



WORKING PAPER SERIES

EMPOWERMENT AND EMPOWERING PROCESSES: A THEORY DEVELOPMENT SEMINAR SERIES

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**The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
at The University of Michigan**

THE PROGRAM ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives was established in January, 1986 by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and additional funds from the University of Michigan. These basic grants were renewed in July, 1988 and again in July, 1991. The Program supports an agenda of research, application, and theory development. PCMA also establishes links among other university research and teaching efforts relevant to conflict management alternatives, and maintains liaison and collaboration with similar efforts in other Universities and Practitioner agencies. The Program staffers own work focuses explicitly on the relationship between social justice and social conflict, specifically: (a) the use of innovative settlement procedures and roles for disputants and third parties; (b) the institutionalization of innovative mechanisms and the adoption of organizational and community structures that permanently alter the way conflicts are managed; and (c) the fundamental differences and inequalities between parties that often create conflict and threaten its stable resolution.

We examine these issues primarily in United States' settings, in conflicts arising within and between families, organizations and communities, and between different racial, gender, and economic constituencies. These specific efforts are supported by a variety of research and action grants/contracts with governmental agencies, foundations, and private and public organizations/agencies.

The Program in Conflict Management Alternatives is housed within the Center for Research on Social Organization, College of Literature, Science and the Arts, Room 4016 LS&A Building, Telephone: (313) 763-0472.

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**Empowerment and Empowering Processes:
A Theory Development Seminar Series
Academic year 1988-89**

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Empowerment and Empowering Processes
A Theory Development Seminar Series
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INTRODUCTION

The Program in Conflict Management Alternatives (PCMA) at the University of Michigan was established in June, 1986, by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and additional funding from the University of Michigan. Core faculty are drawn from the disciplines of Sociology, Public Health, Social Work, Law, Psychology, Education and Natural Resources. The Program supports an agenda of research, application, and theory development that focuses on the relationship between social justice and conflict. Particular attention is given to: 1) the fundamental differences and inequalities between parties that often create conflict and threaten its stable resolution; 2) the use of innovative settlement procedures and roles for disputants and first and third parties; and 3) the institutionalization of innovative mechanisms and the adoption of organizational and community

¹ *Our thanks to PCMA faculty and guests who participated in the 1988-89 seminar series and whose presentations and discussions form the basis of this working paper. Special thanks to Mark Chesler, Jim Crowfoot, Edie Lewis, David Schoem and Helen Weingarten for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper.*

structures that permanently alter the way conflicts are managed.

An annual seminar series is a central feature of the work carried out by members of the PCMA. Program faculty and outside speakers present case studies of actual dispute practice, research findings and conceptual models, providing a basis for theoretical and practice oriented discussions of social conflict and alternative forms of conflict management. In the 1987-88 academic year the focus of the seminar series was on the connections between social justice, social structure, and conflict. In 1988-89, the seminars further examined the processes of empowering individuals, organizations, and communities to overcome fundamental inequalities or differences between parties. Strategies for change were a central theme of this series.

The multidisciplinary nature of the seminar group is considered a strength, as it allows the exploration of conflict and social justice issues from multiple perspectives. In recognition of the different perspectives and disciplines represented in the group, as well as diverse working styles, there is emphasis on process as well as content within the group. During the first two years the faculty focused on group development and sought to clarify definitions and terms to develop a common language. Experience within the seminar was used to analyze and redefine working relationships, and to establish trust and collaborative working relationships among the faculty. In addition, yearly retreats were held to assess

accomplishments, barriers and establish future directions for the group.

The purpose of this working paper is to describe and analyze the content and process of the year-long seminar series on Empowerment. This includes sections on: the seminar planning process; definitions of empowerment and conceptual issues; primary themes that were examined in some depth across the seminars; secondary themes that were addressed less extensively; issues and questions for future research and practice; and "outcomes" or projects that have developed out of the seminars. Thus, the intent of this working paper is to highlight the major learnings that occurred as a result of this PCMA seminar series.

SEMINAR PLANNING PROCESS

The first phase of the 1988-89 seminar series was the selection of a topic area and the development of a framework for the presentation and analysis of relevant issues. The diverse interests, approaches, and disciplines of the faculty required a framework broad enough to incorporate the strengths of the various perspectives, yet focussed enough to stimulate constructive discussion. Consistent with the program emphasis on collaborative problem solving, a series of preliminary meetings facilitated by the seminar coordinator (a responsibility which rotates among seminar participants on an

annual basis) were held to select a topic and define a framework for the discussions.

The group decided to collectively examine issues of interest and select a topic for in-depth exploration. At the first meeting, the faculty generated a list of questions and problems related to social justice, conflict, and social change. Questions included the following:

- How are conflict and social change related?
- What are practice oriented strategies for change?
- What is the role of authority/power figures in change? What is the role of a change agent?
- What issues of control and trust arise in individual and community change?
- What is the relationship between social change and social identity?
- What is social justice? How does it relate to conflict and change?
- What is the relationship of concepts such as race, gender, class, and diversity to social justice?
- What is the relationship between change and empowerment?
- What is the process of becoming a change agent?

Over the next several meetings, through both small and large group discussions, these questions were refined and potential frameworks for their exploration were discussed. Ultimately, a matrix depicting conflict management alternatives by units of practice and strategies for action was developed (Figure 1). Praxis/Strategies for Conflict Management are arrayed along the vertical axis and represent alternative strategies for conflict management: organization/mobilization; action research/critical analysis; skill development and training; education; consultation; organizational administration; mediation; litigation; and

legislation/social policy. The horizontal axis of the matrix contains units or levels at which change and conflict may occur: individual; family; group; interpersonal network; organizational; interorganizational; community; societal; and international. The faculty generated questions and issues about selected topic areas as they relate to these units of practice and strategies for change. The topics considered in this process included: empowerment; social justice; racism/sexism; culture; the process of becoming a change agent; and the use of conflict in social change.

