosen function of the leader, in this case as researcher (Freire, 1972, 1985; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Wadsworth, 1984; Hope and Timmel, 1991; Fook, 1993; McNiff, 1993; Reason, 1994; Janesick, 1994; Ife, 1995, 1996; Bishop, 1996; Treleaven, 1996). If a research process is to be emancipatory, the outcome of the data analysis must prove that empowerment has been achieved at the level of the individual, the group and the environment. Data analysis set out to prove that the experience of each and every participant was a liberating one and that reciprocity had occurred between group members as well as between researcher and group members (Heron, 1981; Reason, 1994). I, as researcher had to consider a constant balance between imposing my own ideology, passion and experience and contributing them constructively to the group-building experience.

To ensure integrity of data analysis, it was crucial at all stages to acknowledge the considerable power I held, given my position as a lecturer and a PhD student. While the fact of being a doctoral student is not necessarily a position of power and in fact adds to the range of commonalities with the other students, it gave me a different motivation and perspective on the research. McTaggart speaks of the "folly of action research groups and critical communities which do not address the problems of differential status of participants" (McTaggart, 1991:58). Within the research I have questioned the extent to which my own status had an impact on the group process and the need to avoid manipulation in my identification as a disabled person. I have also questioned the extent to which true equality can be achieved given that "the espousal of a value for equality does not in **itself** ensure that equality will prevail" (Brown, 1992:21). This recognizes the different abilities and insecurities people can experience. I addressed the issue of equality and that of my own potential to unduly impose my own opinions, by formally soliciting feedback on my own performance as well as

ensuring a structure whereby students could safely offer their own insights. This involved making space for individual feedback in writing, by telephone, before the group or after the group as well as in the context of the group process, the mainstay of the analytical framework. 'Symmetrical communication' enabled group members to have maximum opportunity to participate on an equal basis. To critique the process in this way enabled people to understand the way meanings could be partly constituted as a result of such power differentials and to provide an opportunity to plan action free from coercion (McTaggart, 1991:58). A redefinition of equality in the context of a partnership model of research will be presented in Chapter Six to demonstrate the integral evaluative process. Some analysis of the nature of manipulation will be offered in the context of the discussion around the facilitator role later in this section.

Leadership skills are ones which are exercised in a range of situations including groups, where it involves taking people's feelings seriously, soliciting and accepting constructive feedback about one's behaviour as a leader and making changes consequently (Peck, 1987). By doing so one demonstrates that one has valued what people have said and that one wishes to have a positive influence in their lives as well as on the group. Hope and Timmel adapt Freire's literature to define leadership and state that "it takes sensitivity, humility and love to develop one's skills as a leader, and it takes a number of years practice" (Hope and Timmel, 1991:47).

I as group leader have been required to take on three roles interchangeably: the facilitator, animator or co-ordinator (ibid). These are commonly identified in literature and all have relevance to this discussion. I will clarify the effect of each role to underline the impact of changing roles on data analysis. Firstly, I as facilitator provided a process, took a step back and enabled the group to discuss their own content in the most satisfactory way. This was in keeping with the overall role of researcher. Secondly, I in some respects played the role of 'animator' who not only provides a process but guides people to share their concerns, information and opinions, sets goals, make decisions and plan action. An animator has insight into the power dynamics in the group whether they be reflected in terms of people's abilities/disabilities, gender or race and has a responsibility to enable the group to identify the source of conflict and work through it. Thirdly, I was required where appropriate as a group leader to also be a co-ordinator who draws people together, facilitates networks resulting in actions and events of benefit to the group or groups concerned. It is important to distinguish this range of definitions and to see that a researcher within an emancipatory model may be one or all of these types of leaders according to the needs of the group concerned.

Freire speaks of the role of a researcher as a "liberating educator" (Freire, 1987). The difficulty in separating the role of educator/leader is significant for this kind of research. I would agree that I have personally learnt what good leadership is about through some painful experiences both as a group member and a group leader. While I have described myself as a facilitator at times through this process and have certainly by introducing Rees's steps been concerned with finding a structure which the group could own, I have gone beyond that neutral role to share my experience and to

stimulate participants to think critically, to identify a research agenda and to explore solutions such as the disability equity training package. Strictly speaking this more involved role makes me what Hope and Timmel describe as an 'animator' whose characteristics were described previously.

The leadership style I have used has aimed to respond to the needs of the group as and when those needs change. In this sense I have used a leadership style which allows this flexibility. The authoritarian type of leadership has been recognized as stifling where life is at stake (Peck, 1987; Hope and Timmel, 1991; Butler and Wintram, 1991). This kind of leadership has had no place in the research. The consultative style has also had a limited role but is one often witnessed in the types of research I have cited and its limited emancipatory value has been explored. An example to illustrate this is that of a researcher who goes in with a clearly set personal agenda which s/he wishes to explore with a focus group. S/he may come out with more information on which to act owing to the information uncovered but finally the original agenda is the one carried out. I have cited examples of this type of leadership in the Regional Health Authority meetings where the language of empowerment has been adopted within a framework controlled by the decision-makers. I have also pointed out that this may cause confusion in that in a superficial sense the messages sound correct but that in practice the impact of the process detracts from people's ability to truly participate in a way which values them. I have been careful to differentiate between the styles named and those employed.

A third type of leadership style is enabling and is closest to the type I have modelled with the research group. An enabling leader hands over the decision totally to the group to define limits and make decisions or alternatively the leader can define the limits and enable the group to make the decision. I will give examples in subsequent chapters of both these approaches and their impact on the group process. Sometimes to hand over totally the responsibility for decision making can be disabling as opposed to enabling and I have recognized the need to take the role of asking critical questions and making pertinent suggestions to offer a more educational framework in terms of research practice. Butler and Wintram (1991) describe the skills required by facilitators in this mode. They recommend two people take responsibility for the group participation and that skills include:

The ability to support in a non-judgmental way, keeping silent and listening, knowing when to disclose details about personal experience, knowing when to offer appropriate information (Butler and Wintram, 1991:40).

I often asked for a volunteer co-facilitator at group meetings at the early stages and at later stages students naturally fell into the role of co-facilitation. Data analysis at later stages was much more co-operative as the group understood the concepts and recognized the key components of data collection. For researchers entering into an emancipatory process, the often subtle difference between the different definitions of leadership is crucial to the defining the difference between traditional action-research and emancipatory action-research which has been briefly discussed in

Chapter One and examples have been offered in Chapter Two. Chapter Eleven will provide a framework for specifically monitoring researcher behaviour both in terms of group reflexivity and self-reflexivity.

Identification of the Researcher

Another important question for analysis has been to address the issues to consider as a disabled person in the role of researcher. The significance of a shared experience and its relevance to emancipatory research was explored. This includes an in-depth exploration of the challenges faced where all participants including the researcher identify as disabled. The analysis has evolved based on a recognition of power dynamics, unequal power experienced in all groups and the need to value different perspectives within a group of marginalised people. Mansbridge speaks of the need to equalise influence in women's groups:

Each individual brings to the group different levels of expertise, personal attractiveness, verbal skill, self confidence, access to information and interest in the task. Therefore, a) each group must reduce inequalities that can be reduced and b) understand and find ways to deal with inequalities that cannot be reduced (Mansbridge, 1973:61).

Butler and Wintram, (1991) also speak of this danger of excluding women due to a perception of the level of marginalisation they experience. Questions are raised as follows: "were women inadvertently excluded because they were not oppressed enough? Were they seen to be suffering an "appropriate" level of deprivation?" (Butler and Wintram, 1991:34). Brown points out that the nature of "irreducible inequalities" is not identified, but the message is that different abilities are inherent to a group process, that the facilitator is responsible for fostering co-operation on the basis of these differences, and should guard against fostering competition. Barker warns also of the "false equality trap" (Barker, 1982:82) in women's groups with female facilitators who minimise the reality of differences between women:

This conjures up a mythology of equality which glosses over structural positions in the group, and differences in experiences of oppression and in possession of knowledge and skills (Butler and Wintram, 1991:74).

Barker attempted to avoid domination by merging into the group which led to informal and unstructured discussion which Rowbotham has labelled a coercive form of consensus (Rowbotham, 1979). All of the above points have been recognized as significant in this example of disability research and the ways in which group process has addressed these concerns will be fully discussed in subsequent chapters.

The Significance of Structure for an Empowering Group Process

The group structure underpins all of the above sections in the context of data analysis. A clear structure ensured a rigorous and credible approach to both data collation and analysis. Following on from the issue of power imbalance, the next question is what is the significance of and need for structure to facilitate a group process in order to adhere to emancipatory principles and successfully critically reflect on the research outcomes?

For those interested in the development of a praxis-oriented research paradigm, a key issue revolves around this central challenge: how to maximise the researcher's mediation between people's self-understandings in the light of the need for ideology critique and transformative social action *without becoming impositional* (Lather, 1987:269) [emphasis in original].

I have found Freire's concept of a "liberating educator" to be a useful starting point in exploration of group processes and I consider that as a researcher, I have used the philosophy of the liberating educator to conduct the research. I have consistently referred to pedagogy as central to the emancipatory experience and demonstrated this in action within the steps to empowerment. To explain the nature of the group structure, I approached the task as an educator in full agreement with Freire that the traditional dichotomy which separates research and teaching is a destructive one:

Research is more and more divided into specialities where a deeper knowledge of the part does not teach you more about the totality, where the person doing research is a 'scientist' or 'theorist' who does not dirty his or her hands in reality while the teacher does not research the conditions for education (Freire, 1987:179).

This quote is particularly pertinent in the research environment we have chosen. He describes liberatory education as grounded research, grounded in participants' daily lived experiences. The structure of this "experiential research" has been conceived within this philosophy, but I as a researcher had the task of initiating a structure which enabled participants to take on the roles of co-researchers with the goal of conducting a piece of action research. I aimed to achieve a model of research where participants were involved in every aspect of the process similar to Heron's full experiential research model where:

Each person involved is both researcher and subject. Each is involved as co-researcher, contributing to the research propositions of all stages from the working hypotheses to the research conclusions (Heron, 1981:156).

When one considers strategies for facilitating groups within an emancipatory process where participants have control over the process, the challenge is to decide on some structure which minimises imposition of researcher ideology on the group, or constrains the group from exploring avenues of importance. When aiming at building a research community where there is what Peck

refers to as a "flow of leadership" (Peck, 1987:73) it is essential that "some kind of control must be relinquished. For it is a situation in which it is the spirit of community itself that leads and not any single individual" (Ibid).

Padilla discusses the challenge of adapting Freire's approach to create an emancipatory research model and underlines the need for transparency in methods and structure: "it is crucial to determine the specific methods and procedures used to carry out any activity labelled an investigation" (Padilla, 1993:156). Also, the need for structure such as that provided by Rees's steps in the group exploration is propounded by Padilla:

Viewed from a pedagogical perspective, the encoded generative themes form a curriculum that systematically fosters the development of critical awareness by the subjects about themselves and about the conditions that surround them (Padilla, 1993:156).

The absence of structure is likely to be as disempowering as an authoritarian structure. A lack of structure either allows strong people to take over completely or less confident individuals feel more disempowered by the process. The first effect has been described by Freeman as "the tyranny of structurelessness" where "elite members are able to wield unchallenged and unchallengeable power" (Freeman, cited in Brown, 1992:19). There can be a tendency by facilitators who wish to carry out participatory research in a non-manipulative way to let the group decide. However, as Freire says: "the opposite of manipulation is not *laissez-faire*, not denying the teacher's directive responsibility for education" (Freire, 1987:171).

There is often confusion about the nature of the researcher's role in this type of research and I have already talked about the dangers of manipulation including use of my position as a disabled person. While I identified with the concept of being a "liberating educator" (Freire, 1987), one could rightly ask if this is still using my position as a lecturer to manoeuvre the process in the direction I would wish. There is a constant balance to be achieved between directiveness and allowing a group to decide on its own structure. To go too far either way, could be construed as manipulation and consequent disempowerment: "The power relations of manipulation depend on the power relations of leadership" (Fay, 1987:123).

The effects and nature of this manipulation can often be invisible, making it even more insidious and if disabled students were subject to it, they may not even recognize it for what it is, so close is this to their daily lived experience. This manipulation, which is not deliberate but which benefits the powerful, is described by Fay as the most destructive type owing to the invisibility of the mechanisms for oppression. In this research context the mechanisms would be less visible because of fewer obvious power differentials. To look at these mechanisms gave me further insight into ways to avoid

manipulation in the development of an emancipatory group structure. Lukes describes this “subtle manipulation”:

It functions by keeping the conflict between the oppressors and oppressed latent, so that the former control the latter without there being any overt, actual disagreement, and without there being any conscious knowledge on either of their parts that the interests of the oppressed are systematically ignored (Fay, 1987:123).

The evidence of this process for disabled people in society is strong and can be witnessed in disability services built to support the most vulnerable (Wolfensberger, 1990; Perkins, 1996). The danger within the research process lies in the fact, that, according to Fay “the powers involved in relations of leadership and manipulation both build on the self understandings of the powerless” (Fay, 1987:125).

Given that critical theory aims at empowerment and attempts to liberate people partly via exploring their self understandings, and that identical mechanisms can be used constructively or destructively, the reflexiveness of the group/research process must consistently expose any manipulative, disempowering aspects of the group structure. This clearly has a direct effect on the particular interpretation placed on people's new found self- understandings. In Chapter Six, I will describe and define the exploratory process of development of an empowering group structure, the framework for a critical community. In this chapter I have offered a framework for a methodological analysis in relation to a synthesis of accepted traditional research approaches but the research framework and the methods have been jointly chosen by the research participants creating a methodology of participation through partnership.

I take Bishop's challenge that the construction of a set of rules and procedures imposed from outside can “remove control over what constitutes authority of the text from the participants” (Bishop, 1996:224). His concern that Maori researchers can fall into the trap of using external methods of validity is one which I have found myself falling into. The emphasis throughout has been on the combined efforts of research participants and nondisabled allies who have contributed to the methodology in their participation support and expertise. As Bishop says, “experience builds and compounds experience” (ibid) and he cites Ballard in valuing the contribution of “colleagues with experience” and “kaumatua” (Bishop, 1996:224). The central research question in relation to the value of emancipatory research allows exploration of the extent to which autonomy and ownership can be retained by the group and what level of outside involvement in analysis of the research is required to uphold the validity of the work. In Chapter Seven, I will present an analysis of the group process including management of group dynamics and the evolution of the structure in relation to Rees's steps to empowerment. The next chapter will describe the research process as it unfolds using the framework of Rees's steps.

CHAPTER SIX

Partnership In Action:

Describing The Research Process

Introduction

This chapter describes the research process as it occurred. It also highlights key research findings including the development of a group process which became central to the research model. Rees's steps to empowerment were used as a methodological tool. The steps combined with Fay's basic scheme will contribute to an evaluative process in Chapter Eight. The events will be presented using extracts from the research diary to tell the story. (Diary entries and students' personal evaluations appear in italics). I will quote the reflections made by myself and the group in relation to Rees's steps as events occurred.

The aim of this chapter therefore, is three-fold. In describing the group process in some detail, the way Rees's steps to empowerment (1991) have been used with a group to examine the possibility of an emancipatory methodology will be demonstrated. A second aim is to report on group reflection as well as offer some initial reflections on the experience as principal researcher. The subsequent evaluation in Chapter Eight will link the process to the steps and explain the group dynamics. Finally, the account will seek to define the issues facing disabled students in a tertiary setting. It will make visible some of their lived experiences and indicate a course of action chosen to challenge the system to change.

The chapter will be presented within four key areas representing four phases of the research. The first phase involved **the setting of objectives** where students grappled with the options before them. This includes the official formation of the research group, the introduction of Rees's steps to empowerment, the beginning of a group identity, the creation of a research plan and the summary of objectives. The second phase saw **the development of a critical community** where the group emerged as a cohesive force and with a clear identity while continuing to set objectives. A third phase involved **the focus of the action research** where the events around the development of the disability equity training are described. This section will be subdivided into a process of establishing allies, preparing for initial presentations, submission to key University staff to obtain funding, pre-course training and establishing ownership. The group then entered a **final evaluation** phase which will be briefly outlined, where analysis of both research process in terms of the significance of the group process and the research action, particularly the disability equity training package, were the central concerns. The setting of objectives like evaluation became integral to the process and the way the group have consistently reviewed progress and objectives will become clear. Chapter Seven will describe the development and delivery of the training in more detail.

In the first section the account is taken almost exclusively from the research diaries and reflects the essence of group discussion. Where I am commenting as a researcher, I have made this clear by using 'I' statements as opposed to 'we'. In the diary, in addition to the recordings, I offered my reflections as a researcher for the research group. This aimed to provide a valuable learning tool for each student and to facilitate critical thinking in relation to Rees's steps to empowerment. Fay has been subsequently used in my own research evaluation as will be demonstrated in Chapter Eight. Students were, however, introduced to critical theory in the context of the social theories of disability which became the central theoretical framework on which the research was built. In some instances the quotes are taken direct from the record and the rest of the text will be a summary of the key aspects of a detailed discussion. The wording of the group records have not been changed and my own reflections are those which I offered at the time of the research.

Key Area One: Setting Objectives

In the section on data collection, the initial contact and the formation of the research group was described. The process of defining objectives began at this early stage as students explored the concept of social theories of disability and concrete barriers to integration. Discussions at this early stage focused on such issues as unemployment since that was of paramount concern to many. They also reflected on the need for education and change in legislation to facilitate integration as opposed to the constant pressure for disabled people to prove themselves on the terms of nondisabled people. Students expressed the opinion that employment for disabled people should become the norm rather than something to be tolerated in certain circumstances by some enlightened employers. They also discussed the link between tertiary education and employment including the role of the University Careers office in supporting disabled students.

I raised the issue of consultation and the need for good models of consultation in a range of areas which affect disabled people. The process of exploring the issues is underlined as valuable in itself. It enabled us to identify the importance of telling the employer, academia and society in general that "I am a person with a disability and this is my reality." The options for us would appear to be: do we make that a challenge or do we hide and assimilate?

It was acknowledged that one advantage of doing this study with a group of University and college students is that they can cope with a certain amount of research terminology and use it constructively. This makes one potential power imbalance less of an issue, that caused by inaccessible research language (Barnes, 1996; Bury, 1996). Sally asked me if I would help her do her Masters research with children with special needs. I suggested that she may be able to use the work she would do within the research process to develop a methodology but I also directed her towards a good source of information. The concept of reciprocity was significant from the beginning in that I was happy to act as a resource as well as facilitate a process which could have multiple benefits for individuals as well as for the group.

I did subsequently lead the discussion a little in order to ease the decision making process by offering reflections such as *each person's story would have a validity in itself* and *that education itself may also be a topic for exploration*. I asked the group to think about who may wish to be involved and to go away and reflect on this. Students expressed difficulty in making such a decision - they saw it as a wonderful opportunity which was also "*quite scary*". One student said this is "*vague*". Another student analysed the chaos I had caused by identifying that I had come in and instead of imposing a structure, I had said, "this is your process what do you want?" To be asked such a question is so unusual that people were thrown into a state of confusion. I was determined not to make the decisions for them but I was prepared to facilitate, take direction from the group and take responsibility for the administration of the research and keeping everyone informed. The experience as one person said was like: "*trying to write an essay when you're not quite certain what the topic is*" (Comment by group member).

I grappled with my need to guide and structure the discussion. The research record emphasised this:

From my perspective I am having to resist directing the meeting and introducing topics which are of burning importance for myself. The fact that there have been silences and the accusation of vagueness have in fact challenged my ego; I am accustomed to being up front giving people direction and guidance which comes from my professional role. I feel I have had to risk being seen as inadequate and inept in not providing good structure and focus. It was a relief when students analysed what was happening in their own evaluation as part of the process of empowerment (Diary entry: 20th July 1994).

Many of those wishing to participate in the research were about to undertake exams and in order to comfortably contribute time and energy to a new venture, it was clear that they would need freedom from such practical pressures and associated anxiety. In recognition of such needs, we organised that the first meetings would take the form of support groups for those students who were about to graduate and move on to a new situation. Each student identified as having a story to tell and acknowledged the value to other disabled people of their particular stories of struggle. By the end of the second exploratory meeting we had a tentative commitment from ten students and a date was set for the first official research meeting. One more student subsequently joined us.

The research group is officially formed

The first official meeting of the research group occurred in November 1994, five months after my initial contact. The challenge both to participate in and to take a greater degree of responsibility for a research project was a significant one for the students involved whose previous experience of research had on the whole been one of disempowerment. I reflect in my early findings that this stage could be linked to one of Rees's stage of empowerment: **resisting a return to powerlessness** in that it was acknowledged that the prospect of breaking new ground and the opportunity to challenge one's self concept was a frightening one. Even within exploratory meetings participants passed

through several stages that is: **Identifying themes, developing political awareness** (in their analysis on unemployment), **experiencing solidarity** in the identification with the women's movement and the experience of oppression of disabled people by society. Finally, the group found itself often revisiting the step **resisting a return to powerlessness** where they laughed at themselves for expecting me to take a lead and structure it for them. This was the very experience they were challenging in their political analysis. They evaluated at different stages throughout the process as well as at the end, where participants made a commitment to at least reflect on the process. Each person signed a consent form (Appendix Nine). An information sheet had previously been distributed.

Rees's steps to empowerment introduced

The concept of emancipatory research was discussed again with the group and a brief discussion was held around the potential of critical theory. Fay's basic scheme underpins the analysis presented in the research diary. I introduced Rees's steps to empowerment on large sheets of cartridge paper at the beginning and in this sense the first meeting was run like a workshop. The steps were similarly mounted on the wall or placed on a central table in all subsequent meetings to facilitate analysis and to enable the reflective recording which characterised our research.

The date for the first meeting was particularly chosen to suit those students who had been undertaking exams and who were about to graduate. We met in the Sutherland Room of Victoria University which is the most accessible place for disabled people, but it was noticeable the difficulty many of us had reaching the room given the many different levels the University is built on and the lack of signposting. I had previously sent out invitation cards to each individual student giving directions and details of arrangements. I made this personal contact with each person throughout the research process with a personalised note to each to ensure that they knew that their individual contribution was valued and noticed. I referred to Rees's steps to empowerment (Rees, 1991) and began to describe the meanings of each step in terms of my own understanding of disability and a little in relation to research. I reflected on what I had learnt from living and working with a disability, on the value of the learning experience involved and on changes I had been able to subsequently make in my environment as a result of this self-knowledge. The issues these statements raised became central to the group discussion:

Sally began by referring to acquiring and using language and its importance for our project. Extensive discussion ensued regarding the power of language including the necessity for us to monitor our own potential to exclude each other as well as other people by our insensitive use of complex or alienating language. It has become clear how often we could inadvertently disempower people through use of terminology which others do not feel able to challenge. Not only do we need to focus on the structures which oppress us and the language commonly used by professionals but also the way disabled people sometimes treat each other and create a hierarchy of disability. It is in this way that we are tempted to collude with abusers

of power. It is this, which Freire refers to when he speaks of "the oppressor within the oppressed" (Freire, 1972:137). (Diary entry: 16 Nov, 1994).

Maintaining use of the steps as a discussion tool, the group entered into identification of the foundations of the experience of the social construction of disability. They named different examples in terms of Rees's steps as they reflected their own experience. We identified a range of themes which included three key areas: disabling effects of the educational system; the advantages of solidarity but not to the exclusion of others; and the importance of identifying the difference between autonomy and segregation.

I explained that the research question with which I had started out was chosen to provide maximum opportunity for a research group to choose their own areas of exploration. The central question related to the potential of emancipatory research to achieve change for disabled people. This underpinned initial discussions. This involved change on a personal level as well as within their immediate environment, namely an educational institution. The question was at this stage revisited in order to clarify a research agenda. It was suggested that a list of topics was compiled which may become avenues of exploration. I explained that I had already chosen to conduct an action-research project to provide a research forum where they were the central players and within this, they could choose from a range of possible methods to achieve their projected outcomes. Some people expressed their desire to look at issues of funding as fundamental to change and examined the optimal benefit each individual could achieve from entering the research process. It was clear that we had here the nucleus of a support network which was already in operation. As we all shared individual stories and experiences we consistently returned to the same focus:

How could we challenge the system to enable students with disabilities to gain appropriate support and to enable them to compete to gain degrees with the same level of success as other students? Special arrangements could be made quite easily for some people while others had been forced to settle for an aegrotat degree. Even though previously we thought that the main problem was gaining employment it seemed obvious that if change did not occur at the level of the powerful educational institution nothing would change. (Diary entry: 16 Nov 1994).

The need to set ground rules, including the need to challenge each other on issues such as the use of exclusive language and of confidentiality were acknowledged. Acknowledgement of this reduced the potential for such a group of people with a wide range of abilities and disabilities to disable each other directly and indirectly. The need for individual responsibility to be self-reflexive as well as for mechanisms for monitoring the validity of our processes was discussed. The group suggested that at each meeting each person would feed back their personal insights, their response to my own, and any issues which had arisen in the interim. I reflected at this stage that the discussion of language was the first step to thinking critically about the social theories of disability in the examples of the disabling effects of certain language and what this implied about other peoples' attitudes to

disability. I raised the concern that we would generate huge amounts of data in relation to our research action but the group was prepared to take responsibility for keeping the research material manageable. I was clear that each student would have the opportunity to learn about the mechanics of this research and to fully participate in critiquing and changing the methodology and methods as the project unfolded.

I also shared these observations with the group in the research diary:

I have been impressed by the way each individual has bonded with each other in the group, committed their support to the research and agreed to take full responsibility for their part in it. There is no doubt that the concept of ownership has been quickly taken on board and is responsible for the great success of our first meetings. These first meetings are crucial in the exploration of an emancipatory methodology. Each aspect of planning including the minutiae of finding an accessible room, time of day and responding to students' practical needs are all of equal importance. To ignore any of these issues would instantly invalidate the emancipatory objectives. (Diary entry: 16 Nov 1994).

In my initial proposal I had identified a range of possible topics. I had previously informed students of this proposal but suggested that they read it after they had set their own. I explained that I did not want to directly or indirectly manipulate the outcome since the extent of the influence of my proposal could never be measured. I had wanted the agenda, as far as possible, to be chosen by the students. While I did not present these topics for discussion, the fact that the students came up with a similar list independent of my input suggested that my experience as a student with a disability had equipped me with the necessary empathy for the issues. I considered that this certainly facilitated my ability to work in partnership with disabled students. It also created the necessary openness to adapt to new themes and experiences. Group discussion focused on changes being made:

I am witnessing increased confidence and self-respect as people are learning about themselves and their reality. This has accompanied the realisation that disability is "not your fault" and it not only changes one's own self image but also the perceptions of others. I was excited by how quickly discussion around Rees's steps to empowerment facilitated the identification of each person with what empowerment was for the individual in a practical sense. The richness of political and self-awareness of the group has meant that the identification of objectives could be achieved reasonably easily. I do not consider that any compromises have been made in terms of the attempt to construct emancipatory methodology except as I previously recorded the fact that I chose the framework of Rees's steps (Diary entry: 7 Dec 1994).

The group grappled with attitudes to and definition of disability when considering priorities and spent some time gaining clarity around the social construction and social creation of disability. I explained that their understanding of the difference between these theories was crucial in the planning of action which would effectively challenge the key systems and structures. From a research perspective, the amount of common ground was remarkable but the uniqueness of

individual experiences also enriched the group as people shared their stories of the University environment. My own role at that time was to share my knowledge of research. I talked at the outset, about the importance of research in terms of ownership of knowledge including the importance of participants taking charge of and understanding the research process. At this stage, as facilitator, I was aiming to achieve a safe forum where all could speak out freely without judgement. One of the ways I did this was by speaking of my own educational experiences and in this sense there was a consistent teaching/learning process occurring. I identified the analysis/action/reflection/evaluation cycle (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Barndt, 1990; Hope and Timmel, 1991) as a method we could use in order to more readily enter a joint exploration of the emancipatory potential of the process. The students agreed that this provided a tool they would like to work with. I attempted at every stage to recognize openly the extent to which my own power as principal researcher impacted on the decisions made. I dealt with this by ensuring that they were free to choose from a range of options and by checking out regularly their response to myself as a facilitator. In retrospect I feel it would have been helpful to introduce in more detail other models to ensure that the outcome was unequivocally their choice.

Development of group identity

To what extent were we forming a critical community of action at this stage? We began the second official meeting with a discussion around a possible name for the group. 'Our Story' was suggested as a name which reflected the fact that we would be using our stories as part of our action. It seemed a priority that whatever we decided we should be making disabled people visible as well as raising the issue of disability in general. Finding a name proved difficult and we decided that it was more likely that we could choose what we would call ourselves when we had established what we were going to work on. One could argue here that in attempting to establish our identity we were falling into the trap of over-emphasising the importance of what we do as opposed to who we are.

We then discussed whether the group should be open, the size of the group, confidentiality and ground rules which are all central to a successful group process (Liffman, 1978; Glassman and Kates, 1990; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Ife, 1995; Fook, 1996). This proved to be a valuable interpersonal exercise in the creation of a collective identity. Students shared their experiences of groups which had not worked often owing to the absence of ground rules, the use of alienating language and general lack of respect. A set of rules were agreed on by the group. The issue of confidentiality was acknowledged and although general discussion was expected, it was agreed that names should not be identified on any basis outside the group. It was also agreed that we should be sensitive to the needs of other group members and to be careful not to use exclusive language. If words were used which people could not understand, each person should feel able to ask for meanings without being put down and the group would be sensitive to the fact that language can be a way of alienating other people. A third point of agreement acknowledged possible difficulties in reaching decisions and stated that would be accepted. It was agreed that difference should not only be acknowledged but

should be positively valued within the group as enriching. A fifth rule was that I, as facilitator, would agree to act as mediator if necessary and remain accessible to individuals. If problems arose between group members, particularly with regard to behaviour within the group, everyone should be prepared to accept responsibility for what occurred within the group and also to act as co-facilitators; that reaching consensus may not always be possible and that accessibility of the group should always be maintained in spite of that. No-one should feel forced into making a decision they did not agree with; finally, people were not expected to attend every meeting but that a recording of what happened would be sent each time. People would not have to drop out if they missed meetings.

Consolidation of Objectives

Having established a working forum, it was agreed that objectives could now be more clearly laid out and prioritised:

We began to reflect on exactly what we might want to take action on as a group. We discussed the importance of recording our stories since every group member has a story which would be powerful in raising the profile of the experience of disability within the education system. We agreed that parallel to our group action we would begin the process of collating our stories which would be told in whatever way people chose. This included a taped interview with myself or written by individuals themselves.

It was suggested that recording the stories just in raw form might not be accessible to readers. I suggested that each person could tell their story but then we could decide on common themes and record them in a general summary. We discussed the possibility of reproducing stories in creative ways such as use of pictures, cartoons and other methods. It was decided that numerous methods could be used for both the original stories and for the summary we make available to a general readership. We discussed the possibility of making the original stories available to people if they were interested in more information. This would be the decision of each participant and the tape or record would be held by each person. We set ourselves the task of organising some common themes for our individual stories in order to produce them around certain areas defined by the group. It did not seem appropriate to have tightly set questions but the themes were to be based on group experiences. We had extensive discussion around each theme agreed but recognized that some aspects such as early childhood experiences are more important for some than for others. This was especially the case for those who have had a disability from birth or a very young age. This contrasted sharply with someone who had acquired a disability later on, or as in one person's experience, started tertiary education as a non-disabled person and then became disabled (Diary entry: 7 Dec. 1994).

The range of themes are presented in Appendix Two of this thesis. The summary of stories was to be presented in a range of different formats including production of versions on tape and translated into braille to be accessible to blind people. We decided we would consider later on if the original stories would be made available for general reading. We reflected on ways to protect individuals and their information in terms of confidentiality. Names would be suppressed.

Making a research plan

Having established the themes, group discussion revolved around what we could do to facilitate change. I had to carefully negotiate what role I was to take in participating in this discussion as I may have acted too much on my own preconceptions of what we needed to do. I asked one person if they would like to record our discussion in order to map out the research plan and I suggested that each person in turn stated what they considered a priority and what they personally wished to gain from the process. (This became a format which was consistently used each meeting).

Having completed this process, the areas of priority previously made were reviewed to facilitate a plan of action. We had listed from our discussions what we considered to be disabling structures within the tertiary environment particularly in areas such as the exam system. One person referred to the discussions disabled students had been having about the need to allocate marks based on continuous assessment with the award of an actual grading if they are ill at exam time. This would compensate for either poor performance or a complete inability to complete or even attend the exam. This seemed preferable to the system of aegrotat which is a mechanism by which a student who is too ill to attend an exam can be awarded credits without a grade. It seemed that the alternative of continuous assessment should be a simple change to implement and we decided to investigate which channel we would need to go through to ensure that disabled students were able to have access to this. This was in recognition of the number of times they were left ungraded and the implications of this for the future study and career of the student concerned. One person volunteered to follow this up with view to identifying what action could be taken as a component of our research.

The next issue discussed was that of support for lecturers in working with students with disabilities. Training workshops were about to be held at Victoria and we identified our value as consultants for both the access audit which was planned and for disability equity training. This would be part of the overall equal employment and educational opportunities training for lecturers.

The group recognised that negative attitudes contributed to some aspects of limited access to disabled students. For example any resistance on behalf of staff to adapting their styles or rules to meet the needs of deaf students due to lack of understanding, represented just one instance of the social construction of disability in practice at the University. At the same time student exploration of the social creation of disability enabled them to identify that some aspects of the practices and rules which structured the University system, owing to their lack of flexibility, created another dimension of disability particularly for students with impairments (Oliver, 1990; Barnes and Mercer, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996). The audit was focused very much on physical access as well as access for those with sensory disabilities. Discussion on the range of issues facing students and lecturers led us to the conclusion that staff required basic training around disability in order to more effectively work with students. This included academic and non- academic staff since the role of every staff member at the University had some implications for students with disabilities. For example, administrative/support staff may have some crucial interactions with students in relation

to practical issues of attending the University as well as lecturers who were asked to consider accessibility of lectures and the impact of different learning styles. Christine said:

It is not just the psychological effects, the attitudes, it is recognising where they may have the power to change the structural aspects of exclusion. For example, are the rules we are following really necessary or are we just blindly following them to the detriment of all (Diary entry: 7 Dec. 1994).

The group objectives were slowly being formulated as the process of **specifying problems** (Rees, 1991) evolved:

We decided that use of existing mechanisms and contacts was the best way to proceed. In addition to making ourselves known as a consultant group on issues in general for students with disabilities, we could eventually become a training group. Again linking in with existing training mechanisms seemed better than starting from scratch. The need for attitude change in conjunction with action on access was urgent representing challenge to both the social construction and social creation of disability. We needed to reinforce the point that changes to access would benefit all students. For example, a lecturer speaking more clearly is something everyone finds helpful (Diary entry: 7 Dec. 1994).

The group engaged in a debate around the issue of equity training and discussed the benefits of intensive awareness training for students and lecturers followed by support to make changes. It was clear that whatever we decided to do the project would need to be kept practical and manageable in order to serve as a foundation for something bigger later on. We identified that groups inside and outside the tertiary system require education around disability but the need to keep our focus fairly narrow at this stage seemed important.

It was at this point the group explored the possibility of developing a training package which could target lecturers and administrative staff. Possibly students in general could be subject to the same training at a later date. As a group we discussed the potential for shared responsibility for this training and at the same time to be trained to deliver a training package. In this way all would be building on their existing skills. Patrick, who had a key role in the Students with Disabilities Support Group, was asked to suggest to their working party that we should be consulted and positively involved the following year.

We discussed the importance of a distinction being made between ourselves and Can Do. It was stressed that we were made up of students from more than one institution and that we were a research action group. It was suggested that we call ourselves Disability Action Research Group (DARG) and we put this out for further discussion. It seemed essential to work at all times, if possible, through existing mechanisms in order to ensure access to appropriate channels and also accountability of existing systems to people with disabilities. Added to this, it would ensure use of existing funds and funding structures. We considered that at a later date we may wish to think about applying for funding to develop our training package and to make it available to educational

institutions. At this stage we were able to cope on existing resources which was use of the University facilities for students with disabilities (The Sutherland Room provided private space and photocopiers). This was a key point in our first stage which was recorded:

We have agreed that our action research project should address all of the identified themes and in order to effectively respond that the group could form an educational consultative body. It is clear that partnership between students and lecturers is an essential objective and will provide the rationale for the development of disability equity training which we have unanimously agreed on as our central research focus. We as a group have agreed that parallel to our group action we will begin the process of collating our stories which will be told in whatever way each individual chooses. We plan to make them available as an anthology presented in a range of creative ways in order to be accessible to all disabled people. (Diary entry: 7 Dec. 1994).

Summary of objectives

The discussion about our group status was important in that we were building a unique identity and it helped us to be clear about our purpose. An abstract stating who we are and our philosophy was compiled and made available to those with whom we had contact (Appendix Two). To conclude this section, five key areas to be addressed were identified. Firstly, there was a need for clarity around definitions of impairment and disability. Students wished to address the real concerns staff faced by acting in an advisory role and by facilitating an educational process around disability awareness. Secondly, we aimed to build mechanisms within the system such as disability contact people to enable departments to play a pro active role. It was clear that assessment procedures potentially discriminated against disabled people and would need to be tackled at individual and institutional levels. Thirdly, the invisibility of the disability experience facilitates the exclusion of people from every aspect of University life. The research process could provide a mouthpiece whereby individuals could relate their own stories of the positive and negative aspects of the educational system. This would include details of the impact of inflexible procedures in course processes and assessment systems. Fourthly, the financial constraints preventing change were to be addressed. Students acknowledged those difficulties and identified changes which placed no new demands on University finances. This included improved mutual accountability between lecturers and students with disabilities for negotiation of approaches to study. Greater accountability of the University was also required to educate and support lecturers in their understanding of disability as an equal educational opportunities issue. The final issue was that of staff education and support: it was agreed that staff were likely to have limited practical skills or knowledge of resources to support disabled students. All of these were recorded and we were to constantly revisit them in order to evaluate the extent to which we were maintaining our group focus.

During these early meetings the group took the opportunity to reflect on the experience of disability and society's unwillingness to acknowledge the presence of disabled people. The research diary recorded this discussion:

We talked about the parallels with the women's movement in terms of the experience of oppression, but also the differences, since nondisabled women are also part of the dominant group. The importance of the concept of disability pride was discussed and the need to stand up and be counted. The tendency on behalf of society to deny the reality of disability by using euphemisms such as "differently abled" was also discussed. We reflected on how the use of such terminology is assimilationist and makes nondisabled people feel better about 'us'. We addressed the fact that there would be backlash, in that people often feel defensive when facing their own attitudes to disability for the first time, and that we would need to be ready for that. The discussions around language such as naming disability and the use of euphemism, access on a physical and attitudinal level, education and employment for disabled people have helped raise our political consciousness as individuals and as a group (Diary Entry: 7 Dec. 1994).

I recorded in my personal reflection in the diary that I felt this to be invaluable personally and politically. It served to facilitate our individual growth and ability to challenge the disabling factors in our lives as well as to act in solidarity and pride with other people of like mind. At the same time we acknowledged the richness of our varied experiences and the strength of these in conjunction with our commonalities.

Key Area Two: Development of a Critical Community

To what extent did the group identify as a critical research community (Reason, 1994; Fook, 1996) and what was the significance in terms of emancipatory research? Group discussion addressed this question and each individual operated with a high level of awareness of group process. At a reasonably early stage each person was keen to learn group skills, research skills and the ability to interact with University staff. The discussion around the group name was crucial in the establishment of an identity separate from other disability groups. I shared with the group that the main difficulty I saw, would be in keeping the project manageable and ensuring that we accomplished something concrete and identifiable in the time we had available. We agreed that disabled people have limited energy and we must at all times undertake activities which energise us, where we see actual results and ensure work is truly equally shared. I added in my reflection in the group diary that I felt one of the things which often goes wrong with disability action groups is that people have unrealistic aims and then the work falls into the hands of one or two people who may burn out. If we were to achieve real change we needed to be alerted to the fact that this can occur quite quickly and to reflect all the time on how effectively we were working together. An additional potential problem was the fact the existence of the group may initially threaten other groups within

the University, as mentioned in Chapter Six when discussing “resisting a return to powerlessness”. As McTaggart points out:

Obviously sectional groups conducting action research contain the seeds of their own negation. Their very existence may become an issue and their activities may provoke reaction. Rather than drawing others to their enquiring orientation, they may be perceived as a vested-interest group with an ‘axe to grind’ (McTaggart. 1991:58).

The group having identified the themes and specified the problems, decided on a group action and began to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge to gain credibility within the University. The focus was consistently on the key issues expressed in clear language rather than on the process of action research and the use of exclusive research language. The group was evolving as an entity in its own right and confirmed the name the Disability Action Research Group (DARG). The group had gained a high profile in the University by the end of the academic year.

The third research meeting was focused on the themes we wished to address as a group in terms of our stories. As we continued to specify problems, formulate objectives and increase knowledge, I pointed out to the group that we were addressing the third of Rees’s steps (*Developing awareness of policies*) to maintain our focus. We recognized the integral need for attitude change in conjunction with action on access and as a result two distinct areas of action emerged. The first identified the need for some research into current assessment systems and the second for disability equity training. To address the first, Christine was allocated the role of obtaining copies of the University’s revised assessment policy, in order to provide detailed written feedback. A copy was distributed to each participant and a summary of our responses was passed on to the Academic Board. This took the form of a series of questions to facilitate a critical analysis of the policy as it affected disabled students. This was returned to the person responsible for servicing the Academic Board.

We had to consider the fact that the system is very complex and there were no simple solutions to anything we had so far identified. To address the second avenue of action identified, we began to research the best ways to set up disability equity training. We wished to encourage the institutions, by our approach, to work in partnership with ourselves, to respect us as individuals and as a group and to be willing to offer their knowledge and expertise to our research. We, as a group, were to share responsibility for the training and I was to ensure that I planned a pre-training course to equip the participating students with skills to deliver a training package. In this way people would be identifying and building on their existing skills.

In order to ensure the necessary credibility within the University as well as group cohesion we developed: a) an explicit philosophy of our group and a description of our objectives and b) a policy to which we could all adhere when taking on different roles between research meetings. The policy and philosophy (Appendices Three and Four respectively) were open to comment from all

participants not present at the time. Clearly if we were to challenge policies and practices at the institutional level, our own should reflect a high degree of integrity. We wrote into our policy the importance of keeping strict, accurate records which became part of our audit trail. At each meeting we entered each record into a central log so that we had accurate records of every action and conversation. In setting up such mechanisms, we were “creating conditions within the group which embody rational discourse for mutual understanding (symmetrical communication), participatory decision making for social justice, and collaborative action for social solidarity” (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:183). I had to make decisions consistently about what exactly I should consider as my own responsibility and role in terms of the overall research process and how much should be handed over to the group. The balance between sharing knowledge and providing useful structure and taking control is always a fine one. I constantly had to monitor myself in the way I would always hand over the process, where possible and appropriate to the group, since I recognized to do otherwise would disempower and create dependency. The meetings were structured to allow room for the group to offer ongoing feedback on my role and expectations of me generally:

The critical skills of the group are developing at this stage, which is evident in the ability to enter into complex analysis of the personal and structural barriers facing us as disabled people and students within tertiary education. At this stage in the process we as a group have been able to reflect on our personal growth and are developing an ability to specifically identify the disabling aspects of rigid educational policies and structures such as assessment procedures. As research facilitator I am acknowledging how essential it is to monitor my own learning curve both in terms of the research process and personal changes as well as in relation to the complex University structures and policies. (Diary entry: 23 Feb.1995).

Having established the research approaches, the way we would operate as a group and the issues to address in relation to the specific themes, the focus for the action-research evolved. It became clear to us that the range of problems we encounter as disabled students in a competitive environment stems from inflexibility of rules as well as the lack of understanding and resulting fears of both academic and non-academic staff. We felt our growing visibility was challenging them to confront these issues in a practical way. It was essential to work through existing mechanisms where possible in order to provide access to appropriate channels and to ensure accountability of existing systems to disabled people. The approach had the additional value of identifying how changes could be achieved through use of existing funds and funding structures. This would avoid the tendency for disability issues to be seen as special, separate or an extra expense of low priority. Within the group process it became clear that it would be necessary to constantly review all changes which had been made in previous years to adapt to students' needs. This would be achieved by designing a mechanism to ensure evaluation and action. For example, Victoria University is proud of what it has achieved for students with disabilities. Unfortunately it could be argued that what has been done in previous years is no longer relevant to the students of today in that access issues need to be regularly monitored and reviewed as students and needs change.

The concept of partnership in disability equity training is of central political importance demanding the involvement of appropriate, trusted, nondisabled people. However, as much as possible we had to use our own resources in order to retain autonomy over what we were doing. We were aware that once outside funding, or even internal University funding, was acquired we would be tied by what the funder required. We were careful to consider who we might involve as our partners in the delivery of the training and we chose the disability support person whose central role in the University also symbolised partnership. In addition, our discussions with University staff built our networks of nondisabled allies. Reports from meetings indicated that key University staff were impressed by the calibre of our students and their potential contribution.

The process of specifying problems has evolved adding to my conviction that my original picture of the steps to empowerment as a linear structure was inadequate. Instead I now see as a constantly moving entity where our growth flowed through in an ever moving stream. The nearest analogy I can think of to the elements of empowerment was one of the tributaries of a river entering a sea, since events are happening simultaneously. For example, as we identify themes we are specifying problems, we are developing awareness of policies (study of University aegrotat procedures and links with EEO/student services) and we are defining what choice really meant for disabled students. At the same time we are reaching the realisation that having choice really depended on who had the power to define the nature of choice. In this sense the analogy to the river can become a destructive picture where the tributaries representing student knowledge and skill, cultural background and individuality are swallowed up in the force of the torrent and swept away unnoticed. The research has to provide a strong boat! We have discovered this is a word with many definitions depending on the theoretical perspective of any one individual or institution. Part of our reaching out to other disabled students both in the University and in other settings, has enhanced our visibility as well as targeted the student community in general. Within our research team each individual is pursuing their own personal priorities and taking on issues where they can and are using their own unique expertise. We have consistently challenged the assumptions and myths of our individual culture, our own and those of others. We are in fact being challenged and threatened simultaneously (Diary entry: 23 Feb. 1995).

Again, to refer to Rees's steps we continued to tell our stories in individual interviews which I was conducting between research meetings and in our discussions we were painting a picture of the complexities and contradictions of the disability experience. We consistently shared stories of our educational and life experiences which built our mutual understanding of the factors which disable us. We were experiencing the positive effects of group solidarity as discussed previously in the group analysis. We were **developing political and interactive skills** in our growing **awareness of policy** and the appropriate ways of dealing with professionals and institutional structures. We were already dealing with inevitable backlash which comes from any challenge to what we saw as historically

embedded paternalistic structures in that some resistance to change in assessment procedures in particular was being experienced. Group discussion was recorded as follows:

We do not wish to compromise ourselves or what we are doing but neither do we wish to risk being dismissed as 'radicals' or 'idealists'. If we wish to have credibility as a training group our communication skills require considerable development as well as our understanding of constantly changing policies. We need to know which policies and bodies we had on our side and how to use these effectively. This is the main reason for involving at an early stage the appropriate personnel (Diary Entry: 23 Feb. 1995).

I continued to facilitate, support and in some instances played a teaching role since the group were now planning to become co-trainers as well as assistant researchers. Each person, however, was energised by the challenge and was motivated to take responsibility as well as to identify their own particular strengths.

Key Area Three: Focus for Action

The adaptation and development of an existing disability equity training kit became what Carr and Kemmis would term our strategic action (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) which had been compiled by myself and a colleague for another institutional setting. This was to be used to address the range of goals for action we originally identified and would aim to educate academic and non-academic staff on disability issues.

In order to improve our relations with the system we decided to invite the appropriate administrators to our meetings to explain different aspects of the system so that we could not be accused of "not knowing what we are talking about!". A meeting of key University staff at an early stage formed the beginning of a disability equity working party which became a monitoring group to evaluate this as a long-term project. The input of this group ensured that the training developed would be centred on staff needs while achieving the objective of change at every level of the system. The issues which have arisen as a result of this process will now be discussed.

Establishing our allies

The choice of allies was a crucial one. We began very early to have dialogue with people who would clearly benefit in terms of their own work roles from making a contribution to improvement of learning conditions for all students. We had identified with the Head of Student Services (named for the purposes of this discussion as Jean) some key players to whom we were to present the idea of the kit on 27 April 1995. The group delegated Sally, Patrick and myself to meet with Jean to discuss the status of the Disability Equity kit.

At the meeting with Jean, I described the framework in some detail and raised some of the basic political issues involved in delivering such a programme. Jean reminded us that there would be a certain percentage of staff with disabilities present at the training course which would need to be

considered when we looked at content and delivery of the kit. This is because the experience of disability would have to be explored in a way which was sensitive to a mixture of disabled and nondisabled staff. I tried to clarify the links between EEO and disability equity and suggested that it would be better to fit in with existing systems and programmes rather than setting anything new up. This would serve only to reinforce the segregated approach to dealing with disability. I said I was not sure whether the courses would be voluntary or compulsory. Jean made the comparison with the bicultural courses where it was accepted that there was an expectation of all staff to attend. A similar expectation may be laid down in the context of disability training which would certainly highlight the perceived importance of addressing disability issues. I, personally was not in favour of making courses compulsory as it may create ill feeling and resistance in training. The need to respect the existing experience and knowledge of disability of some staff was acknowledged as well as for care to be taken to address any current sensitivities regarding the issues.

I explained that the trainers with disabilities do use their own experience to educate via disability equity training, which may be threatening for any tutors with disabilities who have not yet confronted their experience in a positive way. I argued that this is often found to be the best form of experiential learning in terms of personal and political awareness. I went through the framework for training which had been outlined by and distributed to the research group. We felt that the experience of members of the research group would be crucial here and that we could facilitate small group discussion around our stories. Jean reminded us that we would be dealing with the needs of approximately 1200 staff at the University.

We agreed that we need to be careful to directly address the actual learning needs of the groups we work with. For example, what statistics would be of interest to them: educational, employment and the range of disabling factors, personal and environmental. Jean said she could certainly assist in gathering the most up-to-date and relevant statistics in relation to University staff since she had access to this information which we realised would be invaluable. This would be compiled in conjunction with our planned Disability Equity steering group which was to meet after 27 April. The feedback from Jean was highly positive and she demonstrated a high level of commitment to identify an appropriate funding source.

I explained that what we wished to put in place an ongoing programme to be developed over time. I saw myself as having a key role as a facilitator at this point but my involvement was to end once a mechanism was in place to ensure this would work efficiently. Jean gave us a helpful outline of the University administration system including the organisation of sections and the financial structure.

We discussed the need to question what kind of model of training would be most appropriate. One option would have been the construction of two courses, one for student services and one for academics. An alternative would be to contract on each training course ten places for student services staff and five places for other staff including academic staff. This cross-fertilization of

perspectives could be an enriching process which would be of benefit long term. There are advantages and disadvantages to this model. I indicated that we needed to decide the best method of piloting this course and then subsequently put a mechanism in place for running other courses. We posed the question as to what cross-section of staff we were targeting who could take responsibility for implementing courses in future years. I suggested that we initially target highly committed people who could subsequently take on the role of trainers. Timing was also important and Jean suggested that we offer three courses jointly with costs shared between section heads. She gave us further advice on who the key personnel were in the University and helped us design strategies for targeting them in the most constructive way, for example, key calendar dates for action and cyclical University meetings. Three students volunteered with myself to make contact with the relevant people.

The group prepares for initial presentations

As time progressed, all the students were gaining increasing confidence and the facilitator role was being shared with myself each meeting. Sally particularly took on a role of making contact with University staff and she reported back on her planning to co-ordinate the April meeting. All letters and phone calls were carefully documented in our central audit file. It seemed appropriate as an interim measure that the EEO Unit in conjunction with student support services remained involved. The Head of Student Services was seen as a crucial contact person at the University and she explained the bureaucracy of the institution to us. From this a mechanism for funding would be the next thing to work out. The role of the University Teaching and Development Centre was as yet unclear and they initially refused to become involved. There were some political issues here and Jean wrote to the Professor in charge to establish dialogue about their role in relation to the training package. This was a sensitive issue and we recognized we would have to tread carefully. I felt that it would be a shame if the UTDC did not become involved since they are so central in contact with our target group and are responsible for staff training - the issue appeared to be exactly what staff training they were responsible for and the disability equity training may not currently be seen as appropriate for them.

A sub-group of DARG students evolved from these discussions, supported by a small but growing number of allies, where definite tasks were set and from which we could circulate the work to the whole research group as the package developed. Since we had such a good solid basis to work on it would probably only take two or three working sessions to set it up. Each research group member was to have some role in planning or implementing the package and only those who wanted a leading role in delivery would have one. Patrick asked about the possibility of involving other disabled students in the training itself. He was referring to those who had the necessary skills but who had not been able to commit themselves to the research. There were mixed reactions to this and we discussed the issues. I said that I felt in the long term that they would definitely have a role in planning and delivery since this is only the start of a substantial project and students with

disabilities would have some say and ownership of this. Most people appeared to feel comfortable with the group the way it was and were reluctant to let others in at this stage. The research diary recorded this discussion:

In the short term we must however be organised and structured about our work and restrict the work to the research group members - as Lunar said it could become confusing for the public if we open it out too much, and that we have a great deal of knowledge and expertise within the existing group including good wide representation of a range of different impairments. Indeed others coming in may threaten the project at this stage and we must put energy and effort into ensuring that we value to the maximum the skills we have available now. For example, there are difficulties setting up meetings and at meetings some people are quieter than others; bringing in more confident and vocal people will make it harder to bring people out (Diary entry: 12 April 1995).

We explored the way the group would work on the kit and it was agreed the best model would comprise six or seven of us to compile the package, two would facilitate the training in partnership with a nondisabled trainer and others would participate in the experiential part of the training. There was no expectation that people would see themselves as experienced trainers - I pointed out that this was to be a learning experience for everyone with regard to equity training, research techniques, group processes and generally integrating theory to practice. The group discussed how every member had something quite specific to offer and how it was up to us to highlight what those skills were and to bring them out. I raised the issue of bi-cultural input and asked Beryl particularly to monitor what had been written by the Maori woman who had contributed the Maori component in the Wellington City Council kit from which the DARG kit was being adapted. We said that we could either use this or leave Beryl and Coral to suggest something more appropriate for this new package. Everyone had access to a copy of the kit on which our new one was to be built and I asked that each person came back to the next meeting with some comments and ideas.

I offered the following reflections in the research diary at this stage:

We are now in a fairly intensive phase of our work and even though we are working very hard everyone seems to be highly energised and motivated. We are at the point where people can begin to identify exactly what they want from this particular phase but also to name the particular skills and qualities they all have to offer. In this sense the group members are providing reflective feedback to each other and encouraging each other to build on those skills identified. In terms of Rees's steps we are particularly developing political and interactive skills which are essential to this stage of the project. Our knowledge of and confidence in dealing with the University hierarchy are also growing considerably and the stronger we become the more credible we appear as a consultant group. Even though many of our members are having some difficulty in attending meetings commitment to the work remains high so our communication methods are at present satisfactory and people seem to be happy they are being kept adequately informed. It would be good if those who have not attended for a while could feed back some of their feelings about what is happening, what we

are doing and the level of involvement they would like to continue to have. We could easily circulate material as we develop it to the group and to carry on phone links to discuss material (Diary Entry: 12 April 1995).

It is important at this point to say that we recognized that while everything we did energised us, our aims were realistic and we saw concrete results; in this way we maintained momentum. One of the reasons groups of disabled people often hand over responsibility to nondisabled people and professionals, is lack of adequate co-operation, planning and mutual support. We addressed this concern at every stage.

Presentation to key University staff

We were all extremely nervous at our first public presentation and it took us a while to settle into it. My support person had got the time wrong so I had to find a last minute replacement to carry all the equipment and drive me to the University! The group did a good job of calming me down and making me comfortable in recognition of the fact I had the key role and needed to make a positive impression. All of the nine staff from the different sectors of the University were present including the Professor of the University Teaching and Development Centre. Six of the research group participated in the presentation with myself as key facilitator. I nervously described the framework for the training and demonstrated the model we had previously used with Wellington City Council. I highlighted those issues the group had identified such as the need for an integrated approach to training making full use of existing resources and the need to enable everyone involved in whatever capacity to do their jobs more effectively. I used overheads to show different sections of the kit and I handed out the proposed framework for the training for people to look through. The participants were a little tense at first but the atmosphere began to thaw as I relaxed and the other students joined in the discussion and answered questions. The fact that the handouts had not been collated (due to the absence of my support person) meant that all present had the joint exercise of making sure everyone had all the components of a six-page handout.

The main points raised related to explaining the social construction of disability and the concept of structural analysis within the training. This involves breaking down the components of a disabling society and making the links with other marginalised groups who are subject to the same forces. Additionally, the use of story-telling to convey the experience of disability rather than simulation training (sitting in wheelchairs and blind walks) was explained; this is clearly a much more powerful tool in making the experience of disability visible (Finkelstein, 1991; French, 1992). The aim to achieve something both positive and practical was reinforced and whatever length the training turned out to be, it was important that everyone felt equipped with some strategies at the end. We explained that we felt the research group could contribute a great deal by telling their stories as a part of the training and sharing some aspects of their educational experiences. We acknowledged the low priority disability appears to have and felt it was important to stress that disabled people are a resource which could be of great value to the community - it is the potential contribution which we

can make which is important rather than maintaining the focus on what we cannot do (the deficit model of disability). The need to acknowledge the expertise course participants already have which can be enhanced by this training has been a constant theme throughout. The fact that this course had already been successfully implemented at Wellington City Council (Boyles and Perkins, 1994) was presented as a definite selling point. This was due to the fact that similar issues could be identified in terms of the need to respond to a diverse working and consumer population. This included a high number of disabled people on staff and a commitment to an EEO policy.

While it was acknowledged there was a need for disability input on many different levels of the curricula, on a more basic level academic staff were grappling all the time with the need to adapt material for the needs of students. To achieve this for those with significant impairment, the ability would come from understanding some basic issues around disability - this would include things people often do not think of such as the needs of students with learning disabilities. This includes for example how they can present essays in an acceptable form. Colin (UTDC Professor) felt that the ethos of the way the UTDC teaches in terms of flexibility of approach was very much in keeping with what we were advocating. However he had some difficulty in seeing at this stage where the training could fit in and there certainly was not any funding available! The head of Human Resources agreed to budget for such training the following year and to try and find money for the current year for non-academic staff. She stressed that she wished to be involved in the advertising and promotion since a professional approach to this would be crucial to the success of any initiative. She was certainly positive about future involvement of staff development and asked for a central contact person to communicate with regarding the next stage. We subsequently formalised this.