Discussion of these issues resulted in the selection of *Empowerment*, and *Diversity, Racism, and Sexism*, as topics in which there was most interest. Two subcommittees formed to develop detailed seminar outlines for these topics. These outlines were discussed at the next meeting of the full seminar group, and consensus was reached that *Empowerment* would be the focus of the seminar sessions for the remainder of the academic year and that *Diversity, Racism and Sexism* would be considered for a future seminar.

Seminars were held in two hour blocks, every other week throughout the academic year. Participants included core PCMA faculty and a few invited guests from the University and practice communities involved in empowerment work, most of whom joined the group for the entire year. Members of this group shared responsibility for presenting and facilitating sessions. Some of the presentations focussed on conceptual issues such as definitions of empowerment, while others were

case studies which explored the intersection between strategies and units of analysis, as shown in the matrix. (Appendix A contains an outline of the topics and facilitators/ speakers for the *Empowerment* seminar series).

Generally, before each session the facilitator distributed to seminar participants a list of questions to consider and one or two articles for background reading. For example, prior to the initial session on conceptual and definitional issues, participants received copies of Keiffer (1986) "Citizen Empowerment: A Developmental Perspective" and were asked to consider the following questions: 1) what is empowerment?; 2) why is it important?; 3) what function does it serve?; 4) what is the relationship between conflict and empowerment?; and 5) do definitions differ by cultural arena? (Appendix B contains brief summaries of the seminar presentations and discussions).

Detailed notes were compiled for each session in order to document the presentations and discussions. At the end of the year, the notes were analyzed by the recorder and the seminar facilitator. Primary or recurrent issues that were addressed across seminar sessions were identified. These cross-cutting themes provide the basis for this working paper, the purpose of which is to synthesize and integrate the seminar content, rather than to document each individual session. Excerpts from the case studies, research reports and conceptual presentations provided at the seminars are discussed in detail throughout the text to illustrate these cross-cutting themes

and concepts. These excerptss, italicized in the text, are reconstructed from the seminar notes, with feedback from the presenter, and are therefore summaries of the presentations rather than verbatim transcriptions. In addition, comments were gathered from seminar participants on an earlier draft of this paper, and incorporated into this version. Seminar participants also offered feedback regarding the seminar planning process: comments and suggestions for future seminars are included in the final section of this paper.

DEFINITIONAL AND CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

The initial session in the empowerment series explored different conceptions of empowerment that provided a framework for later discussions. Definitional issues continued to surface throughout the seminar series, as case studies and other presentations raised new aspects of empowerment. The initial conceptual discussion drew on the work of Keiffer (1986), Freire (1973; 1970), and Gutierrez (1988; 1989). Major elements of this discussion are summarized in this section.

Empowerment was conceptualized as a multiple-level construct, including: 1) personal power, incorporating the concept of self efficacy and the development of basic skills; 2) social power, or the ability to influence others; and 3) political power, or the ability to influence the allocation of social and economic resources. Thus, empowerment occurs at individual, organizational, and community levels. This multiple-level definition of empowerment distinguishes it from self-efficacy - which considers only the individual level - while empowerment includes issues of social influence and control, incorporating collective as well as individual power.

The empowerment framework places the individual within the context of a group or community in conceptualizing the potential for social change. Freire's (1973) concept of critical consciousness provides a foundation for linking the

three levels of empowerment. Critical consciousness involves: 1) the development of feelings of identification with a group, along with a sense of shared fate with that group in the larger social order; and 2) a sense of self and collective efficacy. This second component involves both the belief that effective action is possible, and the ability (skills and access to resources) to develop effective strategies for action. Thus the individual and group or community together develop the capacity to act effectively to create social change.

Critical consciousness develops through an interactive process (Freire, 1973). One aspect of this process involves constructive dialogue with others in similar situations and the opportunity to connect personal experience with larger social processes. A second aspect involves the combination of action and reflection, or praxis. As group members initiate action and discuss results with the group, insights gained promote the development of skills for effective action. This dialogic process of reflection and action is the basis for the development of empowered individuals, organizations and communities.

Seminar participants considered whether empowerment was best conceptualized as a process or an outcome. Do individuals, organizations or communities ever *attain* an empowered state, or is the concept one which is continually in flux, and its measure relative? Questions were raised about whether the empowerment process could be measured

quantitatively, and if so, how. The distinctions between empowerment as a process and as an outcome were woven throughout the discussions.

PRIMARY THEMES

Several themes recurred throughout the seminars, in case studies and theoretical discussions across many units of analysis and strategies for practice. Themes which were discussed in depth, or explored from a number of perspectives over the course of the year, are synthesized and examined in this section. These themes include: the empowerment process; power and empowerment; barriers to empowerment and risk taking; the influence of organizational context on empowerment and social change; and the role of the change agent. Unresolved or unanswered questions concerning each of these themes are also presented. Other recurring themes that were examined less extensively are discussed in a later section of this paper.

The Empowerment Process

Conceptual and empirical work discussed in the seminars suggests that the empowerment process is long term, taking place over a period of several years or more (Keiffer, 1986). Stages of the process include: 1) the opportunity to name, or clarify, the current reality; 2) exploration of alternatives to this reality; 3) anticipatory socialization, or trying out

the new reality in a fairly safe environment or situation; and 4) acting for real social change (Freire, 1970). Through these stages the individual, organization, and community develop skills and structures which enable them to envision and act for change. This model of the empowerment process unfolds slowly and requires commitment over a period of several years, suggests intentional or directed change, and incorporates both personal and structural transformation: thus, it may not be applicable to all social change processes. Other forms of social change may occur rapidly, may not include individual action as a component, or may result from unconscious or unintentional changes which accumulate to create social change.

Models of individual or community change in which a professional or "outsider" defines the problem, and develops and implements strategies for change are also inconsistent with the empowerment model. While these professionally led strategies may result in social change, they do not promote the development of analytical and practice skills, and the acquisition of influence and control, among the persons affected. Leadership remains in the hands of the professional change agent, rather than emerging from the individual, organization or community. These principles are fundamental to the empowerment process, and their absence may reinforce a sense of powerlessness, as individuals and communities are the objects of change, rather than active participants in control of the change.

In contrast, the role of the change agent in the empowerment framework is that of a catalyst or facilitator for the development of skills in the analysis of problems and the development and implementation of strategies for change. Using this model, empowerment and social change occur concurrently, as an interactive, co-learning process with opportunity for dialogue and reflection as well as action. Individuals, groups or communities develop skills for change, and come to recognize their own power, independent of the change agent.

The following case study illustrates components of the empowerment process. It is drawn from the intersection of education as a strategy and group as a unit of practice in the Conflict Management Alternatives matrix (Figure 1).

*Case Study: The Empowerment Process in the Classroom.*²

A case study of intergroup conflict and empowerment in a classroom setting illustrates components of the empowerment process discussed above: 1) naming the current reality; 2) talking about alternatives; 3) anticipatory socialization, or trying out the new reality in a fairly safe environment (the classroom); and 4) acting for real social change.

The case study examined empowerment within the context of an undergraduate course designed to explore conflict between Blacks and Jews. Through a variety of learning experiences, the students were encouraged to explore and verbalize the current realities of their lives. Students' life experience became an integral component of discussions, affirming students' experience and knowledge as a vital element in understanding the problem. A 'fishbowl' exercise, in which students were seated in concentric circles, facing each other, with

2. The case studies and research results presented in the text are reconstructed from notes recorded during the seminars and from discussions with the speaker during the writing of this working paper.

Black students in one circle and Jewish students in the other, allowed each student an opportunity to name their own experience of reality: all students seated in the Jewish circle were given an opportunity to state what it meant to be Jewish, while the students in the Black circle listened silently, followed by the Black students saying what it meant to be Black, while the Jewish students listened silently. This exercise provided each student with an opportunity to be heard without contradiction, interruption, or argument, and allowed students to listen to the experience of others without feeling an obligation to respond in any way: the goal was simply to state what was 'true' for each individual, and to hear each other's truths. At the conclusion of this exercise, students talked with one another across their racial/ethnic lines.

In addition to this fishbowl learning activity, students were provided with opportunities to envision alternate realities through other exercises. Through literature and class discussions, students learned of the experiences of Blacks and whites, Jews and non-Jews, and Blacks and Jews together. Through these readings and discussions, students explored and imagined different ways in which majority and minority groups interact. Students entered the course with their own stereotypes and assumptions, which were confronted in this classroom experience. In addition, students confronted and questioned the stereotypes and assumptions which appeared in the literature.

Students were provided with multiple opportunities to experience alternate realities and to try out alternate visions in relatively safe environments. Through classroom discussion, students challenged and were challenged by the ideas and experiences of others: while this was painful at times, the course framework encouraged students to return and discover that they could survive these confrontations and challenges. Student journals were used to start a dialogue with the instructor, and often became a catalyst for future classroom discussions. Jewish students were paired with Black classmates and attended Black social functions to experience an alternate view of reality, and vice versa. All of these exercises were designed to expand student awareness of alternate realities, and to encourage them to experience these realities.

These classroom experiences contributed to action to create social change outside of the classroom. During a semester when racial incidents occurred on campus, Black students participating in the course took a leadership role in designing and facilitating a "teach in." In conversations with the course instructor several of these

students referred to the role of the course in building the confidence needed to publicly discuss and confront the experience of racism on campus.

The classroom provided a forum for students to try out alternative realities within a relatively protected environment: with people they had come to know, and in a controlled setting. The experience of conflict through discussion between members of different groups within the classroom and the knowledge gained through experience that such conflict was survivable, contributed to a sense of self confidence or personal empowerment on the part of these students which carried beyond the immediate context of the classroom.

Unanswered questions about the process of empowerment

include:

1. In areas where individuals, groups or communities do not recognize their power, can they engage in and resolve conflict?
2. What are the implications for the empowerment process if a social change agent focuses on the accomplishment of a specific change, rather than long term individual, group, or community empowerment?
3. What predicts the ability to transfer the empowerment process to new situations? Structural factors? Beliefs/recognition of power? Is the empowerment process situational?
4. What factors influence the empowerment process? Can it occur over a shorter time period as suggested by the case study described above?
5. Is the empowerment process different at the different levels: individual, group and community?

Power and Empowerment

Discussions of the relationship between power and empowerment recurred frequently throughout the seminars. There was agreement that power and empowerment were different concepts. However, this agreement left many questions about

the manner in which these concepts differ, and their interrelationships, as discussed below.

Individual experience with, and perceptions of, power and power relationships may influence the empowerment process. Power may have many meanings - power *to*, power *with*, power *over*, power *for* - and these meanings may vary according to individual experience. The meaning power holds for an individual, group or community may facilitate the empowerment process or create barriers to empowerment, as illustrated in the discussion of feminist organizing below, and in the case studies cited in the "Risk and Conflict" section of this paper.