Colin explained the way staff are trained to respond creatively to students' needs with regard to gender, ethnicity and other sensitive issues and that a comprehensive learning programme was in place to address this. A course design workshop coming up in the May holidays would focus on some of this and he invited us to attend his training. We felt this would be a good opportunity to make some links and to learn some strategies for planning the training course. We recognized that we were now coming up to a crucial planning stage and the more skills we could be equipped with the better.

I offered this reflection in the diary recording of the meeting:

In total the meeting could be construed as a success since everyone attended who had planned to and were willing to make some commitment to future involvement on some level.

It does not concern me that we still do not have a clear inroad with academic staff because the links are being made. What is important is that they take on the principles and apply them in their work. Attending courses alongside other academic staff is both a good learning experience for us but it also exposes other staff to the

issues while addressing their own learning needs in the context of course design. This may be of equal value to direct training for them (Diary entry: 27 April. 1995).

As a result of this meeting funding was allocated for one training session with academic and non-academic staff for 1995 and a budget for further training would be allocated depending on the success of the course. Four of us attended the course design workshop which was a valuable learning exercise on all sides.

Finalising the preparation of the training kit and pilot session

It was agreed that Anne, the disability support person, would act as the co-facilitator of the training course with myself. This aimed to represent as far as possible a positive partnership between disabled students and nondisabled staff. The group unanimously agreed on her as the obvious choice as she was known to and trusted by all the students and had credibility with University staff. As a group we decided what exactly her role would be and she began to channel information to us such as the success of funding negotiations and other aspects of crucial communication. We set dates and a framework for a pilot training programme. We decided that two three-hour sessions would be the best structure over two days on a Wednesday and Thursday in the August holidays. The initial funding was to come from EEO. We realised that when we look at this kind of training it is vital to get a time, place and structure which will be accessible for people. The first part of the training was to be based on basic values and experiential learning. The second half over the second day would focus more specifically on individual job roles and information needs. From within the group we appointed liaison people so that each key staff member was clear who they were dealing with and could contact someone to ask questions or make changes. I suggested that the printing of the package should be done at Victoria University and charged internally to simplify the process. The main costs of the package would be the coloured paper and the spiral binding.

We decided to advertise the course widely and attract a core group of people. We were to be responsible for the publicity for this pilot (Human Resources expressed interest in picking this up in subsequent years). A flyer explaining the objectives and possible benefits of the course should people choose to give up a morning or two of their time, was considered the best way to market the course. We needed to address the questions people had been asking and respond to any concerns they had about dealing with disability. It was decided personal invitations to people was a good approach and even physically going to see people to inform them and encourage them. Colin's (UTDC) suggestion about using networks including the chairpersons of departments would also be a good approach. We also thought it would be good policy generally to keep Colin in touch and ask for his advice and help on recruitment of academic staff.

There will be a level of resistance in the University- the first training will be crucial and will be the mechanism for creating change in the wider environment. The first people being trained may inevitably be people who are already on board and committed which is fine since they will be the key to informing people

about disability issues in their departments. Until there is some good press in the University there will not be a rush to do disability equity training. We have certainly progressed a long way from an idea to a commitment to disability equity in staff training programmes for 1996. We now have to make our presence felt in the University and any education/training etc which is requested should come through us setting us up with the reputation of a consultant group (Diary entry: 18 June 1995).

When planning the training we had to consider things like what would be the best day of the week and if it was during the August break might staff be away on a long weekend? We solicited some initial feedback on whether two days be too much of a time commitment, what this date may be like for people and changed it accordingly. We decided that the optimum number for the first course would be fifteen. There was a question whether academic and non-academic staff should work together or whether we should separate them. After some discussion we decided that a combination of people would be better. The framework of the course allowed people to address their own specific work concerns and ensured a cross-fertilization of ideas would be enriching as well as the potential basis of a new University staff network. Even two academic staff would be an effective presence on the first training and next time if they had enjoyed it, recruitment of others may be easier. Our research (reports from consultation meetings, previous research, anecdotal experience) and the personal experience of many research group members, showed that some academic staff were working with students with disabilities and were at a loss to know where to go.

The group took responsibility for watching out for appropriate resources to use in conjunction with training which could be tailored to the needs of staff in an educational environment. People committed themselves to search for appropriate videos, written material and other media which would be teaching aids which they could bring to subsequent meetings. The following account reflected group analysis at this stage:

We are clear we don't want anything which focuses on medical models of disability or deficit focus. We are looking at the experience of disability first and foremost. The central theme is equal educational opportunities for students with disabilities in the University and that is our main objective. To achieve this we are targeting staff and eventually we will look at students. This is clearly separate from an EEO perspective which is an inevitable spin-off but is not the central focus. It is impossible to train people about all the different disabilities. What we want them to look at is ways to approach people with disabilities, to communicate effectively with them and to work in an enabling way ie in a way to give the student power to identify their own needs. From there they may begin to understand that the problems lie in the rigid systems including a disabling assessment system, exam structure etc. They become quite frightened then when they realise they are dealing with a heterogeneous population including people with English as a second language etc. An understanding of disability and disabling practices includes equipping staff with skills to deal equitably and in a balanced way with students requiring flexibility while at the same time challenging the student to work hard for their qualification and to be gaining a degree on the same basis as everyone else. There can be accusations of unfairness when people appear to get special treatment. It is important to recognize that some

lecturers do have a direct experience of disability or hardship and are able to use that constructively in exercising power over students in terms of assessment. It is not about having low expectations. We need to define what flexibility and balance means in the educational environment where standards have not been lowered in any way. Many students do not want to be treated as different, no special treatment - the training will support staff to address these problems (Diary entry: 18 June 1995).

We decided we probably needed a logo for our training pack and our publicity. Sally was to be the liaison person with Human Resources; Lunar and Christine were to be linked with Colin (UTDC) and would work together on that; Patrick was to liaise with EEO and student services in conjunction with Anne who would work with Jean and begin networking in other areas of the University. I was to be ultimately a central contact person for everyone. The venue was important - we thought that the staff club where we had the course design training the previous week would be the most accessible room. There is no doubt as a result of our presence on the course design workshop we had made an important connection with Colin and other academic staff and gained some credibility. We were now setting the scene for dialogue about the training and recruitment methods as well as information/resource requirements. We had to identify training tools such as video and the whiteboard which had photocopy facility.

We used the June meeting to look at the disability equity training package and decided on a framework for adaptation into an educational model. Lunar, Christine and I worked on the advertising. Patrick was to work on one aspect of the graphics and Beryl and Coral were to work on the logo and the Maori translation. We were to report to the group on progress and keep each other informed of liaison with University staff.

I suggested that DARG members might benefit from being taken through the training over a few hours, in order to be clear about what the course was about. This would present a model of training and provide people with some training skills for running such sessions. Anne offered to invite volunteers to the training in order to also equip them with the necessary knowledge. We decided eventually to conduct this training on Wednesday 28 June. I suggested that Anne should perhaps present the training with me to practice the partnership role and to familiarise herself at the same time with the course content. I subsequently met with Anne on Wednesday 21st June to plan a "training for trainers" session, which we delivered in July 1995. Each person had some responsibility for drafting sections of the kit and the preparatory training was essential in enabling them to effectively contextualise it. I presented the record of our group discussion and my own reflection in the research diary:

We are effectively sharing our energy and skills and building on those. To connect again with Rees's steps we continue to use our individual experience and to build on the themes, we are developing good group skills, practical teaching skills and political awareness; additionally we are becoming more informed about the mechanisms within the University which create disability in the educational environment; in doing so we are

able to take some small part in deconstructing this experience to actively empower others in terms of their ability to teach students with disabilities effectively. At the same time we all learn about a whole new and rich experience. We are experiencing relationship building which goes beyond the simple concept of solidarity. We are learning a huge amount from each other and my own experience as facilitator has been one of spiritual growth in response to the personal support, teaching and friendship the group members have given to me. We are constantly evaluating the process in a range of ways, in that we are building on our understanding of the theories behind the disability experience and changing the nature of that for us. At the same time we are working reflectively and communicating thoughts, feelings and insights with each other. The success of what we are doing is definitely due to this. It has been pointed out we are not representative of all people with disabilities. I have stressed in this process that we all bring a unique experience and perspective to the research process and we are engaging with each other in a way which enriches us as people. It is important that we value the group experience in this way and present ourselves to the world in that way; we should not invite criticism from outside either which reduces the group experience to one which is apparently white and middle class. Even if this were true it would take away from what we are saying about the great value each individual contributes.

I have related to the group that the evaluation process of this research will not be a short two-hour session at the end of the year after the pilot training. The process will in fact be a long one and the transition to the group taking responsibility for the training and delivering will be a gentle one supported by me. The group will also be involved in the writing up and evaluation since ownership of this project lies with each group member (Diary entry: 18 June. 1995).

At this stage the group were fully engaged with the development of the training kit and while we were adhering to the research protocols jointly agreed in terms of group process and reflective feedback, they became of secondary importance to the production of the kit. Having a concrete central focus was the best possible way to enhance the group process and to create a fully participatory project. Beryl's input on the Maori logo and the wording of translation was crucial but she found it very difficult to commit anything to paper and I was cautious not to put too much pressure on her to complete. While the end result was satisfying and Beryl's continued presence and input was testimony to her satisfaction with her own participation, I alerted the group to be sensitive to the support needs of others as the pressure increased.

Training the research group as trainers

It was crucial that the student participants who wished to be involved in the facilitation of training courses underwent some formal training and it was agreed that an initial day's training in July would be a starting point. The outcomes of the training served as a tool in the formulation of the tutor guide to the training proper to be delivered in August. In partnership with Anne, I took the group through the whole training course and kit. We modelled the sessions as outlined in the handout of the framework of the training. Everyone had at least a rough copy of the kit to work

from. We had productive discussion as a group about language, the experiential issues around disability training and the issue of telling stories. After each of the sessions, I raised some issues involved in running such training courses about group processes, possible resistance and the importance of addressing the concerns of your students even if they conflict in some ways with your own ideas. The creation of an unthreatening environment where people can feel free to say anything they wish without fear of rejection or unsafe exposure is paramount. In this way, the partnership between disabled and nondisabled trainers works very well as initially at least, nondisabled participants feel more comfortable with the nondisabled trainer. In my experience, there is always a period where they exhibit some resistance to the person with a disability facilitating the training. The process of running through the sessions produced many good ideas about what needs to go into the kit and what we need to adapt for the training needs of the staff participants.

Where clippings of other people's stories are often used in training, we wrote pieces of our own and shared those in small groups. The themes in common were extracted and shared in the large group reinforcing the parallels of the disability experience as well as the uniqueness. I took responsibility for typing up those stories and we agreed to use some of them in the kit and others in the training. No-one was to be named and everyone had a chance to edit or withdraw their story before going to print. We also had to address the practical part of the training for staff, mainly in part two of the training course. We felt it was important that staff have the opportunity to work through any difficult situations they experience, with the support of other staff and the research students. We decided we would present them with one scenario pertinent to their work experience which was a real one from student experience followed by a suggestion that they write their own from something they have had to deal with. For both of these phases a student from the research group was to facilitate small groups in order to support lecturers and non-academic staff in working through the issues arising.

We decided that we wished to extend the philosophy of disability equity to the more positive concept of partnership and participation as more definite and active goals. This theme would be reflected in the changes in both the training and the kit. Beryl and Coral were to take responsibility for writing a section for the bicultural part of the kit which would reflect their own beliefs and experience. At the end, everyone felt more confident in their knowledge of disability equity training and of the kit itself. The experience of sharing stories, discussing issues and clarifying the more complex areas of disability including an analysis of the social construction and creation of disability was an empowering one in different ways for each and everyone of us.

A working group spent a couple of intensive days on the kit which we then circulated for comment and editing. I shared my own reflections of this stage in the research diary:

We are reaching an intensive stage of our action research and the amount of positive growth and learning is phenomenal. We are consistently specifying, evaluating and re-evaluating problems as we work through

the development of the kit. Each person is now able to name the social construction of disability and link it not only to their own personal experience but to their experience of the education system and individuals within it. Taking people through the kit has passed on some invaluable skills related to understanding theory into practice and the mechanics of group processes, dealing with resistance in group situations and protecting oneself as a person with a disability in the training situation. Furthermore there is immense value and learning which can evolve from telling ones story both for the person who is the teller and for the audience. For myself I feel consistently empowered when I see people understand and learn from the range of experiences I have had which include both the painful and amusing aspects of living in a disabling society. The grief which is part of living with the disability experience also is placed in a context where the pain becomes central to growth change and development; the tragedy often associated with examples where often one's very existence is threatened is replaced by the power of the learning which ensues and the inspiration to those who choose to take strength from that learning for both disabled and non-disabled individuals.

We have clearly identified within the process the limitations associated with traditional disability equity training where simulation is the training tool often favoured. As people have shared portions of significant events in their lives and in partnership with others have entered into analysis of the implications of such events, the positive outcomes remove the need for further debate and explanation of this more emancipatory approach. What is also important to remember is that no matter how many times one tells one's story it is impossible to be drained of resources provided the audience receives the story as a gift and a tool for personal growth. The theme for the research thus is becoming different ways of constructively using biography and at the same time reclaiming the research process for the participants of it.

The partnership between disabled and nondisabled in the group is less important now than the partnership with each other and using our abilities in a complementary way. Even though we have identified the importance of partnership between disabled and nondisabled it becomes clearer than ever before that disability is relative to the context in which one is operating and those divisions based on impairment are strictly false ones. We can see that we are all capable of excluding one another in the way we interact and work together and as a group we have exercised reflexivity in that we have challenged ourselves and each other to enhance the participation of other members. In spite of our tiredness and the events in our individual lives at present we are still able to summon up the energy to consistently find a way to make a difference - an objective which appears to be important to each and every one of us.

It seems that students who previously lacked the confidence to believe they had anything at all to offer now have no difficulty in entering into dialogue with key people in the system as equals armed with a greater knowledge of the structures and systems of the University which both disable and enable students to attend. At this stage because of the positive way we have presented our case to the system we have not experienced much negativity or backlash either from staff or students which we hope to maintain. Seeing concrete changes in process and practice may be preceded by some problems which we will deal with as they come. However in terms of resisting a return to powerlessness I feel this is constantly an issue in that physically and emotionally the steps we are taking are challenging our personal resources. The more we do the more we are

*expected to do and this in itself can be a little threatening. To counteract this we are alerted to the danger of taking each other for granted and we have to allow each other our vulnerability as well as our strengths and to accept **and value** each other accordingly. (Diary entry: 28 June 1995).*

The group consistently reflected on their own growing competencies and I pointed out to them that I was becoming less crucial to the development of our work. They agreed that they were gradually feeling able to take over the group facilitation which had been one of my personal aims. I felt that I as researcher, had only combined my skills with those of the research group to provide a framework to work within and to bear witness to the previously unidentified skills and talents which clearly existed within our group. I encouraged everyone to conduct their own personal evaluation of changes they had made over the last year and to name and own those changes. I suggested that "Analysis / reflection / action / evaluation" applied to more than the research process itself as we analysed what we had achieved and that those changes were of paramount significance.

Establishing ownership of the research kit

The discussion of who owned this kit was important in that ownership of one's work would be central to an evaluation of the emancipatory potential of the research. If the students were recognized as co-authors and trainers, this would go some way to address the question of the ability of a research process to achieve greater personal autonomy and political change. The credibility attributed to a successfully published training programme would have some long-standing benefits. However, the emancipatory potential could be negated if their ownership was negated or if the material was inappropriately used. I felt it was my responsibility to state that we could insist that material was not to be used without prior discussion and official permission gained. While individual pages, posters and checklists would be used fairly widely, the training package itself could be misused if taken on by people who did not have adequate training skills or represent the necessary partnership between disabled and nondisabled people. We discussed what should be written at the bottom of each page to prevent abuse by photocopying. The question was, were we to name the writers as DARG or attribute the work to the original writers. I felt personally that this version of the package belonged to DARG and that should be publically acknowledged. The group suggested that it should be named Pauline Boyles and DARG. Clearly the nature of the group would change in time especially when the research finished although I would always be available to be consulted. The group suggested that I oversee use of the package and to facilitate this, our names were to be clearly written to make it clear to the world who was responsible for facilitation. If anyone then planned to abuse the package by ignoring copyright then it would have to be a deliberate action of sabotage as in, "whiting" out the name at the bottom. There would of course be no problems using parts of the package which are clearly referenced.

This discussion around ownership is really important since the epistemology (the source of knowledge) of disability has to be identified with disabled people, a problem previously identified in research where the

voices of disabled people are missing. Establishing ownership within the group is equally important and consensus around identification of ownership needs to be clearly recorded. A great deal of work and time has gone into this adaptation and the content reflects our individual experiences (Diary entry: 19 July 1995).

Finalising the kit

Intensive work went into the final days of compiling the kit and the group became even stronger during the stress of this period. Discussions around details of the kit exposed the diversity of opinion in the group but we were able to compromise - for example, debates around the language of disability and the concept of Maori and Taiwi as opposed to Maori and Pakeha. We were told the course was fully subscribed with a waiting list. I felt it might be helpful to have some students with disabilities fully participating and doing some minimal facilitation of small groups while others could take responsibility for assisting with the experiential sessions and the problem-solving scenarios. This would bring the course number 18 which was definitely the maximum. Everyone said they agreed to this. Patrick, Coral and Christine would be the student facilitators with Malcolm as standby. Diary reflection of this stage was as follows:

We are now at a crucial phase of the research - it is a little like giving birth! The group is very much taking responsibility for and claiming ownership of this package which will have significance and life far beyond the present. The investment in this project to challenge the way disability is created in our society, more specifically our education system is a sound one. We have addressed attitudinal change and we have made the links with action required to change the structures which potentially disable us all. We are developing new skills in our training enterprise and we are gaining credibility because of the professional way we have approached our task. At this stage our ability to work co-operatively has been proven. It is now up to us to prove we know our stuff and to pave the way for student-led future equity training at the University and the college of education (Diary entry: 19 July 1995).

A final planning day was held prior to the training days in order to write the tutor guide and allocate roles. The delivery of the kit will be described in the next chapter.

Key Area Four: Evaluation

The process was evaluated at several levels. The diary reflections which I recorded were either observations offered by myself to the group for discussion or they directly reflected discussion during meetings. They were in both cases scrutinised by all group members and commented on at each group meeting. Our consistent return to original objectives and hypotheses regarding the problems we identified served as a measure against which we evaluated our own procedures. The deeper we entered into this process the more we understood the means by which we should challenge the structures. The greater our awareness became (I include my own growing awareness), the clearer our understanding became of the theories of the social construction and social creation of disability in operation in the University and other environments with which we were involved.

The process itself within its educational function reinforced the strength and impact of those theories. Our contact with the system in its various forms, impacted on the experience of staff who now gained greater knowledge of the experience of disabled students.

The absence of information, a problem which is often prevalent in tertiary institutions, was identified as the disabling factor for all, both disabled and nondisabled people. The research process became a forum for information gathering, both at the level of the individual and of the group, where all participants told their stories. In doing so they were both educating each other about a range of experiences and the group process provided the tool by which people could educate themselves and others.

The training process where staff shared knowledge and formed alliances had a similar function. The resulting contact network which was established as a result of the training achieved a level of solidarity among staff who cared about disability issues and this formed an information network. The staff training was fully evaluated both by the staff using evaluation forms which we designed and by all student participants and facilitators subsequent to the training.

A full evaluation process was carried out around themes identified by students which will be fully described in Chapter Eight using Rees's steps to empowerment and Fay's Basic Scheme (Figure Three). The themes and tasks set included critical questions about individual experience of the research, current understanding of the social theories of disability including the extent to which they had been challenged within the process and my role and performance as facilitator. These formed the framework for evaluation which was given to all student participants at the end of the research and are presented in Appendix Seven. During this evaluation, students expressed their wish to become even more familiar with the research methodology, including the terminology and I promised that I would run a day workshop on what we had done. I subsequently designed a booklet which was presented in the form of dialogue between myself and the students, for each group participant, which summarised the research process and included a glossary of terms (Appendix Eight). This day of training was held four months after the official end of the research in February 1996. This time coincided with the University vacation when all students had more time and were also more receptive having had a rest from their study. Evaluation also saw the beginning of DARG as a training group and an incorporated society which will be further discussed in Chapters Nine and Ten.

In this chapter the work of the Disability Action Research Group has been presented as a summary of the research diary, including individual researcher reflection and group reflection. The process has been divided into four phases ending with a brief summary of evaluation approaches, to lead into a full evaluation in subsequent chapters. The next chapter will describe in more detail the presentation of the disability equity training and some of the key findings which emerged from this process.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Development And Delivery Of The Disability Equity Training Package

Introduction

This chapter has three key themes: In the first place, it will serve as an account of the action research component of our work tracing an unfolding process. This includes an initial evaluation of the training from my perspective as principal facilitator. It also gives a summary of suggested guidelines for disability equity training which emerged from the research group discussion. A second theme is the extent to which disabled people have contributed via this medium, to their own emancipation and that of other disabled people in their environment. A submission, which is appended (Appendix Three), was developed as a result of the recommendations made by training participants. A third theme is the description of the follow up meeting with staff which raises the key issues facing committed allies of disabled students. A full evaluation in relation to Rees's steps to empowerment will be subsequently presented in Chapter Eight.

Disability Equity Training: A Catalyst for Change?

The key question for this chapter is the extent to which the process of implementation of disability equity training in this project served as a catalyst for emancipation, and the achievement of change in the immediate environment of disabled students. The evaluation of the training material centred around the extent to which all people involved experienced the impact of a process which was based on the same participatory principles as the main research process. In other words, the same dialogical basis on which the methodology has been developed is linked through to the design of the training.

I will demonstrate the way the social theories of disability provided a baseline from which the teaching process was developed in that trainers introduced participants to an alternative definition of disability. This challenged a medical model, more commonly associated with negative attitudes to impairment and disability, creating space for those participating to examine their own personal philosophy of disability. In this way those participating explore their own stories at the beginning of the training, are encouraged to develop their own theoretical perspective, and are exposed to the power of biography (Rees, 1991) by the consistent presence of disabled facilitators.

I will examine the way altered power dynamics contributed to an equitable teaching environment which potentially increased the personal autonomy of the students involved. I will also explore the extent to which the training facilitated an environment where students were more likely to effect political change via the opportunity provided by an educational process. In this way, the central

research questions have been directly addressed. Some examples of the content of the training will therefore explore the effects of partnership in action and the extent to which this has addressed the question of disability equity training as a catalyst for change. A closer look at the concept of partnership and disability equity and its relevance in this context will more clearly establish the parameters of the discussion.

A Partnership Approach: What is Disability Equity Training?

I will first clarify the terminology: disability equity training in the past was known as disability awareness training. In recent years, disabled people, have decided that the term equity is preferable in that it represents some intent towards action (Finkelstein, 1990, 1991; French, 1990; Boyles and Perkins, 1994). Alternatively, the word 'awareness' when used alone, suggests an intellectual understanding with no particular action component. According to the London Boroughs Disability Resource Team (1991) the concept of equity "encourages people to concentrate on their responsibilities towards disabled people rather than their attitudes" (French, 1992:264). This is based on the belief that attitude change, in terms of the social construction of disability without a challenge to structures and practices in the context of the social creation (Oliver, 1992; Barnes, 1996), produced a transitory willingness on behalf of participants but provided no tools to act on this. The Disabled People's Assembly (DPA) went some way to address this in their training package aimed at promoting employment opportunities called "Advocacy Equals Equity, A Disability Awareness and Society Programme" (DPA, 1992). While awareness was a term widely used, the training process allowed the identification of positive strategies in terms of societal and employer responsibilities.

Disabled people have been able to learn from previous race and gender awareness training where people were often left with unresolved guilt and blame for the oppression of these groups without being shown a way forward (French, 1992:264). Other writers such as Finkelstein (1990) and Sullivan (1990) have challenged the limitations of attitude change which is not reinforced by material changes in terms of the day-day living situations of disabled people. The ability to achieve such changes is often driven by economic and social policy and market forces. Hevey (1993) advocates a more in-depth change as a result of alternative representation from a cultural perspective, a concept reinforced by writers such as Bury (1996) and Shakespeare (1996) who emphasise the personal, political and cultural approaches to disability. The chosen modes of training which often emphasise the tragedy of disability and overstate the individual difficulties produced by impairment have compounded the frustration and negativity experienced by otherwise willing employers and educational administrators (French, 1992). In a tertiary education context, Low has found in her research that the experience of some disabled students as a result of being encouraged to speak out along with increased visibility resulting from greater public awareness around a student campus, can often be one of greater marginalisation (Low, 1996). She claims that students in her research have expressed cynicism and suspicion at being treated as a

“special interest group” (Low, 1996:247) highlighting this point. The substantial research undertaken at the University of Otago (McKay et al, 1995) into the needs of students with disabilities at three sites, indicated the need for increased awareness among University staff. The report clearly stated however that attitudinal change was only part of it and that staff required knowledge of the assessment needs of students with learning disabilities, that assessment in general should be more flexible, and that specific support networks should be made available in order to improve access in a general sense for students with disabilities (McKay et al, 1995:65).

The research group (DARG) identified that a full training package where the participants learn through facilitated discovery similar to that employed by Finkelstein (1990) and London Borough Research Development Team (1991) would be appropriate. We approached the training with the same view as French:

This sort of training places discrimination and prejudice in a social context and gets away from treating disabled people as individual victims and able-bodied people as individual oppressors (French, 1992:265).

DARG developed the training using a range of approaches dealing with attitudes and practices around the University and addressed action on their own identified research objectives -as discussed in Chapter Six. So in terms of methodology, how does this fit with the overall research I set out to do?

The Training Process as a Research Case Study

In the context of the research itself, the training became an “instrumental case study” (Stake, 1994:240) where the process and outcomes reinforced the value of the use of critical social theories of disability and reflected some strategies for further analysis: “The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, facilitating an understanding of something else” (ibid). This is not to deny the importance of this particular group of staff in training, the student facilitators and their joint concerns and perspectives. Stake agrees that there is no line distinguishing an intrinsic case study (a case study where the main focus is to gain an understanding of the case itself) from an instrumental case study in that we often simultaneously have several interests changing all the time. He claims they are separated by “a zone of combined purposes” (Stake, 1994:236) in keeping with a critical approach to research where a range of issues is addressed in the context of one case.

The training programme will thus be reported, with an emphasis on analysis of the process and the experience of facilitators as well as an examination of the participant evaluations with view to adapting the training package for future use. The context of the case will be scrutinized in some depth in terms of the information the details of the process provide because this has helped us “pursue the external interest” (ibid) which is the concept of identifying a catalyst for change. This approach allows me as the researcher to explore two case studies jointly, one which comprises the

student group engaged in an action-research process alongside a second which combines the staff and student participants in training. Stake refers to the study of more than one instrumental case study as a collective case study where a number of cases are studied simultaneously (ibid). While this research resembles the latter in that more than one case has been used to explore the research question, it is not in the comparison of the two, that the key answers lie. Rather these two groups (staff and students) have presented a combined critical analysis where an educational process has served to achieve a range of measurable outcomes contributing to personal and political change. Educational researchers such as Yin (1989) Donmoyer (1990) and Eisner and Peshkin (1990) have advocated the value of case study research in terms of the quality of data it can yield. The information about the nature of the case, the historical background, the physical setting, the variety of other contexts (social, economic, political, legal) can link to other cases and the networks formed around the case in question (Stake, 1994:238). These researchers reject the overemphasis on generalisability which tends to deny the value of uniqueness and diversity.

Donmoyer asserts that the multi-dimensional picture they are presented with in spite of no obligation to be fully personally involved with the details, has a number of advantages. These include greater accessibility, a clearer picture of events from a researcher's perspective and decreased defensiveness to messages proffered (Donmoyer, 1990:195). This latter point has particular relevance in relation to this research given that the success of the training depended on the openness of lecturers and staff to accept an alternative theoretical perspective along with the responsibility this brings. For example, the tendency of human beings including teachers to force their own social constructions on others, has been recognized:

They can through exercise of power- make the world change to conform to their conception of it rather than alter their cognitive structures to accommodate those aspects which are disconcerting or threatening (Donmoyer, 1990:197).

He goes on to say that although they (in this context staff participants) can still screen out what they wish, the 'real life' nature of this approach makes the ability to accept new situations more likely. Ultimately, for the training to be successful they must apply the principles learned to their own experience. Therefore, to examine the training process as a case study has a number of advantages from the perspectives of all involved. This includes: those of the students participating in the research process as well as those co-facilitating the training; of the staff participating as students in the training; and myself as researcher where I can have a clearer vision, step back and analyse my active role through a researcher's eyes.

Having established the research context, the process itself will be more closely examined. What is to be explored is the way a partnership approach has impacted on a course where structural analysis (Barndt, 1990; Hope and Timmel, 1991; Munford, 1994) and dialogue have been the central teaching methods. This method has already been referred to in the description of the action

research cycle where students critically reflect on the issues, followed by a decision on action which is carried out, followed by an evaluation process.

The Disability Equity Training Process

This will be broken down into two key parts: the first will look at the process and methods in terms of five central themes. The first is **the use of the personal experience**. This is a central theme which emphasises what both the student facilitators bring in terms of their own experience of disability as well as what the staff have experienced either directly for those who have disabilities themselves or indirectly through family members. This also reinforces the power of stories in the education process (Ballard, 1994). A second theme is: **the need to create a safe environment**, where emphasis is placed on the responsibility of trainers to ensure that the environment created is safe accepting and accessible, in recognition of the vulnerability University staff experience when placed in a situation where roles are reversed. A third key area is **the role of student facilitators as learning partners**, where the partnership theme is brought into the teaching process and the ways this is practically used is explored. Fourth, **building co-operative strategies** describes and analyses the ways in which staff and students plan positive action in a united and cohesive way. Finally, this leads to the **building of a self-critical community** which is the structure within which the group process undertakes the analysis-reflection-action-evaluation cycle parallel to the research process which the students are undertaking outside of the training. I will evaluate the process in Part Two and offer guidelines for its improvement.

Part One: The Process Defined

Respecting the personal experience

A key principle of this research addresses the value of the personal experience of disability as an educational tool. This section demonstrates how this has been integrated into the training process itself. My personal reflections on the process as key facilitator will highlight the key themes and illustrate the praxis-oriented nature of the process. The need to achieve concrete change has been discussed in terms of catalytic validity and the many elements of the training process aim to achieve the change aimed at a personal and political level. In any analysis of empowerment in relation to disability equity training, it is important to reflect on the extent to which a disabled trainer experiences the teaching process as emancipatory. While it is widely accepted that the use of disabled trainers is crucial and indeed is a powerful form of education (Cahill, 1991; Disabled Peoples Assembly, 1992; French, 1992), the experience of training can be disempowering because of the high level of negativity one can be exposed to (London Borough Disabilities Resource Team, 1991; French, 1992). French recommends a strong level of peer support and even counselling (French, 1992:264) while Disabled People's Assembly suggest the use of two disabled facilitators to share the workload and offer support. The partnership approach we employed ensured such support was built in to our process. It also allowed for the probability that in any training group

there is usually at least one person who has a disability and who can help to balance the participant experience.

The challenge to me was to teach the student group to facilitate this kind of training in a way which retained their self-esteem and that of their participants. I was aware of the responsibility to ensure that they had the appropriate tools with which to use their personal experience constructively. We openly discussed prior to and during the training the limitations of simulation training since this is often a popular method of disability awareness training. Such training was in fact recommended by the students in a recent Otago study (McKay et al, 1995).

I found that most of those involved, both students and staff participants, were familiar with the concept of simulation and some advocated it. Simulation focuses on the negative aspects of disability, adhering to the rigidly individualistic model of disability (Barnes, 1991). It denies any concept of disability as part of life experiences, either fulfilling or un-fulfilling. (London. Borough Disabilities Resource Team, 1991). Research has proven that while simulation exercises have had some limited value in attitude change (Wood, 1990; Reynolds, 1991), in general there is no evidence of lasting change (Clore and Jeffrey, 1972; Semple et al 1980; Pockney, 1991). Furthermore, the range of skills which one acquires as part of living with a disability including flexibility, adaptability and good time management may go unacknowledged (Morris and Capper, 1987; EEO Unit, State Services commission, 1990; DPA. 1992).Other skills can be acquired as a result of the challenges faced when living with a particular impairment. For example a blind woman who worked for the sexual abuse survivors group for whom I previously worked (Taboo, Manchester, 1982- 1990) was the best person to teach others telephone counselling skills owing to her highly attuned listening skills. I have already referred to the limitations of a short trip in a wheelchair, or the well-known 'blind walk' where a sighted person is blindfolded and guided. People often perceive themselves as participating in a funny game rather than a learning exercise (McKonkey and McCormack, 1982; French, 1992), which disabled people can find offensive (French, 1992). Such participants are able to return instantaneously to their previous status once the exercise is completed.

The challenge facing all of us as student facilitators was to create a forum where our personal stories in their presentation could present a range of situations and experiences which would shed light on the lives of many other students. I have taught this type of programme many times previously, but the level of personal risk never decreases and I have learnt that keeping safe has depended on my ability to respond in a positive and non-judgemental way, setting my own feelings apart. As part of the preparation process, I had previously run a training day with the students which I referred to in Chapter Six. At this time, I shared with them some teaching methods to equip them with skills for when they would facilitate the training process themselves. In this context, they had the opportunity to explore their fears and to role play some difficult scenarios. I must be clear here, that I took responsibility for training the research group to conduct this type of training and my role was a teaching one at this point for all who were involved. In this sense I took responsibility for the well-

being of student participants in terms of equipping them, as far as possible, with essential skills. Furthermore, as principal trainer I also considered myself responsible for the safety of the training environment for staff participants. Most of the students had not previously conducted this type of training. I considered it was important that they were aware of the need for balance between self-exposure to facilitate learning and maintaining one's integrity and sense of safety. I had therefore reminded students in preparatory sessions that the title disability equity training belies the fact that the course, irrespective of length, is about their lives as much as it is about that of a whole group of people.

Having rejected simulation training, alternative approaches involve drawing on one's personal experience both positive and negative, to facilitate the learning of participants. This links into the theme of biography as central to the experience of empowerment. The use of specific examples is powerful to illustrate points and make the learning concrete. Use of anecdote is a crucial tool in understanding the essence of the daily lived experience. As Van Manen writes in reference to Aristotelean philosophy:

Anecdote is rather like a poetic narrative which describes a universal truth.... the important feature of anecdote as well as phenomenological discourse is that it simultaneously pulls us in but then prompts us to reflect (Van Manen, 1990:121).

He asserts, that to understand the life world of a child for example, one has to enter the child's world, speak the child's language and he uses stories of his own children to illustrate his point (Van Manen, 1990). The accounts chosen in the training ranged from anecdotes taken from people's personal stories to the longer versions used at a middle stage of the training. Other writers, as discussed in previous chapters, have spoken of the value of people's own stories (Munford, 1989, 1992, 1995; Ballard, 1994; Perkins, 1996) in terms of the learning process. It could be argued, that the same principle used in highlighting the value of the individual case study, is at play here in terms of the richness of data presented. For example, where a disabled student for training purposes describes a difficult situation involving University staff, many staff members present may be able to relate to it as something they recognize without being directly part of. In this way, they can begin to deal with it from a position of safety and think through ways in which they might have dealt with it more constructively, without feeling as threatened as they would should they have been forced to face an actual situation they have faced in a professional sense. At the same time they are free to screen out any parts of it which make them feel uncomfortable (Donmoyer, 1992:197). This does not mean that they are not obliged to take some responsibility as staff members for being part of a system which allows disabling situations to happen, but a high level of defensiveness or discomfort may detract from the ability to offer positive strategies.

The potential danger of telling individual stories (oral histories) of pain or courage has been highlighted by some feminist writers (Seifer, 1976; Reinharz, 1992). They argue that this may create a tendency to individualise a socio-political problem. But as Bishop so clearly states:

Stories are a way of representing truth. Different stories give different versions and approaches to truth. As a result, stories allow the diversities of truth to be heard rather than just one dominant version (Bishop, 1995:24).

He goes on to say that stories ensure that power and control are retained by the story teller. Although there are some risks to this approach, the sharing of personal experiences can be a constructive way to engage in partnership with a more powerful party. In this example that party was represented by the University staff. Being confronted with real situations also reduces the tendency we academics have to intellectualise, especially in a situation which is potentially threatening. For power to be redressed however, the stories have to be 'received' in a way which acknowledges our participatory connectedness (Heshusius, 1992; Reason, 1994) and as Bishop says "promote a means of knowing in a way that denies distance and promotes commitment and engagement" (Bishop, 1995:23). Students' stories were presented in a variety of ways which included scenarios, written extracts and as examples used by facilitators to illustrate points. The emphasis was always to achieve a combination of increased empathy and the increased knowledge and skills of staff to deal with and recognize either their responsibilities or that of the structures within which they work.

Given that we were in a situation of role reversal which overturns power differentials, we had to address at an early stage the negotiation of partnership. Freire sums up the difficulties in a recent paper on higher education: "one of the great mistakes educators and politicians make is not perceiving that out 'here' as the student's and the people's 'there' (Freire, 1990:55). This indicates an inability to reflect theory within the daily lived reality of ordinary people. The dynamic the dualistic attitude identified by Freire produces is central to the difficulties students with impairments have in relating to staff and nondisabled people in general. It was important, however, as Bishop advocates in conducting work with non-Maori, to approach staff with acceptance and gentleness, as well as respect and acknowledgement of their existing knowledge. Crucial to the success of a dialectical approach to training, is the ability to directly address people's deepest fears and to allow them those fears and consequent feelings. If we were to expect them to develop an understanding of our experience, we had to begin with theirs. In the way we structured the training we were modelling the behaviour we expected from staff. This was reflected in our openness to and respect for them as well as the way we related to each other personally and professionally. I would argue this consistent behaviour is one of the most powerful catalysts for emancipatory pedagogy: "What you are being rather than doing has the greatest influence" (Shields, 1991:103). For example, the teaching environment for the training aimed to promote participation in terms of its structure, the unconditional acceptance of the facilitators and the flexibility of approach to enhance maximum

learning. The important key points were that while all were exposed to a range of 'truths', a partnership approach ensured that all were supported to engage with the material in a safe and constructive way.

Another aspect of the theme of personal experience is that of the experience of staff participants of living with a disability themselves or of supporting a friend or family member with a disability. I have discussed the value of this personal connection in the previous chapter. The open dialogue established from the outset paved the way for the recognition of their personal experience of disability and the connections were made very swiftly. In this sense the first step to empowerment was again employed in the use of biography to understand themes (Rees, 1991). During the first exercise one staff member was moved to tears and one of the students went out to comfort him. To explore their disability knowledge, participants were asked to think about their own friends and family rather than their text book knowledge. This, as I have often experienced, opened the floodgates to recognition of issues of which they had previously been in denial, and for one member turned out to be an emotional experience. Some participants recognized, or at least acknowledged for the first time their own disabilities, which had the effect of establishing partnership between disabled and nondisabled staff quite early on.

From the outset the dialectical approach was explained to staff as well as the theoretical perspective on which the research and training was based. Additionally, an explanation of the analysis/ reflection/action/evaluation spiral (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988), in the context of the teaching plan, was presented in the introductory session. Naming teaching methods and overtly explaining theory is not associated with traditional disability equity training, but in my view was a central tenet to the integral emancipatory approach. The theme of the power and importance of the personal experience, both their own and that of disabled people, from whose lives they were to learn, was presented at an early stage in the context of the explanation of the theoretical framework. The training kit became the tool by which they worked through the process and it proved to be more useful than continuous overheads or numerous handouts.

Some of the potential handout material in the training kit will be very useful I think to pass round staff in the department. I liked having the material right up front to follow (Participant evaluation).

The last stage on the first morning, and the most powerful in the whole training, was the use of people's stories to enhance learning of the disability experience. As I have pointed out previously, the validity of using direct experiences of students which "spoke to" participants was more successful than using statements by disabled people written in a more political style. Five stories written by the research group were in the kit and since we needed six, we chose one extra, written by a disability activist to cover the last group. The only person who did not return on the second day had received this supplementary 'story' and had criticised the choice we made. (It had represented an assertive statement of the rights to integration of disabled people). In retrospect, I considered that for him

it was the final straw in the personal challenge we had offered. For some people, the thought that it is all too difficult is in some ways understandable in terms of the difficulties experienced in addressing complex, and in the view of the institution, low priority issues.

For the most part when this attitude was exhibited, we dealt with it in a systematic way since it is essential at all times to counter negatives with real positives. Unfortunately, this person's mind was closed to any personal identification or sense of responsibility. Aside from the incorrect choice of script I am not sure if anything would have changed this. He had identified as one of his goals a need to have a concept of the gap between students' expectations and those of the reality offered by lecturers. On day one, those students who facilitated reported their situations factually and without "window dressing" to clarify their level of expectation. The opportunity to identify student expectations in partnership with lecturers came at the end of day two, an opportunity this person missed.

Some staff participants reported in evaluation of their learning on disability:

It has opened my eyes to the range of disabilities there are on campus. It taught me to identify more clearly with those with disabilities and that the University has facilities, policies and support structures in place (Participant evaluation).

They felt they had been given tools to change the things which contribute to the negative experiences of disabled students for whom they were responsible. This is a process which inevitably involves both staff and students.

Creating a safe environment

I have spoken of my responsibility to create a safe environment where people can be open to the learning process. As discussed previously, the London Borough Disability Resource Team learnt from their experiences: "the environment in which the training takes place must be emotionally safe and that everybody's self esteem must be kept intact" (French, 1992:265).

In my experience, traditionally, disabled people who have run disability equity training have often been seen as radical and angry, and this can have the effect of alienating people. The atmosphere we created acknowledged the dangers of this perception. We ensured the environment was enabling, open and accepting, where people could share their views and feelings without danger of retaliation. The safety of the environment was further ensured by the peer-group support provided by four disabled students facilitating and myself as principal facilitator in partnership with a nondisabled facilitator. It was important that one trainer represented those present who did not identify as disabled in order to directly empathise with any difficulties they experienced. This diverges from most previous approaches to disability equity training which generally exclude nondisabled people from the training role. This was key in terms of adhering to the principles

identified in Chapter Four in relation to emancipatory research of “the role of nondisabled allies”. Furthermore, our objective to create an inclusive environment would be fraudulent if in the process of attainment we excluded the views and reality of nondisabled people who were part of that environment.

People working within systems, irrespective of their knowledge of disability, can often be still part of and subject to those practices and structures, and often wish to justify their existence or part in those structures (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Fay, 1987; Rees, 1991). We did not set out to impose our way of thinking as the right way since this is a disabling approach as well as an arrogant one. The methods we used were based on structural analysis or in Barndt’s terms *naming the moment* (Barndt, 1990:8) where people are encouraged to identify the underlying power relationships and the deeper contradictions (ibid) that determine their lives and those of others within the institutions. This included the opportunity to explore their own experience of a disabling environment. What allowed them to move on, was recognition of the fact that each and everyone of us can be affected by these, while at the same time we are **all** responsible, both disabled and nondisabled, for constructing and deconstructing the attitudes and practices which encompass the disability experience. This has been described as the “hard on the problem , soft on the person” approach (Shields, 1991:57), which requires “one to be respectful, to strive to build trust, and to be prepared to listen”.

I have often heard challenges to so called political correctness and the criticism has been proffered that left-wing radicals who claim to have an empowerment approach are imposing their own beliefs in the same way as the more “right-wing” view of the issues. This warning was presented by Opie (1990) in her critique of Lather’s work and by Bishop in his research (1996) and it is clear that in any action where change is the goal, one should always be alerted to this possibility. It is important that people new to this way of working feel strong and confident in the face of such challenge, and fully understand the issues, as I laid out in the previous paragraph. We had no wish either to be seen as wishy-washy, idealistic and impractical, any more than we wished to be seen as intellectually arrogant and guilty of theoretical or philosophical imposition.

The structure and process have equal impact on the creation of a safe environment. While a well-planned session with a tight structure is important, it is essential for facilitators to be adaptable to group needs and to be flexible in making changes on the spot. Anne (the nondisabled facilitator) and I did this on a few occasions but, there is a delicate balance to be struck. As people grow quickly in new awareness they tend to ask questions about difficult situations they are dealing with which can easily dominate discussion. While people are anxious and we want to keep them interested, it is also important to consider group needs and to adhere to the original aims and objectives of the session. However, when a decision is made to move on, it is essential that the person feels listened to and reassured that at some point during the training their issue will be addressed. Having said this, it is then important to ensure that as a facilitator one takes the responsibility to remember to raise this

as promised, otherwise credibility is lost and dissatisfaction may occur either during or after the training. By the end of the first morning people looked a little stunned even though the comments were positive. One must bear in mind that the issues and stories can throw people into turmoil and that learning is not always a pain-free experience. The opportunity to talk through any issues arising is essential and this space was provided by all facilitators on an informal level afterwards. Within the time frame there was not time for formal reflection, which is probably one of the casualties of a short, intensive course such as this. We felt that the true test of our success would be gauged by how many returned the next day and as I stated previously, we lost only one. We had been able to sense the discomfort experienced by this person.

The role of student assistants as learning partners

It is appropriate at this point to return to the role of the research students in the training process. Six research group members assisted with small-group work. Their presence was for the most part valuable, once staff had accustomed themselves to role reversal. The early tasks of the training are always the most difficult to grapple with and one student was able to work with each small group, both providing concrete examples and generally keeping the groups on task. The examples they were able to provide were so pertinent that the dialectical exchange of ideas and understanding was fluent. Staff were quickly able to recognise their own role in the social construction of disability. For the most part, staff appreciated the value of this, the openness created, and restrained the tendency to intellectualise about disabled people as a phenomenon 'out there'. When working with people who can say "this happened to me yesterday" there is no choice but to acknowledge the daily lived reality of disabled students in the University setting. Had they been absent it would have been easier to speak and think objectively without being asked to personally identify with the issues. The small group approach encouraged practical questioning as well as personal links such as situations they have faced both in their own lives and in a professional capacity. Staff did not appear threatened by the presence of students and they seemed to respect and give credit for their individual knowledge. One participant said:

I found it very useful having disabled facilitators to assist the group work, both students and non students I think presented various invaluable perspectives (Participant evaluation).

The presence of so many people with disabilities facilitated the "coming out" process for those who may not have previously identified as having disabilities. As mentioned earlier, one person began to talk about a difficult family experience of mental illness, which served as a baseline of learning of great value for that individual. The chosen exercise aimed to achieve this as well as to ensure that each participant connected with some personal knowledge even if their own experience was not one of disability.

The model of student participation in staff training is one which could easily be reproduced in a range of training settings, bringing the theme of partnership into visibility in a constructive and

concrete sense. This model of training has a precedent in the example cited previously of the Pacific Island action research model where students were trained as facilitators to act as mediators between teacher and students (Pacific Island Reference Group, 1992). We did not begin with a discussion on definitions of partnership but did point out that our approach was participatory and we were entering a learning partnership. One could argue however, to be consistent with the cycle of analysis/reflection/action (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1981; Barndt, 1990) that to have asked staff to offer their own concept of partnership may have facilitated a greater understanding of the nature of the pedagogic process. Naming the reality is important (Barndt, 1990) and within the framework of the training, we allowed time for active reflection to be systematically structured within the process.

From my perspective as trainer I found the assistance with small group facilitation invaluable, but it was suggested in evaluation that student facilitators could work harder at keeping their group on track. There was also a tendency for facilitators to do the work for the group rather than facilitate. This is an understandable dynamic, given the personal nature of the tasks. Developing skills in this area, however, means learning to hold back on one's own knowledge and silently supporting participants or asking key questions when they appear unable to proceed. This is reflective of the discussion begun in Chapter Four and continued in Chapter Eight about the nature of the leadership role and the difference between a facilitator and an animator. One staff participant suggested the facilitators could be less intrusive and while I do not feel this was a potentially serious problem, one has to remember that student presence for some could have been a little threatening. We had to acknowledge in this situation that the usual power dynamics were completely changed and all the barriers one normally hides behind as a staff member were now removed. The comment implied that there were areas this person wished to explore more privately for himself. We felt that for this reason, it is important to leave each group at least five minutes on their own, to look at the task without any feeling of monitoring and supervision. We can all identify, as students, the times in small group work when we have wished to say things which we would in no way share with the tutor or the large group.

The partnership approach to facilitation was definitely central to its success as well as the positive outcomes reported by all involved. Malcolm summarises this:

I saw a caption recently that said "Partnerships that Work". It struck me how relevant this was to our disability equity training. There are many partnerships which do not work: relationships which break down; marriage partnerships where one party has domination and control over the other; partnerships where there is inequity. In fact these are not true partnerships at all.

What is so different about our training is that it practices what it preaches. It both talks about and models an equitable partnership between disabled people and nondisabled people. It demonstrates that having our

support needs met on our terms, without extinguishing our choice and control, is not only an exciting challenge but entirely possible.

Who we are is OK. We cannot change our impairments, but we can change what happens to us.

Building co-operative strategies

During the course of the training people offered strategies and suggestions which were concrete and workable. These were collated to form the basis of future action. One staff member suggested:

Give more time at the end to put together a list of strategies within departments ie specific things reps can do to spread the word (Participant evaluation).

The time allowed only development of an all-round strategy, rather than specific departmental ones, but a follow-up training course did cover different training needs. I also suggested to the group that we it would have been preferable to write a list of strategies as we worked through and to ensure that these were recorded. The information sharing/action session at the end was the key to future strategising: "it was positive that definite action is going to take place" (Participant evaluation). Strategies can often be developed based on examples from other settings, but it is always important to define how each example could be used constructively in the University environment. I used some examples from the experience of training college and I attempted as much as possible to think of possible parallel situations within the University setting. This is where Anne's knowledge of the University structures was invaluable, since her comprehensive understanding of the system was something all participants wished to develop in relation to disabled students. The interactive sharing of the facilitator role further demonstrated a working partnership. In retrospect, we could probably have run one whole session on the process of sharing information and advising about using existing mechanisms in the system to obtain results.

We supplied a supplementary resource kit which staff were invited to develop in their own departments and suggestions for this included:

The kit should include information about who to go to in specific situations, alternatives eg assessment/exams, creative ideas pooled to help staff (Participant evaluation).

The support offered by the research group was confident and consistent at all times and Anne (the nondisabled trainer) was tuned in to the needs of both myself and course participants. It seemed that owing to the concrete examples I used to illustrate points, that my dual role as student and lecturer had particular value in working with a group of University staff. I would argue that this was because they could not categorise me easily in one box and the living examples from both sides of the coin were powerful. Research group members assisted with small group work and demonstrated the value of using several trainers to relieve the physical demands of the facilitation process.

The practical approach to the second day was excellent and was a good model of a team-work approach to training. Participant evaluation bore this out, but there were real difficulties fitting everything in within the time frame. Everything on our programme was essential but one exercise had to be skimmed over and one omitted. Participants worked very well on the scenarios we gave and the feedback was invaluable but if we had time to look at their own scenarios this would have completed the picture. We also needed much more time to look at strategies for action. While we were given some good suggestions, I feel if we had worked in small groups for ten minutes this could have been even more productive. Of all the training sessions I have been part of, I have never seen such a busy and committed group prepared to work on concrete change. It seemed that after the more emotional experience of the first day they were relieved to be able to look at what they could do to improve what they could offer, and to feel effective.

I had some concerns over the limited time we had to spend on some very difficult scenarios participants raised, particularly with regard to psychiatric disability, which staff are increasingly dealing with. In many ways, dealing with some of the specifics they raised in the large group was a good learning experience for all, but in reality, the seriousness of the situations demanded more individual time. Some were clear that they needed more intensive training in counselling and other interpersonal skills. While in some ways their views are justified, the danger is that they fall into a more medical and deficit-focused approach, by assuming that therapy of some sort is called for. We did not want them to set themselves up as counsellors - our aim was to provide a knowledge base to respond safely and appropriately to individual situations as they arise and to activate their own support networks. I was glad however, that by the end of the second morning those people who previously requested specific details about impairments had ceased to demand this. This indicated to us that the relevance and responsibility of partnership had become clear. It is to an analysis of this I now turn.

Building a self-critical community: the theme of participation through partnership

The final key area in this part of the analysis explores the value of critical reflection within the training process and its role in achieving change at an individual and group level. This section will begin with a critical analysis of the process where the staff and students together built a sense of community which led to subsequent action by the staff to consolidate change throughout the University.

The process undertaken exceeded the traditional boundaries of disability equity training. Those who choose to participate in disability equity training often come expecting a process of information sharing about different impairments and a list of do's and don'ts. To be handed the responsibility of reflecting on their own interaction and practice (Freire, 1987; Carr and Mc Kemmis, 1986; Barndt, 1990), in keeping with the concept of structural analysis, challenges participants

immediately to negotiate a learning partnership (Freire, 1987; McNiff, 1993). The emancipatory action research methods employed in the planning of the training encouraged the development of a critical community in the same way as this had been fostered in the research group. Carr and Kemmis (1986) also speak of a critical community in an educational context, allowing participants maximum opportunity to contribute their viewpoint and to become self-reflective. Bishop condemns a binary notion of critical pedagogy based on an individualist westernised notion of research, claiming it can silence the real voices of participants. In a Maori context the hui and whaka-whanaunatanga (establishing relationships) where people are encouraged to speak from their own cultural perspectives comes closer to a concept of critical community within an emancipatory action research project (Bishop, 1996:59). Our approach attempted to incorporate elements of all of these approaches. McNiff's analysis of an emancipatory approach to teaching and learning illustrates the power of our chosen teaching strategy in the reversal of the pedagogy:

The 'aim' and the 'process' here are the same. Teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin; they are two perspectives of the same process. The process of practice becomes the object of the enquiry; practice becomes enquiry (Mc Niff, 1993:59).

In this shared endeavour, where boundaries have been changed, the concept of joint responsibility is addressed:

If we view teaching in this light, it is no longer an activity geared at passing on information; it becomes a shared communicative exercise which is focused on generating inter subjective agreements about the nature of being (Mc Niff, 1993:59).

Not only did the process focus on them personally, they were asked to analyse themselves in relation to their environment as well as the effect of the environment on disabled students. The overt identification of a specific theoretical approach which facilitated theory building (Lather, 1986; Fay, 1987), the use of empowering pedagogy in the depth of shared learning (Freire, 1987), the overall framework of structural analysis (Barndt, 1990) and the dialectical nature of the teaching process (Mc Niff, 1993), ensured the establishment of conditions in which the staff group could build on their expertise. This, in critical terms, allowed them to:

Identify and expose those aspects of the social order which frustrate rational change, and provides the basis for action to overcome rationality, injustice and domination (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:183).

Through the training staff participants were able to identify contradictions within the institutional setting and their role in creating and maintaining those contradictions. Fay also refers to the process of identifying contradictions within a specific situation as an essential component of developing and working constructively with a critical theory (Fay, 1987). Furthermore, they were able to define the extent to which they were also disabled by the institution within which they worked, and this

consequently led the group to “propose new forms of communication, decision making and collaborative action” (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:184) in the institution as a whole.

The second day of practical action, focusing on real scenarios, was central to the action model of training and a submission was compiled as result of the work they did. They set up a working party which ensured that disability remained a central issue on the institutional agenda. In this sense, they formed an action research community (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1981; Carr and Kemmis, 1986) which gave them space to become:

A source of critique for the institution in which it operates, and can begin to act from within the institution to transform it towards more rational, more just and more collaborative decision making and action (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:180).

The staff participants, as a result of the process were able to form a supportive team using the training as a first step to instigating a staff network within the University. The staff established, subsequent to the training, an action group of contact people who became active in the University. This resembles the action research described by Carr and Kemmis (1986).

There is no doubt that the critical interactive approach stimulated a level of debate, creativity, energy and commitment, far exceeding that normally witnessed in this type of training. This can be said to be a validation for the methods used.

We can now pass on what we have learnt as a group with the same enthusiasm and dedication we have experienced to others; by doing so we will have opened another pathway of understanding and broken down some of the barriers which stand in our way (Coral).

The above process represented the full cycle of analysis/reflection/action/evaluation (Freire, 1972, 1987; Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Barndt, 1990). The student facilitators, in subsequent evaluation a week later, reflected as a group on what could be done to improve the training design and implementation. They came up with some suggestions (Appendix Six) in response to participant evaluation. The key points included the need for more preparatory research, practical follow up, a longer time frame, the appointment of a recorder, a clearer small group structure and the setting of a follow up date. I will now explore the question of the catalytic value of this type of training in the context of the educational environment by describing subsequent events.

Part Two

In Part Two of this chapter I will describe the actions taken by training participants and the strategies for action planned in partnership with DARG. I will report on initial actions taken, followed by an analysis of future structural changes. Final outcomes will be reported in subsequent chapters.

Changing the Face of the University

*Two roads diverged in a wood I
took the one less travelled by
and that has made all the difference (Frost, 1973:77).*

The above extract is easily recognizable, but I consider it pertinent when I reflect on the courage and creativity shown by the staff who attended the training course and who became the catalysts for transformative action in the University. It would be appropriate at this stage to look at what the staff achieved as a result of the training in the context of their contribution to a new partnership with each other and with the students they were encountering. I have already explored the value of critical theory in that staff can benefit in Fay's terms "from coming to conceive of themselves and their role in terms of the theory" (Fay, 1987:114), given the overt theoretical perspective on which the training course was based. The pedagogical approach, where power in the teaching situation is shared, demonstrates the value of co-operation (Freire, 1972; 1987; McNiff, 1993). It also highlights the often inhibiting effects of categorisation in terms of role and ability and the usual power differentials between teachers and students. This will be further discussed in Chapters Nine and Ten. The staff participating who chose to take on a particular role, did so in order to achieve some personal change. For some, this was just in terms of performing more effectively as a teacher/worker, while others saw themselves as disabled and as having a dual role and responsibility in the University.

For critical social science, power exists not only when a group is controlled but also when a group comes together, becomes energised and organising itself thereby becoming able to achieve something for itself (Fay, 1987:130).