The concept of empowerment suggests a model of power relationships in which previously disempowered actors strive for power relatively equal to that of higher status or elite groups with which to resolve conflict to their advantage or satisfaction. However, many power relationships remain hierarchical and linear, with little opportunity for input from those in less powerful positions. Experience with hierarchical power relationships may impede the development of relationships which are cooperative rather than competitive, characterized by open communication at all levels, and in which there is a willingness to set limits on the exercise of power. Individuals whose experience with power relationships has been limited to hierarchical structures may need to learn to develop more egalitarian patterns of interaction as part of the empowerment process.

Experience with hierarchical power relationships may occur very early in life: parents with a strong need for control and without access to power in other arenas may focus on exerting control over their child. Children who are allowed little opportunity for autonomy and responsibility may experience difficulty in the development of autonomy and self control. This socialization experience may influence the degree to which the individual feels empowered, as well as the process through which empowerment may occur. The family's model of power as control over others may become a model for relationships outside the family. Hence, learning a more collaborative model of power relationships may be a necessary component of the empowerment process for some individuals.

Strategies for the modification of power relationships include: modeling, training/education, or the reintegration of disassociated parts of the self through therapy. Modeling may be useful in a group or organizational context, where a change agent may demonstrate collaborative and non-directive relationships. Training or education may be effective in a classroom context, particularly when combined with experiential learning. The process of reflection and self-exploration which facilitates the reintegration of disassociated parts of the self may be appropriate in individual or group therapy. Different contexts and situations may call for different strategies or paths to the redefinition of power as a component of the empowerment process.

Systematic differences in the meanings associated with power or empowerment occur as a result of different life experiences. Gender, race, class and culture all affect the reality as well as the perception of power, and may influence the process of empowerment and the goals of the individual, group, or community. Differences in meanings may also interfere with the ability of a change agent to work effectively with a group, particularly if the facilitator is unable to acknowledge these differences and accept the validity of the group's definition of its problems. These differences in the perceptions of power and empowerment were explored using feminist organizing as an example, with discussion of differing approaches to organizing with Women of Color and European-American Women.

Perceptions of Power and The Meaning of Empowerment

Feminist ideology and feminist organizing have considered gender to be the most important basis for group identification and consciousness. However, for Women of Color, the experience of racism may be as (or more) important as a basis for collective identity. Attempts to organize around gender alone may be considered divisive among women and men who experience oppression on the basis of race.

Failure to recognize the validity of differences among women has contributed to conflicts and barriers within the feminist movement. The assumption that all women find commonality in their experience as women has been challenged and there has been resistance to a definition of collective consciousness based solely on gender. In addition, there have been clear differences in conceptions of empowerment. European-American women's movements have placed emphasis on individual empowerment within existing class structures. In contrast, Women of Color have mobilized with an emphasis on collective empowerment and the transformation of existing social

systems stratified on the basis of race and class as well as gender.

Different life experiences and different bases for identification have been interpreted by European-American feminist organizers as 'false consciousness'; a failure to recognize oppression on the basis of gender. The inability to recognize the validity of different bases for collective identity and different meanings of empowerment and power based on different life experiences have contributed to conflict and resistance. Women of Color have resisted the solutions offered by the European-American Women's movement, continuing to develop their own problem definitions and mobilizing efforts to address these problems.

The conflicts discussed in this example are illustrative of resistance to attempts by outsiders to impose a definition of the problem (sexism) without acknowledgement of the complex intersection of racism and sexism. Furthermore, different perceptions of the basis of disempowerment influence the empowering process in this example.

Unanswered questions regarding power and empowerment include:

1. Any individual, group, community may have power at one level, but not another- at what level do people need to have influence in order to be empowered?
2. Can people be empowered if they do not recognize their own power?
3. How do cultural or structural differences affect the empowerment process? The definition of power?

Risk and Conflict: Barriers to Empowerment

Discussions of barriers to empowerment were woven throughout the seminars. Barriers may take the form of resistance at the individual level, or may be found in

cultural or structural factors. Life experiences shape the meaning of power and empowerment for the individual as illustrated in the previous example, and may serve to either facilitate or create barriers to the empowerment process. The meaning of empowerment may vary systematically by gender, class, ethnicity or culture and influence both the intra-psychic and social-situational risks associated with becoming empowered.

Confronting these barriers to empowerment involves risk and conflict. In turn, the perception of risks and access to the skills and resources necessary to address the associated conflicts are critical factors which influence the process of empowerment. Two case studies are presented below which illustrate different aspects of risk and conflict as components of the empowerment process. The first illustrates intra-psychic or personal barriers to empowered action, while the second considers social-situational risk and conflicts: interactions between these levels are likely, but were not explored in the discussions.

Personal transformation as a component of the empowerment process was discussed throughout the empowerment seminars (see the discussion of change agents in a later section of this paper). The process of personal change involves a degree of risk and conflict, both intra-personally and at the inter-personal level: changing conceptions of the self and behavioral transformations may risk both self-concept and established relationships. Intra-psychic conflicts were

explored carefully in an analysis of the relationship between early childhood experiences and barriers to empowered action in adulthood.

Risk at the Intra-Personal Level

Physical and sexual abuse, extreme forms of the hurts experienced by most children, may result in the repression of some parts of the personality in adulthood in an effort to protect the self from painful memories or potentialities. Intra-psychic conflicts may arise as a result, and may interfere with empowered action: recognition and resolution of these conflicts may be a necessary component of individual empowerment.

One outcome of physical and sexual abuse may be identification of the survivor with the abusive authority figure. This identification may be denied, and the potential for one's own abusive behavior may be projected onto an oppressive authority. Anger, lack of trust, or hostility, and sometimes passivity and deference, may be outward manifestations of the internal conflict, and may interfere with needed advocacy and constructive resolution of conflicts at the interpersonal or community level.

Recognition of the roots of these conflicts is necessary for empowered and constructive action. The healing process, through which the individual works to integrate the disassociated parts of the self, involves the experience of intensified levels of internal and external conflict. The individual must risk new conflicts in order to experience his/her own power. Conflict is an inevitable and essential component of empowerment, at both the intrapsychic and the behavioral level.

Risk and conflict were again discussed in the context of a research report of empowerment and social change involving self help groups and medical organizations.

Risk and Self-Help Groups

Action research with support groups for parents of children with cancer suggests that groups comprised both of parents with living children and parents of deceased children are most likely to create change in the medical care system. Parents of children who are deceased may perceive less risk in challenging the medical care system than parents whose children are reliant on that system for medical care. Challenging the medical care system may also provide a means of personal healing for parents of deceased children. Thus, the perception of the risks involved for both self and others may influence the empowerment process and action toward social change.

Intrapsychic and social-situational risks involved in escalating conflict to create change may become barriers to the empowerment process. Assessment and appropriate management of these risks are critical components of the process of individual, group or community empowerment.

Unanswered questions raised regarding risk and conflict included:

- 1) How can individuals be prepared to recognize and explore risks and make active decisions about risk-taking in the empowerment process?
- 2) What are the costs of empowerment- both intra-psychic and social/situational? How can these be assessed in a given context/situation?
- 3) Is it possible to change the perception and evaluation of risks through the process of action and reflection proposed by Freire's model?
- 4) Are there other pathways through which the perception of risk might be influenced? What is the role of social support or collective undertakings in this process?

Organizational Context, Empowerment and Social Change

Another theme which recurred throughout the seminar discussions involved the interaction between individuals or groups and organizations or institutions in empowerment and social change. In this section the influence of social or organizational context on the empowerment process is examined through research findings related to self help groups and medical institutions, and employee-generated organizational change. The first case study illustrates the intersection between a group as a unit of practice and action research as a strategy (see Figure 1). The second example also used action research as a strategy, with an organization as the unit of action.

Self Help Groups and Change in Medical Institutions

The medical system consolidates power and perpetuates power differentials between patients and providers through a monopoly on practice, knowledge, and the assignment of moral judgements regarding health and illness. The empowerment of patients or others within the medical/health care system requires the ability to change this monopoly on power. Self help groups provide an opportunity for patients and parents/family members of patients to become empowered through several channels. The group: 1) provides a framework for the translation of personal experience into collective experience, thus sharing coping tactics and reducing the professional monopoly of moral choices; 2) provides an opportunity to share knowledge and other resources among group members, reducing the knowledge differential between patient and provider; and 3) increases the potential for institutional change through collective action, challenging the practitioners' monopoly of practice. All three tactics alter the power differential between professional and client.

Empirical work with self help groups in medical settings suggests that groups controlled by professionals are less likely to challenge this monopoly than are

support groups led by individuals who are not part of the medical care system. The latter are more likely to challenge the existing system by generating conflict as a tool for social change. Support groups led by professionals may experience pressure to conform to the current structure of medical care organizations. Those groups which do not rely on professionals for leadership may experience less pressure to conform due to their position outside the system.

Further exploration of the influence of support groups on medical organizations suggests that coalitions between parents of patients and professionals are more likely to generate institutional change than are parent-only groups or groups led by professionals. Professional leadership may temper conflict, while groups comprised solely of parents may lack access to channels for institutional change. The combination of parent leadership and professional membership appears to provide the potential for change through a combination of conflict and the leverage necessary to challenge the medical system effectively.

A second presentation explored the potential for employee generated organizational change through a long term (three year) action research project.

Employee-Generated Organizational Change

One of the goals of the project was the creation of an empowering organization in which employees gained influence and control within the system through action, reflection and organizational change.

Experience with this project provided further insight into the relationship between the context or setting and the constraints or barriers to empowerment. These include:

- 1) past experience, or the normative belief that people do not have influence within the system,
- 2) lack of trust in the change process,
- 3) time constraints: all work must be completed during work hours,
- 4) turnover, or change in personnel, disrupts the change process,
- 5) group members' experience of power differs in different arenas: some who are powerless within the organization may have power in other areas of their

- lives, while others may be powerless both within the work setting and outside,*
- 6) change in one part of the system creates change throughout- preparation for repercussions is important,*
 - 7) empowerment is a long term process, whether the goal is the empowerment of individuals or the creation of an empowering organization: the first requires personal reflection and transformation, while the second requires structural change, and*
 - 8) the organizational culture may subscribe to a zero-sum concept of power, which conflicts with the empowerment model concept of power as a resource which can be generated and expanded.*

These barriers suggest that the organizational contexts within which individuals act influence the empowerment process.

Further discussion of empowerment and organizations considered the effects of organizations on individuals working within these institutions. Individuals working within an institution which they experience as disempowering may find it difficult to facilitate the empowerment of others: this is particularly problematic for human service professionals. The structure of the University and the empowerment of graduate student teaching assistants was explored in this context. University culture, and a structure which provides greater rewards for research than teaching, may not provide adequate support for teaching assistants to create an empowering learning experience for their undergraduate students. The development of empowering organizations is an important challenge facing Universities and other institutions whose goals include the facilitation of autonomy and self-sufficiency.