The task here is to give examples of how staff awareness of the social construction of disability operating in the University, facilitated their ability to challenge that construction. The crucial role of reflection, an essential element of critical theory, will be demonstrated in the following analysis. Implicit within the account are examples of staff *experiencing solidarity with each other, developing awareness of policies, acquiring and using language* and the growing ability to evaluate critically

everything they do (Rees, 1991). This involves recognition of the extent to which the training facilitated a dialogical process occurring inside and outside the classroom situation. For this reason, I will report on the content of the discussions which took place subsequent to the training. An analysis of the challenge presented to staff, who were willing to stand up to be counted in a system which can often discourage new ways of working will also be offered.

Following the submission of staff recommendations to the Academic Board suggesting action in a number of key areas involving disabled students, we arranged a follow-up evaluation as requested by staff, where they could discuss the achievements and difficulties experienced since the training. A small number of staff came to the follow up armed with messages from those who could not attend due to exam pressures and other end-of-year events. The staff who came, as well as those who did not, were acting as contact people in their department, and those present identified positive and negative aspects of this role. They were able to constructively influence the actions of others. For example, the presence of a guide dog in the Department of Biological Sciences had begun to provide a source of exercise for many staff and students! The fact that disability was now placed high on the agenda provoked the feeling of joint responsibility and all were working co-operatively to problem solve. This meant that many of the issues identified by students in Lang's research (1992) and in that of McKay et al at Otago (1995) in terms of the identification of a wide support network, were being addressed. Staff, however, reported feeling isolated within their departments and this seemed one of the most immediate concerns in gaining access to information as well as getting support for themselves. It was this very isolation which informed their understanding of what disabled students had hitherto been facing when attempting to have their voice heard in a system which barely recognized their existence within its policies. Some analysis of these events will present a clearer picture in relation to the research question regarding the facilitation of change in the University environment.

From a researcher's perspective, I would argue that this isolation was reinforced by the fact that nondisabled students and other disabled students were not yet geared to work in partnership with staff and this collaboration was crucial. For disabled students this was likely to be due to a struggle with identity. According to Low, disabled students negotiate disabled and nondisabled identities "while negotiating the physical environment of the University campus"(Low, 1996:246). Her research showed that students in their struggle to be equal and negotiate an inaccessible environment became isolated from interaction with others, emphasising their disabled identity. Also when they are forced to seek assistance, they risk being seen by others as passive and helpless, which contradicts the strong image of disability pride some disabled students try to promote. The training so far had reached only a small number of staff and had not begun to touch all the other players involved.

Rees illustrated in his analysis of the disabling nature of policy and practice separation, the difficulties faced by staff who wish to implement changes (Rees, 1991). He recognized the constraints

faced by staff in an institution ruled by policy-makers who are removed from the reality within which people are living and working. A high value and status is placed on new academic work, especially new research, "uncontaminated by the responsibility to examine implementation" (Rees, 1991:156). These committed staff are fighting for access for a group who have been to date virtually disregarded and subject to the range of structural inequalities which have been widely identified in the literature cited (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Barton, 1988; Barnes, 1991; Ballard, 1991; Munford, 1992, 1995; Bach, 1994; Perkins, 1996). The importance of increased collaboration in research, development of institutional practices and the creation of enabling policies, inside and outside an educational setting, advocated by writers and researchers in the disability field (Rancharan and Grant, 1994; Rioux, 1994; Ward and Flynn, 1994; Zola, 1994; Low, 1996), can now be re-emphasised. Change in one area is only effective when activated as part of a cohesive strategy which considers all of the issues previously identified. Further analysis of the role and situation of University staff will illustrate this more clearly.

In Chapter Three I referred to the use of subtle manipulation and its role in preserving the balance of power. To further illustrate the dynamics of this in relation to the social construction, I will cite the Lukesian analysis offered by Fay:

Subtle manipulation transpires when the political system is so structured that the interests of the oppressed are not considered to be part of the political agenda even by the oppressed themselves (Fay, 1987:124).

The staff now found themselves at the receiving end of a system with which they had been obliged to collude prior to their newly developed understandings. They also recognized the pervasive nature of this oppression, which, for most involved, was not in any way overt or deliberate, but rather emanated from ignorance which subsequently became a disabling factor for them personally. Fay reinforces this point:

Because of the basic social structures of a society, decisions and actions are taken which redound to the interests of the powerful even though the powerful do not intentionally bring this about (Fay, 1987:123).

Staff now set themselves the task both of responding to some newly identified needs, and of attempting to enable and encourage their colleagues to take similar responsibility. The problem with which they were faced was not one of academic priority, rather it was viewed as Rees asserts:

Practical, characterised by the messy business of influencing what people do, and therefore less prestigious, at least in the eyes of the tertiary institution which values the production of publications and research grants (Rees, 1991:124).

Staff realised that in order to successfully challenge the system, better information about disability would be essential as well as the promotion of research, which raises the profile of disabled people. This would include the integration of disability theory into appropriate curricula and would ultimately have to involve a commitment by staff across the University. It was recognized that it is via the powerful mechanism of curriculum development that the ignorance of all was maintained. This includes the ignorance of those students who identify as disabled, in that they do not gain the opportunity to analyse their situation and identify the creation of barriers in the system, preventing them from reaching their potential. Fay's analysis of power would assert that placing the issue on the agenda at an intellectual and practical level forces dialogue where:

Power must arise out of the interaction of the powerful and powerless, with both sides contributing something necessary for existence. Power must be dyadic (Fay, 1987:120).

By developing a concept of the nature of power, and a sense of how individuals use power, it could be argued that all involved benefit in their increased ability to identify the extent to which they have co-operated in maintaining an oppressive system. Once people are aware of the concrete consequences of their passivity or their active behaviour they may be empowered with the choice to act (Fay, 1987; Munford, Georgeson and Gordon, 1994; Barnes and Mercer, 1996; Bury, 1996). For example the staff participants of the training identified a range of situations where they had previously negotiated with disabled students who were having such difficulties as accessing lectures, completing assignments, or sitting exams in a debilitated state. Many questioned, in the context of the training, the way they had handled such situations in their attempts to work within University policy and procedures. In doing so they reflected on what had become their main concern, the welfare of the student or the compliance with the rules. Thinking "outside of the square" led to constructive strategies which balanced the needs of both the institution and the students. One of these strategies included the development of a contact list of liaison people who would form their own network and contribute to a necessary infiltration of all academic departments. The new disability support person who subsequently joined the research group was to have a crucial co-ordinating role in provision of support and training for contact people. As a disabled person, she could model in her interactions with staff and students the process of identifying needs based on the student's own knowledge and understanding of their situation. In Fay's terms this means: "the discovery of conditions under which people can actually consider a particular analysis of their situation is an important ingredient in this task" (Fay, 1987:107).

Staff participants and student facilitators co-operated in an exploration of what could now be done in terms of addressing student needs, using training as one of the tools for action. It was envisaged that this training would be integral to the training programmes offered to staff at the University and that systems would be put in place to ensure that the needs of students with disabilities could be identified at an early stage. Having established this, we explored two elements in terms of training as a catalyst to a partnership approach: first, what people who had been through the training now

needed to meet student's needs; second, the specific support the training group (DARG) could offer to enable staff to be proactive. From these discussions evolved the idea for the formation of a contact person support network to "support the support people".

Within the concept of a theory of education Fay presents the following picture:

Here the paradigm case of power is not one of command but one of enablement in which a disorganised and unfocused group acquires an identity and a resolve to act in light of its new found sense of purpose (Fay, 1987:130).

Staff members reported that the follow-up meeting had come at a good time as their perceived isolation was leading to a sense of powerlessness which precluded the maintenance of any form of positive action. A key issue was information for students and collation of data which identified the range of problems created by University structures. Since students are naturally reticent about coming forward owing to the general attitude to disability, the onus lay with lecturers and support staff to ensure students felt able to approach them at an early stage. The necessary information about available support needed to be included in the calendar and handbook which were key avenues of communication. Since they had already been produced at this stage, this had to be placed on the agenda for action in subsequent years. The staff group decided that one of the actions they could take for 1996 would be inclusion of disability information in course outlines which had not yet been written. A checklist of things to be included, for example suggestions for access arrangements, was to be drawn up by staff in conjunction with a working sub-group of DARG. Some formal mechanism, whereby, the disability support person and the contact people could find out about students' needs (with their permission) at an early stage would be helpful. This would alert support staff to the necessity of a more proactive approach to removing barriers before the barriers created a crisis.

The different definitions of disability were found to prevent some students from approaching lecturers for help. Staff decided that visible contact people who stated that they were there to respond to any needs which are 'different', would encourage students. In addition they considered that a statement or name of contact person on the first page of the course outline should be inserted. I raised the question about ways in which we could ensure that such practices happen within each department as an integral part of their operations. A process of **specifying problems** led to a useful analysis of a sequence of events and I have framed the issues identified around some key aspects of the central research question. The catalytic value of the research was to be measured on one level by the degree of personal autonomy each participating individual achieved, and at the second, by the extent to which change occurred in their immediate environment. Having clarified these questions, the subsequent discussion is divided into four defined areas, all contributing to the process of emancipation sought. These are as follows: **the need for wider identification of contact people; the implementation of support mechanisms; weaving a support network and ways to**

achieve and monitor change. These all link back to the original research principles identified in Chapter Four (see Figure Three in Chapter Three). I will deal with each of these individually and clarify the range of subsequent issues and concerns for both students and staff.

Identification of Contact People

The first crucial area to address within each Department was the identification of nondisabled allies to be known as contact people. This was a strategy agreed by staff and research students in training. It was insisted that the contact person should have some knowledge or interest in disability and preferably training. One of the requirements if they did not have relevant training, would be that the Department supports the staff member to go to the DARG training courses as they occurred. This would set up a framework for the training group since the focus of all courses could be training for contact people. In this way, the outcome of the training was both immediate, proactive and created a future active role for DARG students. The second stage, after appointment of contact people, would be to establish an official forum for contact people to meet, identify goals/problems and share information. This would ensure the alleviation of their isolation some staff had already experienced and a strengthening of the partnership between existing and potential DARG students and their various allies on staff.

Implementation of Support Mechanisms

A second way to consolidate the immediate benefits of the training was through the vital building of support mechanisms, which included the contact people named above. It was recognized that at times the Disability Support Co-ordinator would not have the power or resources to respond to the issues contact people were raising and that other mechanisms should be in place. It was clear that students' personal tutors especially, in the first two years of a course, are the crucial contact people. Questions around negotiating extensions and other assessment issues are all brought to that person often before they come to the attention of anyone else. These tutors were to form a crucial layer of contact people at the ground level of teaching who would need to be involved. Staff argued that a role for the disability contact person for the Department could be to alert the tutors that they have a student with a disability. From there, they could negotiate at the beginning of the year, a meeting of the three people concerned **before** problems arise. Since each Department runs differently, a strategy unique to that Department would be planned. The protocol would be established of appointing a contact person using the initial staff meeting/forum of the year to establish the appropriate mechanism for identifying the needs of disabled students. In this process, both disabled students and tutors would be developing new interactive and political skills as they learn to negotiate legitimate ways to work with the system. In this way, the disabling aspects, could be turned to enabling ones, creating more accessible practices for staff and students alike. The forum previously mentioned for contact people was the mechanism by which they received their support from each other as well as from DARG.

Weaving a Web of Support

Further discussion occurred around the nature of the support web and the way this could potentially weaken the structures contributing to disability. It was hoped that such co-operation would enhance the cohesion of the growing alliance between disabled students and nondisabled allies. **Experiencing solidarity with each other** (Rees, 1991) was important to relieve the sense of isolation in which staff worked and which, ultimately, had the effect of reinforcing that of disabled students. It seemed quite feasible that some departments might wish for two people to take responsibility. Even one academic and one non-academic staff could provide a good balance. The position of a contact person could be an unpopular one if they were not supported by the chairperson of the Department and if necessary resources were not forthcoming. The staff group felt that the time commitment should at least be acknowledged by the Department and the work load identified. The chairpersons in each Department were seen as crucial to the success of support mechanisms. One person pointed out that in some departments chairpersons rotate over three years, so realistically, they felt only one year in three provided the opportunity to consolidate changes made. Other staff members are constant and work in partnership with changing chairpersons. A regular meeting between support staff and either DARG representatives or representatives of disabled students would ensure cohesive appropriate strategies. These laborious discussions were to be crucial to sustaining and building on the changes occurring and the visible work of DARG certainly prompted the University to look seriously at access within their policies. At the same time the research students involved continued to learn about negotiating change, were **developing awareness of policies** (Rees, 1991) and achieving the skills required of change agents.

Achieving and Monitoring Change

The training group was to form a crucial focus of change for disabled students and a constant contact point. In addition to training the group saw the need for them to become a liaison/consultant group who worked in partnership with staff. Staff asked about student support networks and we affirmed the value of student support networks but insisted on the importance of clear simple systems within the administration to ensure practical things are done. Historically, students have had to tell their story to numerous people before the appropriate action has been taken. Naturally, this is a deterrent to identifying needs. Information about appropriate help available was to be made equally accessible to students and staff. **Developing awareness of policies** (Rees, 1991), which particularly impacted on disabled students, was an ongoing learning process for all. It was to be achieved in part by the development of the supplementary information kit, a secondary training tool.

I will return to the outcomes of this work in the final chapters and make some recommendations based on our experiences. In this chapter, the focus of our action research has been described, in the form of a case study, where a group of disabled students have developed and delivered a disability equity training package and sown the seeds for some subsequent concrete change in the

University environment. To a large extent the research action, has addressed the potential for an emancipatory approach to achieve both personal change and environmental changes in relation to disabled students.

Conclusion

The above chapter has explored the concept of change in relation to the action research process. The partnership experience of staff in training and student research participants has been a central theme. It is time to return to these central research questions and critically evaluate the outcomes in the context of Rees's steps to empowerment and Fay's schema.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Critical Theory:

A Framework For Participant Evaluation

Introduction

This chapter will present an analysis, from a participant perspective, of the action research process. Undertaken by DARG. It will be presented within the framework of Rees's steps to empowerment to reflect the ongoing critical reflection in the research diary and Fay's thesis will form part of the evaluative framework. The model incorporating Fay and Rees with the research principles, will be subsequently critiqued in Chapter Eleven in terms of its value to inform a range of emancipatory approaches to disability research. The individual and group evaluations of participants will be referred to, as well as my own as researcher. As this joint analysis is presented, two questions will be addressed. One asks: what potential does emancipatory research have in enabling disabled people to take greater control of their lives and effect change in their immediate environment? The evidence of students' own evaluations will be drawn on to discuss the concrete changes already achieved in their own lives as they look critically at the group process and at the same time reiterate the changes which have occurred as a direct result of the training programme within the University environment. A second question asks: what are the challenges which have faced me as the researcher in conducting this type of research, and what are the potential challenges for others in embarking on emancipatory research? I will revisit the theories of Rees and Fay in relation to the research principles previously identified. This aims to reflect their relevance in the analysis of this research leading to a more in-depth discussion in final chapters.

Figure Three, which was first presented in Chapter Three, is again presented (without alteration) to enhance the clarity of the research evaluation. It outlines the link between Fay's basic scheme, Rees's steps to empowerment and the research principles, and it will be used as the theoretical foundation of this chapter. The positive and more problematic aspects of this type of research approach will be highlighted, laying the groundwork in subsequent chapters for suggesting ways in which the possible pitfalls have been or could be avoided. Three of the students who participated in the research were not able to fully engage in the evaluation process. They presented their evaluations in writing and these were integrated into the overall analysis undertaken by the remaining group members. This meant that the way the research was conducted continued to allow for different needs and access requirements. I have tried as accurately as I can to portray within my records of the research reflections the group experience of the process. The evaluations are presented by individuals and although they were recorded in the diary, extracts of each person's evaluation are presented with their pseudonyms as distinct from other diary entries of group discussion. The recorded diary of events was checked for accuracy by the research group. Lather's

comment on validity is significant: "The validity of a critical account can be found in part, in the participants' responses" (Lather, 1987:268). In other words, the extent to which research has accomplished change for each individual, depends primarily on the achievements they can name for themselves and each other. The initial evaluation questions which were jointly agreed between myself and participants aimed at critical self reflection on personal changes achieved during the research.

In Chapter Six I described in some detail the way I used Rees's steps to initiate the research process. To ensure cohesion, I invited the group to revisit Rees's steps and to evaluate their experience of the research using that framework. They subsequently decided on priorities for discussion while continuing to refer to the steps which were most significant for them. I will present the account of the research evaluation using the framework of Rees's steps as well as with reference to the key research principles (refer again to Figure Three).

Understanding Themes

Evaluating self image and knowledge

The concept of **understanding themes** and the **evaluation of self image and knowledge** have been seen by Rees as the fundamental steps in the road to empowerment. Exploration of themes was consistently evaluated throughout. In this way the process of understanding themes links to that of evaluation which is identified as the last of Rees's steps, reiterating the concept of an integral evaluation process. In this section both these steps will be discussed, in the context of examining the role of emancipatory research in personal liberation, in the identification of the social construction of disability as a critical theory upon which to build, and finally, in terms of respect for the personal experience of disability.

The role of emancipatory research in personal liberation

In the early stages of the group formation, I asked people to say what experience of research they had in order to both identify their potential contribution to the development of a research process and to be aware of the difficulties or experience of exploitation they may be bringing to the group experience. This was vital, particularly for people who had experienced abuse, as problems emanating from insensitivity and ignorance could occur. Once this was expressed, the whole group was able to take responsibility for dealing with that knowledge and could begin to have a concept of how an emancipatory model should be approached.

The first two meetings in particular were run like interactive teaching sessions during which the group process was negotiated. At this stage my input was the most substantial and thereafter, the group took on more momentum. I explained the structure of Rees's steps as well as the critical approach where "action/reflection/action" (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Kemmis and McTaggart.

FIGURE THREE

The Basic Scheme of Enlightenment, Rees's Steps to Empowerment and Their Role as an Explanatory Tool

THE BASIC SCHEME	REES'S STEPS TO EMPOWERMENT	PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH IN THE DISABILITY FIELD
I A theory of false consciousness 1) Demonstrates the ways in which the self concept of disabled people is false in that their understanding is based on Perceptions of deficit and dependency imposed on them. (They engage in ideology critique.) 2) Greater awareness highlights how research, science and the medical profession creates and perpetuates this ideology. 3) Exploring the social construction and social creation of disability places the 'blame' firmly within societal attitudes and practices.	Understanding themes (power of biography). Liberation through dialogue, investigation through words (Freire). Evaluation self image and knowledge. Evaluation of words and themes (Freire). Specifying problem, setting the research questions. Codifying themes (Freire). Presenting the codes by reflecting self needs.	The role of Emancipatory research in personal liberation, awareness and understanding of world view: recognition of social construction.
II A theory of crisis 4) Further exploration spells out the mechanisms of oppression, eg the systematic exclusion of disabled people from education employment etc. 5) On examination of the isolation and discrimination experienced by disabled people become aware that current structures are based on the dominance of an ableist society: a competitive education system, a discriminatory medical system, an individualist economy. 6) Greater awareness and education explores the roots of the oppression in the policies and practices of the systems which impact, eg inflexibility of assessment.	Developing awareness of policies: Learning about the system. Analysing and decoding (Freire). Developing the notion of choice: exploring educational options. Externalising: Making links to wider contexts (Freire). Acquiring and using language. Further decoding using interdisciplinary studies (Freire).	Research as an educational experience and the role of non-disabled researchers (alliance between disabled and non-disabled). Research by/for the disability community (issues of importance to disabled people - building networks).
III A theory of education 7) Increases understanding action identifying precise areas for change. 8) The emergence of disability pride.	Experiencing solidarity with others. Resisting a return to powerlessness.	Empowerment through education within research of the need for concerted process (consciousness raising, community education: education of teaching staff).
IV A theory of transformative action 9) Identifies specific policies and practices which create disability and suggest ways they could be changed. 10) A combination of all of the previous elements fulfills a plan of action.	Developing interactive and political skills. Evaluation. Preparation of didactic materials (Freire).	Research as a catalyst for change and partnership.
Achieving real change within the University.		

1988; Barndt, 1990; Fook, 1996) was central. While Rees's steps were a discussion tool which could be discarded if the group chose, the spiral of reflection and action was the mechanism which was consistently used to reflexively monitor the process and alert participants to negative influences or manipulation in any form (Freire, 1987; Bennie, 1996; Fook, 1996; Walsh-Tapiata, 1997). As I identified in Chapter Six, I initiated a participatory research process by suggesting how my own experience fitted with each of the steps, chosen at random. By doing this, I was attempting to model a method of self-reflection in relation to the steps. One participant followed by commenting on **using and acquiring language** (Rees, 1991). For her, this step had most relevance in relation to her own process of **understanding themes** (ibid) and was the most logical starting point. Each person chose a different step to embark on this process of self-reflection but a central theme in discussion explored the ways in which groups (even groups of disabled people) can exclude and oppress each other using exclusive language such as professional jargon or words which can negate the individual identity (Butler and Wintram, 1991). This included people's personal experiences of other research projects. By the end of this process, the group was equipped to decide on a *modus operandi* which included detailed group ground rules and a mission statement and philosophy. While I, as the researcher, had initiated the process using a defined structure, the group had been able from there to decide on participatory ways of working which would ensure a positive group process. I took responsibility from an early stage to guide them through the research by naming different aspects of the methodology which was unfolding.

Recognition and use of the social theories of disability

The concepts of disability in the social construct model versus the medical model took me a while to understand, but its value has really fundamentally changed how I see myself, my and other's impairments and my view of society, the world (Sally).

Students were invited to explore and define critical theory in terms of the social construction and social creation of disability for them as individuals and in terms of its political implications. They explored the extent to which it had impacted and changed the "world view" (Fay, 1987) and self-understandings of themselves as participants. This was similarly addressed by Bennie, (1996) in his endeavour to develop an emancipatory model of supported employment and Walsh-Tapiata (1997) in her analysis of the issues for Maori in seeking a means to achieve their personal and political emancipation.. Walsh-Tapiata spoke of the powerful effect of critical theory in terms of her own increased awareness:

It was like switching on a light bulb, it was like coming out of a world of darkness (Te Ao Kore) and into the world of light (Te Ao Marama). This theory empowered me by offering an explanation of the oppressive structures of our society, the false consciousness that so many Maori appear to be bound into but also how education of individuals and communities can

lead to empowerment, enlightenment and then emancipation of these people (Walsh-Tapiata, 1997:125).

Students have expressed the importance of the acknowledgement of the social construction of disability in their lives.

My involvement with DARG has further advanced my knowledge of the social construction of disability. This has meant I have been able to more confidently, critically reflect on the social construction of many issues in the wider world, in particular issues tied up with my feminist beliefs and values (Sally).

Research participants used the theory to challenge their own previous false consciousness constructed by societal views and expectations. For women this had even greater significance and other valuable connections to feminism and feminist theory were made. For example, Lunar was able to identify the significance of "double oppression" already cited in relation to the work of other disabled feminists (Browne, Connors and Sterne, 1985; Fine and Asch, 1988; Wight-Felske, 1988, 1994; Morris, 1989, 1991, 1992;) and disabled male researchers (Bourne, 1981; Oliver, 1990). Lunar identified the parallels she saw with the work of the women's movement having been actively involved in previous years. While she saw some disadvantages to the fact that the group was predominantly female, she felt that the larger numbers of women redressed the potential inequality between males and females within the group. On the other hand, it was acknowledged that one of the challenges the whole group (as a group of disabled students) faced, was to consistently **resist a return to powerlessness** (Rees, 1991). The women in the group saw this as a constant challenge which is very much "*part of the experience of being female in a white male system*" (Lunar)[*quote from research record*]. Some of the group became familiar with the work of Morris (1987, 1992) and asked for literature from other sources to develop their understanding. I presented a bibliography in their own training kit (Appendix Eight).

Patrick discussed the social theories of disability in terms of his own interpretation of this. He considered he had a good concept of these theories in terms of their impact on him as an individual but questioned the extent of his understanding of their use in the group context. He linked a growing awareness of the theories with the concept of empowerment and saw DARG members as change agents with a responsibility to the community to promote change. The literature which supports this has had significance for myself as researcher and to a lesser extent for the learning of some group members. Kenny, (1994) emphasises the importance of a community development approach as a key to change and Munford, Georgeson and Gordon, (1994) refer to the importance of structural analysis in a social work context where disabled people and their allies unite to name the issues and become a catalyst for change having reflected on those issues. Ife, (1995) refers to the roles of community workers as change agents and their power in terms of working in alliance with marginalised groups and Munford and Sullivan, (1997) speak of disabled and nondisabled people working as change agents in the context of empowerment of disabled people. Bennie, (1996)

focuses on critical reflection as essential to the development of an emancipatory model of supported employment where disabled people are able to take charge of their lives in alliance with nondisabled people and Walsh-Tapaiata, (1997) sees the naming of the theoretical framework as the only means Maori have to enter into dialogue with those in power on essential issues pertaining to them. Integral to this analysis is a recognition that economic independence is central to a comprehensive understanding and attainment of empowerment which the DARG students recognized within their own analysis.

Further discussion occurred around the social construction and social creation of disability at an early stage within the evaluation process. Group discussion aimed to redefine both of those theories in terms of the lived experiences of participants. I used the example of an original objective which one person felt we had failed to address that of the issue of employment. I argued that all our original objectives had been covered to some degree because the action we took addressed the social construction and creation of disability in terms of identification of University barriers. I asked students to look more closely at what the social construction of disability means: that disability is created in the attitudes and individual practices of individuals within their community. This can include the impact of culture, language, values and structures. The social creation of disability (Oliver, 1990) explains that disability is further created within our institutional structures and attains a life of its own within the practices and policies which give these structures their life blood. It is these structures we challenged by asking the University to recognize inaccessible and disabling practices within the teaching methods, assessment systems and departmental policies.

The social construction and creation of disability as the underpinning theories on which the training was designed, enabled staff during the training to rethink their view of disability and to change their ways of working. The theories served to identify the precise nature of the disabling forces which prevent disabled people from operating to their full capacity recognizing that it is partly through ignorance of these forces that they are, themselves, oppressed. So the educator “intends to be the catalytic agent which sparks these people into changing the way they live and relate to others” (Fay, 1987:89). Having had this discussion, the group proceeded to make the links between the work they had done on the training kit, the changes which had occurred in the University environment as a result and the long term effects of these in terms of greater access to education for disabled people. This in turn would ultimately improve their ability to gain employment. In this sense, the issue had been dealt with indirectly.

Respecting the personal experience of disability

This concept of false consciousness became increasingly significant to students as they became more aware of their own history and sense of self. Rees speaks of the “promise of biography” (Rees, 1991:21) and its role in a multi-dimensional context linking the experience of the social worker to that of the ‘client’ and the equal validity of story-telling for all. The role of people’s stories was the

common linking strand within each element of the research and has created the coherence of this thesis:

The telling of a story will contribute to empowerment if the listeners as well as the storytellers recognise the importance of coherence...coherence connotes the value of joining ideas and activities which usually remain separate (Rees, 1991:21).

While the story of each individual has not been analysed in detail for the reasons previously stated, this has not precluded their effect of bringing cohesion to the research. When we as a group set out with an analysis of the steps to empowerment, the collation of our educational experiences as disabled people was suggested as an important parallel activity. By doing so we were using a combination of action-research and story approaches as recommended by Ballard. He suggests they provide a way of presenting those with limited knowledge of the lived experience of disability with complex, integrated information (Ballard, 1993:3). It was felt by students that the eventual publication of our biography would be a powerful tool in improving the visibility of disabled people in education generally, as well as to perhaps give to many hope who at present have little.

As mentioned previously, the group agreed on a range of key themes to 'semi-structure' the interviews. Students reported feeling empowered by the experience and found it useful in enabling them to clarify some issues which they had previously not had the space to explore. One individual interview was held with each student over the course of the year of the action research. I conducted earlier in the research had a very different function from those conducted at the end. Those students who were interviewed later in the research had the benefit of the research experience with which to analyse their own stories and these stories could be used to conduct an analysis of the research process itself. The initial stories contained much less insight into the nature of their disabling experiences, but have a value in their own right as accounts of a struggle with the education system. Each student used the process in the way which was most valuable to them personally and covered the areas which had most relevance to their experience of disability. The use of interview and life history (in this case topical life history) is well accepted in research (Denzin, 1979, 1989, 1992, 1994)) and taken up by feminists such as Graham to write women's stories using open-ended questions (Oakley, 1981; Graham, 1984; Munford, 1989). It was clear, however, that unless the themes and even the questions were created and identified by participants, the agenda would be controlled by the researcher. I avoided taking control of the research agenda and by asking the group to identify themes we ensured that the summary of our stories would be relevant to a large cross section of disabled people and would reflect real concerns and needs. It was hoped that the telling of our stories would serve as an inspiration and an education to other disabled people and professionals who are interested in enhancing both the availability and the quality of the educational experience, for disabled people in tertiary education.

The way in which the process provided coherence was through the fulfilment of the first steps to empowerment where biography and peoples' stories are central to the identification of themes. For those who gave interviews at an early stage, this was an opportunity to talk through what they wanted from the research process for themselves and to discuss the role they may like to play. For those whose interviews came later, the individual interview became an evaluation of a personal nature of the experience of being part of DARG. Some of the things shared on an individual basis were not shared in group evaluation, and it was for the most part a further validation of the emancipatory action research at the level of personal growth which was reported. Placing the research process in the context of peoples' lives added to the coherence of the research and ensured that I had picked up any outstanding issues for individuals.

Some used the interview as an opportunity to work through practical issues in relation to their support needs: For example, I found myself supplying information about funding sources or encouraging people to apply for equipment or funding to which they had previously not felt they had a right. For others, it was a chance to talk about their studies and any issues arising with particular assignments or lecturers. All spoke of the future and their hopes and dreams and the process facilitated some reflection around future plans. Quite often, in the daily grind, survival becomes the central focus and future directions appear to be a luxury only nondisabled people can afford.

The range of experiences was rich and it was interesting to note the contradictions in people's stories. The analysis will make an informative publication in the future but I do not intend to analyse the material in any more depth than that presented within this evaluation since to summarise it would not do it justice. I will say, however, that for some it was the first time they had sat down and talked about their lives and disability in this way and I was struck by much of the hidden pain expressed, particularly for those whose disability is both more recent and invisible:

I haven't got an exotic experience - I have a plain problem but they can be equally disabling as those more exotic disabilities... I look normal - this is the source of my grief - lack of acknowledgement, lack of visibility... everyone has a sore back (Sally's personal story).

I suggested that while this person was experiencing one of the more common problems, in my view that made the conveyance of the message even more important. She responded to my statement by saying that it was incredibly liberating to hear that. She saw it as acknowledgement of her pain in the wake of a great deal of denial from many in her life. Sally also made an important link in terms of society's expectations of the body, when talking about her experience as a disabled woman with an invisible disability:

So much of that time I was just coping with trying to survive with my body and just learning to accept my body. This is where in the gender class, looking at feminist issues of body and things like that and then the

whole idea of the disabled body - but beyond that the invisible disabled body and body image and the social imposition of that (Sally's personal story).

The work of Munford (1987,1992,1995) explores the many ways women's bodies become a site of oppression including the power of society to construct the caregiving relationship (McNay, 1993) and contribute to the enforced 'dependency' of disabled women. (Morris, 1992; Hillyer, 1993; Georgeson, 1994; O'Sullivan, 1994). Sullivan, (1995) also analyses in considerable detail the issue of the body for disabled identity. Sutherland (1996) similarly conducts insightful accounts within her research of these issues and Lunn, (1997) within the stories of disabled women, raise the debate of the significance of the body for the disabled female identity. Disabled women themselves have begun to openly discuss the impact of the body and feminine role models in terms of the heightened impact of impairment on their identity (Campling, 1981; Morris, 1987,1991; Georgeson, 1994; Keith, 1996). All the research group students male and female, made some reference to the significance of bodies which refused to work properly, in terms of their personal development and sense of identity as they grew through adolescence. These testimonies of personal struggle will make powerful reading and add to the excellent work cited above.

Students spoke of the intolerance they coped with, along with the multitude of barriers identified, particularly in the education system, and contextualised the action-research we had conducted. A further theme of relevance here, is the forum for individual evaluation the research provided. Rees's steps were used by some as an evaluation framework and they became of further use in creating dialogue. The extent to which the theoretical analysis had played a role in peoples' growth and empowerment was discussed and the illuminating nature of the approach using the social construction of disability and Rees's steps:

It's because it has got that theoretical basis - instead of it coming down to personalities, agendas and politics. It comes down to Rees's steps - how do you not let political dynamics destroy the group? Rees's steps have provided that foundation (Sally).

Evaluation of this depth is more easily facilitated by a one-to-one interview and provides a safe forum for exploring more difficult group dynamics and impact on the individual. Sally spoke of this process:

I think this is important. I believe in the power of the personal oral narrative. I would like to see these published/edited for public use - As a member of DARG this year I think the most powerful thing I could take with me would be a collection of our personal narratives This would make for a powerful publication!.

I discussed the value of the story in the portrayal of personal experience (Ballard, 1994; Munford, 1989,1995; Kerr, 1996; Perkins, 1996) and critiqued the use of simulation in disability equity training (Finkelstein, 1991; French, 1992) in Chapters Six and Seven. A story told by a research

participant which became one of those used in the training, powerfully brings these issues into the context of the daily lived experience:

When I was diagnosed with SLE (Systemic Lupus Erythematosus) it seemed that within a matter of months my life completely changed. I was going in and out of hospital, I was constantly in a great deal of pain. Looking back now, although it was a severe intense experience, it made me think seriously about my life, my limitations and my achievements. I began to realise I could change this situation - it was up to me. By changing my attitude to SLE, turning it into something positive, I could get better and improve other people's perceptions of my situation (Story of research participant published in training kit).

This person took responsibility for change while empowering herself through the development of a wider analysis of what was going on and an ability to separate her own issues from those of other students. At the same time, she identified the interdependence of the forces involved in the disabling experience. The theme of the significance of the personal story now links to each subsequent step. For example, the use of people's personal stories on every level led to the process of specifying problems and setting objectives.

Students were aware, as they were speaking, of the mechanism the stories would provide for conveying messages about the barriers in the system, the disabling effects of peoples' attitudes and the particular aspects of the system which created specific examples of disability for them as individuals. Exploration of the theme of powerlessness in the face of such systems was one that the group had identified as a common theme, but the way each person dealt with this common theme provided rich material for a future publication. One of the difficulties the nondisabled world has, in understanding disabled people and in responding appropriately and adequately to their needs without creating dependence, is their inability to 'read' the disabled person's experience.

The students at these meetings in effect were exploring the theories of the social construction and creation of disability and at the same time were building a new theory on ways to facilitate social transformation for themselves. Sally reflected: *"But we have pushed those boundaries and have come up with as a result a body of knowledge."*

By discussing issues such as destructive attitudes inside and outside the University and by relating the impact of these on us personally, people were naming and gaining an understanding of the social construction of disability and challenging their previous false consciousness (Fay, 1987). In the discussion around unemployment, they were beginning to name and understand the nature of the social creation of disability in practice in society. To discover this theoretical perspective was exciting for those who had never perceived their experience in that way. In the naming of

oppression, the students could metaphorically “throw off their chains” (Fay, 1987) and walk free. They identified this process as a healing one where lost skills and confidence were rediscovered:

There has been a re-growth of independence and self awareness, confidence and assertiveness that I think had become 'shadowed or lost'(Jan).

Furthermore:

I have developed a greater confidence to have my needs met and demand things I would not have done previously (Patrick).

In the recognition of the social construction and social creation of disability in their lives, they provided space for themselves to understand the themes involved and to evaluate their own self-image (Rees, 1991). They were able then to separate out the extent to which their personal emancipation depended on changes at a personal and political level. This meant distinguishing between those changes they made for themselves within themselves, and those which needed to be made within the policies and environment of the University as well as the wider society. A high value was placed on the personal experience of disability and what this brought to their learning process and that of others. Students were able to use the first of Rees's steps to set personal objectives at the beginning of the research, to act as a platform from which to tell their stories and, subsequently, to analyse their personal changes and those achieved by the research group.

Specifying Problems

I have described previously the tendency of traditional research to define disability in terms of a medical model and Rees refers to the way powerless people are accustomed to having their problems defined for them. In this section I will discuss the process of identifying barriers to integration where an exploration of the social theories of disability ensured the 'blame' was firmly placed within societal (and therefore University) attitudes and practices. Subsequent research objectives were set by both students and staff participants.

The problems associated with the identified themes emerged as the agenda of the students evolved but the confidence to make decisions on research priorities did not come easily. I had to step back while at the same time offering consistent encouragement reminding them of their skills and abilities. Having explored the themes, the process of setting research goals evolved naturally. The issues which students identified using extracts of their evaluations, the problems as applied to staff participants, and diary entries reflecting on each phase, will now be presented.

At the end of the research, the group, in their own evaluation, revisited the four supplementary research objectives identified as the original ones. The disability equity training became the vehicle by which they sought to achieve them. The first objective was to raise awareness of disability in the University structure and to clearly redefine disability in the context of the social construction of

disability. This meant a move away from the preoccupation with different impairments to a focus on mechanisms of change and enablement. The second involved the implementation of proactive measures to address the need for in-built structures to respond to different learning needs. This included the evaluation of assessment procedures and their impact at individual and institutional level. A third was to tell our stories to contribute to the picture of the disability experience from a multi-dimensional perspective. Finally the group aimed to gather data to be used as a tool to suggest and establish changes which could be made within existing resources.

In general, students felt that the themes we initially identified of access and attitudes in the widest sense had been addressed on a number of levels. Coral felt that she had a better understanding of disability and which aspects of the system and its practices were disabling. The social construction and creation of disability had been clarified and this very clarification had contributed to the achievement of objectives. **Developing awareness of policies** (Rees, 1991), which compounded the disability experience, led to a detailed evaluation of assessment systems which had been submitted to the Academic Board. One student had compiled this on behalf of the group and it had contributed to the high profile given to disability the previous year. Christine described this as “*coming out of the mist - a significant feeling.*” Another student’s view of the extent to which we reached our original objectives was as follows:

Topics that were raised, scrutinised and either discarded or accepted were to us all basic rights and requirements that were not being met under certain conditions (Coral).

It was noted that the smallest concessions from academic staff can, make the greatest difference in the life of a person with a disability. It was considered that as a group we achieved results in the form of positive action within the University, by setting forth areas that needed to be looked at, based on the experience of different group members:

We have defined reasons why there are difficulties, whether it is a physical barrier such as doors, ramps and general accessibility, to the more difficult area of breaking down the personal attitudes and fear that people carry with them (Diary entry: 7 Dec 1995).

Clearly, by redefining disability, we had defined empowerment in practice by our group actions and in the concrete changes we made:

For me the aim of the research process as enhancing learning and empowerment for both myself, DARG and other students with disabilities is still ongoing. It is being very successfully achieved in my opinion, but it is something we can never take casually or for granted otherwise we risk powerlessness when being proactive has more benefits for everyone (Jan).

One of the key objectives of the group had been to explore the possibility of developing an emancipatory process and to attempt to provide a working definition of an emancipatory model of

research. Student evaluations of the process throughout reflect the extent to which this was achieved and I will summarise the conclusions in the final chapter. All felt that the group's objectives had of necessity changed as we planned action and the disability equity training kit became our weapon for addressing many of the issues and themes we originally identified:

While we may have started off with many/several objectives - we have ended up focussing more on the disability equity training package - I think this is a significant achievement as it shows the group's ability to set and achieve realistic goals that have a positive outcome. It would have been easy for the group to get lost in multiple objectives and goal (Chase).

There appears to be evidence already within University practices of more proactive and open approaches to dealing with students with disabilities. Students gave examples of recent positive experiences which bore this out:

Consciousness raising (of both the group members and 'outsiders' eg. liaison people at student services and the participants of the training course) is what I believe we have achieved through the development and implementation of the training package. I believe this is a very empowering thing and as an action research group to have achieved consciousness raising and empowerment is something we can all be proud of (Sally).

The concept of **specifying problems** (Rees, 1991), also applies to staff participants in the disability equity training who came with the aim of finding out: how to 'deal with' disabled students; about the nature of all the different impairments in order to be prepared and, with all good will, how to provide the emotional support, to a limited extent, to aid them in their sometimes 'tragic' circumstances. The same process occurred for the disabled students participating in the overall research by becoming more aware of the reality of the social construction of disability. Freire's concept of praxis sums up the experience of staff in training:

Encompasses a critical reflection which increasingly organises their thinking and this led them to move from a purely naive knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which perceives the causes of reality (Freire, 1972:101).

While at the beginning staff were calling for more knowledge about different impairments and diseases, the approach we took asked them to reflect on their own experiences as educators, family members and friends to enable them to explore their own solutions. In this way a working partnership was formed. We had been expected to be the "experts" and in many ways the student facilitators were colluding with this by over-facilitating, illustrating the power of role expectations. We encouraged the staff to identify the resources they had personally to work **with** students. We also encouraged them to see that no matter how much medical knowledge they had about any one impairment, unless they were prepared to negotiate a partnership, the problem of access to lectures or difficulties in submitting homework to meet deadlines or sitting exams, would remain a mystery.

Another story used in the training illustrates the way staff can be either enabling or disabling in the way they use the system:

About three quarters of the way through a full year course, I asked my lecturer who knew I had lupus, if I could have an extension of time for an assignment due the following day. She asked me why and I explained that, unexpectedly that I had to work extra hours at my part-time job. I was consequently feeling exhausted which had put me behind in my University work. She asked me how many extra hours I had worked and could I obtain a note from my employer verifying this. After explaining that it would be impossible to get the note the same day, she said I could have an extension of one day. I had hoped for an extension to the following Monday so that I could finish the opinion without further detriment to my health. Her attitude left me stunned and too ashamed to explain further as I felt I would have to grovel. I completed the assignment on time by working through the night but it took me some weeks to recover (Story told by a research participant and published as material for the training kit).

While the staff in many ways could be perceived as “oppressors” in these circumstances, they were also able to identify, by entering into an analysis of this story, the ways in which the system limits their own potential to work either on their own behalf or that of disabled students.

Developing Awareness of Policies

The predicament of powerless people is likely to be affected by social and economic policies and the professional services which are delegated the responsibility of implementing those policies (Rees, 1991: 92).

Fay's theory of crisis facilitates exploration of the specific mechanisms of oppression the student group were facing and both identified and explains the systematic exclusion of disabled people from education and employment. *Developing an awareness of policies* provides a tool by which people can challenge this exclusion. From an early stage it was evident that the group would have to both educate and act in order to challenge the policies, practices and systems which created their problems. In the words of Freire (1972) we were undergoing “conscientisation” where we were engaging in analysis and forming new ideas and concepts of our world and experience. This stage corresponds with Fay's theory of crisis where the various structures and policies impacting on disabled students inside and outside the University setting now became the central focus. The research process was becoming an educational process in itself and in the acquisition of new knowledge. We were developing alliances with nondisabled staff, both those who participated in the training and those who helped us find the funding to set it up. The greater the level of awareness, the more apparent was the systematic exclusion, of disabled people from education and

employment. Participants, increasingly, were becoming aware of the system, its anomalies and contradictions:

Learning about systems and going through different processes within the university, language being demystified, participating in staff training prior to the delivery of the training package and participating in the training package itself are all valuable components of new learning and development. Where issues previously had been problems now the group has become a forum for "finding a way" (Diary entry: May 1995).

McNiff offers further insight into this with regard to developing a new model for teacher education. She speaks of the perception of failure as a vital part of learning. She claims that measurement against a clearly defined standard is good but the attempt to achieve this should be "a creative learning process" (Mc Niff, 1993:52). Therein lies the contradiction in that the concept of failure is seen as a mainstay of our educational institutions, particularly in teacher education. By using the training kit, we have aimed to challenge such rigid approaches and reveal their disabling impact on the learner. It was acknowledged that if we as students were to be vigilant to the contradictions and open to identification of real need we should model in our own group process and action what we expect at an institutional level:

This is only possible to the extent that the self-reflective community itself maintains practices which are rational in communication, just in decision making and collaborative in action (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:183).

This included the acceptance that our own individual understanding and experience of disabling structures and policies had validity for others only in the context of group analysis and action:

Emancipatory action researchers recognise that rationality, social justice, and solidarity begin with their own practices, and are critically alert so that they can intervene in the social, economic and political processes of our society (Carr and Kemmis, 1986:183).

It is clear that the very process of collaboration established by DARG created "concrete contradictions" between the work of the group and the University ideology and institutional practices within which we were based. Our "co-ordinated strategic action" (ibid) aimed to use the tool of partnership to overcome these contradictions and use contradiction and difference in a highly constructive way. The students participating recognized this:

Within the University system there are a range of paradigms within which we have to work whether that be in connection with research or other aspects of what we are trying to achieve (Christine).

Respect for, and understanding of, the traditions behind the systems was an ongoing theme consistent with Fay's theory of tradition (Fay, 1987).

Developing a Notion of Choice

I have previously discussed the difficulties experienced by people who have been marginalised in exercising or recognizing real choices (Rees, 1991). The previous steps described formed stepping stones to a notion of choice and the ability to use power constructively for the students participating. Since disability is often seen as low priority, people with disabilities and their allies must move from what Rees describes as, “the assumption that there is no alternative to accepting one’s lot, to deliberation over what might be possible” (Rees, 1991:93). The notion of choice had to apply to everyone involved as it was clear that often staff felt as powerless as students. Further examination of the isolation and discrimination faced by disabled people but to which nondisabled people are also subject, revealed the power of current societal structures which maintain and encourage a competitive education system, a discriminatory medical system and an individualist economy. This links to Freire’s approach where a process of externalising problems and making links to the wider structures facilitates crucial learning and awareness in the process of empowerment (Freire, 1972).

I continued to provide the necessary leadership to guide the group through the task they had set themselves and slowly contributed to the notion of choice by encouraging greater involvement of each person in the responsibility for group action. For example, I asked them to delegate tasks, to use their knowledge of the University, and to capitalize on their existing networks. We found that particularly at University level, in our preparatory dialogue with lecturers, that academics were resistant to the notion of consultation with undergraduate students. We suggested that we could be available to advise on problems of curriculum adaptation, whether this be in relation to disability access, course content or language. To be placed in a position where they consulted as part of a training process was the first stage for many in identifying the real choices they possessed as staff in challenging their part in the social construction of disability. This was evident in the way dialogue between staff and students was facilitated around the different methods of delivery employed by lecturers and in the extent to which this disadvantaged some students. Our discussions around Rees’s steps were recorded:

We continue to use our individual experiences and to build on the themes. We are developing good group skills, practical teaching skills and political awareness; additionally, we are becoming more informed about the mechanisms within the University which create disability in the educational environment (Diary entry: 18 June 1995).

The interaction with University staff on an equal level appeared to facilitate a practical partnership from which all parties involved benefited. Not only was this empowering for the students involved, in terms of the voice this forum gave to them, but the staff in turn were able to discuss some practical things they could do to work constructively with the problems they encountered rather than simply dismissing them as too problematic to deal with. It appeared that their own resistance to consultation with their students (sometimes due to lack of confidence), whether disabled or nondisabled, was in fact preventing them from finding solutions.

To further illustrate the importance of biography, understanding themes and the far-reaching nature of the group activity in the building of choices, Christine related the experience of parents of a child with a disability who were feeling frightened for the future of their son. What they saw DARG doing was paving the way and giving them hope for the future. The process was described by the parents as "*providing a beacon of light for people with disabilities*" (quote from student discussions 18 June 1995) which was a timely reminder of the outside reality amid the institutional structures and research theory. I noted in the research diary that this would be considered idealistic by many but the comprehensive approach we had taken would ensure our action would go beyond that to achieve a reality.

One of the central issues identified by Freire in his analysis of oppression was the resistance demonstrated by professionals to active involvement of students in any educational programme. This had been based on the belief that there was no way they would have the ability to contribute:

Both in preparation for the training and during the programme itself the staff have discovered a whole new area of expertise. In this way within the programme we planned and implemented, the concept of choice has been integral again for both parties. We have been able to enter into dialogue with staff within a setting where we have had some power as facilitators and where we have been able to use our own stories to illustrate the difficulties they faced within the system. This had created a safe forum for us to challenge the behaviour of academic staff without fear of reprisal (Diary entry: 18. Sep, 1995).

The potential threat to staff of such a forum was recognised and it was important to acknowledge their many fears, often resulting from ignorance of disability and feelings of powerlessness. Furthermore, the most intelligent of beings accept the status quo and the restraints imposed by the system. As Fay points out :

Humans create themselves and their own world, but they do not realise this is what they are doing - they do not see themselves in the 'objects' they have created (Fay, 1987:53).

They do not see that they actually do have the power to change and challenge their environment and to adapt their own practices accordingly. They rarely have been given the opportunity to explore the rationale behind the policies and practices which provide their security and they often have had no reason to question the validity of such policies and practices. This is even true if those same practices impact negatively on their experience.

As a result, institutions and cultures transform them in ways they did not or could not anticipate, and their activity is carried out in a disorganised self-defeating way. Their activity is not under their control (ibid).

When looking at an empowerment approach to the educational process, one must identify real choice as an integral part of the structure at every level including the curriculum. This goes beyond

the superficial reactive strategies on disability, where no real change can occur, have been introduced in many tertiary institutions. By this I mean a band-aid approach to access problems and the appointment of disability support people with limited resources. The last word on this step goes to Lunar, who stated:

We need to consistently remind each other of our value as individuals and that it is too easy to become overwhelmed by the apparent struggle which is a part of everyday life. The research process has enabled me to identify my own value and even if I have not understood as much as I would have liked to I know I have been part of something of immense importance (Lunar).

Acquiring and Using Language

Language was a consistent theme and was recognized as a tool of empowerment or exclusion. The ability to name the policies and practices which lie at the roots of oppression and link those to the immediate environment enables a critical analysis in keeping with the theory of crisis (Fay, 1987). From the outset, acquisition of language was a key consideration in the research with one student who was a linguist providing consistent reflection in the context of the research. She said that the whole realisation of the social construction made light bulbs go on, for her, and opened the way to new thinking:

Awareness of the part language plays in the social construction was also enlightening as well as the potential for development of theory and practice (especially in terms of training) around the issue of language. In terms of political awareness, I have become aware of social policy, public health and a general interest in the power of politics (Jan).

Empowerment in the context of language acquisition occurred at two levels: for staff, through the acquisition of a broader knowledge of human experience, while feeling more competent in their teaching; for students, through the personal impact of the pedagogical process and through improved future interactions with lecturers. Greater awareness among staff reduced the need for disabled students to re-write their life text in order to be understood by their lecturer or to conform to rigid University policies.

This was being achieved in the ongoing learning process involving the greater knowledge of research language, the language of the essence of the disability experience and the language of the institution. Where the staff acquired new language in their understanding of disability, the language of the resulting partnership ensured a deconstruction of the disability experience in the institutional context. While development of new theoretical analysis for students did not mean they had left behind their original conception of reality, or changed their reality completely, their growth

ensured they were able to detach themselves sufficiently to move into new territory. As Heron succinctly states:

They can sufficiently disengage from the claims of the past language of words to be open to the present 'language' of experience, so that their future use of words may become revisionary in the most fundamental, empirical way. (Heron, 1981:159).

Traditional approaches to the development of the language of the disability experience has been the use of simulation training to foster some kind of experiential learning (Finkelstein, 1990, 1991; French, 1992; Boyles and Perkins, 1994). In the previous chapter the issues involved in simulation and equity training using experiential learning as an alternative method (French, 1992) were presented.

We all learnt the importance of respecting as well as demystifying the language of the institution. A further analysis of the role of language in the creation of disability discourse is appropriate. It can be argued that it has power to exclude in three ways. The first is in a verbal⁶ context, where there is over-emphasis on the value of verbal communication. A second is ideological, in the insistence that disability is associated with individual deficit and a notion of blame. Finally, in a cultural context, either in a general sense, in terms of non-acceptance of imperfection or within specific cultures, where disability is seen as shameful and disabled people are invisible.

We countered many of the issues arising in a concrete sense by gaining respect, as well as through our own ability to analyse the problems and enter into dialogue with key players. Our allies taught us new language and gave us the dictionary to work by in the way they opened channel of communication and information which gave us access to administrators and academic staff at the highest level.

A test of the value of acquiring and using new language lies in the evidence that the users are making connections between one context of power and another (Rees, 1991:95).

Given this more in-depth analysis, acquiring new language in terms of empowerment must apply not only to students with disabilities, but also in such situations as staff in training who need to develop a whole new vocabulary. The language they gained would define the "essence" (Van Manen, 1990) of the lived experience of disability enabling them to read the "text" (Fairclough, 1995) in a totally different way. In phenomenological terms this is about "the questioning of the very nature of a lived experience; a certain way of being in the world" (Van Manen, 1990:39). This certainly goes beyond the superficial language of political correctness where the emphasis is on

⁶ None of the research participants is Deaf or hearing impaired and we are alerted to the importance of raising issues pertinent to a range of different people. It was acknowledged that we as hearing people can create the barriers.

learning the appropriate terminology (Barnes, 1996; Oliver, 1996) though this is, no doubt, important.

The use of extracts of people's stories taught this new language of experience to staff and consequently, empowered them as workers to cope with a range of situations which challenge them. They were finally speaking the same language and in partnership a new text could be created. In the concrete sense this meant that disabled students would have their needs met by removal of barriers to learning and other tools of exclusion in the educational setting. For example, as a result of their training, lecturers have discovered the confidence to talk to students about their impairment, acknowledging the student's personal expertise and ability to suggest his or her own solutions. Previously they would turn to the information booklets listing different impairments with their medical consequences. This represents a shift from a medical model of disability to taking responsibility for being part of the social construction of disability.

Experiencing Solidarity With Others

Begin to appreciate each other's gifts and you begin to appreciate your own limitations (Peck, 1987:65).

The above quote refers to the interdependent nature of a true community and is particularly pertinent in the context of a group of disabled people working together on a research project. Rees has advocated the value of people with similar experiences forming support groups, where working together can lead to a sense of group pride, in this case a concept of disability pride. The research group sought to achieve the principle of developing research by disabled people for disabled people (principle number three section 11.4 Figure Three) where a mutual education process occurred in keeping with Fay's theory of education. This encouraged consistent sharing of both unique and contradictory experiences of oppression which led to an ongoing re-definition of the concept of disability and subsequently, a re-evaluation of the theories on which we were building our research. An example of this is that of a student turning up for the research meeting having just dealt with the combination of an unhelpful health practitioner and a lecturer who was inflexible in expectations of submission of assignments. She felt forced to reflect on the impact of such experiences before we were able to begin the business of the meeting. Subsequent sharing of similar experiences followed by helpful suggestions was all part of the data collection process as well as increasing the bond between participants (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Fook, 1996).

Coral considered that we were good role models for other students with and without disabilities and suggested that the impairment itself is irrelevant. The first steps to empowerment reminded people of their value as individuals and the fact that as disabled people they should consistently remind each

other of their own skills and value. Personal growth was a common theme running through all the student evaluations:

DARG provided the opportunity to meet like minded yet different individuals. Many wonderful friendships have been formed. Believing in a purpose and having a common goal has helped bring us closer together. Working with a group of people with disabilities in partnership with University staff has been a real sharing of interests and talents. It has highlighted the true value of people working together in partnership to find solutions, to overcome the odds and to achieve something positive and worthwhile. No one person can hope to do it all alone, but together everything is possible (Diary entry: Oct, 1995).

Initial reflections on structure offered the following assertions:

It provided a time and place where each of us could be honest without fear of hurting people. It was a time of personal growth for me in particular, as we all appeared to grow in sensitivity and understanding. I know I came from meetings feeling very enriched by each person of the group who offered a special dimension not only to the research but to me personally (Coral).

The nature of the role of DARG as a support group was another theme which people consistently wished to discuss in the context of their own stories:

I feel an integral part of a support group - a silent support group - we don't sit and talk about our personal problems - we don't name ourselves as disabled people in that we don't talk through our personal grief ... it's a whanau.. we didn't have to ask for the strength and support which was needed, it was just there (Sally).

Owing to the clarity of the common goals, the shared vision became the dominant focus. It seemed important to explore the possibility that even though males were in the minority within the group, that their values and thinking may have dominated the group process. Having devoted a session to consideration of this, it was generally agreed that the process had been gender balanced owing to a rigorous monitoring. We were however amused to recall that during the evaluation phase, Patrick used a rugby analogy to illustrate his concept of the "team" experience. He was challenged by Sally, speaking as a feminist, not to contaminate our analysis with such overtly male thinking! While he accepted the challenge with good grace, the group did reflect on whether Patrick's right to self expression had been impaired.

Throughout the research, links were consistently made to the experience of other marginalised groups and the heterogenous nature of DARG enabled such links to be productive. Having examined the possibility and rare occurrence of male domination, we acknowledged the more obvious tendency the women had to dominate the group. We asked the men to speak of their experience as a minority presence. They concluded that their experience had certainly not been one of further oppression but that they were, instead, consistently tuned in to appropriate language to use to describe women and the need to actively leave space for the women to speak. The tendency

for male presence and behaviour to dominate any group was further discussed (by the men involved in the discussion). As a female researcher, I hope I contributed to a level playing field without undue pressure on either group.

The theme of double oppression was reinforced:

Recently I have been entering into feminist analysis and measuring myself against those principles while questioning the dependence/independence conflict women and people with disabilities face (Lunar).

On the subject of gender inequality, I realised that while some discussion had occurred around this issue there had not been substantive debate. I posed the question (in post-evaluation discussion): does the absence of an exploration of gender inequality and disability detract from the overall potential of the research approach to facilitate the goals of personal autonomy and political emancipation for a group of disabled people? The women said that they as disabled women had benefited from the underlying feminist philosophy and appreciated the importance of that analysis in their lives in general. I posed the question to the males of their experience of the feminist influence and they reported that, on consideration, the impact of feminism on the group philosophy was partly responsible for their sense of inclusiveness. The analysis a feminist perspective provided, allowed them a greater understanding of the mechanisms in society by which the experiences of marginalised groups are discounted (Munford, 1995; Lunn, 1997; Sutherland, 1997) and by which disabled people are silenced. This was akin to a “structuring of silence” (Weiss and Fine, 1993) identified also by Munford in “exploring the silences” (1995) where she identified certain discourses which maintained these “silences” (ibid). Both males and females in the group identified such elements in their own lives. We had discussed how the situation of disabled people, dependent people, women and others such as those from ethnic minorities overlapped (Oliver, 1990, 1996; Morris, 1992; Munford, 1995; Shakespeare, 1996).