Unanswered questions concerning organizations and empowerment include:

1. Can small groups or organizations housed within a larger structure bring about change in this encompassing system? What are the limits of these changes?
2. What is organizational empowerment? How do leadership and membership empowerment fit with organizational empowerment?
3. Can individuals working within a disempowered organization empower others?

Role of the Change Agent

The role of the change agent in this framework is as a catalyst or facilitator for the empowerment of the individual, group or community. The primary goal is the continued empowerment of the individual or group after the departure of the change agent. The role taken by the change agent influences the extent to which the individual, group, or community continues to engage in empowered action following the departure of the facilitator.

The socialization or education of professional change agents such as community organizers, social workers, mediators and educators, may contribute to difficulties in assuming the role of catalyst or facilitator. Education which emphasizes the professional as expert reinforces a hierarchical power structure and impedes the development of leadership and competence from within the individual, group or community. The opportunity to grapple with and define the problem is part of the process of individual or collective empowerment. A change agent who defines the problem and the solution for the

disempowered interferes with the development of empowered individuals and groups and reduces the possibility that change efforts will be maintained or continued when the change agent departs. While the model of change agent as leader may be successful in creating social change, the individual, group or community does not develop the skills and structures necessary to engage in empowered action on an ongoing basis. A challenge for universities and other educational institutions is the education of change agents who act as collaborators in the empowerment process.

A change agent often enters an organization or community as an outsider, as defined by geographical, cultural or experiential boundaries. Thus, entry poses problems and issues distinct from those encountered by change agents who are perceived as insiders or members of the community. The establishment of trust and accountability is an essential component of entry and acceptance, whether working with individuals, organizations or communities. As an outsider, the change agent needs to demonstrate a personal commitment and investment in the issue and respect for group concerns and boundaries.

The following case study, an action research project at the community level, illustrates the process of entry into the community, trust building, and disengagement from the community. The theme of trust building, which was critical to this process, is related to the earlier discussion of perceived risks and conflicts associated with empowerment.

Establishing Trust Between the Change Agent and the Community

The model used in this analysis places the individual in the context of the family and the community: personal or collective change is expected to reverberate at multiple levels. The perception of risk, either at the individual, intra-psychic level, or on a social-situational level, may interfere with empowered action. An initial challenge for this change agent, who was an outsider to the community, was to develop trust among the women of the community. Entry was gained through activities with children: this allowed the change agent to indicate an investment in the community and begin to build trust with adult women. The demonstration of willingness to make a personal commitment to the community was an element of gaining entry and acceptance.

In addition to building trust between the change agent and the community women, it was also necessary to build trust among members of the group which organized to enact change within the community. In this case, the facilitator anticipated that the discussion of personal problems would lead to identification of collective problems. For the most part, this was true: the women worked first on individual problems, then worked together to address community concerns. One woman noted that her individual problem was the community's problem, seeing herself as part of the collective from the start. Working together to address personal concerns may have helped to build a degree of trust among group members which enabled them to work collectively to address community problems.

A potential barrier to continued empowerment in this case study was the tendency among some of the community members to attribute change to the change agent, rather than recognize the power of their own actions. Although the women's group identified the problem, planned and implemented the change strategy, and responded to community reactions, some continued to attribute the change to the presence of the change agent. Prior to leaving the community, it was necessary for the change agent to emphasize the women's role in the change process to promote recognition of their own power in creating and responding to community change.

Trust and accountability appear as critical elements of the relationship between the change agent and the individual,

organization or community: both trust and empowerment are enhanced by respect for boundaries and self determination.

As discussed earlier, the empowerment process develops over time, with leadership emerging from within the individual, organization, or community. The departure of the change agent from the effort ideally occurs after the individual/group becomes sufficiently empowered to maintain the change process, and before prolonged dependency develops. For example, the action research project in an organizational setting discussed earlier in this paper had been in progress for three years at the time of the seminar presentation. At that point, the change agent felt relatively confident that the necessary skills and influence had developed within the group so that change could continue after the facilitators departed. In contrast, she was not convinced that the process would have continued had they left after only one and a half years. Long term commitment to an individual, group or community is necessary for the development of empowered individuals and empowering structures.

In addition to these issues of trust and interdependence, questions about the process through which an individual becomes an agent for social change arose periodically throughout the seminar series. There was a general sense that individuals must first *become* empowered before they begin to facilitate the empowerment of other individuals or groups. A study of social change advocates was presented as part of the

seminar series, providing groundwork for exploring questions about the process of becoming a change agent.

Becoming A Social Change Advocate

In-depth interviews with social change advocates explored the experiences which they identified as instrumental in their development as change agents. Among other factors, the interaction between institutional factors and evolving personal activism was explored. The interplay between opportunity structures and individual choices made within these structures was instrumental in the development of activists as they learned to challenge authority or belief systems which reinforced injustice. Advocacy developed through a series of opportunities to speak out and the choice to do so.

The belief that the status quo was wrong, and that it could be changed, was referred to in the discussion as 'discontent dancing with hope.' This combination of dissatisfaction and a conviction that change was possible was fundamental to the perspective of advocates. Many had an indistinct vision of the goal they were striving toward, but a sense that action was an essential component of clarifying the goal. Cesar Chavez, one of the change agents who participated in this study, used Gandhi's notion of experimenting with the truth to illustrate this belief: action was seen as an essential component of seeking the truth.

Another theme which arose was that of personal transformation, discussed by many as part of the process of becoming a change agent. It is common for individuals to go through patterned transitions in their lives (end of schooling, beginning a family, etc.): social advocates appear to go through distinctive and powerful self-directed transitions to become agents of social change. Many advocates described a conversion process which resulted from a combination of personal experience and self reflection. Personal transformation was linked to acceptance of an intuitive basis for action, rather than a strictly rational or logical basis.

Change agents appear to be shaped by interactions among life experience, position in the social structure, and self reflection contributing to personal transformation.

Unresolved questions regarding the role of the change agent include:

- 1) What role do outsiders have in organizational or community empowerment? To what degree is it necessary to be perceived as an insider to be an effective catalyst/facilitator within a community or organization?
- 2) Who defines insiders and outsiders, and how does this affect the role of the change agent?
- 3) Should a change agent ever impose a solution? In the case of health or life-threatening circumstances?

SECONDARY THEMES

In addition to the major themes discussed above, a number of other themes emerged throughout the seminar series which, primarily due to time constraints, were examined less thoroughly. Several are presented below to encourage further discussion.

First Party/Third Party Mediators and Negotiators

The introduction of a third party to mediate a conflict or dispute may have mixed results as an empowering process. It may serve to decrease the power of the individual or community involved in the dispute by substituting an outside expert for indigenous leaders at crucial points. An incremental change gained through mediation may not be constructive if it serves to take the edge off the conflict, thereby decreasing the power of the low power party without addressing the fundamental, underlying source of the conflict.

A mediator may play a constructive role by modeling new ways of addressing disputes. It is useful if this modeling

includes exploration of the underlying conflicts between parties, rather than remaining focused on the apparent conflict. Mediations or negotiations which address only the apparent conflict may decrease conflict without facilitating empowerment. These concerns with mediation in dispute resolution were discussed by seminar participants in more depth as reported in Cunningham et al (1990) and Chesler (1989).

Multiple Levels of Interaction: The Individual Within the Social Structure

The empowerment model explores the interactions between the individual actor and social structures such as the family, organization and community. Change initiated at any level will reverberate through others, and effects may be expected at all levels. Some may be anticipated through planning, while others are likely to be unanticipated. Reactions to change will influence the empowerment process by providing feedback to those who precipitated the change. Anticipation of potential repercussions or retaliations may help the initiating party to prepare strategies for dealing with these reactions.

A second aspect of the multiple levels of interaction incorporated in the empowerment model is membership in a group with which one has a sense of shared fate. Such groups provide an opportunity for the development of critical consciousness and also provide a forum for problem solving.

The ongoing support provided by group membership may be a critical component of the ability to effectively challenge existing social structures.

Enlisting Spiritual Resources as Sources of Power

Questions about the role of spirituality, or external sources of power, arose at several points during the seminar discussions. Interviews with social change advocates discussed in the seminars suggest that, for many, early religious training or experiences were significant in the development of a sense of social justice. A majority of these advocates were not currently involved with formal religious institutions, but many discussed the importance of early religious beliefs as a foundation for their current work.

The role of religion as an external source of power in the development of change agents or empowered individuals was also examined in the seminars in other contexts. Haniff (1989) presents life stories of women who are or have been active change agents in their communities: many of these women refer to religious beliefs as a source of power or strength. The Civil Rights and Liberation Theology movements stress the need for combined individual and collective empowerment and the creation of a critical consciousness among those seeking change; they often refer to spiritual sources of power or strength. Groups such as the Quakers have often opposed social structures or processes which they considered unjust, based on their spiritual beliefs. Finally, self help groups

such as Alcoholics Anonymous utilize the concept of a higher power as part of the healing process for individuals attempting to cope with addictions.

Religious networks may be a source of strength or may serve to disempower subgroups or individuals by requiring adherence to a rigid set of beliefs and behaviors. The implications for those who are peripheral to the community, or for those who do not adhere to these beliefs closely, may prove disempowering, as the religious community withdraws support or actively rejects the individual or group. Religion has also been used as an ideological tool to justify social systems which oppress individuals or sub-groups of the population. Roles and actions sanctioned by religious beliefs may prevent empowered action, may obscure the possibility of individual or collective resistance, and may support or promote beliefs which justify unjust social processes.

THEMES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

Many other issues and concerns were raised throughout the seminar discussions: a number of these remain unaddressed and unresolved. These questions, in addition to those noted throughout the text, are presented in order to facilitate further theory development, research and practice.

1. A change agent may work within a culture, organization or group which has sexist, racist, militaristic or other beliefs/norms which are in conflict with those of his/her own. When and how can the change agent address these concerns? When does the change agent choose not to work with an

individual, family, group or organization because of a conflict in values or perspective?

2. Can the empowerment process result in the disempowerment of other individuals, groups or communities? Does losing in a power struggle lead to greater oppression? (e.g. does legal access to abortion rights result in oppression of members of Right to Life movements?). How can the change agent work with a group to minimize the disempowerment of other participating groups? How can the empowerment concept be used with value-laden, emotional issues which may be framed in win/lose terms?

3. Can the work with intra-psychic conflict and healing as an aspect of empowerment provide a framework for an empowering process which promotes social justice? How and when can this empowerment strategy be applied to individual or social change efforts?

4. Does the process of forming/creating/developing a collective consciousness or group identity increase divisiveness between groups? Does this increase the difficulty in creating coalitions to address broader issues? How does the definition of 'the community' influence the potential for building coalitions among groups?

5. Can empowerment be measured quantitatively? If it is a process, rather than a state, can it be measured?

6. Are there times when an empowerment model will not work? What conditions are necessary for an empowerment process to be viable? How must an issue be framed/reframed to be addressed within the context of an empowerment model?