The issues raised with regard to social freedom had crystallised the balance between autonomy and independence and the need for research to promote decision-making mechanisms which are workable (Kenny, 1994). The responses were similar to the arguments offered by Morris in that they felt that the extent to which gender issues and disability intermeshed made it of primary importance to focus on unequal power relationships and the oppressive ideologies which underpinned them (Morris, 1992:162). The consensus was that the research must create a catalyst for enabling disabled people to understand and challenge those structures. They felt that to enter into in-depth analysis around gender divisions within the group and to focus on the concept of double or triple disadvantage, may detract from the united front the group was attempting to portray and reinforce images of disadvantage rather than a concept of unity and disability pride. It was recognized, however, that multiple identities should be acknowledged and the group chose within their evaluation to look qualitatively at the issue of multiple identity rather than additively where the number of marginalised groups one belongs to is the central focus. (Shakespeare, 1996). I agree in

part with Morris who suggested that to spend much time analysing the link between sexism and disableism is “something of a red herring” (Morris, 1992:162), which may divert attention from the real issues. By this she meant that to focus on ways in which disabled people may oppress each other prevents a proper analysis of such issues as the structures and systems which disable people with impairments both male and female. The group members agreed that the experience of disabled women and the issue of multiple identities required attention and research in its own right and concurred with Morris’s view that disabled women deserved greater visibility within mainstream and feminist research. Two of the four men and at least three of the women had previously read the work of Morris and other feminist writers on disability (Georgeson, 1994; Wicks and Terrell, 1994; Munford, 1995) while all were familiar to a degree with feminist writings and principles in the context of their own study. I explained to them that I had not set out to present an analysis of the different gender experiences of disability but that I had subsequently recognized that this was a decision I had made without explicitly consulting the group! For this I take responsibility and acknowledge the relevance of the above discussion to the theme of this section. I wonder, however, how much this may have changed if I had started with a purely feminist agenda with the same group and if I had asked the group to specifically focus on gender inequality. Would this have made the process more emancipatory or less so had I imposed greater control over the research analysis?

In the previous chapter I have evaluated the staff experience of the training and subsequent follow-up in the context of “weaving a web of support” and this includes solidarity between staff and research participants. The building of networks and the forming of alliances between disabled and nondisabled people has adhered to a key research principle identified in Chapter Four (Figure Three).

Resisting a Return to Powerlessness

At some point in a process of growing stronger, some people may experience doubts about the action they have been taking (Rees, 1991:96).

A point of discussion for the research group was the way disabled people are not expected to break out of dependent mode and how those in power often expect passivity even if they do not respect it. It was agreed that although powerlessness is a sad and degrading experience, it involves a security of a kind where life is predictable and centered around the decisions made by others. The feeling of being responsible for oneself and the uncertainty of change can produce feelings of vulnerability which were emotions we were each experiencing to some degree.

Expectations were raised by the process from the beginning and it was my role as the facilitator to ensure this was a challenging yet non-threatening experience. There were times that participants felt it was all too difficult, a degree of negativity which can be expected as people are both confronting their own long held assumptions and self concept as well as that of others. It was recognized that the danger of returning to powerlessness could lie in the perceived or real demands

and therefore consequent drain on our personal resources. The more we do the more we are expected to do and this in itself can be a little threatening.

To counteract this, we consistently acknowledged the danger of taking each other for granted. The group process was constructed to ensure that we were always in touch with the lives of other group members. In this way we were able to allow each other some vulnerability as well as to acknowledge our strengths, to accept and value each other and to give each other space.

Within Fay's theory of education, a growing sense of group pride, in this case disability pride will help to counteract a tendency to take refuge in old and safe dependency. Many felt that DARG had provided a support network over the year which helped people through what was an emotionally traumatic time, for some and acknowledged the price of new growth and learning: *"It has been a struggle to achieve what we have and it has been painful at times - the learning curve has come at a price"* (Jan).

Lunar's analysis of the overall experience was that at times, she felt, outside of the group :

I felt seriously undervalued, ungrounded and unfocused - I would then come to a meeting and even if I did not always receive the clarity I wanted I would walk out feeling "I am OK as a person" and involved in something special and important.

Creating opportunities to have dialogue ensured an analysis of events as well as a necessary level of objectivity and avoided the temptation to return to the apparently more secure state of invisibility. To maintain the consistency of this account, it is important to recognise the impact of the research on our nondisabled partners and on the staff participants in the training. Given that true empowerment is based on choice, and by the nature of power dynamics staff could be seen as having greater choice in their actions, but, they had more to lose. Within the teaching process we witnessed staff becoming excited by the prospect of change and the possibilities opening up for themselves as teachers and the disabled students with whom they came into contact. The brainstorming session at the end of the training programme produced a list of strategies forming a document (see Appendix 6) which they wished to implement.

Some of these actions posed a direct challenge to their colleagues and to their more rigid departmental practices. Those who became disability contact people were now equipped with new-found language and the training kit was a form of dictionary to which they could refer. However, their colleagues could not speak this new language and often had no wish to recognize the more disabling aspects of their own 'language' at its various levels. They were experiencing the various elements of institutional disableism which they had been learning about during training (Bourne, 1981; Oliver, 1990; Barnes, 1991; Ballard, 1993). While they had moved beyond a mere superficial understanding of disability, the staff who had been trained were ill-equipped to move beyond the facilitation of an "understanding" in others. This would limit their ability to achieve lasting and concrete change (Ballard, 1993). What would be required would be a critical analysis of and

approach to the dismantling of disabling practices (Bourne, 1981; Borsay, 1986; Munford, 1992,1995; Ballard, 1993; Munford and Sullivan, 1997). Similar difficulties have been documented by women attempting to facilitate change at organisational level on behalf of vulnerable groups. For example, Butler and Wintram highlight the problems encountered:

Women have first-hand knowledge of the ways in which patriarchy operates against them. However the organisation can simultaneously contain within it a whole range of practices, be they benign, paternalistic, conflictual, ambiguous or aggressive, all of which deny workers knowledge about the forms in which decision making occurs (Butler and Wintram, 1991:28).

Butler and Wintram speak of the need to deal with the reservations of colleagues before they can proceed with any new initiatives including educating them and dealing with the fears and myths which can be pervasive (Butler and Wintram, 1991:29). Barton graphically portrayed the destructive experience of a deaf person in senior management in a tertiary education setting who attempted to operate within an inaccessible environment and with an ignorant and uncommitted staff team (Barton, 1993). I know from experience as a lecturer that the backlash, often from male lecturers who have been buried in the system for many years, can be truthfully described as vicious. I can personally remember an incident while working as a lecturer caused by a nasty letter published in response to a complaint I had made in the staff magazine. It was unfortunately released on a day when I was feeling vulnerable, but I confess that it was a long time before I publicly challenged the College and its disableist systems again. I certainly returned to powerlessness (and silence). It is important for me to relate that story as someone who finds herself on both sides of the battle at different times and I cannot blame staff for giving up when the going gets rough.

Rees recognized the potential for this when describing the experience of social work practitioners who have embarked on new ways of working but have become discouraged.

Faced with such discouragement, they capitulate, resign, play the role of martyr or return to a comfortable agency niche (Rees, 1991:96).

The equivalent can certainly happen in an academic setting and the immediate effect on disabled students is further disempowerment.

Developing Interactive and Political Skills

Within the theory of transformative action (Fay, 1987), politicisation is crucial to bring about lasting change. This links directly (Figure Three: 1V.9) to the development of political and interactive skills and to the final principle of research as a catalyst of change and partnership. Students considered that they had been politicised through this process which began from the very first meeting. Previously many had been involved in the self-help model of action, which achieved only development of reactive strategies to the problems they encountered (Rees, 1991; Brown, 1992).

The analysis/reflection/evaluation cycle (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Barndt, 1990; Hope and Timmel, 1991) ensured that not only did they have the space to reflect on their experience and redefine it, they were able to act on their new understandings and achieve change.

Problems were consistently specified, evaluated and re-evaluated (Heron, 1981; Reason, 1994) as the kit was developed. The learning which took place around this process was probably the most significant for students especially as they were focused on an activity which was so concrete. Taking people through the kit was the method of training I used as facilitator. In doing so I felt I was able to pass on some invaluable skills related to understanding translating theory into practice, the concept of structural analysis (Barndt, 1990) including the mechanics of group processes, dealing with resistance in group situations (Peck, 1987; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Hope and Timmel, 1991; Reason, 1984) and protecting oneself as a disabled trainer (French, 1992; Boyles, 1997). Further acknowledgement was given to the value and of the learning experience which can evolve from telling one's story, both for the person who is the teller and for the audience (Campling, 1981; Morris, 1989; Munford, 1989, 1992, 1995; Ballard, 1994). For myself, I felt consistently empowered as I witnessed the growth of understanding when I and my co-facilitators shared a range of experiences, which included both the painful and amusing aspects of living in a disabling society. The grief which is part of living with the disability experience was also placed in a context where the pain became central to growth, change and development; the tragedy often associated with examples where often one's very existence is threatened, is replaced by the power of the learning which ensues, and the inspiration to those who choose to take strength from that learning for both disabled and non-disabled individuals. The development of political and interactive skills meant the identity of DARG as change agents within the university. Coral built on this concept of DARG as a group which would challenge the social construction of disability in the tertiary environment:

I feel that we as a group of people who have come from both teachers college and the university, have broken established boundaries and we appear to be well on the way to establishing a name for ourselves, not only within Victoria University, but within other tertiary establishments as well (Coral).

The confidence to do so was seen as a direct result of the process we had gone through. I was careful as facilitator consistently to name both in the group discussion and in diary reflection, the new skills which were being demonstrated and the training skills which they acquired during the year. Their new-found political skills equipped them with greater insight into the issues directly affecting disabled people in the context of national tertiary educational policy and strategic planning. Many now had the ability to stand on key committees and advocate for the rights of the most significantly disabled students. Clarity around the real problems and the ability to suggest solutions as opposed to merely raising problems was essential to their growing credibility. Furthermore they were developing skills which enabled them to work in partnership with important people on an equal basis. They did this by supporting people such as lecturers and key administrators to use their positions and knowledge productively to achieve change which benefited all. These became a part

of their personal and professional development and when eventually passed on will be an excellent resource for other groups.

The training process as a means of skill development

Given the focus of the training, we as a group clearly identified through the process we chose, the limitations associated with traditional disability equity training. In this context simulation (previously mentioned) is the training tool often favoured. As people shared portions of significant events in their lives, in partnership with others, they entered into analysis of the implications of such events. The positive outcomes removed the need for further debate. For example, people who had previously advocated simulation now reported feeling empowered by hearing stories of survival of disabled people. This more emancipatory approach produced further testimony to the power of the essence of the lived experience (Van Manen, 1990; Munford, 1992, 1994). What also became significant was that no matter how many times one told one's story it was impossible to be drained of resources provided the audience received the story as a gift and a tool for personal growth. One of the key themes for the training as for the research thus became the constructive role of biography (Rees, 1992; Ballard, 1994; Perkins, 1996), the power of its contribution to a working partnership and the significance of who owns the power to define disability (Oliver, 1990, 1992; Morris, 1992; Ballard, 1993; Boyles, 1994; Barnes, 1996; Shakespeare, 1996). The students identified a whole range of new skills having completed the training process which included: facilitation skills, organisational skills, the confidence to speak publically, the ability to deal confidently with lecturers and other staff as equals and the skills required to physically put together a visual training resource.

The research forum as a training ground

The concept of breaking down power barriers which create disability, redefining what is valid research (Lather, 1986; Bishop, 1996) and reclaiming research to empower and politicise a previously disempowered group, is a truly emancipating message for a group of disabled students, many of whom have struggled through the school and University system with little hope and support. In my final evaluation I will explore the extent to which we have achieved this based on the feedback from students and the actual changes which have been witnessed in the environment.

Students spoke of their struggle with these changes in the context of their study and daily lives and the research process as a practical tool:

The importance of the interpretive community was to provide a safe space to work through and explore conflicting paradigms and approaches to practice. Talking through these was often like a rehearsal for the outside world and we have managed to problem solve by exploring the range of options and strategies for action (Christine).

The diary record commented on the acquisition of political and interactive skills as well as the process in relation to Rees's steps generally at a middle stage of the research:

In terms of acquiring and using language we are continuing to address the power and importance of language but we have shared knowledge of unfamiliar language. We have discussed resisting a return to powerlessness in identification of possible backlash. The development of interactive and political skills has been an integral part of the research process in terms of the deconstruction of the disability experience and the discussions around our understandings of systems. Developing training skills and other group skills will enhance the empowerment of all of us (Diary Entry: May, 1995).

Students acknowledged the potential to transfer these skills to other areas of their study and to future employment in any context they chose. Added to this, the politicisation they experienced meant that they had a good all-round analysis of other political issues particularly those pertaining to similarly marginalised groups. In this sense a greater understanding of critical theories opens many doors and lights the way for constructive dialogue with other groups.

Evaluation

Referring back to Figure Three IV.10, the theory of transformative action, links to the principle of research as a catalyst for change, and, as previously stated, evaluation was integral. An important part of the integral evaluation was a return to our original goals and a review of the extent to which our actions were achieving our objectives. Within the context of the research diary, I itemised each objective in detail and commented on the way our action was addressing that goal. In this way each group member had the time to reflect on every aspect of the process and to return to the next meeting with their own analysis, reflection and ideas. The concept of action and reflection was revisited at evaluation stage and the group agreed on the value of continuing to use this approach. This had been maintained throughout the research as it was agreed by the group that it offered the maximum flexibility to facilitate critical thinking and co-operative working.

The first stage of evaluation was in relation to the training which was discussed in Chapter Seven. The main research process was evaluated via the completion of individual tasks and presented to the group followed by group discussion. The task set was identified by the group and typed up and distributed by myself for subsequent meetings. Rees's steps to empowerment were again used as stimulus material for the prioritisation of themes and the research principles and Fay's theory aided the research analysis. Student evaluations which resulted lent exciting insights into group process. Students were asked to relate their experience to the steps and some found this structure to be the most helpful framework within which to critically reflect on their experience. Some used all the steps and others chose one or two of significance to them personally. Final evaluation was extended over a period of time. In this section I will present the essence of student evaluations in the context of exploration of three components of the key research questions: to what extent has the research process accomplished personal change? What has been the significance of a critical reflective

approach to group process in facilitating or inhibiting empowerment? What is the value of an emancipatory approach in terms of enhancement of learning and research knowledge? Individual reflections and evaluations of the research process were central to group process in the final weeks of the research.

To What Extent has the Research Process Accomplished Personal Change?

The group specifically explored the concept of change in personal and political terms. Clearly, the personal experience of being part of this group and having one's experience validated was fulfilled within the first steps to empowerment. Participants recognized, some for the first time, the real implications of the social construction. Christine said:

If you do not reflect on the reality of your situation and face it you can never change your situation. To be shown what the possibilities are, to highlight the problems and to be shown a possible way forward is what the experience has been for me.

As an individual she could have approached University staff and not achieved much but with the group/research experience behind her she felt able to make a difference personally. She also considers that:

As an interpretative group we have epistemic privilege, in other words our knowledge is unique deriving from our experience and the research has demanded that knowledge be valued and used for changing the practices which marginalise us as a group (of people with disabilities). University personnel must take on board our subjective experiences and knowledge in order to look objectively at their practices and make recommendations for change. Without this people in power just continue to talk to each other about "us".

It was clear that the group process offered the opportunity for a reassessment of one's personal priorities and individuality while making a contribution to that process. The result has been rapid personal growth; it was clear also that the group had the potential to be a cohesive and powerful force in terms of achieving change within the education system. Dealing with previous negative experiences of research was also important in order to move on. As one student stated:

Taking part in the action research group has been a powerful rewarding personal experience. This contrasts sharply with another research project I took part in several years ago which involved two interviews and then nothing. I felt deflated and deceived. This has not been my experience this time (Christine).

The very nature of action research implies change in its objective to achieve change at the level of the person, the problem and the method (Reinharx, 1991). As Reinharz describes in her demystification framework:

The very act of obtaining knowledge creates the potential for change because the paucity of research about certain groups accentuates and perpetuates their powerlessness (Reinharz, 1992: 191).

At this stage in the process only disabled people were involved but we planned on building on the partnership theme and gradually defining the nature of the relationship with our nondisabled allies. Of central importance, however, in emancipatory terms was the extent to which we as disabled researchers directed the process and the role of partnerships in enabling us to maintain a genuine leadership role.

Lunar picked up on an aspect of my evaluation almost a year ago about “incidental learning” occurring as a result of group action and process and felt that:

This was an important component of new learning- just by going through the process we all learnt so much naming that has ensured the learning has been owned.

Underlying the new learning, the personal strength gained from increased awareness was acknowledged:

All in all DARG provided valuable learning around disability theory as well as a safety net almost of lifesaving proportions (Jan).

In previous chapters the need for the group practices and structures to reflect those more enabling practices we are attempting to promote in the University has been discussed. The challenge to the group, therefore, has been to work with a structure that enables rather than constrains, and the analysis of this in reference to the group process was enlightening as people grappled with what they perceived as the relative structurelessness of the group. We were learning about policy, educational structures and training.

Our knowledge and confidence in dealing with the University hierarchy are also growing considerably and the stronger we become, the more we are able to appear as a consultant group (Diary entry: 12 April 1995).

The perceived structurelessness did not impede effective decision-making. Suggestions for compromises or alternative actions were easily expressed and consensus was reached over everything we acted on. This was monitored within the research diary and the group process which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine.

What is the Significance of a Critical Reflective Approach in the Achievement of Personal Change?

The group structure evolved in the context of consistent self-reflection within a group process. There was discussion in evaluation about the absence of structure in that people were able to participate on their own terms and were not obliged to attend each meeting. As I discussed previously, I suggested that the group had a clear structure given the consistent recycling of data and Rees's steps but neither were imposed on the group. Coral's evaluation of the methodological framework suggests that the methods used worked for the following reasons:

Pauline provided the leadership required but did not stifle the creative process of ideas and theories being put forward for exploration; the reflection on the session from the meeting also meant that those ideas were mulled over and clarified, then broken down into simple and easily understood goals even though all those goals have not necessarily been achieved; I feel that this is not only a unique research method which moved along at a very fast pace, because of the ideas being culled, clarified and then put into action, as they were unanimously accepted as a group.

Some of the feedback on the need for structure occurred in the context of a group moving on and changing, and in many ways people had to recognize a new cycle of community building (Kenny, 1994) as the group explored new territory. A sub-section of this discussion must revolve around the concept of structural analysis to which the group had been newly introduced. Some students were able to directly use the structure and process quite overtly. Jan recorded:

The cycle of analysis, reflection, evaluation has been SO useful not just in this project or in my Masters studies but in everyday dealings as a part of my ideas of an applied philosophy. I like it as a very practical DOING process.

Some people found it difficult to have an overview of what was happening even though their individual roles were clear. Evaluation provided the opportunity to step back and reflect on the process as a whole instead of being specifically focused on one aspect. The energy devoted to the training produced a tendency to lose sight of the whole process. I said that I had used some clear structures such as Rees's steps, the monthly meetings, the research diary, and clear goals for each meeting. However, the difficulties in fully understanding and naming the research experience and methodology, the relaxed attendance requirements and lack of clarity around the reasons for people being absent from meetings/evaluation were acknowledged. What was being expressed here were similar difficulties to those experienced by community collectives (Kenny, 1994) and women's collectives who have open groups: "collectives do not work well in practice since individuals are not bound to turn up to meetings" (Brown, 1992:71). In our consideration of a way forward, we can learn much from the experience of community collectives and we made reference to the appropriate literature for working models.

Central to this group reflexivity was the extent to which we monitored our own use of language and the constant awareness of the exclusive nature of some research terminology as well as group communication in general. All felt that for the most part we had been sensitive to each other and provided a mechanism through a continual feedback process ensuring clarification where people may have inadvertently used disabling language.

In the group process there is room for the expression of different opinions and personalities (Diary entry: 4 Oct 1995).

The issue of compromise when attempting to achieve a fully emancipatory approach was discussed. It was acknowledged that the temptation to take short cuts often occurs for practical and financial reasons. This is because the time taken to fully consult as well as the necessary resources are often in short supply. The group reflected on the extent to which its practice had respected emancipatory principles. We as a group created open dialogue, used technology - email, telephone and fax as well as the research diary to overcome the usual barriers researchers put in place to limit the level of consultation. There is no way people could attend every meeting but all were part of the central process. We shared energy, tasks and skills and a consistent learning process was taking place.

To reinforce my previous point about the contribution of members who say little and to clarify the potential silent nature of reflection, I asked Coral how she felt about the dynamics of the group process, since I noted she was often quiet for long periods of time. I had then been reassured by how much she had absorbed and was able, in turn, to contribute her valuable knowledge and experience. She said she had been learning and does not say anything until she feels she has something meaningful to say. To add further to Peck's view on quieter group members:.. "not only do the non-verbal contribute to the community in ways that are powerful but they also receive as much as they give" (Peck, 1987:127).

We explored the process of reflection and its value in self and group reflexivity was clear. Christine said that she had been reflecting without realising this. As she was reading the material she was internalising it and forming theories of her own. It was only at the evaluation stage that she raised how much she was reflecting using her own experience to understand the context. We all agreed that the clarity with which Christine expressed herself was witness to the quality of the reflection she had been doing. In this sense, she provided an important contribution to group analysis. She said that she had felt that she lacked the skills to participate and had 'put down' her contribution throughout - we reassured her that this was certainly not the case and perhaps her legal training was a real asset when examining the group process.

In the context of individual stories, critical reflection was also part of the process. With one person I used the story of Plato's cave to illustrate the stage of growth and 'enlightenment' which had been experienced (Fay, 1987:21) This is an account of the cave dweller who escaped his illusory existence

and who once having faced reality and its benefits was not able to return to his previous state of false consciousness. The experience of enlightenment was explored with each student, and the outcome was a greater understanding and appreciation of the substantial changes which had been achieved.

In the context of critical theory, the individual interviews performed a further practical and educational role. The power of individuals to be active in their own transformation often eludes people as Fay identifies: "Humans create themselves and their own world, but they do not realise this is what they are doing - they do not see themselves in the 'objects' they created" (Fay, 1987:53). An important feature of empowerment is the naming of one's achievement in taking control back and the owning of the ability to do so consistently. While we had certainly proved as a group that we could effect change, the impact on the individual level had to be established. As each interview unfolded the self-evaluation rounded off the research process. Sally said of the role of the stories: *"Evaluation forces you to think about things - this was a good way to leave and wind up critical self-evaluation - what has the group done for me?"*

The sense of completeness was important especially in the light of people's previous experiences of research which had left some of them feeling 'empty'. Research is powerful in raising personal issues and the sense of unfinished business can be particularly destructive. The stories served as a gateway to the next phase of the group and its life outside of this research.

The final stage of this process was for me to tell my own story and one of the research group eventually recorded my story for her own research bringing a sense of cohesion to the process. By this I mean that the telling of stories has been a constant theme throughout the research and mine was the last story to be told. The fact that another student used my story for her research was further testimony to the reciprocal value of the research. This demonstrated adherence to at least two of the key principles: the power of the personal experience and research as an educational tool (Figure Three). I discussed previously, the possibilities for presentation of the stories. In terms of the process of recording my own story, I had the option of choosing to ask someone inside or outside the research group or of simply recording it myself in writing. The option chosen responded to the practical needs of one of the research participants. All students had the choice to present their stories in any way they chose but all so far have opted for the individual interview with myself. Once the process is completed we will decide as a group on a method of presentation, but we wish to think this through carefully since the written word alone is inaccessible for many disabled people. We will apply for funding to publish the work in the appropriate format. An extra dimension of the transcription of interviews in terms of emancipatory principles was that one of the students with typing skills was paid to carry out this task. This was agreed by the group as an acceptable way to maintain confidentiality within the group and to enable Christine to earn some much-needed income.

While we have not made final decisions about the material, each person was given a copy of their draft and they were able to edit as much as they wished. They all had the taped version as well as the full transcription. At the time of writing we are entering into negotiation with a publisher who has an investment in making the disability experience visible.

To conclude the discussion around critical reflection, two students who entered into the evaluation process reported the energising nature of critical reflection. Even though they had been exhausted when approaching the research task their interest and energy in the research was reactivated by the very nature of the task. This is certainly a testimony to the empowering nature of this approach.

How has an Emancipatory Approach Enhanced the Learning and Research Knowledge of Each Participant?

I encouraged each student to read about research and research policies and practices to increase their own knowledge and ability to actively participate in development of the methodology. As the final part of the task I asked the group to evaluate their research knowledge and explore whether they felt this had increased. Each student reported gradually learning about the technical aspects of the research as the project progressed. This was in part due to the fact that I, as principal researcher, had taken responsibility for defining the language of critical theory, disability theory and research methodology. Since all the students are or will be involved in other research projects, they felt that the knowledge on an academic level was invaluable while demystifying the research process in which they were participating. The whole group thus genuinely participated in critiquing and changing the methodology and methods as the project unfolded. I used this information as a baseline for the development of a resource kit which explained to them in reasonably accessible terms the nature of the methodology they had been party to developing. Many expressed difficulty in naming the process but two participants were especially interested in research models and had more experience than the others. Sally made the following assessment of the process in terms of increasing her knowledge:

It has made me aware of the hard slog involved in research (particularly this kind of action research) and the level of commitment involved. I tried to do some research last year based on feminist empowerment principles but did not know enough about the pitfalls and methodology required to proceed properly.

The group discussed the way researchers often start out using similar principles but to carry it through without compromise requires great skill, consistency and cooperation. They felt that they had managed to retain integrity and to be part of something which taught them a great deal about the benefits and drawbacks of such an approach. Sally now felt more able to approach research afresh:

It has clarified many of my own thoughts and increased my understanding of research methodology, emancipatory approaches to research, and to be a research participant was a positive if not different

experience from being principal researcher. I will always look back at this experience as being an empowering learning experience.

Sally was asked the question if her belief in this type of research had been strengthened or reaffirmed as a result of the research experience. She said that because of her feminist perspective she had always believed in the possibilities of an empowerment approach to research, but it had always remained theoretical:

Empowering research is all very well but the lived experience is so problematic and so tricky you get bogged down. It has been good seeing that it can work, that it has worked. All the stories about the hard slog and perseverance of research of any type especially this type are true and that it does pay off to stick with it (Sally).

The group discussed the fact that in academia individual research is more highly valued and that participant-driven research is too risky and reinforces the notion of the problem as “way out there so don’t worry about it.” She said “we have shown them that collaborative research is credible, valid, and worthy of a PhD”(Sally).

These reflections are crucial to strengthen the knowledge and expertise of a group of disabled students since they need to be armed with the arguments for and against such approaches. Other students recorded increased knowledge about different approaches to research, particularly action research. This served to increase confidence to tackle their own - as Jan says:

It has taught me about the process of researching which has proved invaluable for my progress in my Masters programme.

Others reported their new-found ability to integrate a new understanding of disability theory into their essays, irrespective of their area of study, and the fact that they were geared to negotiate their final research project using more innovative methodology. The limit to research knowledge and disability theory we identified through this evaluation process led to the development of a kit entitled “Your research process” (Appendix Eight). The final task as principal researcher was to deliver the talk on methodology and answer questions pertinent to their personal understanding and use of research techniques. A final stage in this evaluative process must now examine a key research question which explores the evidence for achievement of real change within the immediate environment.

To What Extent has the Research Achieved Change in the Immediate Environment?

In order to assess the catalytic value of the research, the group returned to original objectives one of which was to tackle unemployment. Indirectly they considered they had addressed the real problems students face in gaining employment and felt that if the staff of a powerful institution only ‘tolerate’ disabled students, employers will feel the same. Discussion included reflection around

whether a powerful educational institution could model good practice, create more enabling policies and serve as an exemplar for highlighting the value of a fully inclusive environment. The action the group had taken aimed to educate at many different levels, highlight the potential contribution disabled students could make and finally achieve long-term benefits for other disabled people within the tertiary sector. It was agreed that DARG had attacked the roots of, rather than reacted to, the problems originally identified.

One of the evaluation questions asked that participants revisit the social theories of disability with which we had been working and reflect on their relevance to the research. To facilitate this I had agreed to conduct a session on the research process itself including terminology. In this session students had the opportunity to discuss the different components of the research methodology and the significance of the chosen theoretical approach for emancipatory research.

The evaluation process played a valuable role in enabling people to reflect on the group process and what they had personally gained from it. Their evaluations speak for themselves and gave some valuable insights into a group experience. The true extent of what we achieved can be seen in the outcome of the staff training, discussed in the previous chapter. What is important here is the extent to which empowerment of students contributed to those changes. The following diary entry sums this up quite well:

As for empowerment, we have had to empower ourselves so that others can similarly empower themselves. This is what the staff who attended the training achieved and this is what training is all about. People can only empower themselves but participation in full can only occur in partnership with each other, hence our central theme "Enabling participation through partnership" (Diary entry: 18 Jan 1996).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the personal and group evaluations of student participants in the research process where they have addressed the central research questions on their own terms. In their individual reflections they have examined their own personal changes and taken strength also from the changes they have witnessed in their immediate environment. They have assessed the extent to which a critical reflective approach to participatory research has facilitated or inhibited their personal and political emancipation. Finally, they have evaluated their own learning in terms of greater theoretical understanding of research and disability, as well as the impact of their learning on others. Rees's steps have formed the framework for this analysis and the value of the steps as well as the relevance of Fay's theory will be directly addressed in the next chapter. The challenges facing researchers embarking on emancipatory research have been briefly expressed from the students' perspectives and those challenges will also be revisited in the context of my conclusions. In the next chapter I will return to the research questions solely from my perspective as a researcher and critique them in the light of this evaluation.

CHAPTER NINE

The Group Process: A Critical Analysis

Introduction

This chapter will enhance the joint evaluation of Chapter Eight by provision of additional analysis from my perspective as principal researcher. It will have a particular emphasis on the significance of group work and group facilitation in the development of an emancipatory process. A primary research question has been addressed in joint evaluations in Chapter Eight, namely: what is the potential for emancipatory research to enable disabled people to take control of their lives and to effect concrete change in their immediate environment? A second important question has been: what are the challenges facing researchers in conducting this type of research project? I will now summarise the findings and reflect on the extent to which the research has succeeded in qualifying as emancipatory.

In Part One the significance of the group process and group dynamics in this example of emancipatory research will be examined. The impact on the students concerned will then be explored. Subsequent to this Part Two will include a debate of four components which are discussed under the heading of 'accessibility'. These will be divided into four headings. The first is *choice of approach* which will examine the significance of who chose the approach and what control students had over that. The second examines *use of critical theory and critical reflection*. This is described in terms of participant ability to be empowered directly through use of a critical reflective approach and the naming of critical theory. A third is *applicability of critical theory*. This includes the social theories of disability and their value as a foundation for a reconstruction based on critical theory. This is particularly in terms of quality of life generally for disabled students.

The final section in Part Two will explore *student understanding of methodology and its replicability*. The question of how many felt they could take the model and design their own research project will be addressed. In this concluding section I will return to an analysis of the question: to what extent can the model be described as fully emancipatory. The methods I used to pass on information with regard to the research methodology will be summarised and critiqued. The level of understanding about what constitutes emancipatory research and the ways in which the students could use their new found knowledge in other situations will also be explored.

The Significance of Group Dynamics in the Promotion of Inter-dependence

It has become clear that the group process has been central to the success of this particular example of emancipatory research as well as the skills of the researcher acting as group facilitator. In this section I will further discuss the management of group dynamics with a view to avoiding

dependence (which would conflict with emancipatory principles). The achievement of interdependence and resultant personal and group autonomy will be explored. In the first part, I will address the group dynamics and in the second, summarise all the issues involved including that of the facilitator's role, discussed earlier in Chapter Four. This will then be followed by analysis of group evolution (Bennis and Shephard, 1964; Brown, 1982; Freeman, 1984) to form an interpretive community (Fook, 1993, 1996; Hawkins, 1996; Ingamells, 1996). The exploration of these areas represents an analysis of a key finding that group process was central to the attainment of a sense of personal autonomy and, therefore, the stated aims of the research.

The first part of this section will be broken down into four distinct sections which will build on each other. The first will look again at the complexity of roles I faced as group facilitator, followed by the concept of shared leadership to facilitate empowerment of participants. I will then explore a self-critical analysis of my own approach to leadership which will be followed by a section on the significance of critical reflection. This will cover both the monitoring of the safety of the process and the acquisition of knowledge which has been identified as another crucial factor in personal and political empowerment.

The complex roles of the facilitator

I have described one of my roles, as a facilitator providing a catalyst for action, in the context of the group work, helping the process along (Ife, 1995:209) and enabling each member to identify their existing skills. While I have simplified my role for the purposes of this discussion to name myself as facilitator, I agree with Ife that there is a range of specific roles within this including social animation, mediation, negotiation, group facilitation, utilisation of skills and resources and organising (Ife, 1995:204.). On reflection, I have exercised those roles consciously and unconsciously and the analysis and understanding I have both brought and encouraged have been central to the reflexive process (Reason, 1994; Ife, 1995; Fook, 1996). Many students had already done some research or were experienced contributors in group work. I worked on encouraging this group to be "enablers" (Brown, 1992) and to pass on those skills to other members. In this process, reciprocal learning was occurring: "Those who are initially skilled (in terms of task competence) are required to learn as much as those who are less skilled" (ibid:19). Butler and Wintram speak of the discomfort often experienced by women's groups when negotiation of power based on skills and abilities is overt. They assert that recognition of positive uses of skills and authority facilitates "an internal legitimisation of the constructive use of authority and influence" (Butler and Wintram 1991:78).

I acknowledged to the group the change and growth I had experienced through the research and agree with Lather's statement:

An emancipatory social research calls for empowering approaches to research whereby both researcher and researched become, in the words of feminist singer/poet Chris Williamson, "the Changer and the Changed" (Lather, 1986:263).

Recognition of my own changes was essential (Reinharz, 1991) and the process of doing so indirectly impacted on the group's ability to monitor those they were making (Schon, 1995; Fook, 1996; Ingamells, 1996; Lather, 1996). Glassman and Kates also point out:

Participation through helping to actualize purpose demands that the group worker consistently examine his or her interactions and emotional self expression...the practitioner has to be emotionally mature, possessing the ability to be unguarded and undefensive, thereby serving as a model (for the members) for participation and change (Glassman and Kates, 1990:149).

I was aware of the constant need to ensure that not only did the group "empty" itself of its prejudices and preconceptions, (Mansbridge, 1973; Freeman, 1984; Freire, 1987; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Brown, 1992), but that I consistently worked on doing so. This situation was similar to that of my role as a lecturer where one can have a tendency to pre-empt events and act or teach accordingly. In other words, assumptions one makes based on one's previous experience, could inadvertently control events. I relate to Peck's analysis of this process: "Life is what happens when you have planned something else!" (Peck, 1987:93).

Handing over power as a facilitator as discussed in Chapter Four resulted in a balanced approach to sharing leadership which promoted equality. To expect too much could be as disempowering as to retain control. One of the central challenges in terms of emancipatory objectives was to achieve collective leadership. I spoke in Chapter Four of the need to own both my own power as researcher in order to ensure constructive use of this power and to more effectively share it. In terms of group facilitation this applies through recognition of the fact that the more people are active participants and own the process, the more inclusive and empowering the outcomes will be (Ife, 1995:197). The process of facilitating a sharing of leadership is a central role of the facilitator and it is to this aspect of our work I will now turn.

Sharing leadership

A group becomes a community in somewhat the same way as a stone becomes a gem - through a process of cutting and polishing. Once cut and polished, it is something beautiful. But to describe its beauty, the best we can do is describe its facets. Community like a gem is multi-faceted, each facet a mere aspect of a whole that defies description (Peck, 1987:60).

One of my aims in setting up this research group was to achieve a community of action or, as one participant described, an “interpretive community”. An essential characteristic of community is “total decentralization of authority” (Peck, 1987: 172) and the formation of autonomous communities are central to the process of empowerment (Ife, 1995). Our aim was to achieve a situation where all research participants were also leaders sharing responsibility for the outcome. I have already discussed the tendency of some disabled people to allow others to take responsibility and lapse into powerlessness. This can be characteristic of group behaviour: “People would generally much rather depend upon a leader to tell them what to do than determine that for themselves” (Peck, 1987:115).

Inevitably, some people had more confidence than others and while ground rules protected people from exclusion, and our philosophy challenged the very notion of exclusion, we were still constantly alert to the dangers of doing so inadvertently within the group. I had to be aware of two elements: the extent to which I took responsibility for directing the group within the facilitation process and my role of enabling people to take greater responsibility for the process. I was consistently concerned to prevent creation of dependence, as previously discussed, and instead to promote a culture of interdependence. Sometimes I recognised that I had to be prepared not to take control and allow the group to flounder and I agree with Peck’s statement: “to lead people into community a true leader must discourage their dependency and there can be no way to do this except to refuse to lead”(ibid).

People can often maintain their dependency through negativity (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Rees, 1991; Ife, 1995). Up to the last when we were discussing funding for the group, one person was still saying “Oh I don’t feel hopeful, many other groups are going through this transition”. I always reject any negative notions although it is important to ‘hear’ what people are trying to express. My philosophy all along has been ‘anything is possible’. I have found any level of negativity drains my energy and I cannot tolerate it. A positive attitude can re-energise a group and while I must acknowledge that a certain amount of negativity may be necessary in order to reach another stage, it can be self-defeating. In my experience of disability support groups I have found they can spend time discussing the problems identified in depth; by the end of the meeting they are depressed and have run out of time and energy for positive strategies. My focus on the positive did not mean that participants were being asked to delude themselves about the reality with which we were dealing but they were gaining the tools to deal with that reality. As Butler and Wintram stated:

Taking pride and pleasure in the group’s strength does not mean that members disregard the distortions of reality within which they have to live, but that at least there is a source of replenishment if confrontation occurs (Butler and Wintram 1991:155).

As the concept of group solidarity grew, so did the power of each individual to assume leadership. A reflexive process facilitated an environment where the essential skills were developed but it is important that the reflexivity begins with the group leader.

The significance of group process and self-critical leadership

A key finding has been the significance of a safe and dynamic group process facilitated by reflexive leadership. In this section, I will examine key aspects of self-critical leadership. At all times I not only reflected on my role but it was also my responsibility to ensure that the group structure allowed consistent self-reflection. So, the group leader is designated the task of creating this safe learning environment where the negotiation of the group process is an equally important part of the research task we set ourselves. The skills involved in this are crucial with Fay referring to what Aristotle calls "practical wisdom" which differs from theoretical wisdom in that it does not result from knowledge that is "determinate and universal" (Fay, 1987:181). This knowledge is derived from one's ability to "read" situations, understand people and to act on one's perception of the situation. Fay asserts that it is conspicuous that Aristotle's account lacks any reference to rules. Instead:

He claimed that such wisdom consists in knowing how to deliberate well about the ends and means appropriate for people in the situations in which they find themselves. Practical deliberation is not the routine application of propositional knowledge but a skill which involves complex judgements specific to the particular practices and situations at hand (Fay, 1987:182).

The facilitator exercises practical wisdom and has the responsibility not only to exercise that wisdom but to pass it on. It has equal significance to the propositional knowledge which has always been at the forefront of research projects (Heron, 1981). I will take this point further in relation to the social construction of disability in the University context. Many of the problems students face have emanated from staff ignorance of disability or simply an inability to understand the message the student is giving. This goes back to the ability to speak the same language, as discussed in the previous chapter (Van Manen, 1990; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Fairclough, 1995). Disabling influences at this individual level give rise to those at the wider institutional level. Again, my practice and that of the group aimed to reflect what we expect in terms of enabling practices in the institution (Carr and Kemmis, 1986).

Central to the measurement of the extent to which the research was empowering for participants was the success of a pedagogical approach which encouraged a mutual educative role between students and the researcher (Freire, 1972, 1987; Ife, 1995). The context of the process was dialogic in that a concept of dialogue (Freire, 1972; Boyles, 1993; Padilla, 1993) was central and we were all engaged in an educational experience. It was significant that the nature of the planned training was also based on the same pedagogical principles which reversed the student/teacher role in the education process. In the same way as students learnt about their own situation, lecturers and other

staff (in the student role) would have the opportunity to critically analyse their situation. The content of this education would be based on:

The concrete experience of the students themselves; the presentation of this experience emphasises its historical character ie. how it came to be what it is and how it can be changed (Fay, 1987:107).

The training package was planned, implemented and evaluated within a group process based on the same emancipatory principles as the research process. This ensured respect for the knowledge and experience of all participants (both staff on the training course and students who became trainers) and the objective of growth and development of all concerned. For this reason the educational process itself in the context of the equity training was to take place in a context described by Fay:

In intimate circles in which a free and uncoerced exchange of ideas and experiences is encouraged, in which a concern is shown for the problems of individuals, and in which they are given emotional support to overcome their own feelings of inadequacy and guilt as they become critics of the social world they inhabit (Fay, 1987:197).

Although we identified the importance of partnership between disabled and nondisabled people, it became clearer than ever before that disability is relative to the context in which one is operating and those divisions based on impairment are strictly false ones. In other words one's impairment may be insignificant in some circumstances and in others be completely disabling. For example a person who is perfectly mobile in a wheelchair within an accessible environment may be completely disabled by a building with narrow doorways and no lifts. Alternatively a deaf person may be completely excluded from a meeting by the absence of an interpreter who would have guaranteed full participation. We could see that we were all capable of excluding one another through insensitive interaction. To address this, we worked together as a group and consistently exercised reflexivity (Lather, 1986, 1986a; Fook, 1996), in that we challenged ourselves and each other to enhance the participation of other members (Reason, 1994). I was careful as facilitator to explain throughout, the nature of the research process which they were developing. I explained that to name one's skills and learning is the root of the empowerment process. This also ensured that each owned their changes and used them constructively. I compiled a document (Appendix Eight) which named every aspect of the research process, provided a glossary of key terms and which would be of value to them in their future research. I will expand on the way this document was used in the second part of this chapter. Clarification of my role occurred at an early stage when I asked the group exactly what they expected of me, as described in Chapter Six. The approach I took contains some features of a humanistic approach and a humanistic analysis of group work offers greater insight. The distinctiveness of a humanistic approach as opposed to a more authoritarian or

utilitarian approach lies in the fact that people are encouraged to fully engage in the group work in a way where:

Members focus on their ability to monitor their own processes in a cohesive and differentiated way - by opening up and facilitating discussion of the practitioner's behaviour and role, the practitioner chooses to demystify the role, enabling members to assume leadership and share power. (Glassman and Kates, 1990:78).

They were encouraged at all times to analyse the nature of the group experience since empowerment lies in the acquisition of knowledge, and as Fay says, "knowledge consists not in the experience itself but in the grasping of the sense of the experience" (Fay, 1996:179). This approach facilitated the use of "symmetrical communication" where each member had equal roles in decision-making and action in the formation of a "self-critical community" (Carr and Kemmis, 1987:181).

The interactive nature of the process meant that my role was to feed back to the group. Where appropriate I related to individuals within it, the changes I was witnessing or asked questions which enabled them to make their own observations. As part of the evaluation I asked the group, with some trepidation, what I could have done differently. I knew this was a crucial question. I had provided space for such feedback throughout the research but at the final evaluation I presented the question positively so that people would not hesitate to give honest answers. If the students thought I would be offended in any way by criticism, they may have resisted being open so I suggested that they give this question some thought and even provide written responses separate from the group process. I provided a structure for evaluation which encouraged them to go back over the whole research diary and reflect. This resulted in the identification of a range of themes. The group reassured me that I had provided them with appropriately timed knowledge, expertise and leadership and one student stated that the success and credibility of this type of research depends on: "*the ability of the leader to bring the group together and keep it on track*" (Diary entry: 7 Dec 1995).

While all members stated in their evaluation that they felt my leadership had been a crucial factor in success, I must analyse for myself what I could have perhaps handled differently. For example, the access to the group was open in that people were not obliged to attend every meeting. They were kept in touch with full dialogue and were invited to feed back. Sometimes, however, I knew what was happening with each individual, but other group members did not and there was not necessarily a natural channel of communication for this. Those who attended every meeting were sometimes annoyed since they felt they were doing all the work. Those who attended less often would then turn up after three months and begin challenging decisions we had already made. The extent to which they should have the right to do this needs more in-depth group discussion and perhaps clearer guidelines about decision-making. However, I have always felt that everyone has a right to give their own perspective and have that highly valued. To reject this right because we needed to move on, would certainly have invalidated the project. For my part, I ensured that any conflict was expressed

within the group and dealt with openly as it was recognized that potential growth emanated from such confrontation (Peck, 1987; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Fook, 1996). Glassman and Kates assert that the facilitator:

Must view the signs of conflict as potentially positive and as opportunities to deepen norms that bring about individuality. The members can see that submerging conflicts, and seeking indirect means to resolve them come from fear and anxiety, as well as from aggressive interests in power, control and dominance (Glassman and Kates, 1990:171).

I made a note in my own evaluation that I could have been more careful to clarify for myself, each member's personal agenda especially as one person was using our action research as a case study. While this had been communicated, the group had not understood the nature of her research and not having the necessary research knowledge, were unclear about the significance. Once I picked up this confusion, I suggested she change the nature of her research question to ensure no intrusion on group privacy and asked that she give a talk on her research as a method of accountability to the group.

In many ways, one could argue, I became the group anchor and encouraged vision - it was from the vision that people took their energy. This is congruent with the concept of "lending a vision" (Schwartz, 1961) identified within humanistic group work. In this model "at the start of the group the practitioner lends a vision by giving the members ideas about in what areas and how they will work together" (Glassman and Kates, 1990:198). When there was doubt I held on to Freire's statement: "Is the dream possible or not? If it is less possible, the question for us is to make it more possible" (Freire, 1987:187). The encouragement of passion is vital as without passion there is no doubt the group would have died. My energy came from my passion and this served the purpose of lifting flagging spirits and revitalising people. To come back to the notion of the "liberating educator":

The liberating educator is with the students instead of doing things for the students. In this mutual act of knowing we have rationality and we have passion and this is what I am (Freire, 1987:173).

In fact, the pedagogical focus meant that by the end of the project each participant was developing the "practical wisdom" (Heron, 1981) to become a liberating educator. This was partially achieved through a process of critical reflection, an approach to which the group participants were introduced at the outset of the research and which was built into the group structure. I will now analyse the role of reflection in terms of the first research question.

Critical self-reflection and community-building

The analysis/reflection/action/evaluation cycle (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988; Barndt, 1990; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Ballard et al, 1994; Fook, 1993, 1996; Munford, Georgeson and Gordon, 1994;) was used to structure group discussion and was evaluated by students, as discussed in the previous chapter. We identified at the beginning of each meeting what we were to work on, we discussed the problems and issues arising and then we strategised. My energy went into ensuring there was adequate space for all three. If people were very tired I had to rise above that and facilitate the group energetically. I did this by raising issues or by encouraging anger rather than negativity about the issues. This soon generated positive energy.

Another approach which I used for energising the group was to remind them of what we had achieved so far or since the last meeting and encouraging the group to give credit to members who had achieved specific goals (Butler and Wintram, 1991). Sharing positive stories was also a good strategy, and within half an hour, an initially flagging group became like a community with a new spirit and direction. I was heartened to witness as time progressed some students using such "purpose-related processes" to take responsibility for moving the group on: "the members are able to maintain useful and helpful forms of cohesion, motivation and energy.....as they increase their interpersonal work the members incorporate and use these techniques too" (Glassman and Kates, 1990:147).

Seeing this interpretive community develop was like seeing a body grow before me and take on momentum. The stages of community development described by Peck are useful in understanding the group life in addition to the steps to empowerment. According to Peck, groups move from a first stage of pseudo community to chaos. This is followed by emptiness before reaching a full mature community (Peck, 1987:87). Kenny (1994) and Ife, (1995) similarly describe such a process as central to the empowerment of communities.

The hypersensitivity to physical and other access issues in this group meant that the first stage was quickly transcended in that differences could not be denied if people were to be able to participate in the group at all. Denial of difference was consistently evaluated as there were different abilities and different cultures in the group which, if ignored, could cause destructive dynamics: "explicit recognition of structural issues is a necessary precondition for raising members' awareness of inequalities which may be operating within the group" (Butler and Wintram, 1991:76). One could say, however, that chaos ensued quite early on, followed by the emptiness required to move on. There was a point in a very early meeting where I feared that nothing would come from this emptiness but the group prided itself in its ability to move into community. At different stages during the year the group moved in and out of emptiness, chaos and community and there have been temporary phases of pseudo community when new people have joined and core group participants have had difficulty in expressing their feelings at the intrusion. The core group in particular shared roles apart from sharing leadership and they gradually took responsibility for

ensuring that all participants were able to identify the particular strengths they had to offer. It was this aspect of the group process which secured its inclusiveness.

Role Sharing and the Achievement of an Inclusive Group

Each person was encouraged to use the group knowledge, experience and shared power to enhance their own situation in a personal/political and often practical sense. The sharing of roles extended beyond direct research tasks to include accessing agencies and financial support for improvement of personal survival. For example, one student had refused to apply for the Invalid's Benefit even though he was entitled to; he was gently encouraged and supported by some of the others to proceed with his application so that there would be less need to work outside of University. This is often difficult for disabled students. The process for him of accepting this help was a major stage of growth for him and indicated a greater pride in and acceptance of himself as a disabled person. A culture of disability pride was cultivated within the group by members who were at different stages of acknowledgement about their disabilities. Many had struggled to deny their disability or cope with it regardless and it was interesting to watch them grapple with this new concept based on social oppression theories. An understanding of the social context of disability had exposed the false consciousness which says an individual must prove him/herself on nondisabled terms. There is an underlying message that it is weak to be dependent and on a benefit as opposed to one which states: it is strong to claim one's rights in order to move towards greater independence.

I built a relationship with each group member which had a uniqueness and intensity of its own. I feel that I became closer to each participant, for the most part, than they became to each other although individuals in the group did cement some quite intense relationships. The different levels of friendship appeared at no time to impact negatively on group dynamics. Awareness of the disabling effect of exclusion prevented this happening in the group. Although some were more vocal, this was accepted by the quieter ones. It was important to recognize that the contribution to a group is not always verbal. As Peck points out: "Members who speak not a word may contribute as much to the group as the most voluble" (Peck, 1987:127). Butler and Wintram speak of the way women in the past may have been forced into silence making it difficult for them to stand their ground and demand to be heard (Butler and Wintram, 1991:88). The fear that one's contribution might be inaudible, mistimed (*ibid*) or incoherent is experienced by many disabled people and the significance of silences was checked out regularly without forcing people to participate before they were ready.

One participant in her silence emanated a healing quality which considerably calmed the group at times when we were becoming over stressed. She sometimes used Reiki healing (a form of spiritual healing using "hands on" and relaxation) with us individually as she tuned into either physical pain or emotional distress. Both of the Maori women who participated played a crucial role in bringing the group into a quieter focus either by speaking softly or by making their presence felt in their

silence. Our stress could be caused over the most minor of issues which occurred particularly around the time we were putting the finishing touches to the training package. We would, for example, find ourselves in dispute over an item to be included on the definition of access or whether we should write in page numbers or not. Each person had such a degree of ownership of the training kit, they felt it had to be perfect, but the struggle was productive in so far as it further reflected the sense of community which had been formed. This is reinforced by Peck's statement:

So it is that a group in community does not always feel peaceful in the usual sense of the word. Its members will from time to time struggle with each other and struggle hard. The struggle may become excited and exuberant, with little if any room for silence (Peck, 1987:74).

I could also contribute to this since, at times, I would turn up in a highly stressed state. Unless I worked hard to calm myself down, the whole group was affected and the stress was reflected in the process. It was at this later stage that I would often find myself sitting back and actually enjoying the sense of collective leadership which these minor disputes indicated. At other times, people responded to stress by raising issues which became barriers to progress. My role was to identify and remove barriers as they were raised. I have found that it is almost habitual for some disabled people within their analysis to go into depth about the difficulties incurred within a system without seeing a way through it. Raising possible barriers could also be a constructive way forward. For example, one person admitted to being "devil's advocate" (Reason and Rowan, 1981) since he always raised the difficult issues which the system may present. This was a way of channelling his usual negativity into some constructive use by challenging us to respond to the most difficult issues we may be confronted with inside and outside a training situation. This was interpreted by one participant in her evaluation as:

The spectre of dominant male thinking and that this was helpful in enabling us to deal with the reality of the nondisabled world (Diary entry: 4 Oct 1995).

One always must be alerted to the effect on a group of imbalance in task sharing (Brandow and McDonnell, 1981; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Brown, 1992). This always irritates those who feel they have been carrying the load. However, it was clear that if people were not pulling their weight they had a reason which I did not always know about. When I sensed conflict around lack of shared responsibility, I would encourage the person "guilty" of non-participation to share where they were at in the context of a general group sharing exercise. This always had the effect of ensuring the group was aware of the difficulties each member was experiencing with their studies and personal life and even became a forum for problem solving. This completely diffused the conflict before it became a problem. The danger of burnout was raised in student evaluation and the tendency to take on too much when one becomes passionate about something: "*Group support is essential when one considers also the inevitable resistance one encounters as change occurs*" (Diary entry: 18 Jan 1996).

Vital to a sense of inclusiveness is a sensitive decision-making structure (Peck, 1987; Kenny, 1994; Ife, 1995). All decisions were made with full group consensus and were in fact often made very easily and there was a healthy openness to debate and discussion. The concept of consensus was discussed as moving beyond compromise which may lead to disempowerment for some participants. The group operated within a process which could ensure decisions about a course of action which would be agreed as in the best interests of all (Ife, 1995:197).

With a group this size I was able to tune into each member and have an understanding of where they were at. Most of the time decisions about adapting the process were based on my own intuition and in response to the developing intuition of the group to each other (Reason, 1994; Schon, 1995; Fook, 1996). There were times people did not understand or felt misunderstood and my job has been to identify those times and ensure there was clarification. However, Coral said:

The group had dealt well with conflict - there is a tendency to close off but as conflict has arisen it has been supportively confronted. We all have different and strong personalities which has brought disagreement at times. The group has grown through this disagreement.

So having aimed to achieve an inclusive community, I now ask the question: to what extent was this a reality for DARG and what significance did this have in terms of the emancipatory objectives of the research?

The Achievement of a “Mature Group: “Becoming an Interpretive Community”

In this final part, I will present an overview of the stages a group goes through in the formation of a community identifying how these stages have applied to the research group. This analysis is essential to an understanding of the central role of good group facilitation where a researcher is attempting to conduct fully participatory research. My ultimate role as group facilitator was to oversee the maturation of the group and to ensure that each member developed the necessary skills to contribute equally to the research and the group process. It is only on the basis of the achievement of this that the research could claim to have emancipatory outcomes. I will use Bennis and Shepard's (1965) definition of a “mature group” (Bennis and Shepard, as a starting point for discussion. The first element in the process of group maturation is “**acceptance of individual difference between participants**”. The stages of group development have been identified in community work literature (Peck, 1987; Glassman and Kates, 1990; Morgan, 1993; Kenny, 1994). The early stage of group process is pseudo community where people have a false sense of harmony driven by lack of depth in relationships. This is inevitably followed by chaos where the painful business of building a working partnership begins (Peck, 1987). In my account, I have identified a swift movement through these phases for the members of DARG with the development of the training kit as a central focus for action.

While one can lay ground rules which say difference must be valued and accommodated, what one does as a facilitator to ensure difference is transcended, depends on one's ability to generate positivity among group members:

Perhaps the most necessary key to this transcendence is the appreciation of differences. In community instead of being denied, ignored, hidden or changed, human differences are celebrated as gifts (Peck, 1987:62).

In a sense this was achieved by the formation of a collective leadership where all took responsibility for the inclusiveness of the environment:

Collective leadership must strengthen the leadership capability of all and create specific circumstances where full use is made of all members (Amilcar, cited in Hope and Timmel, 1991:48).

Where individual difference is encouraged in this way, conflict is often experienced in the decision making process (Mansbridge, 1983; Peck, 1987; Butler and Wintram, 1991). As an interpretive community we did not have a formal mechanism for decision-making, and to explore the dynamics of consensus I have found Peck's reference to democracy in community most helpful. He said that, in a state of genuine community the degree of consensus is so clear he has never witnessed the need for a vote. He says that this implies not abolition of democratic machinery but that: "A community, in transcending individual differences, routinely goes even beyond democracy" (Peck, 1987:64). In other words, democracy is a safeguard for groups where total community is impossible and where decisions have to be made according to the wishes of the majority. In this sense DARG achieved community, thus consensus.

Peck explores the paradox of a group situation where individual difference is valued and encouraged within a situation where consensus is also essential. He also looks at the processes which are put in place to accommodate those differences. The point is our group managed to successfully operate on this basis quite painlessly in spite of vast individual differences. The fact that I cannot describe any formula for it does not in any way invalidate the process. I agree with Peck:

I doubt if we will ever have a formula for the consensual process. The process itself is an adventure. And again there is something inherently almost mystical, magical about it, but it works (Peck, 1987:64).

Consistently, the message regarding difference was that it was enriching and the group philosophy not only stated this, its every action reflected the integrity of this stance. Having difference 'on the agenda' made people acutely aware of absent members' perspectives or those of quieter members (Peck, 1987; Butler and Wintram, 1991). My job was to identify the strengths of each group member and to work on ensuring that within the group framework these strengths were recognized and utilised to the full (Peck,

1987; Brown, 1992; Ingamells, 1996). The cultural differences among group members further enhanced this learning process. For example, a Samoan student who was intermittently involved with the research communicated his perspective through poetry.

The second stage of group maturation is **“conflict over substantive issues relating to group tasks rather than over emotional ones”**. Out of conflict and differing perspectives came growth and healthy compromise. The necessary conflict is a feature of the stage of chaos in community building. Before reaching a consensus the group had to enter emptiness which is the “bridge between chaos and community.” Members had to “empty themselves of barriers to communication” (Peck, 1987:93). I, as facilitator, along with group members had to resist trying to control the process in order to force a decision and to recognise that the desire to do so emanates from a fear of failure on my part (Freire, 1972, 1987; Peck, 1987; Butler and Wintram, 1991).

From an early stage, The group was solid in its understanding and perception of the social construction of disability, which became the central substantive issue. They reflected on their role in challenging that, and acknowledged the motivation and passion this generated. What provoked most debate was how their goals were to be achieved and what would be the means of doing so.

The third stage of maturation is where **decisions are made through a process of consensus which encourages dissent**. In the transition between chaos and community, the group demonstrated its strength by speaking out unafraid of conflict. I, as facilitator, continually invited the group to disagree with each other, with me and to reject decisions (Heron, 1981; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Peck, 1987). This created a healthy environment for debate, critical thinking and learning and brought people into greater solidarity.

The fourth stage of a mature group consists of **participants who are aware of the group processes and their own involvement in them**. By the evaluation stage each person was able to name the role they played in the group process and this was another important function of the evaluation. The way the evaluation task was framed ensured some self-exploration in this area and validation by the group in discussion. The mature group was a critical community, or what students described as “interpretive community”, a term also used by Fook, (1996) to describe a research group where critical analysis had been key to achieving and identifying research outcomes. The final element of my role in this was my presentation of the whole research process, naming the methodology and explaining the role of the group process. Each person was also accountable for the part they played. The ability to name their role (Barndt, 1990), to understand and reproduce the methodology in their own research and in the ability to now pass on skills learnt by participation in the group process (Knox, 1977; Wadsworth, 1984) are all concrete evidence that the research approach achieved greater autonomy for those participating.

From this discussion it can be argued that what has been achieved is the facilitation of a group process set within a pedagogical framework, combining traditional research elements and group theory, to become a model for emancipatory research. The extent to which this can be reproduced to become a tool for real social change will be discussed in the final chapter.

I have explored in this section the roles of the facilitator, the concept of leadership and the need for shared leadership in the achievement of empowerment of participants. I have examined the role of critical reflection in the work of the research group and analysed the attainment of an inclusive interpretive community. I will now scrutinise the process in terms of its accessibility and hence its emancipatory value for participants.

PART TWO

Has an emancipatory process been achieved?

Three key aspects need to be considered in an assessment of the emancipatory potential of this research. Before I conduct my own critique to supplement that provided by student evaluation in Chapter Eight, I will examine four key aspects which need to be considered under the umbrella of accessibility. The first relates to the choice of approach, including who chose to use a participatory collaborative approach, the choice of combining this approach with story telling and the level of access both approaches provided for all of the students who expressed interest in the research at the beginning. The second area involves an examination of the value of critical theory and more particularly the critical reflective approach. This will include a discussion of the value of the personal and political connections made to the experience of impairment and disability by each of the students. The third looks at the direct applicability of critical theory particularly in terms of the training package and the impact of the critical approach on University staff. Finally, the significance and measurement of student understanding of the methodology is explored. This includes the potential replicability of the overall approach, not only by the individuals involved within their own research but also in terms of the ability of the disability community to take on the key aspects of the methodology. I explore now how clear I have been as researcher in terms of explanation of what was accomplished and the naming of the unfolding process. In the following section, I will discuss the research training package which I delivered six months after the research was completed to explain the methodology in simple terms. Within the context of all of the above areas, an assessment of the emancipatory potential of the research will be clearer.

Accessibility of the Research

Choice of a participatory/collaborative approach

The first question must examine the appropriateness of choice of approach and its potential to facilitate an inclusive research experience. We have not looked at, in the overall examination, why the students

who began did not all continue. While they all had good personal reasons for not making the commitment, I sometimes wonder if the approach was too demanding for them and whether they would have preferred a more traditional approach where I, as researcher took much more responsibility for the process and outcomes. Lunn refers to this in her research with disabled women:

Another point to which I did not give enough consideration was that my idea of the 'best' way to do research might be extremely uncomfortable for participants who wish to be treated as traditional research subjects (Lunn, 1997:102).

All who participated in this research agreed that they had been challenged to leave their comfort zone and the very thought of taking such a significant responsibility was a temptation to return to powerlessness (Rees, 1991) at a very early stage. I acknowledge that for those who passed this difficult stage, the project was one of huge growth and learning, for others, the approach may have excluded them and deprived them of an opportunity which they had expressed some interest in. The choice to use individual stories as a contribution to the overall research to be used at a later date, as discussed in the previous section, provided the opportunity for those less able to assert their needs to use the interview as a way of highlighting individual issues they were dealing with and to ask for guidance and information on some practical areas of concern. It may have been appropriate to offer the option of either one method or another, or the alternative of both approaches for those who wished. In retrospect, I wish I had raised this question in evaluation. The individual stories certainly provided an opportunity for a one-to-one interview and space to tell one's story which for many at an early stage of dealing with disability was a crucial first step. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the stories took place at different times during the research and the outcomes reflected where each of the group was at, in terms of their group experience. However on an individual level, all took advantage of looking practically and objectively at their situation in the light of the past, present and future experience. Bennie similarly assessed the emancipatory potential of his own research in terms of individual interviews:

For my part, I frequently found myself as a provider of information and knowledge during the interviews, putting people in touch with resources and enabling people to clarify and analyse their experiences and views (Bennie, 1996:21).

The practical advice required by some DARG students often included applying for benefits and grants, information which is not always readily accessible. For others, the individual interview provided an opportunity to reflect on their personal changes at the time of telling their story. These were not discussed at length in the group evaluation since the situation was not as conducive to this. Those students who did not choose to stay and participate in the action research may benefit at a later date from an opportunity to tell their story, to talk about their personal experience and to reflect on their circumstances. From a researcher perspective, the combination of approaches certainly provided a comprehensive picture for research analysis. The use of story telling also

represented a participatory collaborative approach since the group laid out the key themes for the individual interviews.

Overall, there was unanimity among the remaining students that the group approach had facilitated an invaluable support network. Sally, in her story, spoke of her early experience of DARG:

People in DARG, they don't know my story, they don't know anything about me but there isn't that questioning about it, just that straight out acceptance. You don't get that anywhere else, that level of acceptance, you have to show people and explain to people what you have been through. People generally till won't give it to you unless they have seen you grieve and things like that, When they acknowledge it. But I really like that about DARG. You don't have to do that; there is just that acceptance (Sally's personal story).

The issue remains however, that I chose the approach and used this to create the space for an experience. I did not approach the students for advice on the approach or approaches apart from raising other alternatives for investigation which were to build on the participatory collaborative group process. I also chose the theoretical framework and I have already said that it may have been more appropriate to offer a range of models from which to work, which would have had the effect of educating the group about other approaches to research at an early stage. My argument within my own proposal was that a critical theoretical approach created space for a variety of perspectives and facilitated self expression in a safe way. I will now look more closely at this critical reflective approach in terms of the overall research to build on the previous discussion and explore its role in group process.

Use of critical reflection and critical theory

The use of critical reflection ensured an interactive group process, as discussed previously. Critical theory provided a tool for analysis of the social theories of disability. In addition there is no doubt in scrutinising the individual and group evaluations that the whole group, in the context of the group process, grasped the meaning of critical theory and used it in their own reflections. As Fay asserts, the strength of a critical theory lies not just in its ability to explain a social situation but in:

The discovery of conditions under which people can actually consider a particular analysis of their situation.....the theory of education offers a general account of the conditions needed for the sort of enlightenment envisioned by the theory (Fay, 1987:105).

In keeping with both Fay's schema and Rees's steps to empowerment, the experience of impairment, for those who had not already considered it as such, became a personal and political issue. Looking critically, in those early stages, using the clear examples of the social construction and creation of disability, the awareness grew. This was initiated by myself because none of the students, including those who had

undertaken disability studies previously, fully understood or were able to name the social oppression theories. A combination of my explanation and the use of current literature educated the group who responded with different levels of understanding and vehemence. Sally very clearly attributed my personal theoretical stance as a key factor in the success of the group:

And that theoretical stance you have taken of how we will not be victims and what are we here for, and all those conversations that we have in that group, and I think that is why the group has not dismantled (Sally's personal story).

However, could that stance be seen as empowering or manipulative? As previously referred to, Opie and Bishop speak of the danger of theoretical imposition and the missionary status of the politically correct researcher (Opie, 1990; Bishop, 1996). I have spoken of the reflexive mechanism of the research diary which tested the accuracy of research reports and encouraged honest reflection and ongoing verbal and written evaluations. I must also question if there could have been other safe corrective mechanisms built in to ensure students felt absolutely confident to challenge me, my approach and theoretical stance. Having said this, I was challenged within the group regularly, which led to excellent debates. This question of safety was raised in evaluation with no recommendations for change from students but it is worth considering other evaluative tools in the future.

At an early stage, an important group discussion which contributed to new found knowledge was that of the ability of critical theory to bring into the light the experience of oppression: *"it was like turning on a light bulb"* (Jan) and *"coming out of the mist, a significant feeling"* (Christine). Making the invisible visible was a continuing theme for which the critical approach was a catalyst. Throughout the process each participant related their own personal experience of impairment facing it in a new light inspired by new knowledge and understanding. An example of how this visibility was expressed on an individual basis and used constructively is revealed in a story which was used as a teaching tool in the kit:

I've spent my whole life making what is invisible visible, and what is visible invisible. But what is really going on is that my experience often remains invisible. This goes beyond the question of a visible versus an invisible impairment. People look at me and assume they know what my disability is or they ask me what 'caused' it so that they will know. But it isn't like that. They can't know about the fight my mum had to get me into school. They can't know what it is like to be called a creep (Story by research participant published in the training kit).

Direct reference to the critical framework was made both within evaluation and within the context of personal stories: Sally spoke of the power of critical reflection:

Personally, I think that is why the group has been so empowering for me, because it has that theoretical basis. Instead of it coming down to personalities, and agendas and politics, it

comes down to that theoretical perspective of Rees's steps. If the shit hits the fan go back to Rees's steps, where are you, what are you doing? (Sally's personal story).

She further relates the theory to her own self perception:

That is where I find my own personal liberation is things like dealing with that instead of getting all uptight and upset about the fact that sometimes I see myself as able bodied and sometimes as disabled. Letting me get my mind all screwed up about that. Instead of being able to analyse it in a particular way and saying it is okay (Sally's personal story).

From my point of view as researcher, it was crucial to make space for a range of competing and challenging points of view and to use my skills as facilitator to use stimulus questions to trigger the critical thinking. I agree with Fook on the importance of intuition:

It is important to recognize that the understanding of any situation must be based on an appreciation of the context, and also of the difference and possibly competing perspectives, which might be involved in interpreting the situation (Fook, 1993:4).

While the group worked well together on their task, they were encouraged to reflect critically on the significance of that mutual bond and link this to the wider research context. Ife has similarly recommended an approach where people systematically reflect on their actions and relationships with each other as a "deliberate and planned activity" (Ife, 1995:204). Rees also in his analysis of an alternative approach to management advocates the power of reflection in a more collective management style (Rees, 1995).

Bishop raises a parallel issue in the context of Maori. He reminds us that while Carr and Kemmis consider the process of self-reflection as having emancipatory value "it is the process of initiation and emancipation which are of primary concern" (Bishop, 1996:59). He considers that participants require the tools to accomplish real political challenge to structural inequality and self-empowerment. Within a Maori context this would be accomplished using an approach which addresses Maori cultural aspirations and which is located within Maori cultural practices.

Kaupapa Maori promotes self-determination of the research participants as a primary goal and is a research strategy that relates theory to practice in an indigenous based context and in a manner that aims to promote symmetrical dialogue (Bishop, 1996:59).

Ballard in *Disability, Whanau and Society* made space for people and their support workers to reflect on the process of empowerment and disempowerment in their own words and from their own cultural perspectives. Other researchers have instigated a critical reflective approach to research with representatives of agencies working with marginalised groups (Reason, 1994; Doyle, 1995; Ingamells, 1995; Lynn, 1995).

The research participants were gradually able to reflect in detail on the power relations in their immediate environment. There is widespread empirical evidence of the way the power of disabled people can be collectively undermined in a range of institutional settings and the group used other examples of peoples' stories to help make sense of their own growing awareness. For example, Perkins talks of the power relations between institution staff and people with disabilities based on the stories told by service users (Perkins, 1996) highlighting the often subtle ways in which people's personal power can be undermined. Creating a safe space for expression of their experiences was crucial, and on a different level, for the students of DARG, to move towards an analysis which relieves them of some of their responsibility in the improvement of their situation, was a source of empowerment (Munford, Georgeson and Gordon, 1994; Ife, 1995).

Critical reflection ensured scrutiny of the delicate balance between dependence and independence between disabled and nondisabled people. This is illustrated in Christine's personal story where she described the temptation to return to a safer "sick" state in the negotiation of her personal and professional relationships:

It is tempting for those who know me as sick and who have seen me sick not to take it seriously. Unfortunately the temptation for someone struggling with the daily grind of a chronic illness is to find some way to remind them: "but then when they do take me seriously, the fear generated is frightening in itself and I risk losing control again (Extract of personal story).

This balancing of relationships and interpretation of contradictions is an ongoing feature of living with impairment and while it may involve two or more people disabled and nondisabled, the price is almost always higher for the disabled person. We had discussed this phenomenon in the context of the group process but the power of exploration at an individual level was demonstrated in the new-found understanding when people related this concept to their individual experiences. This preceded the process of making relevant practical connections to the wider research objectives to which I will now turn.

Practical application of theory

The applicability and relevance of critical theory can be evaluated within the concrete outcomes of firstly, a support group which formed a training group and subsequently, within the development of the training itself. For some the group process and the support group DARG provided was central while for others the fact that DARG became a training group was key to their ability to feel part of the process and achieve something concrete. It was interesting to reflect on the initiation of this group from the student perspective in terms of my role and the part played by my own theoretical approach in building solidarity within a learning process:

That whole support group thing which comes from taking a theoretical standpoint like you did - a body of knowledge - bringing a group of disabled people together-- well you didn't bring them together, providing

a space where they could come together and seeing what happened from that, to me personally is a bigger thing than the actual action research (Sally's personal story).

In other words, for her, and a small number of others, the focus on interpersonal experience was the paramount consideration in ensuring the success of the research itself and an appreciation of competing perspectives. For others, the focus of the action research gave meaning to their participation and my assessment is that for those, the understanding of the theory and the methodology came at a much slower rate. I can only conclude that for some the ability to deal with theory and see it both in terms of their personal experience as well as in terms of the group process was more difficult and the training provided a visible outlet for the concerns of other disabled people in the University.

The training programme as a vehicle for emancipatory action research aimed to provide a forum for exploration of the experience of staff and students in the context of the social construction and creation of disability. In turn the staff acted on their findings and continued to create the conditions for further change and mechanisms to enable challenge to disabling attitudes and practices. In the next chapter I will discuss how the existence of the disability action research group as a training group has become one of the mechanisms of change in the institution facilitating a reconstruction within the institution based on critical theory (Fay, 1987). Enabling participation through partnership remains a central theme in action taken by staff since they realised the benefits of sharing resources, negotiating alliances and recognising the superior knowledge (in terms of disability) of their disabled students. The submission developed as a result of this training is attached as Appendix Five as well as the disability equity training package which is in Appendix Nine.

We have undertaken each component of our research on the basis that the pedagogical experience is central to emancipation and dialectical theory building (Lather, 1986, 1986a, 1995; Freire, 1987). Fay sees critical theory as limited and limiting when it comes to actually taking power back in the practical sense in the face of the power of the oppressor. I would argue that the same theory of emancipation can apply to the staff who, although they are part of the oppressive system and can indeed, albeit unwittingly, be oppressors (Freire, 1987; Doyle, 1995). They can be similarly subject to the restraints of disabling policies, thus reinforcing the nature of the social creation of disability. To limit our action to the experience of one small group of people would invalidate the emancipatory objective of the research. What has been explored is the potential for the staff group to be similarly empowered by the critical reflective approach of the research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Fook, 1996; Lynn, 1996). I therefore reject to some extent Fay's assertion of this particular limitation of critical theory. I concede, however, that if staff choose to hold on to power, once they are aware of its destructive and insidious consequences, the action to be taken to challenge power would ultimately be different. I myself, at the time of the research, was a privileged member of an educational institution. While I, owing to my impairment, was more vulnerable than many of my colleagues, due to demanding employment contracts and staff policies, my ability to analyse my situation placed me in a position of considerably more power than that of my colleagues, in the range of choices this knowledge opened up to me. My ability to 'see the bigger picture'

and mobilize support from other lecturers and students may, in some circumstances, have been greater than that of many other educators who have different life experiences. I attempted to use this power, in the context of the student group and later in my work with staff as constructively as possible. In terms of the latter, the only measure I can use is that of the staff evaluations of the training of which my contribution was only one small part.

In the light of the above evaluation, critical reflection has enabled students to make sense of their situations and use critical theory to re-evaluate their lives and experience of impairment. However, this, in itself does not serve to make the research process itself totally accessible to and owned by the participants. My responsibility, clearly, as a facilitator of an emancipatory research process, was to ensure that all participants understood the methodology and were able to replicate the approach within their own future research. I will now discuss to what extent this was achieved and critique the methods I used to attempt to share knowledge.

Student understanding of methodology and its replicability

I will begin with my own objectives in the design of an emancipatory model of research before discussing such issues as group composition, the perceived level of understanding and finally its replicability. Having identified throughout my study, the lack of good research which involved disabled people in its design, implementation and dissemination (Barton, 1988; Morris, 1992; Oliver, 1992; Ramcharen and Grant, 1994; Wight-Felske, 1994), I set out to develop a project which could be owned by a group of disabled students, and for which they could set the aims and objectives. Within my own definition of a fully emancipatory model, it would only be by achieving the above could I claim to have achieved my own objectives. Over the years of the project, I have realised that to attempt to develop fully emancipatory research within the context of my own PhD, was impossible. There are a number of reasons for this, the main one being that I have been forced to own the project as my own in order to attain the successful completion of a PhD. The overall project was mine, but a project within a project has been conceptualised and implemented by the student group and this acted as the case study. The way this project developed was described in Chapter Seven and will be further discussed in Chapter Ten. The above assertion does not take away from the achievements of the students who participated and continue to participate in DARG Inc.

While there is evidence of personal and political change of a substantial nature, I would argue that the model would require more development and different conditions to achieve a fully emancipatory status. The project has been based on a unique approach by a group of disabled people working together, which could be described as having emancipatory features, but the extent to which each individual understood the full impact of the use of the social theories of disability and their application in the design of the methodology was variable. The diary was the key interactive tool in data analysis and much of that has been cited in previous chapters. Literature and translation of theory was made available to all in the group process, but some students were still confused about such concepts as praxis and the terms method and

methodology by the end of the research. At a fairly late stage, one person asked for a definition of methodology. This was in spite of the fact that I had already defined this term in the context of what we were doing and provided what I considered accessible literature on the subject including my own research proposal. In the light of that evidence, I should have found other teaching tools to explain the process much earlier on, or at least established within the process, areas of confusion. It is essential that disabled researchers in the future feel they can undertake credible research with confidence with other disabled people inside or outside a University. Other marginalised groups express similar views in the context of research. As Walsh-Tapiata pointed out in relation to research with Maori:

Research is not something that belongs strictly within the province of Universities and academia but could and should be actively pursued by iwi. It is important that more Maori are trained in research, because while the debate around Maori research models that could involve others (other iwi, Pakeha) in research settings, I am convinced that the quality of the richness of information that originates from people with their own is different (Walsh-Tapiata, 1997:271).

The group acknowledged the key factor of an all disabled group as central to the success of the group process, and the safety of the "silent support group" has already been mentioned. This removed the barriers to learning to some extent, but they then required the appropriate tools. I was asked to conduct a training session on all aspects of the research presenting a cross section of the methodology, the theories on which the project was built, including Rees's steps, and the research principles. This session was held six months post evaluation after the summer break when people were feeling fresher and ready for a new year. This coincided with our discussions on the future of DARG as an organisation and the debate over my future involvement if any.

The training booklet in Appendix Eight was prepared as a training tool which they could subsequently use in their studies. This began with a full glossary of terms, contained parts of my own literature review, aspects of the research diary and a summary of key points of the unfolding project. While the amount of information given to them was enormous, I explained that they were not expected to take it all in at once but it was there for their future reference and study. I went through the first few pages as an interactive teaching session where students were encouraged to ask questions and for points of clarification as I spoke. Although they were familiar with definitions of emancipatory research, Rees's steps and much of Fay's thesis, the opportunity to name more clearly where this fitted in with the whole process completed the picture for the group and I was clear how their participation was to be used in my own thesis. I designed the session so that they would all have the opportunity to further reflect on their own part in the research design and to consider ways they would use this process themselves in the future. I admitted to the group the amount of preconceptions I had when I entered into the process in terms of aiming to design a perfect research project where they were fully in charge of the whole process including design of methodology and data analysis. What we achieved by my own evaluation fell short of the ideal but in terms of the students' learning and development, all felt that they contributed to a

unique and empowering experience and that the effects for themselves and for other disabled students would be far-reaching.

A small number of students were fully conversant with the technical aspects of the research and were able to analyse the process in terms of their own future research. Jan who was conducting her Masters using some elements of the action research spoke of ways in which she may develop her own methodology with a focus on language:

The things that I discovered about definitions for a start, about the way language has changed, that was a thing I could really take up more time. If I did do a PhD that is probably the area I would look into more. Because there are lots of little things in that project which I could take out but that is probably the one area that I feel I could expand more comfortably. I just feel language is so changeable and it is in group outgroup. It has a lot of things to do with power and people (Extract from Jan's personal story).

Sally also spoke of the way, the research had stimulated her wish to explore the power of narrative:

And for me the ultimate would be being able to integrate the research I have done at varsity is around the use of narratives. The use of the oral narrative and the legitimisation of the oral narrative. Exactly this, telling stories. I want to do for my research one day (Extract from Sally's personal story).

She went on to speak of the way she would like to use my PhD:

This is definitely your PhD, your model that you have set up for. I would really like a personal copy of your thesis. For my Master's thesis I can use your work as my theory foundation..you use Rees and whatever. You get one theorist. Lets test this and push the boundaries. That I would really like to do one day. We have started off with a theoretical framework and pushed those boundaries. We have come up with a new body of knowledge (ibid).

Others spoke of a new hunger for learning, but the number who were able to evaluate and run with the methodology were in a minority. The level of personal growth in terms of transformation for them was more significant even though this was linked to their University study and the ability to make changes in such key departments as education. As Coral said:

I have grown and matured as a person. I am a lot more vocal about things outside the group. The other day they were talking about the socialised effect of teaching because of the scheme which was coming through..social skills were the most important thing of this group or that group within the teaching regime. When I was asked my opinion of what I have actually learnt for most of the last two years I said to learn to value people for what they are, not what they actually show in the way of disability or things like that. And I was quite vocal about it and nobody said anything but maybe the message is going to seep through that department too. Especially if I write my essay on the theme (Extract from Coral's personal story).

In the light of this evaluation, what is important in terms of defining the extent to which the model is emancipatory? One clear answer to this would be: only the participants can decide (Lather, 1987; Boyles, 1994; Bishop, 1995; Bennie, 1996; Walsh-Tapiata, 1997). This question was posed within a series of evaluation questions, which were covered in considerable detail in Chapter Eight.

In this chapter I have returned to the question in the context of my own analysis, to what extent this research could be described as fully emancipatory. This has been examined in terms of the student definition and more importantly, in terms of their level of research knowledge. I have explored this question while acknowledging the boundaries of my own knowledge, understanding and perspective as a disabled researcher. This has been, however, consolidated by the student evaluation of the research as presented in Chapter Eight which is testimony to some extent of its success in achieving change on a personal and political level. This focuses on the degree of transformation which is a key factor in the validity of an emancipatory process but is this enough? With the benefit of hindsight, I have become aware that the teaching session which I presented with a summary of the research process as a tool of learning, ought to have occurred much earlier in the research process, if the participants were to have been in a position to comment with confidence on the emancipatory potential of the experience. I had given all participants a copy of my research proposal which gave a good deal of information about different approaches to research, a definition of emancipatory research and a summary of Rees's steps based on a reconstruction within an educational setting. While they were able to connect this to some extent to what they were undertaking, a teaching session discussing that paper in detail and the final session pre-evaluation would have been more effective in ensuring that not only was the research conducted strictly within the emancipatory principles laid out in Chapter Four, the students may have made more informed comment on ways in which the research could have been conducted differently.

Taking these questions into consideration, my conclusions in Chapter Eleven, explore in more depth the future of emancipatory research and the range of approaches which can qualify as emancipatory in both work and research settings. The next chapter explores a concrete outcome of the research, the formation and future of DARG Inc and its contribution to future social change.

CHAPTER TEN

Future Directions:

Darg Becomes An Incorporated Society

Introduction

Critical social science seeks to be a practical force by galvanizing its audience into socially transformative action: this is what it means by empowerment. (Fay, 1981:285).

We have explored within the research a range of partnerships including the building of a community of partnerships. In this way partnerships between, for example, males and females and Maori and Pakeha have been valued as integral to the group experience. In Chapter Seven, I described the development and delivery of the disability equity training package while Chapter Eight was focused on the student evaluation of the research. In that context, the evidence of the research as a catalyst for change was examined in terms of the value and power of a group process as well the benefits for the individuals within the group. Also described were the outcomes of the training in terms of change at the level of tertiary structures. The actions which staff planned to take have challenged the social construction and social creation of disability in their area and were described as examples of the catalytic effect of the research action. The process further illustrated the nature of the developing partnership between staff as well as between staff and disabled students.

I will now develop the concept of emancipatory research as a catalyst for change by describing and analysing the process of negotiation of the future of the Disability Action Research Group. This will include some reference to the extent to which the group entered a new life cycle in order to re-establish its direction (Peck, 1987; Glassman and Kates, 1990; Kenny, 1994). This analysis will include what the students recommended in their evaluations for a future direction and the resulting proposed structure of the group as an incorporated society. The process of rebuilding DARG as a community will be described and the difficulties encountered by a group when negotiating transition and change (Peck, 1987; Butler and Wintram, 1990; Kenny, 1994). The first section will describe and analyse the practical and political issues the group had to face and will be divided into four distinct sections: *exploring options for group identity and actions; consolidation and facilitation of partnerships; negotiating a new identity; seeking funding*. The second section will more specifically focus on the later stage of development, the process of incorporation and the resulting political implications for the group of becoming a legal entity. The comments made will apply to DARG Inc specifically and will form the foundation for lessons which might be used by other research action groups to be presented in Chapter Eleven. I will speak from my experience as group facilitator involved in the process and will refer to the discussions as recorded in the research diary.

Exploring a new group identity and actions

During the evaluation process, a key question for the group was: what is the future role for DARG as a training group, and what will be the image and structure the group will work with for future endeavours? I was clear as principal researcher from the beginning that this type of research carries with it a responsibility to accomplish change as well as to monitor and sustain that change once it has occurred. The issues raised in the previous chapter about group development are relevant here and worthy of consideration since all groups potentially experience difficulty in achieving change where group structure and dynamics are ignored. Reference to group process in this chapter will however be linked only to the key pertinent issues in organisational development. I will offer some insights into the way in which I see my own role which will include the positive and negative aspects of continuing in any sense as group leader. I will then describe the formation of DARG as an incorporated society alluding briefly to the group process as a new stage of community building was reached. In relation to critical theory, transformative action was geared to challenge the social structures creating disability inside and outside the educational setting. The formation of DARG was the catalyst for this action. The next section will explore the way recommendations for action emerging from research and post training staff evaluation were considered as well as the re-negotiation of partnerships inside and outside of the group.

Consolidation and facilitation of partnerships

During evaluation the students of DARG expressed trepidation at the responsibility for sustaining change especially within the University setting. It was important that I stepped back as facilitator and allowed the group space to explore what they wanted in the coming years, what they felt they were capable of and what they saw as their obligation to other disabled students. Three key issues emerged in evaluation: the need for structure, for clear commitment on behalf of group members and a plan of action. While continuing to evaluate the process, the group returned to a process of “understanding themes” and “specifying problems” (Rees, 1991) in recognition of the changing priorities of the group.

The themes and objectives had necessarily changed in terms of the appropriate actions required of the action group even though the commitment to social change through group action was a continuing important focus. The practicalities of achieving change became much more important, for example the issue of budget was looked at, as was the need for a paid administrator. This would provide a degree of professionalism and ease the setting and achievement of goals. It would also be a way of rewarding the invisible hours of work which are done such as the research diary (which would become minutes of meetings), mail outs, liaison with key players in the system and action on access. I explained that there was a role for a group facilitator to have an overview of what goes on in the University and to work with liaison officers, to look at equity issues generally and to promote disability studies. I said that I personally had no desire to be an administrator alone and I stressed at this stage that while I had not committed myself in any way to agreeing to take on the co-

ordinating role, I would explore with them what that person would do. When considering the University structures from faculty down to departmental level it seemed an opportune time for DARG to step in and propose that it offered its services as a consultancy group in association with student services. In this way participants felt that new found "awareness of policies" could be utilised to advise students and staff on creating avenues in the system. Students felt that this would require a permanent member-facilitator, possibly the co-ordinator of students with disabilities, or someone working in partnership with this person, to bring together the group and set a direction. The transience of the student group in terms of membership was perceived as potentially problematic in its tendency to destabilize the group and it was argued that any new group structure should address the effects of this. All agreed that in response to staff evaluation an advisory group would be made available to explore possibilities as to what staff/students needed to do. Some discussion ensued as to how more concrete outcomes could be achieved this way rather than sloganizing, moralising or agitating (Butler and Wintram, 1991) The group aimed to further develop a team approach in order to co-operatively construct strategies and answers rather than just highlighting problems. This has been proven in the development of the staff contact network which looks at concrete issues and practical solutions, to ensure the mutual benefit of staff students and institution.

The group identified some clear outcomes resulting from the research. The challenge facing DARG was to make the work meaningful in terms of achievement of real social change which could be sustained. It was considered that this "expert group" would be an ideal resource to offer to any agency with an interest in disability research. For example, government was surveying statistics of disabled students in tertiary education during this period and it was possible that we could offer some advice on the implications of different trends for policy. It was recognized that a core stable group would have to be established which may include ex-students. I will address this point in a later section. Another outcome of the research was that it had been demonstrated that a group of students could put together a quality staff training package and deliver it. It was argued that this laid the way for disabled people to be key facilitators of consultant policy-making groups as opposed to undervalued token members of predominantly nondisabled groups.

Three key initial proposals for action were put forward as follows: the first was that the group would propose to the University that DARG offers the services of its members and, to clarify the nature of their expertise it was suggested that the philosophy, origins and aims were committed to paper. This recognized that with membership of such a group comes a level of responsibility which must be taken seriously (Kenny, 1994). By establishing and owning the structure it was considered that each person would identify their role more clearly and take responsibility for the success of the group. The second was for the expectations of members to be clarified. This included a clearly stated level of commitment, a basic ongoing framework for practice and statement of group objectives, for example, an annual review of the training package, regular meetings and provision of a mechanism for ongoing support for group members. Finally, members agreed that adherence to the group's

original empowerment philosophy was essential and a mission statement would reflect this. It was suggested that we open up the group to staff with disabilities for a number of reasons: firstly it would serve to raise its credibility and improve effectiveness; secondly, to provide a more long-term stable membership to balance the transient student population; thirdly, to aim to improve access and support to disabled staff as well as students, thus providing a model of good practice central to the message of the training; finally, to ensure that key players within the system were aware of the existence and role of DARG.

Negotiating a new identity

A second phase of the evaluation included extensive discussion on how DARG could achieve the above goals and the group process will be alluded to in order to illustrate the significance of a new phase of the group life cycle (Peck, 1987; Glassman and Kates, 1990; Kenny, 1994). As a facilitator I had been experiencing some difficulty in motivating the group to be energised to look ahead and to conduct in-depth evaluation. Peck's analysis of community building (1987) helped me to explain to them what was happening. In Peck's terms this phase signified the 'death' of the action research group in order to move forward into another identity. Towards the end of the evaluation process some members were describing a feeling of depression and disaffection with the group. They were questioning their ability to maintain a commitment or identify what they could offer to the group. Statements about how difficult change was to achieve became commonplace and other group members were affected by this. The impact of the group reaction to changing phases is significant for other groups since, it would be easy to submit to the difficulties at this stage and objectives which have been formerly energetically set can be dropped in the face of the conflict. Naming the process as discussed in Chapter Nine contributes to participants' insight which enables them to take responsibility for the success of the group process.

We explored a number of ways payment for an administrator could be achieved. It could be simply an honorarium, or a part-time wage from the training courses. Alternatively, an outside funding source such as Community Funding Agency could possibly fund the training group which could subsequently service a number of institutions and community agencies. To obtain funding solely from Victoria University would raise conflicts of interest and impede our ability to work outside the University. Group members warned that if we were to ask for funding we would have to be seen as a professional, credible enterprise with clear structures, membership and the ability to handle money. The commitment to and clarity of goals were equally important. Coral particularly felt that without this the group may die, that we would soon be asked to name two dates for staff training and that in spite of our pressures we would have to be prepared. The group did not consider that anyone was ready to run the training to the level Anne and I had facilitated the training in the past. However, I pointed out that this failed to give credit to the skills in the group; I suggested that at least two of them were capable, with support, of conducting this training and that I would support them

to take a greater level of responsibility. Others would require more training or would take on alternative crucial roles.

Events which occurred from here continued to reflect chaos in that people began to demand structure, as I discussed previously, stating that the 'wishy-washiness' of our group operation did not lead to a professional profile. They were sure that the only way the group had held together was because of my ability to facilitate (which concerned me) and the fact that I had been seen as a permanent stable leader. They gave no credit to the structure which had been the catalyst for such change. As I pulled back, to ensure I did not manipulate the process, what emerged were what Peck (1987) would call 'secondary leaders' who in his analysis, attempt to "escape into organisation" (Peck, 1987:93). Some people began to call for tight structures such as minutes, a chairperson and meeting protocols.

As Peck says "organisation is a solution to chaos. Indeed, that is the primary reason for organisation, to minimise chaos" (Peck, 1987:91). However, I did not feel that rigid organisation and community would be compatible for DARG, even though it felt like a safety net at the time. As Peck points out:

Committees and chairpersons do not a community make..an organisation is able to nurture a measure of community within itself only to the extent that it is willing to tolerate a certain lack of structure. As long as the goal is community building, organisation as an attempted solution to chaos is an unworkable solution (Peck, 1987:92).

In consideration of the dynamics of DARG, we had temporarily lost sight of our philosophy of participation through partnership. We were attempting to achieve partnership through our controlled participation. This is the very trap numerous groups fall into and remain in a tightly structured hierarchy thereafter (Peck, 1987; Butler and Wintram 1991; Shields, 1991; Brown, 1992). This phase of chaos remained for some time as the crucial transition period was complex and our meetings were limited to once a month. For this reason I was not able to spend the necessary time with the group in order to work through our transition problems. I will describe the process from here in some detail in order to demonstrate the issues which arose when this particular group of disabled people attempted to form a new organisation. Hopefully, their experience will have some value for other groups as they attempt to form action groups.

During discussions we agreed that a committed group required a paid facilitator and the model one person suggested was similar to her role as facilitator of the post-graduate forum where goals were set by a committed student group. In this context the facilitator simply ensures that everything keeps ticking over and enables a sense of direction. Angela reminded us that since this was not a Victoria University group, that other institutions were represented in DARG and that funding should reflect this by coming from an outside source. She further suggested a training transition

period of months where I would remain as facilitator and gradually train people up to take on training roles. They felt that if I left at this point the group might have dissolved.

This worried me since I had been alerted to the danger of creating dependence. I was reminded of the dilemmas of the researchers of the Otago Family Network “where it appeared at one stage that the parents may have been reluctant to “take over” the Network project” (Ballard et al, 1992;235). In their situation however, I was reassured that given time and gentle encouragement, parents were ready to take over. I have already discussed the disempowering nature of research where the researcher disappears when the job is done. It was my duty to remind each student that they had the skills to achieve group goals but the transition period may be a long one. I did reassure the group constantly that I would not leave without ensuring the necessary support was available. I felt that was sometimes forgotten when they considered the enormity of what they were taking on.

Seeking funding

It was suggested that the group draw up a budget and that running the training in other areas such as teachers college may bring in necessary funding to pay for the position of administrator. The group also felt that a training group could be viewed as a real resource and could earn enough to sustain itself. In the same way as the Network parents did (Ballard et al, 1992), I suggested we put together a proposal and sort out issues such as the writing of a constitution and an estimation of costs incurred by a salary, photocopying and general administration.

Since the group had requested that I became facilitator, I felt it was important to state what I would require if I were to stay on. In the first place, I had never intended to abandon the group but I had not assumed that they would want me to stay. Also I had to be clear about my other commitments and requirements for a full time-salary. There was a possibility that I could facilitate the group as part of my role but I felt that I would prefer to use the institution as a base to work from in order to meet my own needs for support and a familiar infrastructure! This would not necessarily detract from the status of the group as a free agent. I would have clear expectations of the group commitment and the allocation of roles since once we were an operating body with training responsibilities, the group would need to establish credibility in its new identity. I committed myself, while awaiting funding to partially facilitate training to which the group was committed, and supported the others to share the remaining facilitation role. Other people could then test their own skills and gain valuable training experience which would increase confidence.

The formation of the group as a professional entity posed a major decision and there was no way I could suggest anything or give any further direction until the group had identified its direction. I reminded everyone that whatever direction the group took it would still be working on empowerment principles, perhaps based on Rees's steps where the group philosophy of inclusion

would be inherent and it would be set up to encourage consistent reflection on issues. As Rees recommends:

Organisations can be managed in such a way as to encourage a capacity for reflection, to enhance social and political awareness, to contribute to empowerment by fostering opportunities to learn (Rees, 1995:287).

We proceeded at this stage to explore what would need to be done to pursue a source of funding. We surveyed the range of options before us and allocated people the roles of compiling funding applications. We also had to have an interim meeting structure and an accessible meeting place. Meanwhile, Malcolm (a research participant) and I had been looking into the possibility of using someone else's established business and premises as an interim measure to save the stress of setting up alone. I explained that we saw the possibility of working in with B.F. of "Learning Unlimited" who has a base in Education House from which she co-ordinates TOPS courses and other courses for people with psychiatric disabilities. She was seen as someone who could use our skills and knowledge and who would be interested in talking to us further about setting up in some negotiated partnership. DARG members were anxious to retain autonomy of their group and sought reassurance on this, but we had to act quickly to decide what we were to do since our services were in demand nationally. The issues we had to confront were partially based on the fear of losing control and included four clear themes: the first was the need for an established base and identity; a second issue was the nature of the partnership with "Learning Unlimited"; third, admission of new members and the issue of whether we would retain our independence or if we would be bound by Learning Unlimited's company protocols; finally, the nature of the reciprocal arrangement.

There were concerns that we should remain a group of disabled people who operate with that identity. I reassured the group that they would decide the terms of any legal arrangement and that the current commitment to partnership would be honoured and remain the identity and philosophy of DARG. As always the group would be owned by them as well as any structure they chose. We affirmed that while we would resist being co-opted by nondisabled people wishing to own what we do, we would not wish to work alone, which would definitely be more stressful and problematic. We realised we would have to plan a date for training at Victoria University for this year and that would be a separate priority. Malcolm reiterated that any initial discussions with Learning Unlimited would be strictly exploratory. I was worried about delays in applying for funding. There was a suggestion that we put this on hold until the May deadline but I stated that I felt it was important to proceed without delay to facilitate our discussion with either Learning Unlimited or any other private training enterprise. Malcolm said it was important that when applying for funding that we clearly portrayed ourselves as a group of disabled students who were facilitating training in the tertiary sector to improve their own access and that of others to tertiary education. Learning Unlimited was only one of the options and we realised there may be others who had something to offer in terms of partnership and existing structures. Group discussion

subsequently revolved around concerns about identifying appropriate funding sources in order to employ a co-ordinator. Any funding would certainly give us more bargaining power and independence within a business partnership with Learning Unlimited. I and another group member took on the responsibility of entering initial discussions and of reporting back to the group.

Moving Towards A Legal Identity

I will present an analysis here, most of which I recorded in the research diary and presented to the research group early in 1996. The group at this stage had entered a new phase of “development of political and interactive skills” (Rees, 1991) where it began to explore current funding sources, learnt to write funding proposals and liaised with funding providers. As I now reflect on the process we went through, I realise that as facilitator, while I continued to remind the group of its origins and our commitment to an empowerment approach to practice, I ‘bought into’ the fear around change and allowed an over-emphasis on structure rather than pointing out the efficacy of the existing, less rigid structure (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Kenny, 1994). In some ways this was an attempt to **resist a return to powerlessness** (Rees, 1991) which occurs when one’s security is threatened. “People are routinely terrified of the emptiness of the unknown” (Peck, 1987:94). It is interesting that we all respond to this by exercising control, the very mechanism which causes powerlessness and destroys partnership. Had I identified this sooner, I would perhaps have been able to guide the group into a new sense of community much sooner.

The Formation of a Legal Entity

The evolution of the research group into an incorporated society continues to demonstrate as an instrumental case study the catalytic power of emancipatory methodology. The group process and the political implications of the actions taken have significance in the demonstration of integral emancipatory principles serving the same function as the analysis of the training package. I will first describe the process and offer a subsequent critical analysis.

It was agreed that DARG would become a legal entity in order to qualify for funding and to establish a clear identity. The process of becoming incorporated proved a stressful one for the group and served to alienate, to some extent, those who had no experience or understanding of the process. We designed a structure for DARG which focused on all the different areas of interest and potential growth. The conclusion of this discussion revolved around the need for increased sensitivity to each other as group members, respect for individual roles and contributions and better group meeting protocol including possibly shared lunch. This raised the important question of the future of DARG. To follow on from my previous point we had four key questions to address: the first was, how would new members be involved and on what grounds would they be invited to participate? second, would a core group/management group be established or would the group become an open collective? what difference would a paid co-ordinator make and on what grounds may students be employed

by the group? Four, how could original ideals and philosophy be retained while allowing the group to grow?

The need to do things which both energised and empowered participants and to retain a structure which ensured sensitivity to needs was seen as important. In relation to Rees's steps the following diary entry was recorded:

We are in a new phase of learning having told our research stories and we are now learning new systems; our political awareness again revolves around possible funding structures, entering into partnership with existing training providers, including demystifying the jargon around the business world. We have a number of choices before us but we also have to question ourselves as to how we will retain our autonomy when growth enables us to both reach a bigger audience and take on even greater responsibility. The thought of this responsibility for what we have developed is frightening, but we can reassure ourselves that as long as we operate on the same basis as we always have we should not go wrong (Diary entry: March, 1996).

Rees's steps were to continue to be the working framework but new ways to formalise the group structure were conceptualised. An example of this was the writing of a mission statement and meeting protocols and clear guidelines for participation in DARG were designed. In some ways to set up as an incorporated society would force DARG to formalise along a set of rules but at the same time the group aimed to retain an emancipatory philosophy. It was important to take this transitional phase slowly but steadily. Now research evaluation had been completed, a strategic plan could be developed and definite goals set for the future.

Planning Future Goals

The group had to consider realistically what could be achieved in the coming year. Without knowing about funding this was a difficult question to answer but it was considered that DARG should demonstrate accountability to disabled people in terms of the research principles discussed in Chapter Four. This could be achieved by publishing the kit and allowing it to be used around the country. DARG had to trust, at this crucial stage, their nondisabled allies since they had some of the resources needed for building firm bridges. Gaining knowledge of the legal system and perhaps the national qualifications framework (NZQA) was to be the next step in order to preserve group autonomy while reaching out and using existing resources constructively.

It was not until the group became incorporated and ran a first meeting as a legal entity that many of the issues which had arisen during this phase of chaos were confronted. Many members expressed their pain and grief at the changes the action research group had gone through and talked about their grievances about the behaviour of different group members. In this way each person was able to empty themselves of the negative energy they were experiencing and as the group returned to a sense of partnership, the need for minutes, a chair-person, a secretary and

many other formal elements of the meeting disappeared. Every single person committed themselves to a role and began to say what was needed in terms of rules and guidelines. Clearly, unless one adheres to the basic principle of ownership, the ideals of a group will cease to be emancipatory (Kenny, 1994).

The question was: would such structure contradict group aims? While it was argued that the group could operate as it wished, the contradiction of the legal structure would inevitably contaminate the practices of the group thereafter. It is important to name this dynamic and to recognise the precise ways in which it impacts on individual members and the objectives of the group. To date the research group has worked along strict principles where each group member is equally responsible for the outcomes and the facilitator has been there to serve the purposes of the group (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Kenny, 1994). I note the use of the word 'strict' and acknowledge that on the surface this could appear to be a contradiction in terms. However, without such a clear cut framework, which for us took the form of Rees's steps, we may not have achieved as much. The group, however, made those rules and adhered to them because they owned them and understood them. It was essential to confront the implication of ignoring the outside constraints under which DARG was operating. There is a danger of which I have previously spoken of the invisible power relations where overt markers of power are removed within a collective setting:

It is also arguable that as overt markers of power become less evident, covert markers of power asymmetry becomes more subtle rather than disappearing (Fairclough, 1995:203).

What happened to DARG in the process of incorporation was that the group had to conform to outside rules in order to be recognized. Requirements of law had to be balanced with those of the group and the challenge to remain working along emancipatory principles became much harder. I would argue that in the process of incorporating, the group may have breached its own principles. While there had been consultation with the group present at meetings and in writing to those who were not, a deadline had to be met and there was little time to talk through the full implications of becoming incorporated, of linking up with an existing private training establishment, or what impact this would have on individual members. This, in conjunction with the transition from a supportive research group to a viable business with premises, was difficult for some people to deal with and, as I have described, provoked for some a temptation to return to powerlessness

It was recognized that it would have been easy for the group to slip into a more directive hierarchical model of working in order to survive the outside world. Peck's explanation (1987) of this is perhaps the most pertinent one for this stage of our growth when he speaks of the constant tension which a community must live by:

The tensions between entropic laziness, pulling us back repeatedly into traditional ways of behaving or well-worn defensive patterns, and that part of our nature that stretches towards

new, better ways of creating things or relationships are omnipresent in community. Because of this tension, community once attained is never obtained for all time (Peck, 1987:136).

His answer is consistent self-monitoring known as community maintenance and in the same way the group reflexively scrutinised its research practice, its present status was examined. However, Peck's analysis is only part of the problem and Ife recognizes the impact of external power relations on community groups and the need to adjust to, recognize and move with those pressures (Ife, 1995). A reflexive approach built-in to group practices (Fook, 1996) meant participants consistently reminded each other that the reason DARG was set up in the first place was to challenge the very contradiction which was avoided within the group structure. I have previously discussed the need for structure and that collective leadership does not imply constant chaos. In a sense in the same way as emancipatory research demands a synthesis of methods, traditional and innovative (Heron, 1981; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Ballard, 1991; Doyle, 1996), the same balance of approaches must be struck in working as a group and in building a management structure (Rees, 1995). In asking the question what existing conventions and expectations are valid and what is the logic behind them, one can move towards the development of working practices which are both positive and efficient. Fairclough speaks of the contradictions people encounter in the face of change:

Change involves forms of transgression, crossing boundaries, such as putting together existing conditions in new combinations or drawing on conventions in situations which usually preclude them (Fairclough, 1995:96).

To find a way to solve these problems which maintains the integrity of DARG will be a further model for others to learn from. We recognized once we had time to discuss the mechanisms by which we fulfilled our obligations, the dangers being confronted and the need for balance at all times. A set of working questions by which DARG and other groups can monitor working practices, whether that be in relation to research or work in the field generally, will be compiled in Chapter Eleven. This goes beyond ground rules which all groups operate by, guidelines must be detailed and adapted to the specific needs of the group members and again adapted as new objectives are formed. I must admit a degree of trepidation at the ease with which any of us could fall into a less democratic and a less emancipatory way of working. I would conclude, therefore, that the biggest challenge is not so much accomplishing a piece of work which is fully emancipatory, it is in maintaining such practice in the long term. I would argue that to claim to be working along such principles and to be allowing practices which compromise such principles in any area of one's work could be more disabling than if one had set out with an overt hierarchical model of working. Fay's theory of subtle manipulation takes new credence in this context (Fay, 1987).

The group will face many challenges as it heads into the future. It is committed to an emancipatory philosophy and Rees's steps to empowerment will continue to form the fundamental framework within which it works. However, inevitable contradictions are presented in dealing with the tertiary

sector which is built on individualistic notions of achievement and whose priorities may differ from those of the group. This will create a struggle to maintain group integrity. It would be valuable to understand these conflicts in the context of discourse analysis. The disabling influence of contradictory discourses and discursive practices become increasingly clear as our ability to analyse and expand on our world view (Fay, 1987) increased. The democratization of discourse is what we have attempted to achieve where power is shared in society between people and groups of previously unequal power. What we have witnessed in research and in educational and societal practices are contradictory messages of equality and power. As a group of disabled people who have become an incorporated society, DARG has attempted to claim back its own power on society's current terms which would be, in Fairclough's term, discursive democratization which is:

Linked to and behind political democratization and the broad shift from coercion to consent, incorporation and pluralism in the exercise of power. (Fairclough, 1995:80).

A group sense of integrity will be essential in future work since DARG's challenge to the structures which disable its participants inside and outside the University is based on exposing the overt contradictions and there is a need at all times to model coherent enabling practices. The work already accomplished within the University has established an expectation that disabled students will be visible, will participate fully in the University community and will have a voice in all aspects of University life. The group has the potential to accomplish change in a number of key areas by marketing the training kit, training disabled students to deliver it, as consultants inside and outside the educational system and conducting research based on emancipatory principles.

The above account has addressed the first research question regarding the role of emancipatory research in achieving autonomy for disabled people and change in the immediate environment. Chapter Eleven will draw out some general conclusions and look critically at the research findings.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Reflecting On The Research: Some Conclusions

Introduction

In this final chapter, the potential for emancipatory research to achieve tangible change for disabled people will be examined as well as the challenges in the use of this approach to research. A critique of emancipatory research will discuss the potential for all research to have emancipatory value depending on the approach and ideology of the researcher.

The project described presents an example of an emancipatory approach to research and an analysis of its potential to enhance the lives of participants. This is in response to the first strand of the research question which explored the role of emancipatory research in enabling disabled people to take control of their lives and to achieve change in their immediate environment. The framework described was built using a synthesis of methods taken from a range of examples cited in Chapter Two which also challenged more traditional approaches to research. A critical approach ensures the scrutiny of a range of methods and the recognition that what is emancipatory for some may be quite the opposite for others depending on the context. The fact that the process undertaken by the research group has been emancipatory in terms of the experience and understandings of those who participated, does not automatically mean that this would be the case for all disabled people. It has become clear that to claim that research must be done in the way described in order to be emancipatory would be as tyrannous and prescriptive as some of the strictly positivist approaches previously alluded to and which the establishment of the research group aimed to challenge.

A second strand of the research explored the use of Rees's steps as a methodological framework for an emancipatory research process. This was incorporated with the research principles (Figure Three) and Fay's basic scheme to provide an accessible explanatory framework. An analysis of the amended basic scheme of enlightenment has been offered in relation to the experience of research participants, staff participants in the training described and also, more particularly, to the implications for emancipatory research. The relevance of the limitations Fay acknowledges in the achievement of concrete change have been acknowledged in Chapter Three. In the context of the methodology, the way Rees's steps were used to create a tool for discussion and action has been described. They were subsequently used as an evaluative tool in Chapter Eight.

This concluding discussion will focus on three key areas in relation to the research questions. Key area one examines the potential for emancipatory research to achieve social change in the light of the findings. This will include an analysis of the contribution made by DARG to personal and social change for disabled people, followed by the challenges DARG faced and an indication of what other groups may learn from the experience.

A second key area will examine the theoretical frameworks of Fay and Rees and highlight the key aspects of their particular contribution to the research described. In the critique of the steps their limitations in relation to emancipatory research will be explored including discussion of the potentially negative impact on participants in certain circumstances; the contribution they make will then be explored, not only to research with disabled people but in the development of emancipatory methods of working.

A third key area for concluding discussion will be the implications for policy and practice in the disability field. This section will be divided into four sub-sections to ensure clarity of argument: the first will begin with an analysis of the way research can emancipate or exploit depending on the perspective of the researcher; the second will examine the possibilities of this type of approach in work with marginalised groups; the third sub-section will present some general issues when working with disabled people including the challenges to and roles and responsibilities of the researcher; finally, the chapter will conclude with a brief look to the future and some recommendations for researchers interested in conducting emancipatory research.

Key Area One: The potential for Emancipatory Research to Achieve

Personal and Social Change

After having completed a process which has claimed to represent an emancipatory model, it is important to examine what can be learnt from its key components. Researchers who have highlighted the difficulties involved in carrying out emancipatory research with disabled people have been cited. Issues such as the costs involved have been raised (Barnes, 1992; Beresford, 1997): these can be associated with the practical needs of participants with a wide range of impairments, access requirements and, subsequently, costs of dissemination of results in a variety of media (Beresford, 1997). Researchers have claimed that what is required to achieve a model of emancipatory research is a change in the social relations of research production (Oliver, 1990; Barnes, 1992; Ballard, 1993) and a recognition of the way findings can be coloured by the perspective a researcher brings (Acker, Barry and Essweld, 1983; Dubois, 1983; Reinharz, 1990; Barnes, 1992, 1996; Munford, 1994; Bishop, 1996). These debates have been considered previously and a participatory reflexive approach (Lather, 1986; Fook, 1996) has provided the key to the emancipatory approach described. This has allowed scrutiny of my role as a researcher, as a disabled person and as a facilitator both from my own self-evaluation and that of the group. The role of the group process and the fine balance provided by careful, sensitive facilitation has been a key finding which has been addressed in Chapter Nine. Research participants have explored their contribution to social change by what they have achieved and I as a researcher must explore further the extent to which I have challenged those ways of conducting research which have previously been critiqued. In other words I must critique the extent to which I have researcher have worked in real partnership with the group and enabled participants to own the process. I have already critiqued the approach

in Chapter Nine and this will be consolidated here. Within the personal and group evaluations, the extent to which the experience has been empowering for each person involved has already been discussed and measured in the following ways: by the level of personal change experienced, the achievement of group objectives (the completion of the training kit) and finally, by the level of change experienced within an educational setting which impacts on other disabled students. The first part of this discussion will begin with the group as a vehicle for personal and social change.

DARG as a vehicle for personal and social change

We cannot know who we are until we act and our action takes place in a particular context of relationship with particular others (Yeatman, 1995:55).

In this section I will explore from a researcher's perspective what can be derived from the experience of DARG. This includes an analysis of the way a research group process was perceived to be the means of achieving a sense of personal autonomy, followed by the role of the group action in accomplishing social change.

The evaluations presented speak for themselves. Within the first stage of research analysis, the group found it necessary to re-evaluate its actions in all kinds of ways. I, with the central responsibilities of principal researcher, had a range of significant roles in the development of a collaborative process. These included those of, initiator, facilitator, convenor, researcher, housekeeper, participant (Treleaven, 1994:152) and educator (Freire, 1987). The ways in which I have taken on roles where necessary has been discussed. In Chapter Six the training role I was obliged to take on in order to facilitate skill building, was described. In most other respects, I was positioned as facilitator, firstly, of their learning and, secondly, of the group process (Treleaven, 1994). The collaborative process ensured responsiveness to the needs of the group and evaluation and measurement of the success with which this was achieved. The framework for evaluation also ensured reflection on the ways in which the lessons of the research process were being integrated into their lives as well as measuring the extent to which they had moved as people (Fook, 1996).

Participant reports were enlightening in the way they highlighted some of the weaknesses in the group, such as how new people were welcomed, the assumptions people tend to make about one another and the destructive nature of non-communication. The group members had to learn to empty themselves of any preconceptions in order to move into a sense of community (Peck, 1987:63). Each person became committed to learn more about the wants and needs of other members, thereby developing a more perceptive understanding (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Treleaven, 1994). With that, came an awareness of the right to offer support to others with confidence based on received personal wisdom, practical experience (Butler and Wintram, 1991:80) and, ultimately, practical assistance as was demonstrated in discussions presented in Chapter Eight. This was based on trust between group members and between myself as facilitator and the group (Butler and Wintram, 1991; Whitmore, 1994; Treleaven, 1994). Many participants

have reported a process of self-discovery as they learnt they had permission to express their feelings and their views. Finally, the group has not been merely outcome-oriented, all participants have offered each other unflagging personal, practical and emotional support.

The evaluations helped group participants to identify what they needed to work on as well as their strengths. It emerged as clearly important to build a structure and process which ensured that the deficits of the group could be picked up early in a way which did not destroy the harmony and co-operation in the group (Whitmore, 1990; Butler and Wintram, 1991; Reason, 1994; Treleaven, 1994). During this time all individuals including myself, experienced personal traumas some of which have been major life stresses. The background of DARG provided a support and continuity without becoming a counselling group or putting everything on hold to deal with crisis resolution. An over-emphasis on support may be just as destructive as lack of emphasis. The group managed throughout to maintain a sense of professionalism without taking away from the respect for the individual and our awareness of the baggage they are obliged to carry at any one time.

The experience of DARG was based on an adaptation of community development principles in conjunction with Rees and Fay where the impairment of each participant including myself as researcher, provided an extra dimension. I will briefly summarise the most relevant ones in relation to the research. Firstly *structural analysis* was a central tool at the beginning and subsequently throughout the project to enable exploration of the experience of disability. This built on the biography of each individual and worked towards an alternative theoretical perspective based on the social theories of disability. Secondly, a *critique of the social control functions* of certain approaches to research and institutional policies consolidated the group understanding. The effect of disabling structures and past and contemporary research approaches were examined including the ways these had contributed to the experience of disability. Thirdly, a *critique of existing structures* both in terms of their personal lives and the University structures they were exposed to, enabled a definition of research objectives. Fourthly, a *commitment to challenging oppressive structures* underpinned the group's choice of research action in terms of the development of the training kit. Finally the ultimate aim was to contribute to the *personal liberation of a marginalised group*, in the context of this research to improve the access to tertiary education of students with disabilities (Barndt, 1990; Munford, Georgeson and Gordon, 1994; Kenny, 1994; Ife, 1995; Fook, 1996).

The group identified and struggled with the challenges posed by the social construction of disability. In this sense, it provided a forum for the development of a positive political identity as well as being instrumental for achieving identified personal and political goals (Shakespeare, 1996). The transformation of consciousness can lead to emancipation (Yeatman, 1995) which is often accomplished through collective political organisation (Shakespeare, 1996). It could be argued that DARG represented within the tertiary environment a microcosm of what the disability movement is attempting to achieve in society. The group processes and actions challenged the views of disabled people as powerless, incapable and passive; also participants were seen as credible people to train

others around disability issues. The definitions (of disability) the group provided in training challenged those which emanate from the traditional domination of professionals (Shakespeare, 1996:102). The activity of DARG and the group process itself laid the foundations for the change DARG was able to achieve in the University environment. The group also shared a cultural identity which consolidated the extent to which change could be achieved. As Shakespeare points out: "Challenging stereotypes, building solidarity, recounting new stories, are all about developing a disability culture" (Shakespeare, 1996:103). He goes on to say the three aspects of disability identity are interlinked and complex and all require attention. I have discussed the balance between the personal and political which the members of DARG had to retain as it would have been easy to over-focus on changing the University environment and to ignore the personal and psychological obstacles to feeling empowered and effective (ibid). In this sense the group process provided the forum for the necessary overall support as well as the space for critical reflection on the issues. I have already described what is possible in terms of social change by providing the example of DARG Inc. I will expand further on the implications for emancipatory research in other settings in key area three of this chapter.

It would be appropriate to summarise the key components of the outcomes resulting from research group activity. I would argue that, as a research group, DARG achieved most of its original objectives as well as some unintended outcomes. First, the profile of disabled students at Victoria University has been raised considerably and this has contributed to the greater awareness of student need in terms of access around campus; second, there is evidence that the proactive stance taken by DARG resulted in the beginning and/or the consolidation of a process of major institutional change in relation to disability. This is embodied in greater flexibility of assessment and support systems and the willingness of staff to deal sensitively and practically in partnership with disabled students; third, reports from students and staff reveal a greater level of confidence in working with disability issues and definite responsiveness on behalf of the system.

Significant incidental outcomes include: the setting up of a contact network (described in Chapter Seven) in each Department, a commitment to continued training by the University administration, including specialist training for management; the development of DARG Inc is a second important development and the group's resulting national profile as a result of the publication of the training kit. Other tertiary institutions are now seeking to deliver this on their own campuses. The latest requests for training have come from Massey University and the University of Waikato. All of these outcomes can be seen as a catalyst for social change albeit on a small scale within the tertiary environment. From my own perspective as a researcher, the testimony of each of the students in relation to every aspect of the process fulfilled the original principles identified. The implications of the work of DARG for other groups in the quest for social change will now be explored.

The challenges for DARG and the relevance for other groups

The issues of grappling with structure, negotiating new partnerships and setting up a business have been similarly faced by many groups including Maori and women (Kelly & Sewell, 1991; Bishop, 1996). The formation of DARG Inc is an example of an outcome of emancipatory research and the challenge to maintain emancipatory principles in the continued work of a research group is as important as that experienced in the research itself. Should any group overtly aspire to work along emancipatory principles, the stress which is encountered during the formation of a legal entity is often a test of the working philosophy (Kenny, 1994). Research findings suggest that it is important to regularly revisit the details of a group's working principles and evaluate the extent to which the group is still operating along those principles. If new structure, funding sources, new members (for example the balance of disabled people as opposed to nondisabled people), or methods of operation such as committee structures, breeches those principles in any way, it is time to adjust or review the guiding principles as to their relevance to the current working group (Kenny, 1994; Ife, 1995).

When a group operating for social change wishes to operate in the world as a legal entity capable of supporting itself, contradictions are immediately introduced. This is illustrated where DARG was obliged to register as an incorporated society and to pass through a complex process where it was asked to state the numbers required for a quorum and the names of principal officers. As far as the outside world was concerned a working hierarchy had been established. It could be argued that a loosely organised collective can be less democratic than a more formal organisation because of the dangers of domination by stronger members and the fact that decisions loosely made can be easily overturned (Kenny, 1994:145). The potential for structure to be intrusive and disempowering has been described as well as a method of introducing a non-intrusive-structure. This is to acknowledge that the breaking down of hierarchy and denial of unequal skills can work at the lowest common denominator and become inefficient (Kenny, 1994:145).

It was unanimously agreed that DARG wished to be viewed as credible and professional and to hold its own in the academic world in order to accomplish the goals for change set out. For this to be a reality, a range of structures were required to get things done and to empower people (Kenny, 1994:146). The questions to be asked are: do the structures assist the group to make decisions in an effective and democratic way? What strategies can the group identify to achieve these (ibid)? Is the group able to make the huge commitment it will entail? Provided any structure in place is open to monitoring and scrutiny by group members, it is likely that the emancipatory goals of the group will be maintained. The same questions were asked in the planning of the research process and methodology in terms of using some traditional methods and I would argue that a synthesis of methods and approaches (Rowan, 1981; Ballard, 1991) have contributed to the formation of this emancipatory model.

In this section the potential for this particular example of emancipatory research to achieve personal and social change for those participating has been addressed. Its relevance and value in terms of the

experience for other groups has also been explored. Key area two explores a second strand of the research question and looks at the contribution of Rees and Fay to emancipatory research.

Key Area Two: The Contribution of the Thesis of Fay and Rees to an Understanding of Emancipatory Research

A proper critical theory is one which possesses a stereoscopic vision which recognizes every situation as one both of gain and loss, of change and stasis, of possibility and limit. The amended scheme is meant to incorporate this dual vision. Without it critical social science is likely to generate either into tyranny or quietism (Fay, 1987:215).

One of Fay's closing statements above reflects a fundamental theme which has been explored, that of the potential of critical theory to inform emancipatory research. The theoretical basis of this thesis, built partly on the work of Fay and Rees, has also formed an explanatory framework for the methodology. In the first part of this section the scheme Fay has developed will be related to the transformative process experienced by DARG. (Refer back to figure One Chapter Three and the summary of the amended basic scheme also discussed in Chapter Three). In doing so, its value as an explanatory framework in this type of research will be examined and the four key theories of the amended scheme will be considered: **a theory of the body, a theory of tradition, a theory of force and a theory of reflexivity**. Figure Three, represented in Chapter Nine, outlines the basic scheme as it relates to the steps to empowerment and emancipatory research principles. This framework was adapted by myself and presented to the group.

(Friere's research methods represent my own interpretation in relation to Rees to strengthen the argument).

How relevant is Fay's contribution and how has it been integrated with Rees's steps?

Fay's basic scheme provided a useful explanatory framework for myself as a researcher while the amended basic scheme highlighted the limitations of the theory and identified the need for other theoretical frameworks to present a comprehensive picture. Fay's fundamental thesis was used to provide an interpretation of the individual's fairly limited perception (due to life circumstances) as to their real situation and this enabled identification of the fact that although the students who were involved with DARG had all acknowledged they had a disability, to a large extent they were clearly ignorant of the real causes of their disability. The theory was strengthened in conjunction with a process of **understanding themes** (Rees's first step). This enabled a process whereby a growing understanding of the implications of the social theories of disability, combined with the physical limitations of the body, provided a pathway to personal and political change.

Fay's critique of critical theory, in terms of its limits, enabled a systematic identification of the gaps in my own analysis. This is particularly so in terms of the extent to which he highlights the denial

of the effects of somatic learning and how this poses a limit to emancipation. Chapter Three described, in the interpretation of Fay's theory, the challenges faced by disabled people at Victoria University. In collaboration with the research group, the issues of the physical effects of impairment were addressed and they identified the way their own learning was affected by their daily experience. In both the individual and group stories students shared their experiences of limited access inside and outside the University and the way this has become a familiar part of their everyday lives.

The research addressed this directly both in the way the group dealt directly with access in the flexibility of participation and in the venues chosen as well as in the content of the research package which facilitated exploration of access issues in depth. Students did not attempt to glamorise disability in any way but stated the facts and balanced this by naming compensatory abilities. In doing so they have not only addressed their own negative internalisation, they have also educated others and enabled identification of the "taken for granted" nature of the inaccessible environment. One of the students actively participated in an access audit and used this research to convey to staff areas which they could easily change by their own actions such as changing the venue of their lectures or tutorial times to create greater access for some disabled students.

Fay's reference to the body stimulated my own thinking around **the theory of the body** in relation to disability, linking in with the writings of Sullivan (1995), Barnes and Mercer, (1996) and Shakespeare, (1996) which build on the social oppression theories. Fay claims that bodily therapies are required to reverse the negative effects of somatic learning. While previously I have suggested caution with regard to "fixing" individuals, I have referred to the way hands on healing and massage became a regular feature of our group meetings and aids such as pillows and lumbar rolls to ease pain were freely distributed. Fay agrees that body therapies are "aggressively instrumental" and that their intrusiveness is incongruent with the theory of education, in terms of the ability of the individual to learn new ways of thinking and behaving (discussed in Chapter Three) revealing serious limits to its application:

But people also are bodies. A good deal of their society enters their body directly, or continues to be an effective determinant of their identities in addition to their having certain ideas; their bodies bear their societies like stigmata..something more direct, palpable and manipulative and corporeal is called for. Personal and political liberation, in so far as it is possible, must be somatic as well as spiritual (Fay, 1987:154).

Rees's steps provided a tool for addressing such limitations in the **evaluation of self- image and knowledge** in terms of the active linking of a damaged self-concept to people's life experience including the experience of living with their particular impairment. **The theory of false**

FIGURE THREE

The Basic Scheme of Enlightenment, Rees's Steps to Empowerment and Their Role as an Explanatory Tool

THE BASIC SCHEME	REES'S STEPS TO EMPOWERMENT	PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH IN THE DISABILITY FIELD
I A theory of false consciousness 1) Demonstrates the ways in which the self concept of disabled people is false in that their understanding is based on Perceptions of deficit and dependency imposed on them. (They engage in ideology critique.) 2) Greater awareness highlights how research, science and the medical profession creates and perpetuates this ideology. 3) Exploring the social construction and social creation of disability places the 'blame' firmly within societal attitudes and practices.	Understanding themes (power of biography). Liberation through dialogue, investigation through words (Freire). Evaluation self image and knowledge. Evaluation of words and themes (Freire). Specifying problem, setting the research questions. Codifying themes (Freire). Presenting the codes by reflecting self needs.	The role of Emancipatory research in personal liberation, awareness and understanding of world view: recognition of social construction.
II A theory of crisis 4) Further exploration spells out the mechanisms of oppression, eg the systematic exclusion of disabled people from education employment etc. 5) On examination of the isolation and discrimination experienced by disabled people become aware that current structures are based on the dominance of an ableist society: a competitive education system, a discriminatory medical system, an individualist economy. 6) Greater awareness and education explores the roots of the oppression in the policies and practices of the systems which impact, eg inflexibility of assessment.	Developing awareness of policies: Learning about the system. Analysing and decoding (Freire). Developing the notion of choice: exploring educational options. Externalising: Making links to wider contexts (Freire). Acquiring and using language. Further decoding using interdisciplinary studies (Freire).	Research as an educational experience and the role of non-disabled researchers (alliance between disabled and non-disabled). Research by/for the disability community (issues of importance to disabled people - building networks).
III A theory of education 7) Increases understanding action identifying precise areas for change. 8) The emergence of disability pride.	Experiencing solidarity with others. Resisting a return to powerlessness.	Empowerment through education within research of the need for concerted process (consciousness raising, community education: education of teaching staff).
IV A theory of transformative action 9) Identifies specific policies and practices which create disability and suggest ways they could be changed. 10) A combination of all of the previous elements fulfills a plan of action.	Developing interactive and political skills. Evaluation. Preparation of didactic materials (Freire).	Research as a catalyst for change and partnership.
Achieving real change within the University.		

consciousness triggered my own analysis of the mechanisms of oppression and my awareness of the danger of denying the reality of a person or group of people. As Fook reminds us:

Any one interpretation of a situation, in this sense is only one perspective on a situation and as such, remains at the level of an interpretation of 'reality' rather than reality itself (Fook, 1996:4).

This is not to deny the importance of my role, the effect of my actions, and the fact that the group committed themselves to contributing to my PhD. Lather speaks of the need for some outside influence to evaluate the process since she claims that people are often too close to their situation and blinded by false consciousness to be able to do this for themselves (Lather, 1986). I do not agree wholeheartedly with this statement. While I have advocated partnerships with nondisabled allies, the research group has had full control over evaluation of their own action and changes. People have been able to name their own previous ignorance, reclaim their lives and recognize the damaging influence of the ignorance of other students in their situation.

While Fay's theory has provided a good explanatory framework for this phenomenon in terms of the operationalisation of the research, the steps to empowerment have provided a safe tool by which this could happen.

Specifying problems, the third of Rees's steps, allowed students to take control of the research process and set their own objectives in the light of their new consciousness. . The second stage, **a theory of crisis**, (refer back to Figure 3) has been used to analyse an early phase of the research, where students explored the assessment systems at the university, participated in the access audit and formed partnerships with key staff members. Rees's step, **developing awareness of policies**, again provided a practical tool in highlighting the specific value of understanding institutional policies and learning the skills to rewrite those policies. **Acquiring and using language**, both to describe the disability experience and to deal competently with professionals, became part of an integral learning process. I also introduced research language consistently into the process.

Fay's **theory of education** gave me as the researcher a good starting point in conceptualising what was required in terms of a representative case study which was DARG. The story of the Exodus so clearly demonstrated the effects of loss of identity of a people and I used both the story of Plato's cave and examples from the Exodus to relate to different aspects of what the research group was experiencing. At a midway point before the training, the struggle to maintain a strong group as well as the struggle each person was having to continue their studies made it difficult to always keep the main goals in perspective. Allusion to Fay's translation of the Israelite experience enabled a clearer

identification of the issues in **resisting a return to powerlessness** (the eighth step) and I presented this extract to the group:

It is an account of people who are enslaved in part because, not knowing their identity, they are alienated from themselves and the sustaining power which is the deepest part of them; and it is also an account in which they throw off their chains partly because they acquire a new self understanding which reveals their genuine needs and possibilities. The Exodus story provides a paradigm for the process of emancipation through enlightenment (Fay, 1987:14).

The issues Fay raises in relation to the **theory of force** previously discussed also enabled analysis of the group development in that they also reflect the very real fears involved in moving on and taking responsibility in what may be perceived to be a less secure, sheltered and even threatening world. In this way resisting a return to powerlessness has heightened significance for disabled people in the extra physical vulnerability which is often experienced.

Reflection on the **theory of tradition**, identified by Fay as a limitation to the use of the basic scheme, encouraged me to guide students to take account of the long history of Victoria University and to reflect on the significance of long-standing practices and processes. In doing so It was clearly unrealistic to expect overnight change and to address this the training emphasised the value of existing systems which worked well and on which one could build to incorporate the needs of disabled students. The need to value difference as enriching within this group of disabled people also allowed more space for a bringing together of a range of cultural perspectives which further enhanced the educational process: "human knowledge and human power do really meet as one" (Fay, 1987:19). An analysis of the **theory of transformative action**, provided a theoretical guide for the research to become a catalyst for change and partnership. In solidarity with others DARG brought about personal and political changes, albeit on a small scale, while developing practical interactive, political and academic (research) skills. The integral role of **evaluation** (the tenth step) provided the necessary reflexivity, the absence of which was identified by Fay as a potential limitation.

Fay's critical theory both explicitly and implicitly formed an explanatory framework for the research. The theory has been consistently used and translated into the social theories of disability in order to monitor my own actions and changes as well as those of the group and its associates. Aspects of Fay's theories in relation to the research process have been explicitly alluded to and discussed with the research group as previously indicated. I would argue that Fay's theories, in terms of both the original and the amended basic schemes, are limited and limiting. They do enhance a fundamental understanding of emancipation, but undue emphasis is placed on the responsibility of the individual to emancipate him/herself without providing any tools with which to proceed. While I recognize Fay's awareness of this, a consistent negative evaluation could be considered as having limited value. I, personally, have been excited by the vision expressed by Fay but had to be

careful not to impose this vision on a group of people and expect them to run with it. Walsh-Tapiata (1997) agrees that Fay's theory on its own could be prescriptive and it would be easy for other peoples' agendas to be imposed. She sees it, however, as valuable in conjunction with Rees's steps since people are assisted to not only tell their own stories on their terms but also "to recognise that different personal events can be linked to interconnected episodes that form a meaningful whole" (Walsh-Tapiata, 1997:122). This allows individuals to develop a political analysis within their own language and experience. For this reason Rees's steps, combined, to a large extent with the basic scheme, formed a good explanatory framework to adhere to emancipatory principles as laid out in Figure Three.

The next section will critique the use of Rees's steps as a model for emancipatory action research. It will explore the extent to which the steps have fully complemented Fay's basic scheme while addressing implicitly the limitations of the scheme. It will also examine how successfully Rees's steps have dealt with those limitations and contradictions.

Rees's steps and their use as a practical research tool

This section will be divided into two key areas: the first will explore the issues I have been alerted to as a researcher in applying this model in emancipatory research. I have also become aware of the dangers of prescriptive use of the steps in any similar setting. The second will suggest ways in which they could be positively implemented in different areas of research, or more particularly, in emancipatory approaches to work with disabled people.

The debate would not be comprehensive without an honest assessment of some of the drawbacks in applying this model indiscriminately. Research with disabled people is often perceived as difficult to operationalise, particularly where people have significant communication impairments (Bashford et al, 1995; Beresford, 1997). This demands that the researcher is more creative about his/her own communication. This is certainly one of the reasons that disabled people have been hitherto virtually excluded from the development of research methodology where the research is about them. The steps can be viewed as an exciting way forward but it is important to return to the discussion, particularly in Chapter Nine, where some of the difficulties in conducting emancipatory research were raised. Many of the points made can be applied directly to the use of Rees's steps and that argument will now be revisited. My own experience of using the steps as facilitator will be described, to demonstrate ways in which the difficulties were dealt with as well as to highlight some of the contradictions which remain unanswered. This discussion will include, in the light of research findings, the difficulties other researchers may face, particularly as nondisabled researchers working with disabled people.

There can be a tendency to take the structure of the steps and use it prescriptively, especially when one feels unsure of oneself and the people with whom one is working. Rees constructed the steps in response to the work of Freire (1972), Rose and Black (1985) and Rosenfeld (1989). All of these

authors had identified a process which was used to work with groups identified as oppressed in different parts of the world. Rees adapted them to assist social workers to work in a more empowering way with their 'clients' and at the same time to develop a political analysis of the situation in which they and the people they were supporting found themselves. Although each step was seen as distinct which was to be completed before working on another step, they were used only as an educational device. Rees insisted that they were not to be rigidly followed as this would work directly against the process of empowerment (Rees, 1992:87).

I have already described in Chapter Three, the steps to empowerment more as a series of interlocking circles and Rees has dealt with the linear effect by refusing to number them. It is important that the inter-relatedness of initiatives is recognized between each step and that responsibilities acknowledged are carried through to the next step. I, as a researcher working with the steps, had a responsibility to establish trust and credibility at the beginning. The first stage of **understanding themes** provided the opportunity to break down the power differentials, to tell my own story (to make an equal contribution) and to identify in a collaborative way the commonalities between my own situation and those of the research participants. I had to seriously consider what was appropriate to share and to exercise judgement as to its impact on others, on myself and its implications for my role (Zeller, 1993:170).

As I discussed previously, I began by using an example of part of my story in relation to the steps and it was successful in stimulating deep reflection among those present. By beginning this way however, I was estimating the ability of the group to deal constructively with what I was telling them in order to explore their own experience. If I had misjudged that in any way I may have found a much depleted research group. As I said in my previous discussion I do believe there is an element of manipulation in this approach given that I have a preconceived idea of what will 'work' and although anecdote is an excellent educational tool (Van Manen, 1990; French, 1992), it was a deliberate method, not at that point a spontaneous statement of my history. The fact that those participating did then relate spontaneously to the steps does not cancel out the fact that a structure had been imposed. The arguments about the ethics of this approach continue between researchers, professionals and disabled people themselves. The issues arising as a disabled person undertaking research have been discussed in detail in Chapter Five, including the advantages and disadvantages.

To return to the initial stages of the steps, trust and credibility were effectively established through the use of my personal experience and facilitation skills. However, this had to be consistently maintained by addressing it in everything subsequently instigated, in every response I made as facilitator and in the way I supported each individual in the group. The fact that "I" as facilitator was so important in the process chosen is potentially problematic. There was a risk that my own knowledge and values could be over-imposed, especially in relation to the steps. The question should be raised as to whether the group could have worked well with the steps if they had been asked to facilitate the process themselves. I suspect that the depth with which the steps were used

as a tool depended on the degree of safety experienced and, in this case, I would argue that a skilled facilitator and a balanced group process provided the necessary environment. If “I” had got this wrong, the outcome may have been disempowering. This was avoided by good group preparation, development of ground rules and initial group exercises. Rees also emphasises the responsibility of the worker or facilitator which is significant to this discussion:

Even if credibility and trust have been achieved at one point in time, that is unlikely to be a permanent feature of working relationships. Successful completion of each step requires constant attention to the gaining of credibility and the maintenance of trust (Rees, 1992:87).

They were each unique with a different contribution to make, and although I facilitated a group of twelve I had to ensure that each person remained aware of this fact. This, in part, depended on my personal relationship with each person as well as the way the group dynamics were handled. The partnership could never be taken for granted and it could be concluded that any researcher working with a group at this early stage, must acknowledge the limitations of what they have achieved while remaining open and responsive to the changes in needs.

Whatever the context of the inquiry, if the steps are to be used, I have realised how important it was that I, as researcher, had a clear view of exactly what the steps meant for me personally as well as for the research participants, the significance of each stage for the research process and an ability to articulate the political situation. Freire's concept of a “liberating educator” (Freire, 1987) enabled me to clarify my role in making space for the research participants to explore the distribution of power and its consequences. This occurred for DARG as the group developed an understanding of the social theories of disability in practice in the University and, because of my own situation and analysis over the years, I was able to successfully guide this learning process. Had I attempted the same process a few years ago with less experience and understanding, it would have been impossible for me to provide the necessary guidance. It needs to be acknowledged that all groups attempting to enter into this process may not have access to this level of expertise.

I chose to use the steps overtly and in this way make them a visible research tool. I was alerted to the temptation to design research methodology around them without adequate involvement of participants in discussion of what they mean. Indeed, as one witnesses any process of change, it is easy to see how the steps apply and can be an analytical tool. While a less participatory approach has more limited emancipatory value, the use of the steps as a verbal discussion tool may not be accessible where participants have some form of intellectual disability or where the researcher lacks communication skills to interact easily with participants. This would be particularly true where the principal form of communication is non-verbal. However as Perkins has demonstrated, the researcher need not be limited by their own communication style and one can be creative in the development of a participatory model with those who present significant communication challenges (Perkins, 1996).

I have stated previously that of key importance for me, was the ability to relate personally and to analyse the social construction of disability in relation to the research context. However, the question must be asked: am I in fact defining reality for the research participants by modelling in this way or by playing the role of educator? People must be allowed to interpret their own stories and their own reality without judgement and to grow and change at their own pace. This is not to negate the skill of the researcher any more than it would be appropriate to negate those of the participants. As Rees points out, when he raises a similar issue in the social work context:

Caution about professionals defining reality for those who appear to have less power than they do, is not the equivalent of saying that practitioners do not have a lot to share with clients and cannot influence them. They pass on information, provide support, generate ideas and participate in making plans. But in so doing they recognize that the other party possesses different information and has had different experiences (Rees, 1992:90).

Disabled and nondisabled researchers using the steps with a group of disabled people would avoid some of the potential problems by developing an appropriate mechanism of self-reflexivity which will allow the participants identifying as disabled, to name at the outset, their own skills. Similar to the DARG process, these can be regularly reviewed and the researcher committed to an emancipatory approach will ensure methods which utilise both the skills and expertise people possess in relation to their own circumstances (Fook, 1996). Often the significant level of empathy which can be exhibited by disabled people, when relating to other peoples' situations, can offer invaluable assistance to the researcher to evaluate more effectively what is happening. One cannot eradicate the power differentials but one can use the steps to either enhance them or dismantle them. Rees identified the implicit assumption of some superior knowledge and cited Berger's critique of consciousness raising to illustrate the need for a "lesson in humility" (Rees, 1992:90).

Perhaps another disadvantage of the steps for a researcher working within a time -frame with a group of people is the expectation that everyone will grow and change at the same rate when in fact life is just not like that! This expectation encouraged in some way by the facilitator can be disabling and detract from the group experience. The group dynamics have been discussed in considerable detail and the ways in which these difficulties were addressed in co-operation with the group. It was important not to pressure the group to move too quickly from one stage to another. DARG, as a group, did manage to work cohesively and efficiently, using the steps which were useful in providing a political analysis and a measurement of personal growth. If the research had been conducted with a group who did not have the same appreciation of the steps in the form in which they were presented, the agenda, and therefore the analysis would have remained that of myself as the researcher. While this is not necessarily in any way destructive, it could not be viewed as emancipatory.

Rees contests another implicit assumption which could be considered pertinent to this discussion. The theory around the steps implies that all people whether they be social workers, researchers, or community workers, always wish to empower those with whom they work. One could agree that this may be unlikely, since many may have internalised those aspects of their training based on a medical model. This can have the effect that they can find it difficult to conceive of disabled people in terms of their “potentialities” (Freire, 1972). Rees asserts:

Some practitioners, as a result of their professional education and socialisation, will have adopted a brand of professionalism which eschews any notion of partnership. In all those circumstances, fascination, let alone excitement, in what might be learned from clients is unlikely (Rees, 1992:90).

A final point in this section concerns the definition of empowerment. I had a clear vision when I set out and applied the steps of what I considered would be “empowerment” for the people participating. I was determined to achieve this for myself and the group and I approached the exercise with passion. However, it was important to recognize that any degree of growth and change the students could identify was important and could be achieved within any one of the steps. Even if they had not progressed further than **understanding themes**, this would not necessarily have negated the value of the steps or the exercise. It is only in retrospect that I can fully appreciate this, so the lessons I have learnt may benefit other researchers. These lessons include the importance of a close examination of: whose reality and whose definition of empowerment is being used? If as a researcher, one is measuring success by one’s own definition, the steps could potentially negate the progress people make rather than serve as a foundation. The power can remain in the hands of the researcher if the researcher so chooses but it must remain in the hands of participants if the process is to be emancipatory. What can be construed as emancipatory must therefore also be left to the participant to define. I have discussed in Chapter Nine the extent to which the research can be described as emancipatory. It is up to the researcher to ensure that people are allowed to opt in and out on their terms and take a back or front role depending on their circumstances while still feeling fully involved. For some of the DARG participants this was key to the extent to which the experience was emancipatory. A secret of successful emancipatory research can therefore be perhaps seen as the ability to keep the process going even when people (including the principal researcher) are needing time out. I have related how the group continued with the development of the kit in Chapter Eight for a three week period when a family crisis meant I had to return to England.

By entering into this debate I am in no way negating the value of the steps in participatory or emancipatory research. The aim is to encourage reflexivity in methodological analysis if the model previously described is to be used elsewhere. Having addressed the possible pitfalls in using the steps, a second phase of this critique will explore the potential the steps hold, not just for emancipatory research, but to inform an emancipatory approach to good practice when working

with disabled people. It will become clear that those limitations identified within Fay's critical theory can be dealt with by the flexibility provided by Rees's steps.

Rees's steps as a tool for partnership

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to specify ways in which the steps could be used in settings other than within research. It is important however to remind ourselves that every aspect of what we do in this field has relevance: for example, Freire connects teaching and research as a "mutual act of knowing" (Freire, 1987:172) and McNiff is equally clear:

I feel there is much pressure on teachers to conform to a perceived need to justify their pedagogic practices rather than to investigate how their personal and professional conduct affects learners (McNiff, 1994:7).

The link which can be consistently made is that between research as work practice and the responsibility of the practitioner to work in an enabling empowering manner whatever their role and responsibility. The quest for emancipation in the field of disability happens at many different levels every day. It could be argued that the process of relocation of a group of people labelled as intellectually disabled from a long-term institution could be successfully conducted as an action-research project. The process always involves a large amount of work to construct lifestyle plans, explore the possibilities for suitable relocation, organise day and residential care and find support workers who have a full appreciation of the huge leap this is for the people involved. Bach explores in depth the vantage points for establishing quality of life indicators and the range of different conclusions which can be drawn based on the particular approach taken (Bach, 1994). It could be argued, remaining with this example, that the process could be either emancipatory or it could be abusive depending on the perspective of the people directing the process.

My vision for the future is that those who are among the most vulnerable can enjoy the kind of liberation I and the students I worked with have experienced and, that the links which have been made, will be adapted into more emancipatory methods of working. While it would be too restrictive to say that research such as DARG has undertaken is **the** way to conduct emancipatory research, it is indeed **one** way. This thesis has presented a model of working which suited the needs of a group of students, and the very smallest achievement on an individual basis has had equal importance to the very visible success of setting up an organisation (DARG Inc). The aim here has been to clarify, once the pitfalls have been acknowledged and dealt with, that an emancipatory approach can facilitate important small changes irrespective of the degree of participation or ability of research participants. Whether one is focusing on taking a small part of someone's lifestyle or training plan (working in the services), conducting small-scale research with individuals in a tertiary setting in order to enable choice and identification of barriers, or is responding to a request by a government organisation or sub-committee for "consumer feedback" and even full consumer participation, an emancipatory process, using the steps, has validity and would be possible.

KeyArea Three: Implications for Research Policy and Practice

What has been described is a model of emancipatory research based on some clearly stated emancipatory principles (see Figure Three). The specific features of the model presented can be integrated into many other models. This widens the scope of its value and the implications for its wider application. What will be explored now is the potential for other types of research to qualify as emancipatory depending on the integrity of the researcher (Barnes, 1992). This includes his/her willingness to work in the best, preferably self-defined interests of those subject to the research. This will be followed by some suggestions when working with disabled people and concluding comments on research generally in the disability field. Checklists for researchers to act as a reflexive tool when embarking on this type of research are presented in Appendix One.

Research as a tool of emancipation or exploitation

This thesis began with some dramatic examples of research which were perceived to be exploitative. Research has after all been used at times to condemn whole groups to destruction as described in Chapter Two (Morris, 1992). An argument often proffered in order to reject a more emancipatory approach to research is the sheer size of a research project. It could again be argued, using the example of Hollows's research cited in chapter Two, that no matter how large a research project is, information can be collated in a way which respects the individual, allows the individual to have input into the research questions and ownership of the outcome. Time, energy and expense are often used as excuses but a more emancipatory approach can always be found within available resources.

Having said this, methodology designed on overtly emancipatory principles can be covertly abusive to participants in the manipulation of power dynamics, the exploitation of people's painful experiences or through the expectation that they have to make a significant and ongoing commitment to the research beyond their physical and emotional ability. This has been, to some extent, previously discussed in the reference to the danger of subtle manipulation (Fay, 1987), or to the inappropriate use of one's life experience to gain people's confidence. Provided people know, as the DARG students did, that they can be flexible in their participation and be supported whatever the level of participation the danger of abuse of this nature can be avoided.

What perhaps we should be reminded of here is that the whole debate in this area is rooted in ethics and the definition of ethical conduct in research. The perspective on what is ethical has been defined by the quality of participation in, and ownership of, the research itself. From a positivist perspective the 'inter alia', the necessary distance between researcher and subject "required that professional standards and federal regulations be constituted that protected the research "object"- a human being from being permanently harmed or from having his or her constitutional rights violated" (Lincoln, 1988:289). This gave the researcher the power to define reality in the interests of the person being researched. A philosophical shift away from positivism begins to dismantle this power

base. Researchers agree that a new set of working guidelines and principles are necessary in order to ensure the ethical basis of our research (Oliver, 1990; Morris, 1992; Barnes, 1992; Ballard, 1993). The principles I laid out in Chapter Five are a good foundation for all researchers whatever the area of inquiry and whatever the approach. As Lincoln says, however, there is no way we can police the all-round use of ethical principles.

There is no principle on earth that can protect the innocent from the unprincipled or that can, for that matter, protect the principled from being taken advantage of by those less scrupulous (Lincoln, 1988:292).

The avenues by which more traditionally focused research projects could reflect emancipatory principles is the brief of another piece of work. The key point to remember is that any research can be as much a vehicle of exploitation as it can emancipation. What appears superficially to be safe practice may, when one looks beneath the surface, be hiding exploitative practices. The antithesis to that is: no research or research area or method should be rejected without due regard to the principle or theoretical perspective on which it has been based. So what does this mean for research in the disability field and what can the model which has been presented contribute to the debate and the working practices of researchers?

The future for emancipatory research with marginalised groups

Approaches to research more recently employed by Munford (1989) with parents and service providers. The work undertaken by Ballard (1994) by Kerr (1995) with families, Hera (1996) with women, Bennie (1996) and Perkins (1996) with disabled people, and Walsh-Tapiata with Maori are some examples which (1997) have challenged the more traditional research approaches. They have also given greater credence to the self-knowledge and experience of disabled people and their families. I have previously referred to the work of Perkins whose thesis explored the stories of people with intellectual disabilities within disability services. This was designed along emancipatory principles and illustrated the possibilities for working with people with more severe disabilities (Perkins, 1996). By actively supporting disabled people to engage in research, they and other committed allies have created the necessary partnership to challenge academia and to subsequently place the theme of research by disabled people very firmly on the academic agenda. I join these people in strengthening the pathway for change.

The key message this research brings in terms of work with disabled people is that the approach and response of the researcher is crucial to the extent to which a participant's experience is one of emancipation. The importance of reflexivity and evaluation have been reinforced throughout and perhaps the most useful contribution this thesis can make to other researchers is to suggest some simple mechanisms to monitor researcher behaviour (Appendix One). Evaluation has been essential and will be an integral part of an emancipatory approach to practice. One true test of evaluation concerns whether the themes one began the process with have been redefined. In the

case of this research, within evaluation, the concrete changes achieved in the immediate environment have been consistently monitored, thus challenging what the group identified as the social creation of disability. Where disabled people are concerned, the particular themes which constitute the social construction and creation of disability for them are those which must be addressed if a truly emancipatory approach has been used. It can be concluded that evaluation is an essential key to the validity of any research process. At this point it would be pertinent to revisit some key issues when engaged in research with disabled people and at the same time reiterate some of the challenges which have faced me and will face other researchers aiming to achieve such a model.

Working with Disabled People: Some General Issues for Research

Many of the issues raised here will have relevance for the implementation of an emancipatory approach with other marginalised groups. This section will be divided into five distinct parts: **the creation of an enabling environment; dealing with physical exhaustion and illness; the significance of identifying individual skills; making informed decisions; and finally, the researcher's roles and responsibilities in conducting emancipatory research.**

Creating an enabling environment

I have already discussed some problems facing disabled groups in terms of dependence and power issues including the ways I have dealt with my own power. The challenge has been to build a critical community which is "a safe place precisely because no one is attempting to heal or convert you, to fix you, to change you, instead the members accept you as you are" (Peck, 1987:68).

The temptation to "fix" people is even greater where disability is an issue, furthermore the dynamic identified by Freire of "the oppressor within the oppressed" (Freire, 1972) can be more evident in groups of vulnerable people. I, as facilitator, have been alert to this and have stressed the importance of any potential to misuse my power. It could be argued that this would have relevance, irrespective of one's status as a disabled or non-disabled person. I was aware how easy it would have been to manipulate the group down a path which suited my own vision and original proposal and the equal ease with which this behaviour can be rationalised. The group structure and reflexive mechanisms aimed to prevent this and, consequently, I was able to balance a tendency to teach with a positive empowering approach to facilitation. This was difficult since I definitely fulfilled a teaching role in the sense of imparting crucial information but I was a researcher not a teacher. I have had to continually question my own motives.

The access issues can be phenomenal in that different abilities can be so marked that it would be easy to overlook someone's communication requirements and thereby create a disabling environment. A thorough understanding of approaching the identification of support needs is vital as well as having the expertise and resources to ensure those needs are met. I have already said that no one who was deaf or blind participated in our research and it would have been difficult to obtain the

resources to have a signer present at every meeting. However, if a deaf student had wished to participate, I would have endeavoured to gain the necessary funding. I must add that I feel I could have recruited deaf students more actively and my failure to do so is more to do with my own inadequacy in this area since I cannot sign. In retrospect, the fact that we did not have to deal with the challenges posed by someone who would challenge the communication skills of the wider group means there is an area still unexplored in terms of emancipatory research which would be valuable to pursue in future work. I carefully monitored as group leader a tendency to compliance which is often experienced in work with disabled people (Oliver, 1990; Morris, 1992; Perkins, 1996). This makes it hard to identify true decision making by research participants which is not manipulated (albeit unwittingly) by the researcher. I had to resist the tendency, based on my own agenda, especially when I was under pressure, not to rush through the process. I spoke of the unwillingness of the group to evaluate my behaviour as a researcher. It may be that they were happy with what I had done and that I had provided enough opportunities throughout for them to challenge my leadership but I had to be thorough in the final analysis to ensure there was adequate space provided to critique what I did in a constructive way. On the other hand, the criticism I did take at times was difficult for my perfectionist personality! The irony is that I can remember almost every critical comment which was made and they were often about crucial aspects of the research process. An example of this was mentioned in Chapter Eight, when one member said the group was without structure. The discussion which ensued about structure represented an important learning curve for all of us. For anyone conducting this type of research, skills, understanding of disability and the maturity to withstand criticism are required to ensure that the researcher is not limited by his/her own experience and personal assumptions.

Emancipatory action research takes time, energy and commitment. If one strikes the necessary balance this can be energising but where this type of research fails is where the responsibility is not adequately shared and the chaos characteristic of community building (Peck, 1987; Glassman and Kates, 1990) becomes a permanent feature of group dynamics. Where one is working with disabled participants, there will often be people who have difficulty in accepting responsibility because it has never been expected of them. As research facilitator, one has to learn to push people to identify and reach their potential without frightening them into thinking they are out of their depth. To illustrate this, one student rang me one night in quite a state as he was having difficulty with room bookings, which at the University is not as straightforward as it sounds. This combined with some other stresses in his life and study made him feel like he would never cope with the demands this was making on him. My job was to diffuse the situation, calm him down and talk through some alternatives **without** taking the job on myself. In some ways it would have been easier to do so, but he would never have learnt anything from that experience. It felt risky not to do so since one never really knows exactly how much people can take without getting ill, breaking down in some way or pulling out. I was careful at this stage, however, to reflect on the approach to sharing tasks which had been taken and raised this at the next meeting as a group responsibility to monitor. Another issue

here is that one cannot go home at the end of the day with this type of research and expect to leave it behind. The impact it has on the lives of others means that one has to be available at all times and if one is not willing to do this, the enterprise should not be taken on. However, if the group is well organised and supported it is unlikely that there will be many “crises”.

Dealing with physical exhaustion and illness

Because of the high level of commitment to our research it was more likely that illness would become an issue which impeded our progress rather than lack of interest or ability. All people in this research felt stretched beyond their usual limits and they required significant support practical and emotional. The feedback from research participants bore witness to the fact that because they felt empowered by the process they discovered strength in themselves they were not aware they had, making illness less likely from a holistic point of view. The same applied to myself in that an environment was created which energised me, enhanced my own ability to lead and survive many gruelling hours of hard work.

The significance of identifying individual skills

Partnership implies equal contribution and in order to truly contribute, disabled people must be able to evaluate their own skills and abilities. Every person has a contribution to make and it is the support worker/researcher's job to facilitate awareness of the range of skills one has had to develop to survive the daily grind of disability. This will counteract the often negative self-image which is so typical of the disability experience. People's own perception of disability is often based on a medical model of disability and the support worker/researcher has some responsibility to point out and explain the difference between impairment and disability. For many disabled people this may be their first exposure to the social theories of disability and the impact of this realisation must be acknowledged.

Making informed decisions

The need for a fine balance is presented here, between enabling independent decision-making based on existing knowledge and resources and providing direction which will ensure the ability to make truly informed decisions. What is being described applies to research with disabled and non disabled people but the issues are certainly compounded for disabled participants. While it is hoped our research will encourage people to use this model, it would be wise to approach the process with caution and be sure the appropriate skills and resources are available to all involved.

The roles and responsibilities of the researcher in conducting emancipatory research

It is necessary to return briefly to the role of the researcher as facilitator, which has been covered in my section on “the disabled person as researcher” in Chapter Five. To enter into a fully emancipatory research process is powerful and, if successful, has lasting consequences for all

participants. The person who has initiated the process has a responsibility to ensure that they do not leave a group to flounder once their research role has finished. This is not a process one can walk away from. A gradual transition may be acceptable but if one is not prepared for the long haul, one should not even begin. The process where DARG Inc. was formed bears out this statement and without the continued existence of DARG, the changes at the University would have been unlikely to be sustained. Other issues in relation to validity have been previously discussed.

Any research methodology within an emancipatory framework will allow exploration of positive images and perceptions of self before the process of identifying areas of inquiry. The reflexivity provided by the group process and the space to tell people's stories can facilitate the exploration of individual achievements. However, Rees has placed implicit emphasis on the person being supported. I would argue in a research context that the researcher must also consider their own self-image and what they are bringing to this partnership. This can be in a positive or negative sense. For example, if the researcher sees him/herself as superior in some way, it may be a necessarily humbling experience to now focus on the reality of how much has depended on the image presented by status rather than actual useful skills. On a positive note, to name some aspects of one's skills and life experience is a valuable contribution and can enhance the partnership.

It is pertinent to make a final comment about the experience of the researcher in an emancipatory context. For the researcher, it is possible to learn a great deal from the research participants, research allies and supervisors. One can start out with passion and a vision which may be subsequently replaced in part with an awareness of one's own naivety in believing that this approach is the only way to go. This thesis has sought to highlight the many dangers inherent in this approach, which have been named, and it is easy to have a full appreciation of why other researchers have backed away from doing anything similar. The analysis presented in Chapter Nine leads to the conclusion that confidence and skill in group work, knowledge **and substantial experience** of group dynamics and community development have been essential to the success of this project. The basis of structural analysis (Barndt, 1990; Munford, 1992; Fook, 1996) is an essential component where a researcher chooses to use Rees's steps to empowerment and it may be difficult to allow the process to unfold without controlling it to make it safe and manageable. An early research task of exploring a range of theoretical models from which to work (apart from Rees's steps and the action research model of Lewin), may be useful should time be available but the chosen models should allow early change if necessary.

The extent to which the success of an emancipatory model depends on skilled leadership and knowledge of community building and disability may limit, to some extent, the replicability of this type of research. Often researchers in the disability field will have a wide range of research skills and knowledge but limited understanding of group process and the particular issues faced in interpersonal dynamics by some groups of disabled people. A disabled person (as a researcher) is likely to have greater insight naturally into the experience of living with disability but as stated

previously, this identification does not guarantee an empowering process (Lather, 1986; Barnes, 1992; Bennie, 1996). If the researcher as group facilitator fails to appropriately approach group work, the experience may be a wounding one for the students concerned. They may also find they have either too much independence too soon or too little depending on the response of the facilitator. There are compromises which can be made as discussed above, which can achieve similar aims in different circumstances. The group at the end of a research project such as this may be convinced they cannot function without the researcher, as experienced by the Otago Family network (Ballard et al, 1992). A greater level of independence at that point is preferable but the researcher should be prepared to stay and facilitate a growth in confidence and a clear identity for the group. A postscript to this two years down the track, is that DARG Inc is now functioning as a training group with minimal input from myself. They are earning \$2,000 a session delivering training to staff and management at Victoria University and at other institutions around the country. There were times I doubted this could be achieved! So what are the implications for emancipatory research generally?

Looking to the Future: emancipatory research in the disability field

This section began by stating that research could only be justified if the objectives centered around concrete changes for all involved. It has been argued that the research process described has acted as a catalyst for personal and social change and the evidence is strong to support this conclusion. The change which occurs on a personal level is often invisible and the individual who has gained strength from new learning will undoubtedly impact positively on those around him or her. Revolutionary social change is not necessarily a dramatic event, it is happening on the ground on a daily basis achieved by ordinary committed people.

In view of the success of a group of students to accomplish change in their immediate environment what is the potential for such a model to facilitate social change for disabled people generally? As I look around me, I have a sense of excitement as the evidence is in fact overwhelming. Barnes has made a key point with regard to emancipatory research which he claims is:

About the systematic demystification of the structures and processes which create disability and the establishment of a workable dialogue between the research community and disabled people in order to facilitate the latter's empowerment (Barnes, 1992:122).

For my part, I have had to balance consistently my role as a researcher and the maintenance of a clear research agenda and one as a change agent which is facilitated by an action oriented approach. I agree with Shakespeare (1996) that an academic exercise has limited value except to provide a climate where change may take place. Emancipatory action research implies both partnership in the research process and praxis where concrete change occurs. I would further argue that a path has been laid and some real steps have been taken.

In the context of the University, those in power responded and change was able to occur and as argued previously the work of DARG represented a microcosm of what could be achieved in society. There have been committed allies inside and outside the research field who have been fighting for change for several years. Gradually disabled people are joining this fight to form a powerful alliance. It must be acknowledged that although I have critiqued the way research has been conducted in the disability field, I am forever grateful to those who have chipped away to endeavour to develop more participatory and emancipatory approaches, to give vulnerable people a voice and to have the courage to challenge a male-dominated system to give up some of its power.

I would argue that we, as researchers in the disability field have a responsibility to stay honest and accountable to each other as well as to the disability community. An emancipatory approach demands personal integrity which will ultimately hold up under any level of pressure due to the trust which it is necessary to build with those participating. Whether one identifies as disabled or nondisabled, it is important to reflect at all times on one's motives and the way power is being used. A check list of questions would appear to be a simplistic mechanism of reflexivity, but would in fact provide an essential baseline for researchers to work from. As I have said previously, a concrete outcome useable by other researchers may be the two sets of questions (Appendix One), which they can develop along with their research groups. The first would be for the use of the principal researcher and could be used as one accessible way to ensure self-reflexivity. The second is for group reflexivity in disability-focused enquiry. They are both designed to address the issues already raised in relation to the positive and negative aspects of emancipatory research. If any question cannot be answered by the researcher it is an indication that action may be required to ensure the process fully addresses the needs of all. If there is doubt about any question, It is hoped that reference to the methodology developed with DARG will help provide some answers. For example, if one does not know how the research participants feel about the practices of the principal researcher, this may indicate absence of a mechanism to monitor participant feedback. While the checklist deals with explicit issues arising within interpersonal relations, the absence of many of these elements are what contribute to disempowerment in research. I have presented these in Appendix One.

Conclusion

I would argue that there are a number of areas where I have indicated room for future research writing and development and my aim is to address some of these in the future. The most significant aspect of this work is the way a group of disabled people has assisted me in the development of a research process which contributed to our mutual empowerment. The success of the project may lie partially in the acknowledgement of the value of the experience of living with disability as well as a recognition of what people from a range of backgrounds can learn from and offer each other. From this we have made our mark in a tertiary education setting which has laid the foundations for change for years to come. If we had started with a concern for funding, a fear of failure or even with the belief, often expressed, that the difficulties involved in such a process were insurmountable, we

would not have passed the first hurdle. The students of DARG have gifted a piece of themselves to this research and the story of the research reflects some of the pain and joy involved in making that contribution. I hope that the experience I and the research group have shared will make a small contribution to future social change for other disabled people.

I will end with a pertinent quotation from Margaret Mead:

Never doubt that a small group of committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.

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APPENDIX ONE

A Check List For The Principal Researcher

- ▶ For whom am I conducting this research?
- ▶ What am I personally gaining from this process ?
- ▶ Have I defined what emancipatory means in relation to this research?
- ▶ How will this definition be evident in the research process - what opportunity have I provided to define, redefine and constantly monitor emancipatory practices?
- ▶ How am I involving the people who are central to the research question?
- ▶ Whose research question am I asking and whose priorities is it reflecting?
- ▶ Which priorities are mine alone and which are those identified by the research group?
- ▶ How do I know that the identified priorities are those of the research group? What means have I developed to monitor those priorities?
- ▶ Which participants have most difficulty in contributing to the process and what opportunity have I given them, and others who have least visibility to participate?
- ▶ How can I enable them to establish and review their priorities?
- ▶ What will happen to the research material? What have I done to respect ownership of the research? how and who will be responsible for writing up?
- ▶ How can I ensure the research report it is an accurate undistorted record?
- ▶ How reflexive is the process? What visible mechanisms have been designed and integrated through the process to ensure constant monitoring. Who has designed these mechanisms and how accessible are they to those participating?
- ▶ Have I changed in terms of my personal growth and learning as a result of my experience of the research?
- ▶ Have any changes I have made, impacted positively or negatively on participants?
- ▶ How am I in touch with the changes being made personally by all group members
- ▶ Am I able identify and respond to potential problems at an early stage - if not how can I ensure that I can be more "tuned in" to each participant?
- ▶ How do the people participating feel about my behaviour as a researcher?
- ▶ Have I made it clear that people can opt in and out as they wish?

There may be others which should be added, but this list can provide a framework for the development of a personal check list to be regularly reviewed by the person setting out on an emancipatory research project. I consider that a separate list of criteria should be used by the

principal researcher, as many of the central difficulties in conducting emancipatory research lie with the ability of the researcher to monitor his/her own behaviour and sense of integrity. It is easy to become very personally engaged with the process. To have a mechanism which evaluates quality of participation for all participants as well as the researcher is valuable for both parties.

The second list can be used more generally in assessing the extent to which a research project is emancipatory in the context of disability focussed inquiries:

Is the research emancipatory?

- Have empowerment criteria been defined and what are the mechanisms for monitoring this?
- Who benefits from the process?
- Who benefits from the outcome?
- How is the process reciprocal?
- How has information been shared and disseminated?
- Has a support network developed to complement the skills of group members and to facilitate partnership with nondisabled people ?
- Is there an established consultation process with the disability community?
- How is information acted on?
- How is the process to be monitored?
- Does every participant have equal access to the process and to information generated?
- Have people with different impairments including sensory impairments been accommodated?
- How have cultural needs been respected?
- Have research assistants been chosen by group participants?
- Has the group structure respected the cultural needs of participants in terms of agreed protocols?
- Has the process ensured that whanau and support people are welcome?
- How has the process been funded? Does this inhibit the principles and aims of the project?
- Who owns the research information?
- To whom is the facilitator accountable?
- Have people been able to opt in and out according to their circumstances and wishes?

This list is not exhaustive but again deals with some of the issues previously raised in relation to defining what emancipatory research should look like and provides some guiding principles.

APPENDIX TWO

Themes Developed By Students To Guide Stories

- ▶ **EARLY HISTORY:** (Where applicable) Goals and aspirations
- ▶ **STRUCTURAL BARRIERS:** Within educational settings. How does this compare with those we encounter in other areas of community and social integration.
- ▶ **PERSONAL EXPECTATIONS:** of educational system compared to other aspects of our lives. How do these compare with the reality?
- ▶ **EXPECTATIONS** of ourselves are as opposed to other people's expectations of us. This includes the difficulties others have of accepting that we can make our own decisions.
- ▶ **RESPONSES FROM OTHERS:** professionals, fellow students, teachers, in relation to us as people with disabilities.
- ▶ **PERCEPTIONS OF DISABILITY** The experience of either a visible or invisible disability. What are the particular problems we encounter?
- ▶ **SUPPORT NEEDS:** Identifying support needs for ourselves and difficulties in asking for and gaining appropriate support.
- ▶ **POSITIVE EXPERIENCES:** What particular things have helped and who has been helpful?
- ▶ **INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPORT STRUCTURES:** especially in relation to staff/tutors etc.
- ▶ **COMMUNITY SUPPORT:** an overview.
- ▶ **EXPERIENCE OF GENERAL STRUCTURES:** What has our individual experience been of these structures within tertiary education? this includes administrative structures.
- ▶ **FINANCE.** Experience of accessing different networks for information on resources/funds etc available. Links between finance and employment/achievement/different courses.
- ▶ **ASSESSMENT:** exams, barriers we have encountered.
- ▶ **PERSONAL SUPPORT NETWORKS:** Outside of training institution.
Individual support strategies.
Identifying and naming skills acquired as a result of having a disability.
- ▶ **RESISTING A RETURN TO POWERLESSNESS:** How do we recognize this and what do we do?
- ▶ **ASPIRATIONS FOR FUTURE EMPLOYMENT:** Career plans. What do we as people with disabilities need to think about?

- **ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT:** What particular training and support do we need to improve our access to employment?
- **EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES:** Our experiences of their support.
Consultants/screening training.
- **HOPES AND FEARS:** In relation to employment.
In relation to other aspects of our lives.

APPENDIX THREE

Philosophy Of The Disability Action Research Group

We are a group of undergraduate and postgraduate undergraduate and postgraduate students with disabilities involved in a piece of action research within the context of tertiary education. The research facilitator is undertaking this project as part of her PhD with Massey University. We come from a variety of institutions in Wellington including Victoria University and Wellington College of Education. Each member including the researcher identifies as having a disability. We aim to develop a research process which not only enhances our own learning and empowerment but ultimately that of other students with disabilities.

We are committed to working in partnership with nondisabled teaching and support staff as well as other students. In this way there will be a mutually beneficial education process taking place and the opportunity to improve access to tertiary education for all students with disabilities will ultimately be the outcome.

We have chosen to look at access in the widest sense. We seek to not only identify gaps as has previously been effectively done but to act to improve access generally. This is conceptualised particularly in response to the high failure rate of students with disabilities not only to gain access to higher education but within the assessment systems of a tertiary environment. We intend to look at the reasons for this failure and to attempt to improve the situation by recommending changes in our published findings.

The process of the research is as important as the outcome and the group is the core of a future support group for students with disabilities in Wellington. If any further information is required about the nature of the work we are doing please contact Pauline Boyles the research facilitator, Senior Lecturer at Wellington college of Education: Dept of Special Education.

Tel: 476 - 8699.

Any support or relevant information will be welcome.

APPENDIX FOUR

Policy On Liaison And Communication With People Outside The Research Group

The following policy statement was agreed by DARG members. Others can adapt this for their own use.

- ▶ **CLARITY IS IMPORTANT: WHO** we are; **WHAT** we are doing; **HOW** we are doing it and **WHY**. So be careful you are clear about this and have our philosophy at hand.
- ▶ **KEEP RECORDS OF EVERYTHING YOU DO**. Bring these to the group and report back. This will be recorded in our central log. Make your recordings as clear as possible to prevent the need for re-writing them as the logbook will be a loose leaf folder divided into months.
- ▶ **ENSURE AUTHORIZATION FROM THE GROUP** before making contact with anyone. If you are asked a question about an issue which is not directly your responsibility delay your response and bring it back to the group for clarification or ring Pauline and check it out if it is more urgent. Do not be pressured into answering.
- ▶ Invitations will be extended to people we have contact with within tertiary institutions to meetings to give information about ourselves and to gain information from them for our research. Remember the emphasis must be on partnership between disabled and non-disabled people.
- ▶ Everything we do is a collective responsibility, successes and mistakes, so group support is ensured if anything goes wrong.
- ▶ This policy will be evaluated and renewed on a regular basis.

APPENDIX FIVE

Submission For University Committee

Sixteen Victoria University staff members participated in disability equity training 23rd -24th August 1995 facilitated by the Disability Action Research Group.

The staff who took part in the training expressed concern that the constructive work they did in identifying issues at the University should be brought to the attention of the University administration. The following report gives details first of the main concerns in the experience of all who participated and secondly suggests some avenues for implementing change.

Issues Identified

Themes:

Equity

- D
 The first issue to be identified was the need for greater awareness of equity and its definition in a general sense as well as greater understanding of disability as an equity issue. The discussion ranged from basic access to the University to the need for integration of disability theory into different curricula. People realised from seeing the extent of the wider implications of equity that an EEO officer at Victoria was essential. The role of the Disability Services Co-ordinator is obviously separate from this and we felt that while all equity issues need to be integrated - at an interim stage one person should be identified as a support for students with disabilities. There is the danger otherwise that disability will become further marginalised alongside other equity issues - disability, seen by some as being the poor relation.

Information Collection

- D
 The need for collation of information at an early stage in the enrolment process was to ensure approval of appropriate funding for access arrangements some of which can be costly.

Access

- D
 The need for an adequate sound system which also tapes sessions can give a whole range of people better access to the learning experience. Such facilities as hearing loops could be installed and linked to new and existing systems. (This is a loop which is fitted round the room and works in conjunction with a hearing aid).
- D
 The difficulties in setting up sound systems were discussed and the practicalities around sub titling videos etc. The various arguments for and against taping lectures were proffered.
- D
 The question was raised about how much should be the responsibility of the students to do the taping and would this be abused in some way. Many students irrespective of impairments choose to tape lectures - for students with impairments, however, taping may be the only access

they have to a lecture. It was pointed out if a lecture is taped it can benefit students who have missed for some other legitimate reason.

Suggestions for improving access were as follows:

- ▶ Lectures should be taped,
- ▶ Notes should be presented in bigger print,
- ▶ Rooms should be well ventilated,
- ▶ Special parking should be made more widely available,
- ▶ Information should be provided in course outlines about facilities available for students with disabilities.
- ▶ A reliable accessible shuttle services should be available across campus,
- ▶ More information in general about support services for disabled people should be made available across campus,
- ▶ A system should be put in place to facilitate recognition of what is required to support students. Staff should be clear about who is responsible for meeting those needs.
- ▶ Information collation regarding students with impairments should be formalised and methods of ensuring information reaches the correct sources.
- ▶ Prevention of OOS was discussed as a serious issue and this is being addressed with regard to staff. The expertise of the occupational health nurse who has been key to addressing this could be drawn on to address the problem in the student population.
- ▶ A lumbar role could be fitted on every chair and computers adjusted to the correct height for each individual. Recognition of OOS and the potential cost of this problem in the general University population should be acknowledged.
- ▶ Students should be encouraged to bring problems to their lecturer at the beginning of the year: one of the ways would be via the introductory lecture and to introduce Ava (The Disability Support Co-ordinator) as an important key person.

Making Lectures/Courses More Accessible

- ▶ Lecture notes and the definition of what constitutes lecture notes were discussed since this was seen as an access issue for some students. The principle that any material made available on disc will benefit all students in some way and will certainly directly meet the needs of students with a variety of disabilities. Issues were raised such as: if overheads are always used suggest that these could be copied and substitute lecture notes. Such issues were considered such as converting such teaching media as slide shows into lecture notes and the fact that lecture notes often emanate from student discussion. In this sense the lecture can only be written up afterwards which is a great deal of work. One partial solution in this instance would be to tape discussion.

There was a fear expressed that the notes may be abused by people who do not attend and the concern around copyright. It was stressed that students with disabilities would need to have a specific understanding and agreement over how that material was used.

Adaptation of Material and Flexibility in Teaching Methods

- There was general acknowledgement that course structures could be disempowering. There is commitment on behalf of many lecturers to adapt course material but such problems as outside translators delaying return of material prevented staff from improving access to notes with the recognition that there is limited control over outside bodies. Ava identified that the Wellington Braille Society made material more immediately available than other service providers. Departments are spending more on assistant tutors while waiting for this material to counteract the deficiencies in outside services. This is obviously something which should be rectified.
- The question of confidentiality was raised in relation to sending out exam papers and the need for a system to protect information and be accountable for where papers go. The University needs some policy on this to prevent individuals being responsible for any problems which may arise.

Balancing Other Students Needs

- Discussion revolved around the importance of consulting with other (non-disabled) students and in so doing giving them responsibility for creating an enabling environment. This may counter any negative reactions to disability provision.
- Concerns were raised about students who presented themselves aggressively and who appear to have significant psychiatric problems. While staff wish to appear welcoming they worry that they do not have the skills to deal with the problem. It was suggested that staff having problems approach the University counsellor themselves to discuss strategies for dealing with these situations and to explore general issues of responsibility. Staff should only see themselves as part of a network responsible for all students. Some individuals are regularly being approached and this is an indication that they actually do have many skills. However further training being made available would partly facilitate identification of those skills as well as enhance them.
- Some staff described situations which had become frightening and out of control. It was stressed that prevention of this is key - once a situation has reached crisis point, safety is first and foremost. This is clearly the University's responsibility. There appears to be increasing incidents of people with psychiatric difficulties presenting problems because of inadequate support inside and outside the University.

Representatives of different staff groups looked at a range of different situations. The outcomes of discussions are recorded below:

Administrators

- The need for effective communication on both sides and that both people concerned are aware of the effect on the other.
- Protocol in dealing with student allowances to prevent unnecessary delay for student and tiring waiting around.
- The need for accurate and full information in accessible form about all aspects of administration.
- In the context of the discussion people with knowledge around exam procedures explained the system of grading in times of illness during exams and the need for a student who has impaired performance on examination day documented. Students with disabilities often have loss of preparation time and this is to be taken into consideration within the overall graded assessment which is a fairer system than the present one.

Technical Staff

This discussion was in response to a scenario where a disabled student with difficulties in fine motor co-ordination wished to undertake training. It is included as it raises a number of important points.

- The need for flexible teaching methods which directly address different disabilities since the traditional banking method of education is still employed in some instances.
- It is important to know the extent of the problem and to assess the danger to student involved and others in lab situations. Health and safety issues are paramount.
- Strategies for adapting equipment such as microscopes especially where a student cannot control hand or head movements such as projecting image on the wall.
- Setting up a “buddy system” in lab situation to encourage partnership between students.
- Students who are dependent on computers should always be encouraged to keep back up copies to avoid losing work and failing to meet deadlines.

Academic Staff

(In response to difficulties in note taking)

- Encouraging group research to share responsibility for note taking and accessing libraries.
- Dictating essay onto a word processor.
- Question about whether any extensions should be granted - suggestion that earlier setting of topics rather than granting extensions since students enter a vicious circle of allowing work to build up.
- Clear departmental policies on extensions and documentation involved - however use of discretion and flexibility to prevent repetitive explaining and duplicating medical certificates and information for different departments.

- ▶ Using the disability support person as a contact point to pass on information would prevent some difficulties here.
- ▶ Consult with student about what they see as alternatives and then look at ways to match solution with course requirements.

What follows is a summary of concrete suggestions made by the group:

Strategies for Action:

Issues were divided into three areas of responsibility: individual responsibility, team/departmental responsibility and University responsibility.

- ▶ Overall the need for appointment of an EEDO officer at Victoria would facilitate action.
- ▶ A contact person should be appointed within each department who students know they can go to if they have any problems. This could be a lecturer, a secretary, chairperson or any available member with appropriate expertise.
- ▶ The Vice-Chancellor should be approached with a report from this workshop. The first port of call would be the University committee which is convened by the disability support person which addresses the needs of students with disabilities.
- ▶ The contact person from each department clearly needs the support of the chairperson and the appropriate channels for gaining this support should be identified.
- ▶ A diary should be kept in the form of an newsletter or some other written form to report on exactly what each department is doing for students with disabilities. Information should be further provided within course outlines and other essential course documentation and communications.
- ▶ The contact person should build on the information in the supplementary kit to ensure easy access to help inside and outside the University. The kit provided should be shown to people by the contact person in each department and people should be encouraged to undertake the training.
- ▶ Contact persons names should be printed in departmental information and in student handbooks and the students with disabilities handbook. A notice board should be set up giving disability information and a photograph of the contact person would facilitate access especially for new students.
- ▶ For the year coming up information will be limited to course outlines and other material not yet prepared although supplementary information can be prepared once a support structure is in place.

- The concern was expressed that those who put themselves forward as contact people may open the floodgates to a large number of students requiring significant support. For this reason contact people need to be adequately equipped with knowledge of support networks and need to spend time explaining to other staff academic and non academic what the issues are and appropriate ways to deal with problems identified.

The issue of taping lectures needs to be seriously addressed. This is a complex issue and the following concerns were voiced:

- a) The difficulties in securing appropriate equipment.
- b) Difficulty in persuading lecturers to tape their lectures.
- c) The question of who picks up the tape and copies it.
- d) A clear policy on taping lectures needs to be written.
- e) What system should be put in place to ensure tapes are not abused?
- f) Should students be able to go to the audio visual centre and ask for a copy?
- g) The issue of copyright of material was discussed.

A working party would need to be convened to look at this which is at present before the academic board. The advantages of having access to taped lectures for disabled students outweigh the disadvantages and all students having difficulties may benefit from action in this area. This should in no way be a substitute for attending lectures it is only a way of ensuring maximum access to the learning experience.

If this was to be enforced University wide clear guidelines would certainly need to be in place.

- In terms of working in partnership with Ava it would be helpful if the course arrangements form was filled in by representatives in each department stating exactly what has been and is being done for students with disabilities. Much of the key things which work often go unnoticed and when a student leaves valuable information is lost.
- The outcomes and discussion from this training should be submitted in the form of a paper to ensure short and long term changes.

We recommend that a working party debates these recommendations further and that some of them can be acted on immediately. A follow up evaluation of the training is planned to enable staff participants to assess progress. Some staff who attended have volunteered their services as contact people in their department. Ava Gibson will support them with information and some co-ordination.

Report Prepared by Pauline Boyles

Contributors:

Disability action research group (DARG)

Ava Gibson

Staff participants of Disability Equity training 23 - 24 August 1995 VFW.

APPENDIX SIX

Participant Evaluation Of Disability Equity Training Workshop

The following is a summary of the evaluation of disability equity training workshop 23rd August 1995. Responses were received from all who participated.

A written evaluation was collected from all participants and there was no time for verbal evaluation. The key issues arising were as follows:

In response to the question *“How has this course improved your understanding of disability equity?”*

- ▶ all participants without exception agreed their knowledge about disability in general had been expanded;
- ▶ many expressed better understanding of the problems the University faces;
- ▶ some felt more confident in addressing the particular support needs of different students relative to their situation;
- ▶ the need for good two way communication was identified;
- ▶ greater knowledge of existing facilities at Victoria to support students.

We asked the question *“Do you feel this training would be helpful to other staff in your section?”*

- ▶ All said it would be helpful to at least one other staff member.
- ▶ It would be good to raise awareness.
- ▶ It would improve the quality of the service students receive.
- ▶ A shortened version of the course would be helpful since allocating a whole day may be difficult.
- ▶ While it will be difficult for everyone to attend participants were prepared to liaise and facilitate support for staff members in this area.
- ▶ Human resources could develop a better holistic understanding of the needs of students and respond to their needs as constructively as they do to those of staff.
- ▶ A whole range of education staff could benefit inside and outside the University. In response to the question *“Do you have comments on presentation of material?”*
- ▶ General comments included clear and well focussed, fairly well done, very good, excellent.
- ▶ It would be good to have more time available to work on strategies
- ▶ A suggestion for shorter time on group work.

- ▶ Group work was beneficial as was brainstorming - small group tasks need more clear explanation and a structure to stay on track.
- ▶ Page numbering would be helpful in the working kit.
- ▶ The presence of people with disabilities was particularly helpful.
- ▶ The practical exercises of day two were more helpful especially use of scenarios.
- ▶ Facilitators could be less intrusive and one person taking notes which another has to interpret was difficult.
- ▶ Clearer explanation of terminology at the beginning would help.

In response to the question *"How can we improve this training to more specifically meet your needs?"*, the following comments were offered:

- ▶ A longer time frame.
- ▶ More specific assistance and guidance in dealing with the needs of students with psychological problems.
- ▶ Practical information on specific problems
- ▶ Running the training more often since only after a few times would specific needs be truly met.
- ▶ Making time for more examples from people's specific areas of interest.
- ▶ To invite representative from University management to outline VFW policies.
- ▶ Making more time at the end to discuss specific strategies and things contact people can do.
- ▶ Respond more specifically to the needs of different groups by adapting the second part to look at practical strategies in peoples work areas.
- ▶ Develop the training to progress to practical strategies.

General Comments

- ▶ More precise details on facilities available for taping lectures, dictating essays, subtitling videos etc.
- ▶ It was good to have the opportunity to look at personal experience.
- ▶ The course has not only widened perspective on disability but has clarified other areas.
- ▶ A follow up is needed for all participants to report back on progress.
- ▶ The potential handout material in the kit will be useful and the resource kit giving definite information should be developed.
- ▶ It was an informative course which will be of great benefit in work area.

APPENDIX SEVEN

Task Set To Conduct Evaluation Of The Action Research Project

The following questions were evolved by DARG members with the support of the principal researcher. This occurred during the group process at the end of the action research.

- ▶ Go back to original research notes and think about both your own goal for the research as an individual and reflect on those goals identified by the group.

Reflect on:

- ▶ How far has DARG met its objectives?
- ▶ How has the group process evolved in relation to Rees's steps to empowerment?
- ▶ How has your own understanding of research changed?
- ▶ How has your own understanding of the theory of the social construction of disability developed and to what extent have we as a group challenged this theory through development of the research methodology and through the results of the action we chose to carry out?
- ▶ What has DARG achieved as a group?

Range of future activities:

- ▶ An action research group
- ▶ A consultant group - Staff and students for training package
- ▶ A training group
- ▶ An education group
- ▶ What does the group want Pauline's role to be?
- ▶ What is the role of other existing group members especially those leaving university?
- ▶ What is the future of the training kit and access of others to ongoing revision and evaluation of kit?
- ▶ How will this aspect operate (training kit)?
- ▶ Collecting our stories how and in what format?
- ▶ Reasons for drop out (two people have left).
- ▶ Jan's research project - feedback and link to DARG.
- ▶ *Pauline to give talk on methodology to enhance group knowledge on research and to enable group to deliver talks on methodology they have developed.*

The group needed to consider the following questions in strategic planning:

- ▶ Should the kit be adapted by us for the needs of individuals, printed and sold in bulk numbers?
- ▶ Should we simply sell the kit with a tutor handbook at a price and allow them to copy etc?
- ▶ Should we only deliver the training ourselves in which case that has implications for travelling to other areas etc which may not be practical.

What other roles should the group take on? for example as consultants who could deal with problems which arise over and above those involved with the disability support person. This role could go outside universities into other tertiary settings.

- ▶ Would it be appropriate to take the package into schools?

We asked for all to contribute their ideas for our direction including some proposals for practical management like:

- ▶ What do we charge?
- ▶ Who will deliver?
- ▶ What training do we require?

APPENDIX EIGHT

Paper on research process and methodology presented to DARG students six months post action research.

Explanatory Introduction of use of paper.

The following paper was presented in the form of a training package to the students of DARG six months post research evaluation. The need for a training session around the research process, for more clarity around the significance of the methodology, the role of critical theory and the part played by Rees and Fay in an overall understanding of the process was identified in evaluation by the students. I have critiqued the process of delivery of this kit in Chapter Nine and have stated that in retrospect the session should have been held earlier. In the three hour session, I presented an overview using the key points highlighted in the kit but there was not time to go through the material in detail. It was meant to be a record of the process they could keep and use in their own future research. It was spiral bound and backed for each student. The paper summarises the research process, takes extracts of the research diary, and attempts to define the research terms and the role of theory. It has been written as an interactive text referring to the roles the students have played including an analysis of my own role. During the research I had covered all of these points and they had been recorded in the research diary. This kit simply aimed to bring them together and clarify key points. The research diary itself is not contained in the appendix due to sheer volume of paper so this acts as a substitute (providing a summary of key points for the benefit of students), with a researcher commentary. In this way it has acted as a guide to a greater understanding of the diary account of the research process which is a vast document of which all have a copy. I have discussed in brief in Chapter Nine the student reaction to this paper as it is presented here as I prepared it for them. Please refer to Chapter Nine for more details on its role in the overall research framework. I will comment in a concluding paragraph on the value of this document as well as highlight some limitations.

(The sections in bold relate to the key points raised during the workshop and the following is written in the form of a lecture. I did however allow for interactive discussion and used visual aids. Diary extracts and student evaluations are presented in italics while other literature is cited in ordinary typeface).

THE DISABILITY ACTION RESEARCH GROUP

YOUR RESEARCH PROCESS:

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN EMANCIPATORY RESEARCH MODEL

PAULINE BOYLES

APRIL 1996

Glossary of Terms in the context of the DARG research.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION: The extent to which society's attitudes and practices impact on the experience of people with impairments.

SOCIAL CREATION: The extent to which systems and institutions with their policies and inflexible practices disable those who depend on them.

PRAXIS: A method of carrying out research which ensures theory is consistently translated into practice. In this case emancipatory theory has been consistently demonstrated in practice.

EMANCIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: In the context of disability, research which is designed and carried out by disabled people at the level of setting objectives, deciding on ways to meet those objectives and owning the outcomes.

OPERATIONALISATION: The way methods are implemented and plans are carried out in the research context.

METHODOLOGY: The theory which underpins the research design and which guides the overall plan and implementation of the research..

EPISTEMOLOGY: Reflects ownership of knowledge - in the context of disability the epistemological base lies with the stories of research participants - their knowledge and experience has informed the research process.

POSITIVISM: is based on the scientific research tradition where the researcher maintains their objectivity and claims to be value neutral. The techniques most often associated with positivism are quantitative although qualitative research can be interpreted in a positivist way.

INTERPRETIVISM: A later research tradition which focuses more on participants subjective experiences. The techniques most often associated with this are qualitative.

TRIANGULATION: This is where a number of methods are used to look at the same question. In positivist terms this is to ensure trustworthiness of data. This method can be used positively to make the research process more accessible for participants.

CATALYTIC VALIDITY: The extent to which the research is literally a catalyst for change. Emancipatory research most often aims at this category of validity since it is always designed to accomplish change at an individual and social level.

FACE VALIDITY: This is where individuals involved in the research provide corrective feedback to each other -in the group context this is the ongoing evaluation of what is happening internally.

CONSTRUCT VALIDITY: This concept (in the context of disability research) is based on the development of research based on the social construction and social creation of disability. Where the research process provides space to evaluate and re-evaluate outcomes based on these theories ensures consistency in theory building and clarification of themes in the light of these fundamental theories.

DIALECTICAL THEORY: The research process is built on the premise of theory building based on an interactive approach where all share insights and experiences from which to analyse data.

RESEARCH PARADIGM: This is a model, a way of presenting the research for example an emancipatory research paradigm is a model which is developed by and for participants.

ACTION RESEARCH: Is research which is always applied in practice, actions a particular theory and always aims to achieve tangible social change.

CRITICAL THEORY: A comprehensive way of building a theory or picture of the world based on a range of different theories relating to human activity (Fay, 1987).

RECIPROCITY: The process by which the researcher and the person participating gain equally from the procedure. This is key to feminist research.

REFLEXIVITY: The mechanism by which the research process is evaluated and by which the researcher is forced by the structure to evaluate and self evaluate regularly. The self evaluation is known as **self-reflexivity**. This prevents or reduces the possibility of the imposition of the researcher's ideals and ideological positioning and the resultant manipulation the research outcome.

The Work Of Darg: Defining And Naming The Research Process

PART ONE

Research and disability

During this research we have consistently named what we have done and you have had access to some of the literature on which the research has been built. However it is clear from the evaluation process that some of the terms have been too difficult and that some clarification is needed to achieve a greater understanding of the methodology. The following section looks first at precisely what we

did followed by some definition of emancipatory research and its role in achieving change for disabled people.

A summary of what we did:

We engaged in a process known as emancipatory action research. This means by our actions we have challenged more traditional approaches to doing research where the researcher begins with a problem identified by him/herself (or some funding body) and then sets out to prove or disprove it. We as participants decided on the research agenda, acted as co-researchers in the process and remained involved in all aspects of the unfolding research plan.

We in short designed the methodology, decided on the methods and techniques, collectively engaged in data collection, allocated roles in action research and jointly evaluated the project.

Our thematic concern became the access on all levels at the University and this identification is key to action research. There are four aspects to the cycle (Action research cycle supplied in original document in diagrammatic form) forming a spiral of cycles (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1988).

The steps we took can be summarised as follows:

- ▶ Developed a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening.
- ▶ Acted to implement the plan.
- ▶ Observed the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs.
- ▶ We reflected on these effects as a basis for further planning, subsequent critically informed action and so on, through a succession of cycles.

As a final outcome of the research we are in the process of setting up a business. Now let us look at the rationale and the theory:

The role of emancipatory research in the disability field

I began with the above explanation to answer your immediate questions about what exactly we have done. It is equally important to understand the rationale and the theory and the rest of this paper will outline the explanatory framework and analyse in detail your process.

Increasingly researchers in the disability field are debating the ethics and principles behind the research process in relation to people with disabilities. What we achieved was to develop a model based on emancipatory participatory principles. This booklet will serve as a manual to explain the key terms, the role of student participants in the development of a methodology and a description of an unfolding process. Included will be a brief literature review to encourage further reading and to ensure that any research you develop in the future will draw on a tried and tested theoretical foundation.

The research we have undertaken has aimed to be emancipatory. The definition below is just one definition which can be a measure for you against which you can assess retrospectively the process undertaken by DARG.

Emancipatory research

Research is like embarking on a voyage of discovery. As the voyage takes place, the researcher maps or charts the process of exploration.... the rules you choose will both limit and enable you to do your research (Mc Kenna & Kirby, 1989: 43).

The above quote sums up quite well what is involved in setting out on emancipatory action research and you will see as you reflect on the process how the methodology we have developed fits with this analogy. Ward & Flynn (1994) provide a theoretical explanation of an emancipatory research model in the following manner:

One which places people with disabilities and their concerns central stage at every point in a research process aimed at facilitating empowerment (Ward and Flynn, 1994:31).

To link this therefore to the first definition, disabled people decide which region they wish to explore, they draw the maps identifying the most accessible route and they define the terms on which the journey is undertaken. Non - disabled people play a necessary support role in assisting the researchers on their journey, contributing their own research knowledge, creating accessible routes where none previously existed and thereby empowering disabled people to meet their research objectives.

The model which has been developed contains many aspects of traditional action research based on collaborative principles where:

The people studied **make decisions** about the study format and data analysis. This model is designed to create social and individual change by altering the role relations of people involved in the process (Reinharz, 1992: 181).

The aim is for the model to provide a framework for more positive participatory practices involving disabled people in the evaluation and development of services built around their needs.

The rationale for such a paradigm within the area of disability is well documented (Oliver, 1992, Morris, 1992; Zarb, 1992; Ward & Flynn, 1994). The practical problems involved in implementing this are highlighted especially in relation to funding and other aspects of involving disabled people in a research process. I wish to demonstrate how, on every level a piece of action research based on participatory, collaborative principles, takes the definition of emancipation to a degree of depth not

often seen as achievable by researchers. Action research is applied research undertaken by groups of people with shared concerns. It can be defined as follows:

Action research is a form of collective self - reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out. (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988:5).

Action research has been seen by feminists as a more valuable means of achieving social change than basic research (Reinharz, 1992: 178) and in feminist terms is not "a particular set of arrangements, but a process of continuous change" (Bologh, 1985 cited Reinharz, 1992: 178).

The project cultivates the themes of participation, partnership, consultation and transformation by validating the lives of individuals involved as well as by promoting political awareness of disability within a powerful institution. More importantly the catalytic validity "the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses and energises participants towards knowing reality in order to transform it" (Lather, 1986: 452) of the research in the concrete changes being undertaken. The success of this has depended solely on the motivation and ability of a group of students to empower themselves first and foremost, without waiting for permission or funding from powerful bodies. This has had the ultimate effect of inspiring support and the promise of funding from people in positions of power; it is expected to have far reaching implications for disabled people everywhere. However think what we could have achieved if we had been funded.

Disabled people who are traditionally excluded from and indeed exploited by the research process (Finkelstein, 1975; Morris, 1992; Oliver, 1992), are central to this praxis oriented approach. The legitimacy of the work derives from the richness of shared experiences and the role they play in educating participants themselves and outsiders about disability.

If research is not about change at every level it cannot qualify as emancipatory. Much existing research you find will provide information for interested parties but will not necessarily accomplish change. The uniqueness of emancipatory research is based on the fact that the very process brings about change at different levels.

All research is based on a theoretical framework which then underpins the whole methodology. So for example if we began with the theory that disability occurred at the level of the individual and change depended on fixing the individual the whole process would revolve around making personal changes only - a self help model, or alternatively an identification of some medical or psychological interventions.

I chose to present to you as a possible theoretical framework based on feminist theory and the social construction (the way disability is maintained through peoples attitudes and practices) and social

creation of disability (the way in which our systems create disabling inflexible policies). Combination of all three elements ensures development of an emancipatory framework since feminist research insists on reciprocity and starting off with the social construction ensures our perspective is focused on changing our environment. Traditionally research has been based on the medical model - an example of the effect of this on the research process is seen in Oliver's example: (see research questionnaire). Another example of a questionnaire based on the social construction can be found in Kate Lang's research, the results of which we published in the kit. The questions focused on the environment - I will return to Kate's research later.

The project has been based on bi-cultural principles, an important emphasis for a group of New Zealanders. The fact that two of you involved are Maori has ensured that the spirit of partnership promoted by the Treaty has become an important foundation on which our action research is based. Without them it would have been just theoretical. While disabled people see research can have "oppressive consequences" (Oliver, 1992 p. 8) Maori people have been similarly exposed to exploitative research processes. They criticise the research process as an exercise in control, generally carried out by non-Maori, which meets the needs of Pakeha and which particularly emphasises negative characteristics about Maori (Teariki & Spoonley, 1992). Research has compounded the grief associated with the loss of heritage which has deprived Maori people of the fundamental right to self definition. Any exploration of research paradigms must address this reality and this has become one of the central themes.

There is an increasing demand for consultative strategies in policy development particularly in this changing political climate. It would seem an appropriate time to provide the services with a road map for development of participatory practices where people whose experience is one of disability can define the terms of those partnerships. One of the ways this could be achieved is for disabled people to reclaim an area as powerful as research.

The title you chose for the kit has become the title of my thesis. A more common term is "Enabling partnership through participation" - Your title "Enabling Participation through partnership" underlines the emphasis we have placed on the fundamental philosophy of partnership and the resulting potential for participation. It seems fitting in the New Zealand context that an emancipatory project should emphasise partnership and then set out to demonstrate how that works in practice. boratively.

The Theoretical Framework

All research is based on a theoretical foundation which is drawn from literature. This gives the research its credibility. You have read extracts of Michael Oliver's work on the social construction of disability. I looked at a range of disability research projects done with a view to looking at the methodologies used. I also examined what literature there exists about research itself. There is a

growing body of people critiquing research - Maori people especially want research which is done by them.

In this part I will briefly describe the theoretical framework on which the research is based, define emancipatory research and clarify the underlying principles. The need for the development of new research paradigms has been well documented; disabled researchers such as Morris (1992) and Oliver (1990) are two writers who have called for an emancipatory approach to research. Writers through the years have analysed the value and importance of social research and although many different themes have emerged, there is general consensus that it has much to contribute to improving the quality of life for everyone in late capitalist society in its capacity to inform social policy (Oliver, 1990). Oliver attributes the failure to achieve change for people with disabilities to the "social relations of research production" where the research design serves only to emphasise the needs of the researchers or policy makers (Oliver, 1992:101). The development of a dialectical paradigm (a research model which emphasises dialogue, an interactive process and shared experiences) for research would resolve some of the problems encountered; this requires a synthesis of the old and new social science models of research and a recognition of the way different styles and traditions of social science research relate to one another (Heron, 1981). In other words we do not throw out the baby with the bath water - even quantitative methods have their place and it is good to value the positive elements of work already done. I will now briefly refer to the ones I consider relevant specifically to this discussion. Feminist writers in the last two decades have led the way in advocating research which provides the necessary formulae for outcomes relevant to the needs of all participants (Oakley, 1981; Mies, 1983). In addition, feminist research is premised on the oppression of women and is committed to changing it (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Roberts, 1981). These basic principles characteristic of feminist philosophy are central features of the emancipatory paradigm which will be described. The feminist approach to research has much to offer in terms of a non-exploitative relationship between researcher and researched based on in Oakley's terms: the principles of collaboration, co-operation and mutual respect (Oakley, 1981). Reference to the work of many feminists has been reflected in and has positively informed the underpinning philosophy and method and methodology of the research (Hooks, 1983; Graham, 1984; Reinhartz, 1992; Munford, 1995). I also acknowledge the work of Keith Ballard and the Otago family Network whose creative approach to methodology has significantly influenced my own work (Ballard et al, 1992). In my PHD thesis the writings and research of a number of social scientists will be critiqued in order to provide a broad framework for my chosen methodology and this will be available to the research group when completed.

Some writers in the disability field have incorporated similar principles in their call for a socio-political perspective on disability (Barton, 1988; Fulcher, 1989; Ballard, 1991). In this context the medical model of disability is attacked and the exclusion of people with disabilities from the 'official' and academic discourses concerning disability is highlighted. Disability has been a rich source of data

in the medical and research fields but one can see how scientific measurement has dominated. For example the many assessment systems which have been developed to “measure” the potential of disabled children. Furthermore the ecological models of research developed by writers such as Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Glossop (1988) are important to this discussion in their inclusion of both of the above mentioned perspectives. They claim that the complexity of inter-related systems if implemented within a dialectical paradigm would benefit disability research and better inform social policy. In other words research undertaken from a holistic perspective rather than looking at people in a limited context. Ballard claims this type of approach is resisted by the research community and cites its dismissal by Salzinger, Antrobus and Glick (1980) as “messy, time consuming and expensive” (Ballard, 1991:19). While researchers debate the relevance and value of different perspectives, marginalized groups such as disabled people, oppressed indigenous people and other ethnic minorities have increasingly identified the central importance of power and politics in their lives (Ballard, 1991). It is clear that if researchers valued and implemented the different perspectives in their work, they could direct resources they control towards emancipation through empowerment and partnership in action research.

Research as alienation

Many of the experiences I have had of medical research have alienated me. What some of you have described as well as others outside of this group, demonstrates a level of alienation as a direct result of non-participatory research processes. What you give in a research process is a gift to the researcher, is often an important part of yourself and it often contributes to someone’s prestigious degree. Researchers owe their participants some of that benefit.

The concept of alienation has been a feature of most social research (Oliver, 1992). Rowan argues that this occurs when individual experience is fragmented by putting a person into the role of ‘research subject’ and using their experience for the purpose only of fulfilling research objectives (Rowan, 1981 p 93). He asserts that: “the person’s actions do not belong to that individual, but to the researcher and the researcher’s plan” (ibid).

Heshushius refers to “alienated consciousness” (Heshushius, 1994 p.16), to reflect the traditional approach to research and the notion of subjectivity and objectivity which is characteristic of both positivist and interpretive models of research. She has described an approach known as “a participatory mode of consciousness” (Heshushius, 1994 p 15) where the focus is predominantly on people’s total involvement with one another including the relationship between researcher and participants. She states:

The recognition of kinship and therefore of ethics is at the core of a participatory mode of consciousness (Heshushius, 1994: 15).

This raises a considerable challenge to the research community but develops the analysis of eminent researchers within a range of disciplines whose methodologies can be described as participatory. These include the work of Patti Lather (1986) based in a feminist tradition, and Eisner and Peshkin (1990) who take a critical approach to educational research. The most recent piece of research carried out within a tertiary educational environment (McKay, Rowlands, Ballard et al, 1995) goes some way to using these concepts in their participatory approach to methodology and promises much for the future development of emancipatory paradigms in the disability field.

The examples of the alienation of people with disabilities from the design and implementation of expensive research projects indicate a crisis within the research community. For example much of the evaluation research undertaken by such agencies as Standards and Monitoring services is based on a medical model. While it uses triangulation (a range of methods to evaluate a service) this never involves consultation with the people who use the services. Research clearly ignores the important personal and political issues of oppression affecting disabled people. As Oliver asserts: "Disabled people have come to see research as a violation of their experience, as irrelevant to their needs and as failing to improve their material circumstances and quality of life" (Oliver, 1992:105). Other oppressed groups experience similar alienation (Finch, 1984; Bourne, 1981) which leads to the need for the examination of the wider research crisis and how this has developed historically.

The research tradition

It will be helpful here to define the shifts in research approaches over the years. Oliver's model demonstrates the way social science has developed and the way we are moving towards a more emancipatory framework for research. We could be described as being in a "postpositivist" era.

Disabled people have recognized the medical and individual ideologies underpinning this approach and have sought to demonstrate that disability cannot be abstracted from the social world which produces it. Research is a key to change and empowerment as it represents a legitimization of knowledge which is a source of power. People are defined as powerful in society, not only in societal resources, but as producers or participants in the creation of knowledge, "ways of knowing" themselves and the social structure within which they live" (Felske, 1990). People with disabilities have been excluded and even alienated from the research process to the extent that their needs and their very identity are defined by non disabled researchers. Social Science research has been dominated by the positivist paradigm. Positivism is difficult to define but there appears to be a consensus about the main elements of what constitutes mainstream empirical social science. Rosenman and Ruckdeschel define these elements as follows:

- (i) that scientific knowledge must be definable, measurable and testable;
- (ii) that there is a basic logical unity between natural and social sciences;
- (iii) that empirical knowledge must be separated from the pursuit of moral aims;

(iv) that the observer must be value neutral about what s/he is observing (1981:37).

The interpretive or qualitative paradigm has different fundamental principles:

- (i) that there can be no unity of method for the social world is a meaningful place, a world full of active subjects not passive objects;
- (ii) that research should attempt to understand the meanings of events, not their causes;
- (iii) and that research is a product of the values of researchers and cannot be independent of them (Oliver, 1990).

Researchers in the disability field are now struggling to employ more emancipatory methods in their research. Much of the more recent research has been based on an interpretive model in that peoples stories are now being used increasingly. A criticism by Zarb (a disabled researcher) is that they are then often interpreted in from a positivist perspective (Zarb, 1992). It will be useful at this point to refer to Kate Lang's analysis of her own research in order to demonstrate the difference between that model and the one we developed:

She says that she cannot claim that her research is emancipatory in the real sense because:

I had ultimate control over what is included in the report and what is not. There were opportunities for some students to critique the report, and they will have control over what happens to the research product, but this does not apply to all respondents to the survey. Furthermore the question of how the research has contributed to the empowerment of students can only really be answered by the students themselves (Lang, 1994:128).

It is important to understand this distinction since so many research projects you will witness contain elements of an emancipatory approach but to qualify as emancipatory it must contain all elements. This in no way negates the value of work such as Lang's and that of other researchers who have provided invaluable information and served to make visible a variety of experiences.

The challenge to those of us wishing to undertake research is to use our skills and expertise in a way which would create a situation which would enable people with disabilities to acknowledge and develop their own resources (Oliver, 1990).

There is however a gap in the literature in terms of truly emancipatory research directly involving disabled people in the process; furthermore if one refers to the active inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in the research process there is some difficulty in conceptualising how this would be possible. Our goal has been to prepare a path for such endeavours and show that where research is conducted by disabled people the bond which builds up between co-researchers is unique and productive. Equally important is the role of partnership in this context between disabled and non-disabled people.

The six emancipatory principles of the research are based on critical theory, fundamental feminist philosophy and the recommendations of Jenny Morris (1992) and Michael Oliver (1992) in their discourse on disability research. They can be summarised as follows:

1. The Role of Emancipatory Research in Personal Liberation.

Any research undertaken must be in response to the needs, wishes and experiences of disabled people. A forum must be created where all are partners in the research process and are jointly responsible for the identification of group priorities.

2. The Personal Experience of Disability

Emancipatory research must highlight the fundamental contradictions in the experience and understanding of disability. In the disability context particularly the concept of partnership is crucial in that reciprocity involves sharing skills, energy and varying abilities. Also the promise of biography is acknowledged. By relating their stories in the way that they wish, the daily lived experiences of disabled people become visible and the process of story telling is valid on a personal level.

3. Research as an Educational Experience and the Role of Non-disabled Researchers.

The research itself must be the basis for widespread education and the process will facilitate truly reciprocal partnerships between disabled people and non-disabled researchers. Research projects should highlight disability in the context of power dynamics which operate on several different levels: in personal relationships as well as through social, economic and political institutions.

4. Research by/for the Disability Community

It is essential that the personal experience of disability is made political and that research is used to accomplish this. The new paradigm for research in the context of disability must be social action based and funding for any undertaking must not in any way interfere with the concept of ownership or influence the aims and objectives of the research. The questions will be set by the disability community and will reflect the concerns and priorities of a cross-section of its members. They will become social action researchers and their research will accomplish concrete change based on the priorities identified.

5. Empowerment through Education Within the Research Process

Disabled people will have access to the necessary training to ensure:

- ▶ effective collaboration in the research process and their active development of new research paradigms as models of consultation.
- ▶ active participation in the establishment, monitoring and evaluation of services

- the ability to become effective advocates, managers and group facilitators.

6. Research as a Catalyst for Change and Partnership

Finally the research process should be defined and initiated by people with disabilities in partnership with non-disabled allies. It should be based on its commitment to the long term ideological struggle to transform social inequalities and thus enhance the quality of life for disabled people.

These principles have underpinned our process as you can see and should form the framework for any work undertaken in the disability field. The next section will link into Rees's steps and incorporate extracts from your diary and evaluation session.

PART TWO

Explaining the concept of praxis: Integrating the literature

Our work is described as "praxis-oriented" - in other words theory is taken into practical action in the research field and describes an ongoing process of theory and practice interlinked.

The purpose of this section will be threefold: I will link the literature base, which will facilitate understanding of the integration of critical theory into a dialogic research design; I will briefly describe the research context and I will demonstrate the unique way in which Rees' steps to empowerment have become a central framework within an emancipatory research methodology (Rees, 1991). Integral to this process will be a description of the changing research priorities identified by participants and the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of these priorities. Aspects of our own evaluations and analyses of the process will be woven through this to underline the collaborative nature of our work.

The research has been influenced by the work of Freire (1972) and subsequently Rees (1991) who has identified a plan in his work "Achieving Power" which translates the scheme of empowerment into social work practice. The project is based on action research principles similar to that of Otago Family Network where researchers worked "alongside parents and professionals on issues they, the participants identified as important" (Ballard et al, 1992: 22). The structure follows closely the methodology described by John Heron in his paper on experiential research methodology (1981) (see Appendix Four) methods advocated by other writers as emancipatory have been integrated within this structure. For example Opie in her research claims that where the researcher does not use rigid interview schedules the participants can be empowered in the following ways: firstly by taking part in the study they contribute significantly to the description and analysis of a social issue; in this context they lift the veil of invisibility from their everyday lives; secondly there was a built in therapeutic dimension to the process which Opie characterises as empowering in that participant have been able to reflect and re-evaluate their experience as part of the interview process; thirdly

the research has a politicizing effect in the incorporation of marginalized voices (Opie, 1992). Opie's work meets Reinharz's definition of participatory or collaborative research where the construct validity lies in the fact that the people studied made decisions about the format and data analysis (Reinharz, 1992: 181). Furthermore the work of Freire has significance in deciding on this format, in that in his research with adult populations in the Third World the researcher's role is clearly redefined as that of a catalyst in enabling research participant to formulate the problems, discuss solutions and interpret findings (Freire, 1972). The research ideally involves the participants in every aspect of the process (Rowan, 1981). The participants are co-researchers who: discuss research propositions and agree on basic phenomenal categories which apply and how to map them; agree on each person's individual skills and potential for change and growth including what can develop these capacities; what can encourage and restrict them and how they can achieve this; and finally they focus on what developmental procedures they can adopt. In other words we, as a research group have developed a research plan based on the range of issues we have identified and used our mutual skills to design a research methodology which accomplished change at an individual, group and social level.

My role as facilitator

In this type of research it has been essential to be very clear about my role. I am the principal researcher have at each phase acknowledged, evaluated and re evaluated my own ideological changes with reference to the research process using a variety of media. I recorded my reflections in full in the research diary which I made available to the whole group. By doing so I encouraged feedback on my performance as facilitator and ensured that I provided the opportunity for the group to challenge the record of the research process. This is to prevent theoretical imposition and textual appropriation which can contribute to disempowerment (Opie, 1992). In other words to prevent my own ideas, ideals and values being imposed on the group process, the recording of data and on individuals. As the facilitator I have explained that my aim is to develop a method of consultation which empowers and enables people to gain a greater degree of autonomy in their own lives and to clarify all that may entail. Reflection on what my role should be has required considerable negotiation with you and one of the key mechanisms for self reflexivity is the diary as described above. It has been made available to the group to maintain open dialogue about roles and changes occurring. It is often considered that fully participatory research requires handing over total responsibility for the work to the group and this has been attempted for short periods of time by many researchers. It is my assertion that to leave a group without a facilitator is totally counter productive. I have chosen to use Rees's framework as a foundation and to provide a structure. The group had the opportunity to discard this had you so wished. I will discuss in Part Two the initial problems groups can have in taking such responsibility and relate events which have occurred. However I will say that the facilitator must respond to the needs of the group and interpret sensitively the more invisible demands for structure. Growth can only occur if appropriate support

and structure are provided. Participants need space to explore their own skills, knowledge and expertise and to grow confident in taking responsibility and leadership. The challenge to the facilitator is to provide this structure without manipulating the situation in any way and to have the ability and even humility to fade out as the role loses its significance and importance. As a disabled person, the power differentials are removed in the context of life experience. However it would be unwise to deny the real power I possess as a senior lecturer in a higher education establishment. While denial in itself is potentially abusive, to use ones power and credibility constructively is a real asset to the research group. In the project chosen my own experience as a disabled student and a lecturer has been particularly pertinent and has served to illustrate a number of contradictions in the education system. For example as a worker in a disabling system I become part of the social construction of disability while being subject to that system myself. I have consistently used my personal and professional experience in the context of the group process to illustrate points, to educate where necessary and to participate in the research on the same terms as everyone else. At no time have I set myself apart from the rest of the group except that I have taken most of the responsibility for recording and sharing data, group reports and for passing on training skills. At an early stage in development of our project the sense of ownership was such that it had a life of its own and would have continued without me. As students you have been clear in your evaluation about what I personally have offered the group in the same way as you have given each other feedback about your mutual contributions. It is very important for the principal researcher to honestly solicit feedback on how the group feels about ones performance. I have also with the group's permission discussed my role with supervisors and other disabled people to monitor the extent to which emancipatory principles have been adhered to. Just a final word about my role and a summary of what that is from my perspective. This type of research exposes one as a person and inevitably I have become a friend and developed a unique and individual relationship with each group member. This has been reinforced by doing in depth individual interviews with each person which have also provided a mechanism for the identification of personal, practical, professional and academic problems being experienced. This relationship has been constructively used to explore such issues as funding sources for meeting individual needs, reflect on difficulties in writing essays and/or just to talk things over. I must say this has also worked both ways since the group has been particularly supportive to me personally. Research can be an intense time and life inevitably complicates that!

As I describe the research methodology unfolding within Rees's steps to empowerment I will identify the relationship of each stage to emancipatory theory reflecting the basis of dialectical theory building, a key feature of emancipatory methodology (Lather, 1986).

Background and Context for this Research

I have made available my own research proposal to explain the background to the approach I have taken. It seemed a logical move given my own experience as a student and as a lecturer t of

dialectical theory building, a key feature of emancipatory methodology (Lather, 1986). To explore the ground of the tertiary system as a possible focus for radical change - also universities and colleges are the keepers of research and to challenge this on their ground is powerful.

I will briefly discuss here the problems facing disabled students who wish to gain equal access to education. Considering the large and growing numbers of disabled people in society including children - it is not good policy to have a potential work force uneducated and forced into dependency. They are usually excluded from positions in key professions such as teaching, community work and social work. Within these environments particularly in the latter two they are traditionally the "clients". Not only does that mean true partnership cannot exist it fails to recognize and facilitate the contribution people with disabilities can make to our community and work force. It is essential therefore that students across a range of professional and academic disciplines should be empowered to have a voice to protect their own interests and those of others within the environment. There is a high failure rate among disabled, Maori and Pacific Island students and the reasons for this are complex. My research will address some of the more fundamental issues involved as well as clearly identify them for data collection purposes.

When I invited you to join my research you were introduced to the social theories of disability and you acknowledged the ways in which the social construction and creation of disability are evident in the education system (Oliver, 1990) reflecting societal concerns and priorities. In our initial discussions we examined what these concepts meant for us in practice. This was the first time some of you had the opportunity to name the theory in this way and translate it into reality for yourselves. I was determined not to pre-empt the outcomes or to take any part in setting the agenda for our action; handing over power and responsibility in this way raised fears and a level of confusion since we are more familiar with direction and lack of control. The ensuing vagueness is a potential obstacle in this type of research particularly if working within set time frames; however sensitive, supportive facilitation overcomes this and the outcome is a research agenda genuinely decided by the group. I as facilitator took responsibility for the structure by introduction of Rees' steps to empowerment (Rees, 1991) as a discussion tool and the process is subsequently described below. While the concept of steps is a helpful one in understanding different stages, it must be clarified that the process can in no way be a linear one if it is to be truly emancipatory. Each stage is integral to the next and in diagrammatic form would appear as a series of overlapping circles with interlinking feedback loops where the evaluation would be central to the model. This reflects the integral nature of the steps to empowerment and the challenge to participants to constantly critically reflect and evolve as individuals and as co-researchers.

The most useful way to now proceed is to explain the process loosely based on the steps to empowerment. Some extracts from the research diary are linked through to ensure you can see the way your voices have been incorporated - this includes parts of your research evaluation. If you

check back to your research diary you will see that this is simply a summary of what we have recorded.

Understanding Themes/ Evaluating Self Image And Knowledge

The research process has been evolutionary as is the identification of themes but I will show how the first two steps laid the foundations of our enterprise and allowed us to set initial objectives.

From the beginning the group took on the nature of a support group since everyone had equal time to begin to discuss their own experiences of the education system. This is in keeping with Rees's notion of themes as:

those aspects of biography which depict experiences of power and powerlessness, explained perhaps with reference to relationships of relative equality or those characterised by feelings of being dependent or controlled (Rees, 1991:90).

The amount of common ground was remarkable but the uniqueness of individual experiences also enriched the group. My own role at that time was to share my knowledge of research and to enable you to identify and share your own. I talked firstly about the importance of research in terms of ownership of knowledge including the importance of participants taking charge of and understanding the research process. I identified the analysis/action/reflection/evaluation cycle as a method we should use in order to maintain the "emancipatory" ideal of the process. It was important that students recognized at this early stage the value of the learning experience involved in living with a disability and the value of this to contribute to change in their own environment. The confidence and self respect which accompanies such realisation not only changes their own self image but also the perceptions others have of them. The diary records are as follows:

I began by facilitating discussion around Rees's steps to empowerment and identified the meanings of each step in terms of my own experience of disability in order to set the scene. In this way I entered the process completely and attempted to dismantle any power barriers reflecting a feminist approach. The steps became central to the group discussion. One person focused on "Acquiring and Using Language" (Rees, 1991:95) and its importance for our project. Extensive discussion ensued regarding the power of language including the necessity for us to monitor our own tendency to exclude each other as well as other people by our insensitive use of complex or alienating language.

Maintaining use of the steps as a discussion tool, the group entered into identification of the foundations of the experience of the social construction of disability and named different examples in terms of Rees' steps as they fitted with their own experience. We identified a range of themes: the disabling effects of the educational system; the advantages of solidarity but not to the exclusion of others; and the importance of identifying the difference between autonomy and segregation. (Diary entry, January, 1995)

Specifying Problems

People with long experiences of powerlessness are likely to have had their problems defined for them (Rees, 1991:92).

Typically researchers have defined the questions and therefore the problems for disabled people; this process has provided the forum for analysis of the problems encountered and the prioritisation of a range of issues which were summarised in the research diary as follows:

- D
The need for clarity around definitions of impairment and disability. Students wished to address the real concerns staff faced by acting in an advisory role and by facilitating an educational process around disability awareness.
- D
The need for in built mechanisms within the system such as disability contact people within departments to play a proactive role. It was clear that assessment procedures potentially discriminated against disabled people and would need to be tackled at individual and institutional level.
- D
The invisibility of the disability experience facilitates the exclusion of people from every aspect of University life. The research process could provide a mouthpiece whereby individuals could relate their own stories of the positive and negative aspects of the educational system. This would include details of the impact of inflexible procedures in course processes and assessment systems.
- D
The financial constraints preventing change should be addressed. Students acknowledged those difficulties and identified changes which placed no new demands on University finances. This included improved mutual accountability between lecturers and students with disabilities for negotiation of approaches to study. Greater accountability of the University was also required to educate and support lecturers in their understanding of disability as an equal educational opportunities issue.
- D
The need to explore whether staff have sufficient practical skills or knowledge of resources to support disabled students.
- D
We all agreed that the action research chosen should address all of these issues and that the group could form an educational consultative body. Clearly participation and partnership between students and lecturers remained a consistent theme and provided the foundation for the development of disability equity training which we unanimously agreed on as our central research focus. The group agreed that parallel to our group action we would begin the process of collating our stories which would be told in whatever way people chose. We plan to make them available as an anthology presented in a range of¹ creative ways in order to be accessible to all disabled people.
- D
The group at all times are defining and reviewing the methodology, methods and are addressing issues involved in data collection. They are aware of the need to regularly acknowledge their mutual skills and abilities since disabled people do tend to lack the confidence to do this for themselves. It is common for disabled people to measure their worth and ability according to the assessments of others since many have had a lifetime of attempting to live up to the expectations of parents, teachers, doctors and other significant people. This compliance to the wishes and views of others means that true identity and sense of self worth is

often denied. It is clear that the group process offers the opportunity for a reassessment of ones personal priorities and individuality while making a contribution to that process. The result has been rapid personal growth; it is clear also that the group has the potential to be a cohesive and powerful force in terms of achieving change within the education system. Dealing with previous negative experiences of research was also important in order to move on. As Christine stated:

Taking part in the action research group has been a powerful rewarding personal experience. This contrasts sharply with another research project I took part in several years ago which involved two interviews and then nothing. I felt deflated and deceived. This has not been my experience this time.

(Christine).

The challenge to the structures of the University and the attempt to achieve the writing and implementation of new criteria to empower disabled students in concrete terms, challenges the social creation of disability (Oliver, 1992). This means the commitment to change as a group not only on an attitudinal level but also at the level of institutional structures.

As we have gone along you have been learning about the technical aspects of the research and I as principal researcher have attempted to take responsibility for defining the language of critical theory, disability theory and research methodology. This paper will now serve to explain the process in full and you can use this as a reference for the future. Since all of you are or will be involved in other research projects, the knowledge on an academic level is invaluable while it demystifies the research process in which you have participated. You have been involved in critiquing and changing the methodology and methods as the project unfolded. This has been done by review of the group processes, sharing roles, identifying changes of course of action and constant evaluation of our actions. The very nature of action research implies change in its objective to achieve change at the level of the person, the problem and the method. As Reinharz describes in her demystification framework:

The very act of obtaining knowledge creates the potential for change because the paucity of research about certain groups accentuates and perpetuates their powerlessness (Reinharz, 1992:191).

Objectives have been formulated in your own terms and language. All the goals originally set were your own concerns derived from your experience as students in the tertiary sector. There is no doubt that the concept of ownership has been quickly taken on board and has been integrated into a formalised group philosophy. There has been no need for compromise so far in terms of construction of emancipatory methodology. We have proceeded from here to define and review action and methods. We as co-researchers have set our own questions and identified our own research agenda thus ensuring the validity of the results. Heron (1981) speaks of the "indeterminate validity" of research results based on questionnaires designed by researchers without consultation with participants.

At the early stage in the process only disabled people were involved but we planned on building on the partnership theme and gradually defining the nature of the relationship with our non-disabled allies. Of central importance however in emancipatory terms is the extent to which we as disabled researchers direct the process and the role of partnerships in enabling us to maintain a genuine leadership role.

To summarise the elements of emancipatory methodology: the research begins to act as a catalyst for cultural transformation where an educative process results from this mutually reciprocal relationship. The fundamental dialogic nature of this enterprise challenges the status quo and enables all involved to identify areas of oppression as well as the potential for change.

Developing Awareness of Policies

The predicament of powerless people is likely to be affected by social and economic policies and the professional services which are delegated the responsibility of implementing those policies (Rees, 1991 p.92).

At this stage in the process (and indeed this continues) clearly we have been developing new political awareness and an ability to specifically identify the disabling aspects of rigid educational policies and structures such as assessment procedures. It has been essential to acknowledge my own learning curve both in terms of the research process and personal changes as well as the complex University structures and policies. Having established the methodology and become familiar with the concept of dialectical theory building in relation to the specific themes, the focus for the action research has evolved. Clearly the range of problems we encounter as disabled students in a competitive environment stems from inflexibility of rules as well as the lack of understanding and resulting fears of both academic and non-academic staff. Our growing visibility challenges them to confront these issues in a practical way. It has been essential to work where possible through existing mechanisms in order to ensure access to appropriate channels and also accountability of existing systems to disabled people. Added to this it ensures use of existing funds and funding structures to avoid disability issues being seen as special, separate or an extra expense of low priority.

We have recognized the integral need for attitude change in conjunction with action on access and that disability equity training could be a tool in achieving this. For this reason we have developed a disability equity training package which will target lecturers and administrative staff initially and will be adaptable to a range of training needs. We as a group will share responsibility for this training and at the same time be trained to deliver a training package. In this way people will be building on their existing skills. We have named our group as the Disability action research group (DARG). A meeting of key University staff at an early stage formed the beginning of a disability equity working party which will monitor this as a long term project. We have since successfully implemented the first training course the report of which will be central to another paper. Our approach has inspired commitment and practical support from people who are in a position to achieve real change.

We are constantly evaluating our action, our group process and our priorities; to achieve this we are actively applying the developmental procedures laid out at the first stage using all corrective feedback loops," with ideas influencing actions and experience, with action and experience influencing ideas, both intra and interpersonally" (Heron, 1981: 157). In a concrete sense this means maintaining open dialogue with each other, monitoring the manageability of the project and equal sharing of responsibility which prevents the familiar burn out associated with disability action groups. It is important at this point to say that while everything we do energises us, our aims are realistic and we see concrete results, we can maintain momentum. One of the reasons groups of disabled people often hand over responsibility to non-disabled people and professionals, is lack of adequate co-operation, planning and mutual support. We are thus addressing this concern at every stage.(Diary entry: March, 1995).

Developing the Notion of Choice

Since disability is often seen as low priority people with disabilities and their allies must move from "the assumption that there is no alternative to accepting one's lot, to deliberation over what might be possible (Rees, 1991:93).

To achieve this the notion of choice has been created on a number of levels: the ability of each of us to challenge the system rather than simply be passive recipients of it; the right to ownership of knowledge and the ability to create choices for others by facilitating change through the training package. Most importantly the research process is serving to provide the choice to discover and reach ones maximum potential. This is partly being achieved, through the opportunity for practical and emotional support as well as training and personal /professional development. We are finding that some of the barriers identified are a result of the problems emanating from a lifetime of oppression such as low self esteem and consequent inability to speak on ones own behalf. This can be addressed by encouraging students to fully participate in the planned exercise and by ensuring they have whatever training they need to do this confidently. At an early stage the disability equity sub group attended a course design workshop alongside academic staff at Victoria. Within the group interaction itself during this training staff are acknowledging the extent to which the students are teaching them about addressing the needs of heterogenous groups. (Diary entry: March, 1995).

This aspect of emancipatory research includes a practical component; a similar process was documented by the Otago Family Network at a middle stage:

Practical action has been reflected in Network involvement in areas of information exchange, individual support and advocacy with parents, and in actions on policy and education, health and social welfare that impact on families and children with disabilities. Emancipatory action has occurred in many of these practical areas for individual parents who have gained knowledge and skills and been empowered to bring about changes in their own lives (Ballard et al, 1992: 231).

No similar work is documented in terms of action research by people with disabilities; much of the best research has been carried out involving caregivers. (Munford, 1989; Opie, 1991).

The incidental outcome of the process we are undergoing is heightened self esteem, a safe forum for self expression and true acceptance. Our daily experiences consistently inform the research agenda. While the group continues to identify priorities for action I, as facilitator, am constantly wary of ignoring important issues raised for different individuals which may not be group priority. This requires sensitivity to the needs of and changes occurring in all you. The open reciprocal relationship ensures this and I am careful to spend time with individuals as and when it is required whether that be as a researcher or a friend and colleague. I in this sense have been privileged to get close to so many unique people who have given me so much. In this sense though maybe I have gained more than anyone since other group members may not know each other quite as well. Your own evaluations confirmed for me that this process works: Lather asserts that the response of the participants is a major factor in proving validity of data (Lather, 1986). The true test of the emancipatory quality of the research is dependent on the ability of each person to freely and consistently express their feelings, concerns as well as to identify their own personal and intellectual growth. (Diary entry, March, 1995).

The research model not only stresses the participants' own voices, each person involved is both researcher and subject where each is a co-researcher a method given credibility by Heron (1981) and Rowan (1981). These models have been previously introduced and are referenced.

Experiencing Solidarity with Others

The support group which brings together people experiencing the same predicament can be a means of education because it reveals a common grievance and encourages a sharing of ways to respond to such problems (Rees, 1991:94).

During this process group solidarity has been growing and people have been building relationships. There is reciprocity built in as people are learning from each other including non disabled allies. Information sharing is a consistent theme as information is power and is often hard to access. (Diary entry: April, 1995).

This includes information on all levels. As Heron states:

Research is a way of exercising political power. Knowledge fuels power; it increases the efficacy of decision making. Knowledge about persons can fuel power **over** persons or fuel power **shared with** persons; and the moral principle of respect for persons is most fully honoured when power is shared not only in the application of knowledge about persons but also in the generation of such knowledge" (Heron, 1981:35).

The group diary demonstrates the way the group process has encouraged you to constantly clarify and re-evaluate your own role and what you aimed to gain from the process. You have each taken a specific role for example dissemination of information, acting on and informing others of

outcomes of meetings, facilitating contact between members and liaison with key people in the university.

Avenues of political action in terms of consultation and advocacy are now being focused on: for example we have held planning meetings with representatives of decision making bodies in the university. Disabled students are often excluded from traditional student political activities and as a way of increasing visibility some are now taking more active roles. (Diary entry: April, 1995).

The Otago Family Network also worked on this principle: they stated in their report:

Action research involves collaboration among all participants and a striving for shared understandings that may guide action. In this context information should be democratic - that is available to all.. it should not be necessary to have specialised knowledge to use information gained in family and community settings (Ballard et al, 1992:24).

In terms of solidarity the work of Maria Mies who stresses the importance of the collectivisation of women's experiences has significance. She asserts that women are equipped to work with other exploited groups and that the 'double consciousness' they have is a positive tool in emancipatory research (Mies, 1983). There is a clear parallel in our research where both researcher and research participants are bringing "their own experience of oppression and discrimination into the research process" (Mies, 1983 p. 121).

Acquiring and Using Language

A test of the value of acquiring and using new language lies in the evidence that the users are making connections between one context of power and another (Rees, 1991:95).

In contrast to other methods of conducting research where language is analysed from "the one-sided perspective of particular individuals" (Garbutcheon and Singh, 1988:16), the process ensures the recognition that human beings are social beings and that language, activities and social relationships are socially constructed" (ibid). In the educational context theoretically informed practice demands knowledge of the language of educational theories and policies as well as developing the ability to enter into dialogue with key people within the system.

We are all learning the importance of respecting as well as demystifying the language of the institution. Language is one powerful method of exclusion whether that be in a verbal², ideological or a cultural context. We are gaining the necessary respect through our own ability to analyse the problems and enter into dialogue with key players.

We have explored the current debate within the disability community around appropriate terminology including the powerful impact of and ownership of language. This process together with defining access on a physical and attitudinal level including education and employment for people with disabilities has helped

raise our political consciousness as individuals and as a group. I feel this is invaluable personally and politically. It facilitates our individual growth and ability to challenge the disabling factors in our lives as well as act in solidarity and pride with other people of like mind. At the same time we have acknowledged the richness of our varied experiences and the strength of these in conjunction with our commonalities.

The analysis of language is complex and goes beyond words - in this sense the whole methodology facilitates understanding of the language of experience, often one of lifelong disability, as well as a deeper connection to ones cultural roots.

I have felt that this has been particularly significant for Caryl and Buleau being Maori and Thai as the only Pacific Island students (even though he rarely was here, when he was he always had an impact). Their contribution to the training package has strengthened the theme of partnership. It is up to them to explore the extent this has brought them closer to their own heritage. (Diary entry: March, 1994).

Resisting a Return to Powerlessness

At some point in a process of growing stronger, some people may experience doubts about the action they have been taking (Rees, 1991: 96).

The following discussion was presented in diary reflections March, 1995:

Disabled people are not expected to break out of dependent mode but those in power often expect passivity even if they do not respect it. Powerlessness is a sad and degrading experience but it involves a security of a kind where life is predictable and centered around the decisions made by others. The feeling of being responsible for oneself and the uncertainty of change can produce feelings of vulnerability. Disabled people are traditionally cared for by others and the expectations can be low. Expectations have been raised by the process from the beginning and it is my role as the facilitator to ensure this is a challenging yet unthreatening experience. Positive action often provokes negativity and hostility from others. We have acknowledged the inherent dangers of this and we are providing mutual support accordingly. Creating opportunities to have dialogue ensures an analysis of events as well as a necessary level of objectivity and avoids the temptation to return to the more secure state of invisibility.

This theme raises the question about the role of the facilitator: Mc Taggart and Garbutcheon and Singh note that many action research projects have relied on a facilitator from outside to “empower” oppressed group members. The researchers involved with Otago Family Network raised concerns about dependence when it appeared at one stage that parents were reluctant to “take over” the Network project. However it transpired that given time and where the partnership role was clarified, the issue of dependence did not become a major concern (Ballard et al, 1992, p. 235). The co-operative nature of this process has ensured that the group take gradual responsibility for the facilitation role. It is acknowledged that a sudden transition would be harmful and indeed disempowering. The issue of false consciousness is a central theme raised by Fay and has been

discussed in the course of the research. It has been addressed in the recognition that there is an element of security inherent in the image society holds of disabled people which is internalised by them and requires:

abandoning self conceptions and the social practices they engender and support, things people cling to because they provide direction and meaning in their lives (Fay, 1987:98).

In the research process a safe environment has enabled people to engage in 'ideology critique' (an examination of their ideas and beliefs). Furthermore, "there is a dialectic between people's self understandings and researcher efforts to create a context which enables "a questioning of taken for granted beliefs and the authority that culture has over us" (Bowers,1984, quoted in Lather, 1986: 446).

The forum for conscientisation has been created (Freire, 1972) through a process of value analysis of theoretical and conceptual formulations.

Developing Interactive and Political Skills

Rees sees skill development in a social and community work context as an essential stage of empowerment. He emphasises

the value of workers seeing themselves as assertive, powerful and able to take risks (Rees, 1991:113).

This is in recognition of the disabling effects of some services on support workers and social workers. The research process has thus sought to provide similar opportunities for professional training and skill development.

As a result we as participants are developing essential political and interactive skills. For example we are all gaining confidence and expertise to liaise with chairpersons of departments, to represent other students in Equal Educational Opportunities negotiations with academic board, to contribute to the learning of academics in training; most importantly DARG has credibility and is achieving concrete results (Diary entry: May, 1995).

Evaluation

This section is presented in two parts. The first reflects participant evaluation and provides an introductory summary of group methods. The second more specifically clarifies and recapitulates the research techniques employed.

Rees refers to the importance of evaluation at the beginning middle and end of a research project as a kind of stretching exercise to "prepare the athlete and dancer" (Rees, 1991: 121) We have been working collaboratively, analysing the process, negotiating meanings, recycling descriptions. These

practices facilitate deeper probing of research issues. At the same time we have engaged in “a maximal approach to reciprocity” which has involved the group in “a collaborative effort to build empirically rooted theory” (Lather, 1986: 446)

Consistency in this method of evaluation has ensured the validity and quality of our work. The research process adhered to in this way stimulates the beginning of a theoretically guided extended plan of action (Fay, 1975). With this aim participants are keeping diaries, recording the processes and their own reflections on events. Extracts of your own evaluations enhance the validity of this theoretical approach. Malcolm speaks of the theme of partnership:

I saw a caption recently that said “Partnerships that Work”. It struck me how relevant this was to our disability equity training. There are many partnerships which do not work: relationships which break down; marriage partnerships where one party has domination and control over the other; partnerships where there is inequity. In fact these are not true partnerships at all.

What is so different about our training is that it practices what it preaches. It both talks about and models an equitable partnership between disabled people and non-disabled people. It demonstrates that having our support needs met on our terms, without extinguishing our choice and control, is not only an exciting challenge but entirely possible.

Who we are is O.K. We cannot change our impairments, but we can change the things which happen to disable us. And that is a process which involves all of us.

(Malcolm)

Other questions you have asked

How did we conduct data analysis? Naming the process.

The data analysis was carried out on an ongoing basis within the research diary and I will summarise here some of the key issues of importance:

We have ensured full participation by taping all meetings and making these available to all members including those absent. Extra effort has been made in co-ordinating action and facilitating dialogue with respect to the varying energy levels and access difficulties faced by disabled people in such an environment. We also have a central audit file where all records of action/communication are kept. These are being used to reflect on changes made, the progress achieved in meeting identified goals and recording developments. At each meeting, space is made for analysis and reflection around each stage of empowerment and the records reflect our findings. The aim of this is to present a model not only of successful emancipatory research but to provide a practical model of consultation. With a group this size democratic dialogue is possible³. Like the researchers of the Otago Family Network, what Grundy and Kemmis (1988) call “symmetrical dialogue” (329) is being employed;

this is where each participant has equal say in generating ideas and that decisions will be genuinely made by the group. Part of the evaluation process is a corrective feedback press where there is ongoing reflection on partnership, control and quality of dialogue. This approach is built on Lewin's concept of action research as proceeding in a spiral of steps "each of which is composed of planning, action and the evaluation of the result of the action" (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1988: 8). The "action - reflection-action" model (Ballard et al, 1992:229) is central to the methodological framework. The research is practical, collaborative and emancipatory; collaborative reviewing of problems facing participants is systematic within the framework of the group process. Through this interactive approach to research, the creation of emancipatory theory becomes possible; dialectical theory has been developed in an empowerment process which invites reciprocal reflexivity and critique. By rigorously adhering to this method, the danger of theoretical imposition and reification on behalf of the facilitator is lessened (Lather, 1986). I have attempted within this process to describe reciprocity in practice in terms of the reality of the research process for a group of disabled people. The evaluative process I have described has been adapted from the combination of recommendations of writers previously cited and can be summarised as follows:

- The design is based on interactive dialogic interviews requiring intermittent appropriate self disclosure on behalf of all participants including the facilitator.
- Regular evaluation meetings/interviews of both individuals and small groups facilitate the collaborative process and a deeper probing of research issues.
- Joint consultation to define and interpret data with an appointed working group who represent a sub sample through whom data is recycled. (The training programme itself was planned in a small working party of disabled students and their allies.) In this project I as facilitator have taken responsibility for maintaining a true emancipatory framework through ongoing collaboration with all research participants to build "empirically rooted theory" (Lather, 1986: 446).
- Reciprocity is ensured through ongoing discussion of the key issues for the participating group. I have identified the need for the researcher to create a safe context for the enhancement of the conscientisation process (Freire, 1972).

The following diary entry was made October, 1995:

Our findings suggest that the successful implementation of such training is paving the way for the building of staff and student networks who will ensure greater participation for all. The partnership between both disabled and non-disabled people as well as between staff and students is enhancing every aspect of the working and learning environment. We are already seeing evidence that the consultation processes we have modelled and subsequently exercised in our negotiations and in our training have positively impacted on the culture of the institution. This is reflected in their increased consultation with us in implementation of new policies and practices. The student services co-ordinator supporting our work has taken on board our

recommendations. The key message is that more empowering policies and practices which benefit a marginalised group such as disabled students, will achieve greater participation for all students, irrespective of their background or ability.

Coral's evaluation of the process reinforces this statement weaving through the partnership theme:

we can now pass on what we have learnt as a group with the same enthusiasm and dedication we have experienced to others; by doing so we will have opened another pathway of understanding and broken down some of the barriers that stand in our way (Coral).

Jan's evaluation would be appropriate to conclude this section:

DARG provided the opportunity to meet like minded yet different individuals. Many wonderful friendships have been formed. Believing in a purpose and having a common goal has helped bring us closer together. Working with a group of people with disabilities in partnership with University staff has been a real sharing of interests and talents. It has highlighted the true value of people working together in partnership to find solutions, to overcome the odds and to achieve something positive and worthwhile. No one person can hope to do it all alone, but together everything is possible.

Personally the supportive environment within DARG gave me the necessary inspiration, encouragement and motivation to pursue a research project within disability policy, practice and language issues of EEdO. This has become an integral part of my MA degree.

There has also been a ton of learning about myself about others, about life, about the nature of disability issues and about different multiple perspectives to all things. It has all been great (Jan).

Summary of methodological techniques

For the purposes of your future studies you have requested more concrete explanation of what we have done in terms of the methodology and the part you have played.

The thoroughness of the project evaluation and data analysis has been ensured by the blending of methodological techniques which can be described as multiple triangulation (Denzin, 1989). The complex process described involves: use of more than one method of data collection; multiple investigators (in this context co-researchers); the theoretical framework has been approached from a multi-dimensional perspective; finally "between-method" triangulation (Denzin, 1989, p 244) has ensured more than one methodological approach. The concept of validity in the context of emancipatory research is discussed in the next section. This complex approach to research is seen as a more reliable way to examine certain phenomena and has been chosen to ensure that research participants have the maximum opportunity to gain a voice through the research process as well as to achieve real social change. It is important to recognise that this has involved borrowing, as advised by Reason and Rowan (1981), some accepted traditional research methods including in part the

notion of validity. They caution praxis orientated researchers to revise and expand those concepts to develop in their terms “interactive, dialogic, logic” (Reason and Rowan, 1981: 240).

Your own observations offered during the group process have been recorded. The emerging themes have been shared with the research group combined with those categorised in the group research diary. Group meetings have been recorded from the beginning and transcripts prepared by myself as group facilitator which include my own reflection and evaluation. These are automatically circulated to all research group members. This has provided the opportunity for all participants to comment on emerging themes, the group process and the planned actions. Space has also been made at each meeting for co-researchers to comment critically on data summary, analysis and interpretation in order to establish how this has fitted with reality for them. This technique is known as “member checks” (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The main research diary has provided a central framework for data analysis and the opportunity for what our group named as the formation of a critical reflective community. This again resembles Lewin’s approach to action research by the establishment of “self-critical communities of people” who finally succeed in “emancipating themselves from the institutional and personal constraints which limit their power.” (Kemmis and Mc Taggart, 1988: 23). The diary has formed a vital corrective feedback mechanism since whoever writes up the research it “must be the fruitful discussion of all co-researchers” (Heron, 1981). The records of meetings, the outcome of discussion and training seminars, all letters and memos written as well as recorded dialogue with key University staff have provided the ongoing account. This has become a form of “audit trail” (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 28) similarly used by the Otago Family Network to check trustworthiness of data. Each participant has undertaken individually a form of final evaluation by completing a task agreed by the group to be shared in a process of critical reflection in the group context.

Other aspects of this validation of findings and material must include the two stage evaluation process of the training package by staff and students. The first evaluation measured the immediate effect on the perceptions and attitudes of staff in training as well as of facilitators. The second stage ensured measurement of the impact of the training on the University environment. In this way the construct and catalytic validity (Lather, 1986) have been addressed. Finally the emancipatory goal of the project has been furthered by the use of topical life history (Denzin, 1970:222) where students have told their stories of struggle with the education system. The material gathered will be eventually used to consolidate the positive outcome of the research, increase the visibility of disabled students and further validate the assertions made at the completion of the project.

Enabling Participation Through Partnership

Have we achieved this?

Kia Whakamara Puta Noa Whakatioa Tahi

Our evaluations explored the extent to which we have achieved this and your reflections have been recorded in the research diary. The above is the theme of our training package and it is fitting at this stage to return to this. There are many complex strands to the research project all with their own significance. I will briefly highlight these and comment on the extent to which each has been woven into the growing tapestry of the research. You can assess for yourselves the extent to which we have achieved our goals on reflection.

The first is the theme of emancipatory research, the development of research methodology and the synthesis of approaches. The student group has maintained ownership of the methodology and Rees' steps to empowerment have been the key to development of the methodology. I as principal facilitator consistently provided the structure for the process but the focus of the action research has at all times been defined by the group. The process in many ways is inextricable from the outcome and this is illustrated within the article. Both are equally important in the emancipatory process and together challenge the social construction of disability the theory upon which the research is constructed. By adhering to participatory principles and maintaining group ownership over the research the process qualifies as emancipatory.

The second strand is that of the precise method of meeting research objectives outlined in the section "Specifying Problems". The research is still in process and full evaluation has not yet occurred but evidence suggests that change has been achieved on a number of levels:

- A submission has been sent to the University committee from staff and student participants in training. Because of the source of the recommendations the findings have credibility and are being actioned.
- The training has been budgeted for 1996 and the training group has an established base fund.
- The student group is recognized as a consultative and educational body which will be called on to work alongside University staff.
- Staff contact persons have been appointed in each department.
- Assessment procedures are being reviewed and individually negotiated with disabled students.
- A working party is looking at methods of delivering lecture material including the issue of copywrite over taped lectures and lecture notes.

- Disability is being integrated into all aspects of University policy rather than being addressed as a separate and low priority issue.

The third strand of this process is the effect on the lives of individual participants (staff in training).

I will summarise some of what people have reported as follows:

- Rather than feeling drained by the amount of work undertaken all have identified feeling energised by the experience.
- We have all learnt about development of research methodology and have now found confidence to use this to constructively challenge the system.
- All have reported feeling empowered by the opportunity to tell their stories and make our experience visible and are finally benefiting from the concrete change the research has achieved.

I personally have been inspired by the commitment of the group to the research, the loyalty and consistency with which they have participated and I have learnt the true definition of participation through partnership.

We can now pass on what we have learnt as a group with the same enthusiasm and dedication we have experience to others; by doing so we will have opened another pathway of understanding and broken down some of the barriers which stand in our way (Coral).

The report of work in progress I have outlined is an example of reciprocity used not only as a means to empower people but to actively involve them in theory building in a disability context. The debriefing sessions where concepts and explanations are scrutinized by all facilitates theoretical exchange - "the collaborative theorizing at the heart of research which both advances emancipatory theory and empowers the researched" (Lather, 1986: 449).

Conclusion

In this paper I have described a working definition of emancipatory research where the theme of partnership and full participation has been central.

The steps to empowerment have provided a clear framework for a project which totally involves people with disabilities in the process. While the setting has been an educational environment there is no doubt that such principles could be constructively applied to other work settings with people with disabilities. The glossary of terms will help clear up any confusion as you come across research language either in the context of this process or any other aspect of your work. We as a group can now look to the future to ensure that what we have achieved will of lasting value for disabled people everywhere. I want to thank you all for being part of my research and for the richness of your friendship. I am truly privileged. I hope this paper will clarify for you everything we have done.

Kia Kaha

The following list incorporates some of the above references and provides others which you may find useful in your own research.

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A Concluding comment to Appendix Eight.

The two hour session was insufficient to cover all this information and I have offered follow up time and individual tutorial time to students who wish to pursue this type of approach to research within their own studies. The reference list represents what I consider the most accessible works to form a baseline explanation to the work they have achieved. The session did act as a kind of closure to the main research process and an opportunity for each person to reflect on their own academic development as opposed to their personal development which was the focus of the previous evaluation.

APPENDIX NINE

Consent And Information Forms



**MASSEY
UNIVERSITY**

Private Bag 11222
Palmerston North
New Zealand
Telephone 0-6-356 9090
Facsimile 0-6-350 5627

**FACULTY OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL POLICY
AND SOCIAL WORK**

INFORMATION SHEET:

RESEARCH TITLE:

ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE RESEARCH
PROCESS.

THE RESEARCHERS:

The principal researcher/facilitator is Pauline Boyles who is submitting a proposal for work for her PHD. However the nature of the research means that each participant has an active part in the research process itself and will in effect have the role of co-researcher along with other participants. In agreement with all participants a contact list will be made available so each member can be easily contacted at any time.

Pauline Boyles can be contacted at the following bases:

Wellington College of Education: department of Special Education.

Tel: 476-8699

or

9F Mako View

Titahi Bay.

Tel. 236 - 6505

You as participants must not hesitate to make contact with the principal researcher at any time if you need to.

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

The true nature of the study will be determined by the participants. The key themes are as follows:

a) active involvement of people with disabilities in decisions about nature, format and outcome of research. This is known as action research.

b) The ongoing development of equal opportunities for people with

disabilities in tertiary education and in the work force.

WHAT WILL PARTICIPANTS HAVE TO DO?

For the first three months you will be a member of research group and make decisions about the key themes to be explored. You will be supported to achieve your goals within the research process. Where possible the research activities may be used for the purposes of personal study goals. Research may take the form of a questionnaire, a written or taped interview, a request for a personal story or any other appropriate method. You will not be expected to do anything you do not wish to or do not feel able to. The project is intended to be productive and enjoyable for all participants.

HOW MUCH TIME WILL BE INVOLVED?

At first the only commitment will be to short monthly meetings. As time progresses further tasks may be identified but you will not be expected to spend time which will detract from your ability to study. The time and place set aside for individual interviews will be decided by yourself; you will also decide on: the format of the interview; the questions covered; whether a tape recorder will be used or other equipment; who you wish to conduct the interview.

WHAT CAN PARTICIPANTS EXPECT FROM THE RESEARCHER?

Participants can expect to be kept fully informed about the progress of the research and to have input into how the research is conducted as well as the outcome. The researcher must fully involve each participant in project decisions and be available to provide support of a practical or emotional nature as a result of issues arising from the research. If plans are changed at any stage you will be informed with good notice. The researcher must be prepared and available to discuss any aspect of the research which may be causing dissatisfaction.

IF YOU TAKE PART IN THE STUDY YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- * Refuse to answer any particular question and to withdraw from the study at any time.
- * Ask any further questions about the study that occur to you during your participation
- * Provide information on the understanding that it is completely confidential to the researchers. All information is collected anonymously and it will not be possible to identify you in any reports that are prepared from the study.
- * Be given access to a summary of findings from the study when it is concluded.



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**FACULTY OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

7574

DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL POLICY
AND SOCIAL WORK

CONSENT FORM

PROVISIONAL PROJECT TITLE:

INVOLVEMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN THE RESEARCH PROCESS
IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING:

I have read/or have had read to me the information sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researchers on the understanding that it is completely confidential.

I agree/do not agree to taping of interviews.

I wish to participate in this study under the conditions set out on the information sheet.

Signed: -----

Name: -----

Date: -----



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**FACULTY OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL POLICY
AND SOCIAL WORK

CONFIDENTIALITY DECLARATION FOR SUPPORT PEOPLE ASSISTING WITH
INTERVIEWS.

I agree that any information disclosed in my presence during this
interview will be entirely confidential.

Signed.....
In the Presence of.....
Dated.....

APPENDIX TEN

The Disability Equity Training Kit

ENABLING PARTICIPATION
THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

*KIA WHAKAMARA PUTA
NOA WHAKATIOA TAHI*

A
DISABILITY EQUITY
TRAINING KIT

The Disability Action Research Group (Inc)

ENABLING PARTICIPATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

*KIA WHAKAMARA
PUTA NOA
WHAKATIOA TAHI*

**A
DISABILITY EQUITY
TRAINING KIT**

DARG Inc

**A
DISABILITY EQUITY
TRAINING KIT**

by

**THE DISABILITY ACTION
RESEARCH GROUP
(DARG Inc)**

Supported by

THE EEO OFFICE
CO-ORDINATOR FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
STUDENT SERVICES

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
Te Whare Wananga o te Upoko o te Ika a Maui



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See your supplementary kit for more information

INTRODUCTION

This kit is based on the original kit *Absolutely Accessible Wellington* by Jan Perkins & Pauline Boyles, trainers at Wellington College of Education, and has been adapted by members of the Disability Action Research Group (DARG).

The kit is integral to the Disability Equity Training Programme and should be used only by those who have participated in this training.

About the Disability Action Research Group (Inc)

The Disability Action Research Group is now an incorporated society. It evolved from a research project undertaken by a group of tertiary students and education professionals. The research investigated aspects of access to tertiary education for students with disabilities. Each member of the group has identified as having a disability and is thus able to contribute their own informed and unique perspective.

Members of the Disability Action Research Group thank Jan Perkins for permission to use her original material and to acknowledge her contribution to this version.

We also wish to thank the following Victoria University of Wellington staff for their support in the development of the original material for this kit: Gill Boddy, Director, Student Services, Hilary Smith, EEO Officer, Dr Cedric Hall, University Teaching Development Centre, and Erina Harding, Manager, Human Resources Policy Development.

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ENABLING PARTICIPATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP/KIA WHAKAMARA PUTA NOA WHAKATIOA TAHI:
A disability equity training kit. ISBN 0-908957-08-4. 1995

THE DISABILITY OF LANGUAGE

MAINTAINING BARRIERS

We called them evil
 We called them a threat
 We called them idiots

And they were stoned
 And they were chained
 And we gave them pity

And they were still in chains

We called them handicapped
 We called them mental retardates
 We called them clients

And they were deficient
 And they were trained
 And they begged for services

A new chain

We called them disabled
 We called them challenged
 We called them by a label

Yet we were disabling
 And avoided our own
 And said "We have to call them
 something.
 Otherwise we won't know who we're
 talking about"

And we were right

We have to call them something.

We have to call them people, members of the community, sister and
 brother, mom and dad - friend.

We call "them" Human - And We are One

Don Roth
 December 1990

NZ Disabled 1992

CLEARING UP OUR LANGUAGE

TO SAY OR NOT TO SAY? THAT IS THE QUESTION

Disabled ~~physically challenged~~
~~wheelchair person~~
 ~~handicapped~~
 ~~differently abled~~
 people with disabilities hearing impaired
 crazy visually impaired
 deaf-mute
 disabled person
 spastic
~~deaf and dumb~~ Deaf
 people with intellectual impairment
~~retarded~~ blind
 mobility impaired ~~crippled~~
 people with psychiatric disabilities

DISABILITY EQUITY

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THIS?

- ☐ ***IT IS OK TO ACKNOWLEDGE
DIFFERENCE***
- ☐ ***EQUITY IS NOT ONLY ABOUT
ACKNOWLEDGING DIFFERENCE –
BUT ABOUT PROVIDING THE
RESOURCES AND SPACE FOR ITS
INCLUSION***
- ☐ ***EQUITY IS ABOUT REMOVING
BARRIERS***
- ☐ ***EQUITY IS ABOUT ACHIEVING
CHANGE***
- ☐ ***EQUITY IS ABOUT VALUING
DIFFERENCE!***
- ☐ ***EQUITY IS ABOUT PARTICIPATION
BY RIGHT!***

WHO WE ARE IS OK – WHAT HAPPENS TO US IS NOT

DEFINITIONS

IMPAIRMENT is a physical, intellectual, psychiatric or sensory loss or functional difference which often results in

DISABILITY ... “*isn’t* something that you have. It is something that happens when one group of people create barriers by designing the world only for their style of living”.

(From ‘Revolution’ in New Internationalist, July 1992)

SIMPLE RULES TO APPLY

- ☐ Speak of the person first, then the impairment.
- ☐ Emphasise abilities, not limitations.
- ☐ Do not label people as part of a category - don’t say “the disabled”.

PORTRAYAL ISSUES

PLEASE CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN REFERRING TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES . . .

1. Do you need to refer to the disability at all if it is not central to the context of a specific situation?
2. Does it sensationalise a disability to say “afflicted with”? Consider using, for example: “a person who has multiple sclerosis”, “a person who had polio”.
3. Do descriptions such as “unfortunate”, “pitiful”, “it’s such a shame” emotionalise a disability? Consider emphasising positive abilities such as “uses a wheelchair”, “walks with crutches”, “is partially-sighted” rather than “is confined to a wheelchair”, “is crippled”, “is partially blind”.
4. Does presenting disabled people who succeed as inherently ‘saintly’ or uniquely endowed with a special skill due to their impairment imply that they are “super-human”? Does this imply also that they have no other talents or special gifts?
5. Do people with disabilities have a disease? Are they ill? (Possibly, but not usually.) Therefore, except in a medical situation, should people with disabilities be referred to as “patients” or “cases”?

(Adapted from “We Can”: Taking the Dis out of Ability’
Resource book, Disabled Persons’ Assembly)

A BICULTURAL APPROACH

Kia whakamara puta noa whakatioa tahi

To enable education through participation

There are many similarities between biculturalism and disability equity in action. The blending of the two is part of the pattern that is woven by those who have a major role to play in the reaching of educational goals for people with disability.

Whatever your role in this tertiary institution, you have a part to play: by helping students with disabilities to feel comfortable and valued within the spirit of partnership which brings Maori and tauwiwi together. It should enhance the link between you and disabled students.

It is in the knowledge of who we are and through the exchange of mutual respect, that we will maintain our dignity. Despite the obstacles we face as disabled people, we can achieve.

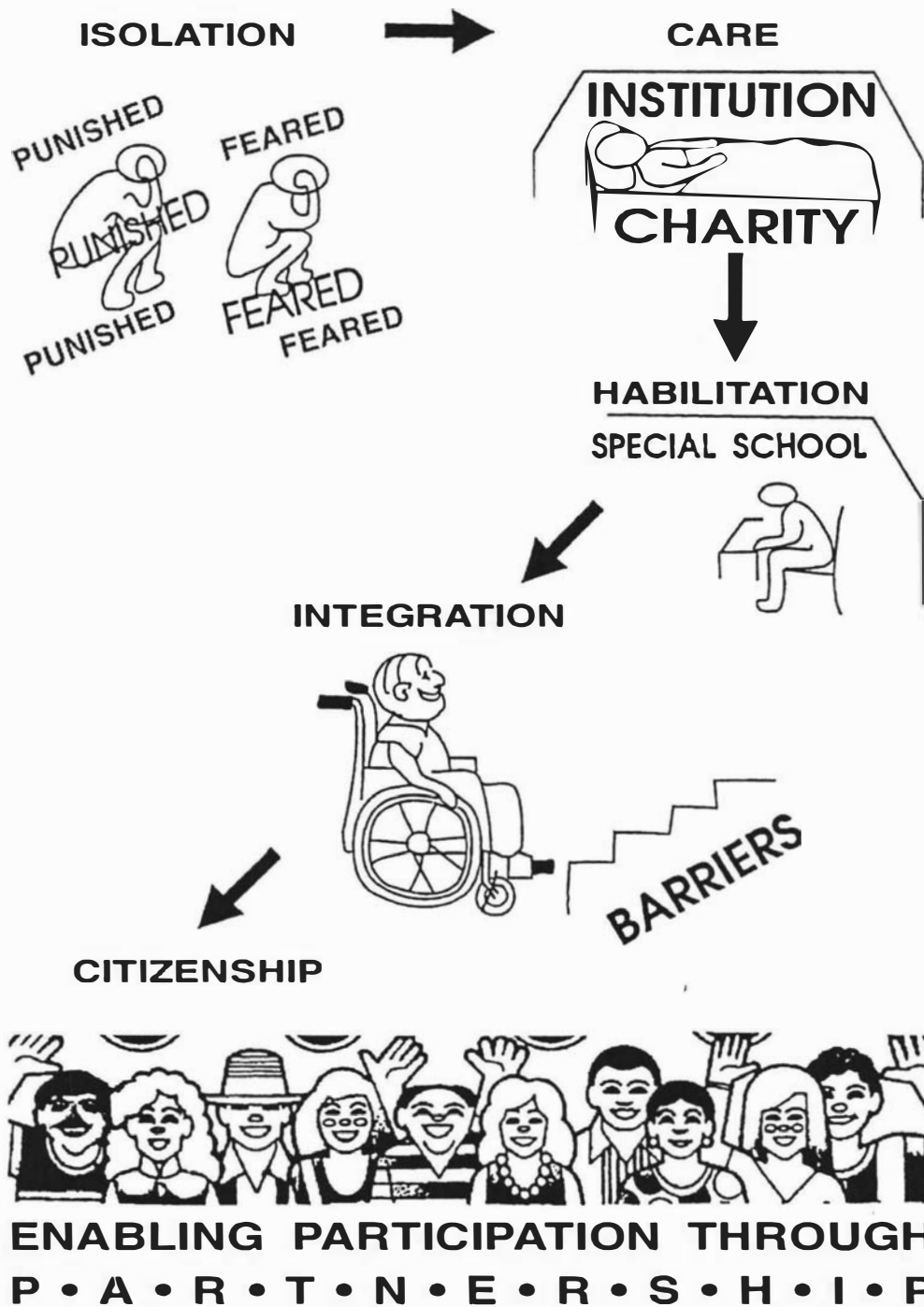
You can work in an enabling way, which reflects the partnership of Maori and tauwiwi. This partnership is what we are aiming to achieve in our work. We wish to express more than goodwill to each other. As it is with the blending of two cultures, so it should be between non-disabled and disabled people. The experience should be empowering and enabling for everyone concerned.

Nau te rourou naku te rourou

Ka ora ai te iwi

*With your basket and my basket we will ensure
the people will be well*

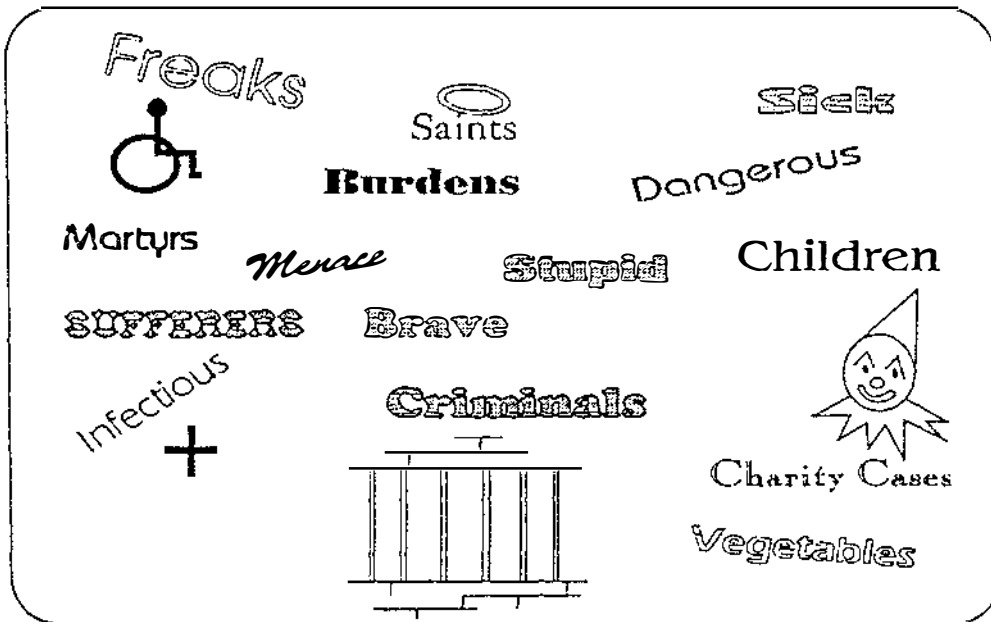
A DISABILITY HISTORY



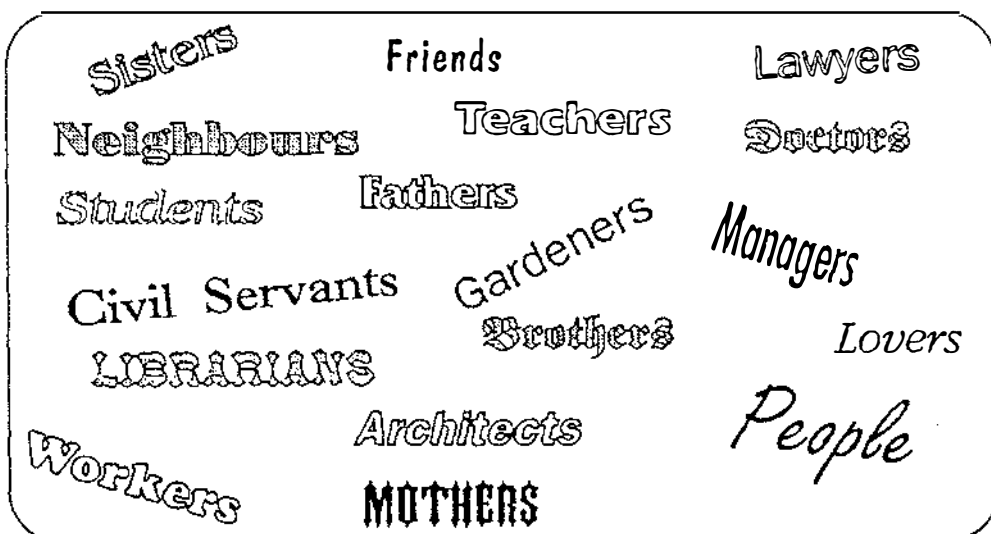


ENABLING PARTICIPATION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP © PAULINE BOYLES & THE DISABILITY ACTION RESEARCH GROUP

MYTHS: DISABLED PEOPLE ARE . . .



FACTS: DISABLED PEOPLE ARE . . .



WHY DO WE NEED EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES ... ?

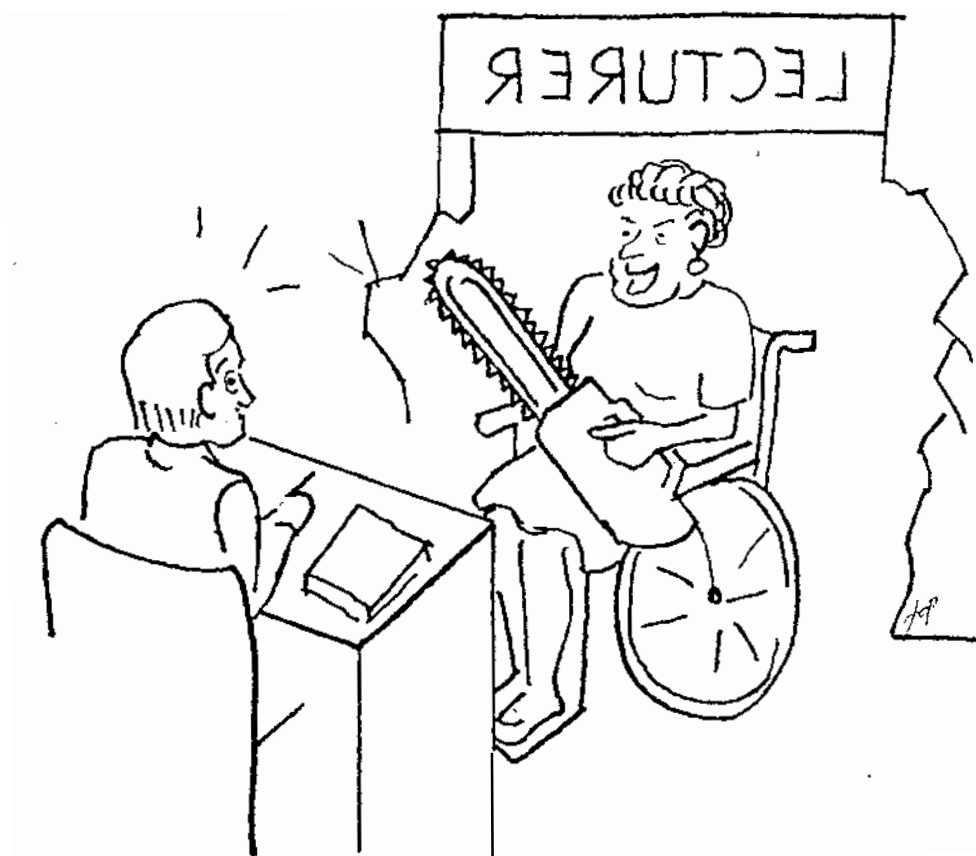
In any society there are minorities of people who are devalued for a variety of reasons.

Wealth, intelligence, physical beauty, physical strength and outstanding artistic ability are differences which are valued, whereas difference caused by impairment, poverty or ill health encourages rejection.

Within tertiary education the following groups are either under-represented or have difficulty in participating fully:

1. Maori people
2. Pacific Islands people
3. People who belong to a minority culture
4. Women
5. Mature students
6. Single parents
7. People with physical, psychiatric, sensory or intellectual impairments
8. Deaf people
9. People with specific learning disabilities
10. Lower socio-economic groups

A CASE OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION?



*"I MODIFIED YOUR ENTRANCE
SO I COULD GET TO YOUR OFFICE!"*

THE DISABLING EXPERIENCE: ITS MANY VOICES

Listen

*I said – “this is what I need to enable me to participate”
They thought they had to find out how
And they were scared
and did nothing*

*And I said—“this is what I need to participate”
They decided there was a better way
And they took over
And I was alienated.*

*I said – “this is what I need to enable me to participate”
And they thought I was ungrateful and demanding
They suggested counselling and support
And I was misunderstood*

*I said – “this is what I need to enable me to participate”
And they listened
We talked
And together it worked
– for partnership*

PEOPLE'S STORIES

When I was diagnosed with SLE (Systemic Lupus Erythematosus) it seemed that within a matter of months my life completely changed. I was going in and out of hospital, I was constantly in a great deal of pain. Looking back now, although it was a severe intense experience it made me think seriously about my life, my limitations and my achievements. I began to realise that I could change this situation - it was up to me. By changing my attitude towards SLE, turning it into something positive, I could get better and improve other people's perceptions of my situation.

I've spent my whole life trying to make what is invisible visible, and what is visible invisible. But, what really is going on is that my experience often remains invisible. This goes beyond the question of a visible versus an invisible impairment. People look at me and assume they know what my disability is or ask me to tell them what 'caused' it, so that they will know. But, it isn't like that. They can't know about the fight my Mum had to get me into school. They can't know what it is like to hear yourself described as a creep.

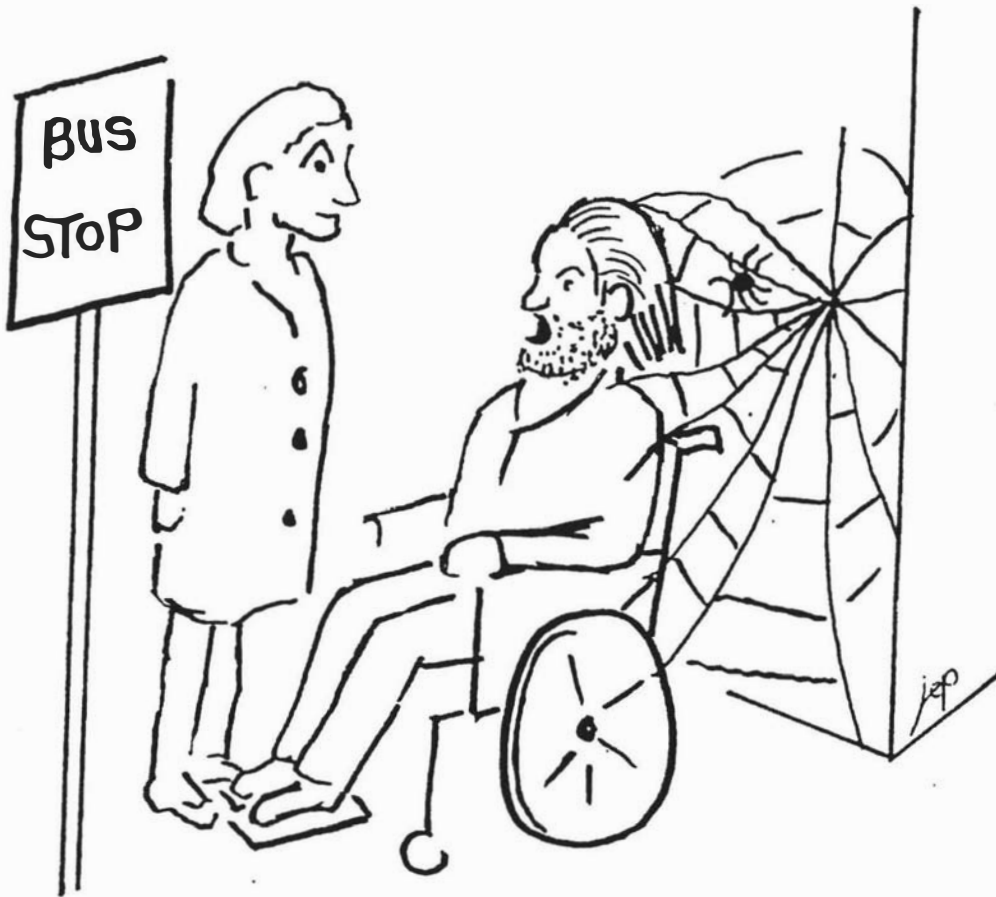
About three-quarters of the way through a full-year course I asked my lecturer, who knew I had lupus, if I could have an extension of time for an assignment due the following day. She asked me why, and I explained that, unexpectedly, I had to work extra hours at my part-time job. I was consequently feeling exhausted which had put me behind in my university work. She asked me how many extra hours I had worked and could I obtain a note from my employer verifying this. After explaining that it would be impossible to get the note that same day, she said I could have an extension of one day. I had hoped for an extension to the following Monday so that I could finish the opinion without further detriment to my health.

Her attitude left me stunned and too ashamed to explain further as I felt I would have to grovel. I completed the assignment on time by working through the night, but it took me some weeks to recover.

As an incomplete tetraplegic, my experience of disability is one of challenge. Once a friend jokingly said I was getting so fit I would be running marathons next. So I set about training to walk a half marathon. My biggest hurdle was not getting fit enough to do it but convincing my friends that I could do it safely. When they realised I was determined they supported me every step of the way. When I did finish it six months later it was with others who walked the 21 hours with me. Other people can, either help lift me up or chain me down!

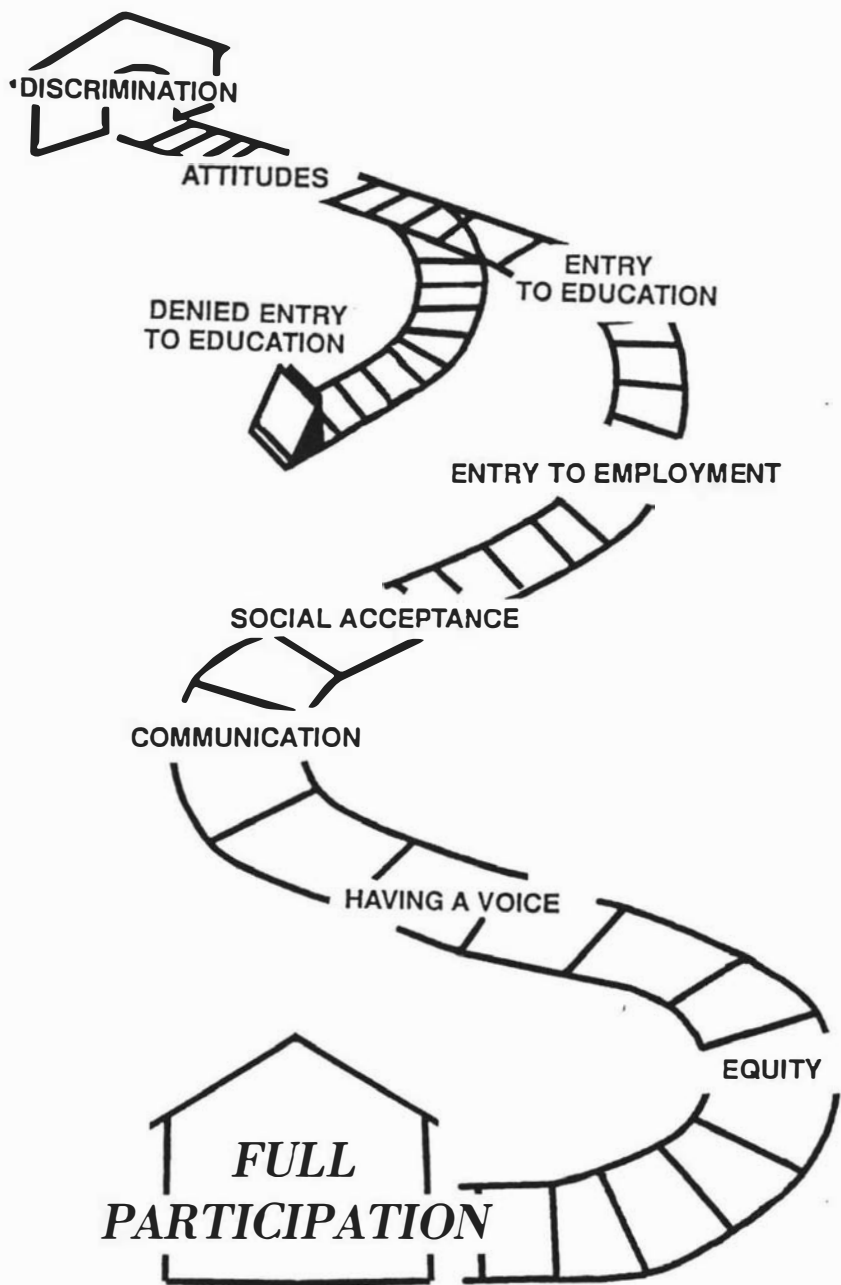
Although life was always a struggle, the barriers came not in my personal lifestyle - I had learnt to adapt to the physical limitation - the barriers came when I became a student. The physical limitation was one of moving around campus and the time it took for me to arrive at lectures and tutorials. I coped by spacing my lectures and tutorials with an hour between, and chose my subjects carefully to accommodate this problem.

GETTING THERE?



"I'M WAITING FOR AN ACCESSIBLE BUS"

ACCESS IS NOT JUST ABOUT BUILDINGS, IT'S ABOUT . . .



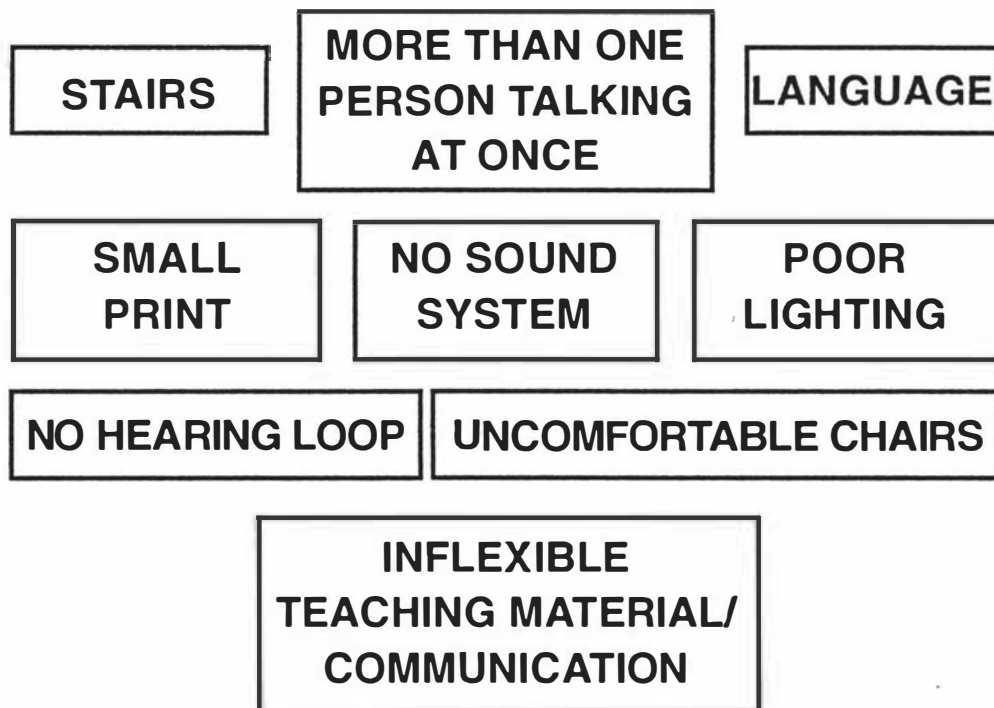
ACCESS

*ORGANISING A... LECTURE? ... SEMINAR?
... TUTORIAL? ... MEETING?*

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT . . .

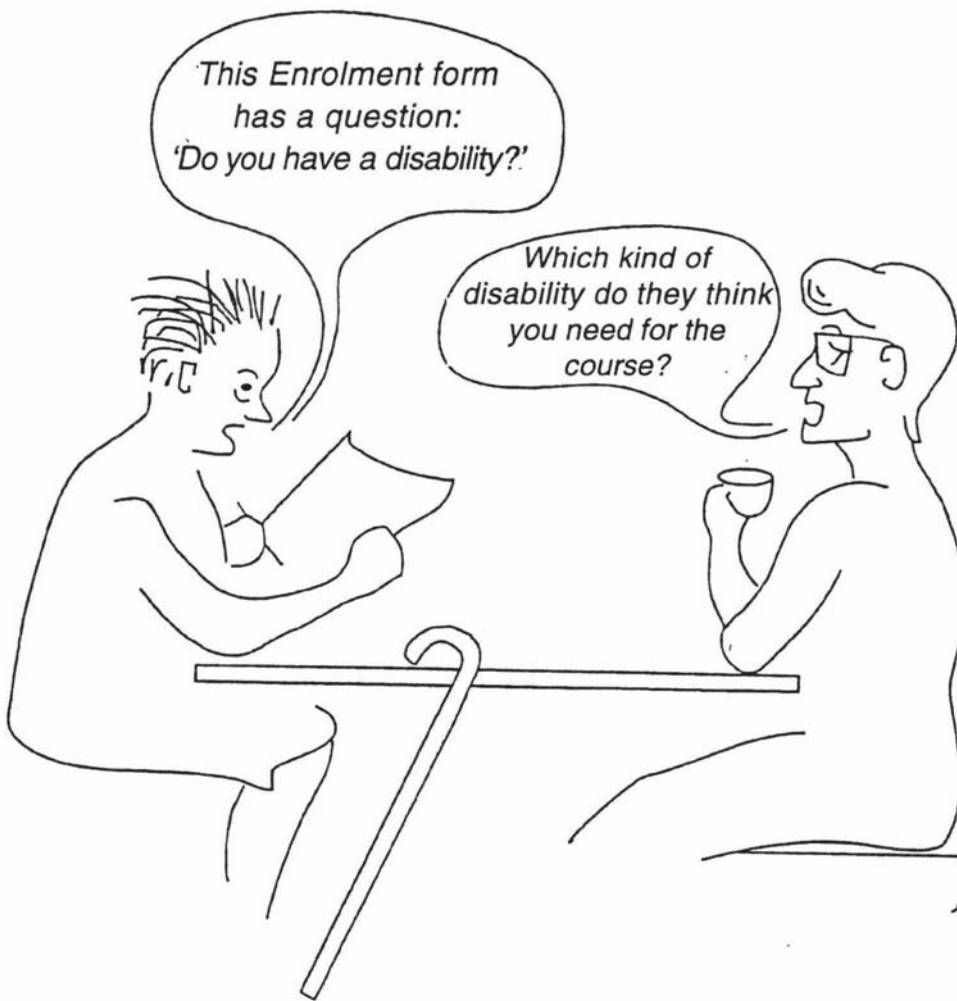
- ☐ Can everyone involved get into the venue?
- ☐ Can everyone participate?
- ☐ Can everyone understand what's going on?

SOME THINGS CAN CREATE BARRIERS:



YOU CAN ACHIEVE FULL PARTICIPATION

ENROLMENT



BARRIERS CHECKLIST

TICK IF YOU IDENTIFY A NEED FOR ACTION

DOORS

- ☐ WIDTH
- ☐ WEIGHT
- ☐ HANDLES
- ☐ COLOUR CONTRAST

LIFTS

- ☐ ACCESSIBLE CONTROL
- ☐ SIGHT & SOUND SIGNALS
- ☐ BRAILLE MARKERS

SIGNS

- ☐ INTERNATIONAL SYMBOLS
- ☐ SIZE
- ☐ GRAPHICS
- ☐ EFFECTIVE

TELEPHONE SYSTEM

- ☐ ACCESSIBLE
- ☐ TTY
- ☐ FAX

COMMUNICATION

- ☐ HEARING LOOPS
- ☐ INTERPRETERS
- ☐ INFORMATION SERVICE
- ☐ SUBTITLED VIDEOS

COMPUTERS

- ☐ ACCESSIBLE
- ☐ APPROPRIATELY POSITIONED
- ☐ ERGONOMIC KEYBOARDS

LIGHTING

- ☐ ADEQUATE
- ☐ APPROPRIATELY POSITIONED
- ☐ NO GLARE

FURNITURE

- ☐ FUNCTIONAL
- ☐ COMFORTABLE
- ☐ ADAPTABLE
- ☐ ERGONOMIC

FLOOR LAYOUT

- ☐ ACCESSIBLE
- ☐ FLEXIBLE

GROUND & FLOOR SURFACES

- ☐ FIRM
- ☐ STABLE
- ☐ NON-SLIP

AIR CONDITIONING

- ☐ ROOM TEMPERATURE
- ☐ AIR FLOW
- ☐ NOISE LEVEL

TOILETS

- ☐ ACCESSIBLE
- ☐ APPROPRIATELY POSITIONED

REFRESHMENT FACILITIES

- ☐ ACCESSIBLE
- ☐ FLEXIBLE
- ☐ MEETS DIETARY NEEDS

CAR PARKS

- ☐ DISABILITY PARKING
- ☐ ACCESSIBLE ROUTES

ADVERTISING JOBS

- ☐ EQUITABLE LANGUAGE

SELECTION PROCEDURES

- ☐ ACCESSIBLE
- ☐ FLEXIBLE

STAFF TRAINING

- ☐ ACCESSIBLE
- ☐ FLEXIBLE
- ☐ ADDRESSES EQUITY ISSUES

ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE

- ☐ FLEXIBLE
- ☐ RIGID

SOME VICTORIA STATISTICS

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES BY AGE & GENDER

Age	Male		Female		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Under 20	5	12	15	17	20	15
20-29	19	44	41	46	60	45
30-39	10	23	13	15	23	18
40+	9	21	20	22	29	22
Total	43	100	89	100	132	100

(from: Kate Lang 'We CAN DO it' Report, VUW, 1993)

DISABLING FACTORS IDENTIFIED BY STUDENTS

Area of difficulty	% of students with disabilities who have experienced problems in this area
Lectures/tutorials	71
Exams/assignments	69
Emotional/stress	63
Ability to study	60
Access	41
Financial	36
Staff/students	28
Health-related	28
Form-filling/enrolment	27
Support/assistance	19

(from: Kate Lang 'We CAN DO it' Report, VUW, 1993)

At Enrolment 1995, 155 students identified as having a disability, long-term injury, impairment or chronic medical condition. Many more have registered with the Co-ordinator for Students with Disabilities since.

PARTICIPATION AND ACHIEVEMENT OF STUDENTS

HOW WELL DO YOU MEET THE EEdO REQUIREMENTS?

- ☐ Is your course material clear, well-presented and produced in a variety of media?
- ☐ Are you flexible in your presentation?
- ☐ Are lecture notes available to students who might require them? Some impairments mean students are unable to take notes.
- ☐ Do you record your lectures?
- ☐ Have you identified alternative assessment procedures?

WHAT STEPS HAVE YOU TAKEN TO ENCOURAGE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES TO APPROACH YOU?

INTERACTION WITH A STUDENT WITH A DISABILITY

SOME POINTS TO CONSIDER

- ☐ Be matter-of-fact in asking the person if they have specific support needs.
- ☐ Be clear about what your expectations are.
- ☐ Don't assume you understand the person's impairment, even if you know someone with a similar condition – remember, every individual is unique.
- ☐ Don't focus on the person's impairment. Focus on the purpose of the discussion.
- ☐ Don't feel embarrassed or guilty if you have difficulty understanding the person. Don't **pretend** you have understood, ask the person to try again.
- ☐ If the student brings a support person, focus only on the student. The support person will contribute if necessary.
- ☐ Sit at the same level as the student. Ask if you can be heard clearly, or is it better to sit on one side rather than the other.
- ☐ If you are organising an appointment be sure to find out if any specific arrangements are needed, eg, an Interpreter.
- ☐ Allow extra time. Some people take longer to express themselves. Allow time to check back over points.

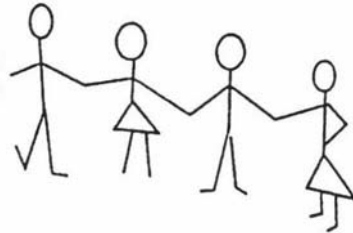
TOWARDS FULL PARTICIPATION

DISABILITY EQUITY IN ACTION

TOWARDS FULL PARTICIPATION – WHAT CAN YOU DO . . . ?

NETWORKING . . .

Access and use available support
methods and structures



Encourage Equal Educational
Opportunity networks within
the institution

Form a network of resource people:



SET UP A BULLETIN BOARD, TO . . .

Identify and discuss issues
Post information
Send out and receive news
Use your disability kit
Raise awareness
Celebrate progress
Display legislation requirements

GOOD THINGS ALREADY HAPPENING AT VICTORIA

- ☐ Appointment of a Co-ordinator for Students with Disabilities
- ☐ Enrolment options – fast-track and postal
- ☐ Orientation for students with disabilities
- ☐ Special examination arrangements
- ☐ Access Audit completed and a commitment to continue to improve access
- ☐ Sutherland Room
- ☐ Vic Volunteers
- ☐ Equity-in-Action card and poster
- ☐ *Students with Disabilities at Victoria – A handbook for staff*
- ☐ *Planning for University: Students with Disabilities*
- ☐ Alternative Assessment and Teaching Policy
- ☐ Increased budget for student support
- ☐ Student Services Subcommittee on Students with Disabilities – with representation from students, academic and general staff, and the community
- ☐ Support for CAN-DO
- ☐ Disabilities component in staff training
- ☐ Disability Equity Training

THE HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

People with disabilities are protected from discrimination in:

- ☐ Educational establishments
- ☐ Services for grants and loans
- ☐ Employment
- ☐ Business partnerships
- ☐ Vocational and qualification authorities
- ☐ Access to public places
- ☐ Provision of accommodation
- ☐ Provision of goods and services
- ☐ Services provided by any profession or trade

What does this mean for your department/faculty?

What are your obligations?

Do you know who your disability representative is?

***Information on the Human Rights Act is available from the
Human Rights Commission Infoline: 0-4-473 9981***

DISABLED PERSON'S COMMUNITY WELFARE ACT

THIS ACT COVERS:

- ☐ Assistance to voluntary and charitable organisations
- ☐ Vocational training for people with disabilities
- ☐ Financial assistance to approved agencies

HEALTH AND DISABILITIES SERVICES ACT 1992

THIS ACT COVERS:

- ☐ Grants for and provision of aids and appliances

**‘DISABILITY’ IS THE ONE
MINORITY GROUP ANYONE
CAN JOIN AT A MOMENT’S
NOTICE . . .**



DISABILITY INFORMATION

APPENDIX ELEVEN

Research meetings May 1994 - March 1996

First meeting	4/5/94
Second Meeting	20/7/94
Third Meeting	16/11/94
Fourth Meeting	7/12/94
Fifth Meeting	18/1/95
Sixth Meeting	12/4/95
Seventh Meeting	18/6/95
Exploratory Presentation to staff	28/4/95
Eighth Meeting	18/6/98
Training day for research group	28/6/95
Ninth Meeting	28/6/95
Tenth Meeting	19/7/95
Eleventh Meeting	3/8/95
Disability equity training programme: Victoria University staff.	23/8/95 and 24/8/95
Evaluation of training meeting (Research group)	6/9/95
Follow up staff meeting (post training evaluation)	11/10/95
Meeting with University administration representative	15/10/95
Research evaluation meeting one	4/10/95
Evaluation meeting two	7/12/95
Evaluation meeting three	22/2/96
The evolution of Darg Inc. begins	14/3/96

Both the research findings and the stories will be made accessible for example shortened simplified forms and talking books similar as suggested by Ramcharan and Grant (1994). Dissemination of research findings requires specific attention and would be central to another discussion.

None of the research participants is Deaf or hearing impaired and we are alerted to the importance of raising issues pertinent to a range of different people. As hearing people we can create the barriers.

Students are responsible for monitoring the equal participation of the group and share the facilitation role in the group process.