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The empowerment seminar series provided insights into strategies through which oppressed individuals, groups and communities may gain power and become active participants in processes of dispute resolution, conflict management and social change. The Alternative Conflict Management matrix (Figure 1) proved a useful framework for the organization of these seminars. While clarity was gained in some arenas, other questions were raised through the course of the

seminars, and many issues remain unresolved. In this final section, projects which developed out of the seminar series, a critique of the seminar process, and recommendations for future seminars are discussed.

Spin-Offs of the Empowerment Seminar Series

The seminar series provided a beginning for the discussion of empowerment, and PCMA faculty have continued to build on that groundwork. At the end of the 1988-89 academic year, PCMA sponsored a retrieval conference on "Means of Empowerment in Individuals, Organizations, and Communities." In a retrieval conference outstanding practitioners and scholars on a particular subject are convened and information on that subject is "retrieved" from their focused discussion and interaction (c.f. Chesler and Weingarten, 1991). General questions considered at the retrieval conference included: What is meant by empowerment? What are strategies and skills for empowerment? What are internal and external barriers to empowerment? What is the role of conflict in the empowerment process? What are the different levels at which empowerment works? What is an empowered individual, organization, and community? What is an empowering individual, organization, or community? A report of this conference is available from The Program in Conflict Management Alternatives (Gerschick, Israel and Checkoway, 1990).

In addition to the Empowerment Conference, several other projects developed out of this year of focused discussion on

empowerment. PCMA participated in the 1989 Detroit Area Study, a survey of the tri-county Metropolitan Detroit Area which is conducted annually by the Sociology Department at the University of Michigan. Questions were included in the survey to explore the multiple levels of empowerment, and their relationships to community and political participation among respondents. These questions have been used to develop an empowerment scale with which to explore the determinants of empowerment.

Collaborative work with the Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee began as a result of the retrieval conference. Members of PCMA are working with Highlander staff to study the process through which grassroots groups focussing on issues of economic development and environmental protection define issues and develop strategies for empowerment and community change. Through this collaboration a proposal has been developed to extend this study to grassroots and community groups struggling with these same issues in developing countries, with the additional goal of dialogue and exchange among these groups.

Critique of the Seminar Process

Following the completion of the seminar series, each participant was approached for feedback regarding the process of planning and implementing the seminars. Participants were asked to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of the process and to suggest improvements.

The interdisciplinary nature of the seminars was mentioned as one of the strengths of the series, both enriching the discussions and providing the challenge of multiple perspectives on the topics and issues considered. The group had worked together for more than a year prior to this seminar series, providing an opportunity to develop a common language and a level of trust which facilitated more open discussion and participation. The seminar planning process, in which participants worked together to shape the seminar series, was time consuming but contributed to the collaborative nature of the seminar.

The relatively small size of the group (generally between 8 and 10) and the continuity of participants contributed to the development of a shared conceptual background throughout the seminar series. Each member of the group had an opportunity to lead one or more sessions, contributing to a sense of collective responsibility for the seminars.

While session facilitators/presenters were encouraged to structure sessions similarly to maintain a sense of continuity, one critique of the seminar was a lack of coherence or clarity in linkages between sessions. Suggestions to address this concern included: 1) building time into each of the sessions to summarize and integrate the content of the discussions, as well as to discuss the seminar process; and 2) periodically setting aside one or two sessions to integrate material across several seminars, rather than presenting new material at each seminar.

Readings were selected prior to the seminar sessions (generally one or two articles), and key questions were suggested for consideration during discussions. Readings were selected by group brainstorming or individual suggestion, without attempting to select systematically from the literature. Comments regarding these questions and readings varied: some felt that these readings were effective for illustrating major points concisely, while others expressed a desire for a more systematic selection process.

Feedback regarding the structure of the sessions was mixed. A desire for more structure and focus in the sessions was expressed by some, while others commented that the seminars provided a balance between structured presentations and unstructured discussion, and that this balance allowed for both exposure to new ideas and perspectives and some integration and opportunity to challenge these perspectives.

Finally, the process of recording and synthesizing the seminars received comment. The notes taken at each seminar and distributed to the participants were considered to be helpful in capturing the process and the content of the sessions, and in synthesizing the seminars at the end of the series. However, there was a lag time of one year in writing up the seminar series in this report, which was felt to be longer than optimal.

Recommendations For Future Seminars

Based on the experience of developing, implementing and evaluating this seminar series, several recommendations for future seminar planners follow.

Seminar participants from diverse backgrounds and disciplines enriched the PCMA discussions and provided differing perspectives with which to explore the seminar theme. Time built into the seminar to create trust and a common language among seminar participants will be particularly important in groups in which members have not worked together prior to the seminar series, and in multi-disciplinary groups where members may have different perspectives and languages.

A core of participants who attended seminars regularly contributed to the development of a common base of knowledge and trust within the seminar group. Guests were occasionally invited to attend the seminars, following discussion and agreement among group members. The emphasis on consistent group membership helped to build a cohesive group with a common background related to the seminar topic.

The collaborative process which led to the development of the seminar framework and format also contributed to member's collective commitment to the sessions. The process of sharing decision making power and leadership responsibilities among group members throughout the seminar series modeled a

definition of power which was consistent with the empowerment framework: collective power, rather than power over others.

New material was presented and discussed in each seminar session described in this paper. While this allowed a great deal of material to be presented, we recommend that time be set aside periodically to synthesize the content of sessions. In addition, periodic discussion of group process throughout the seminar series may be useful. Discussion of issues such as the balance between structured and non-structured time in the group, group decision making processes, and group dynamics may contribute to the quality of the seminar discussions.

The seminar series provided an opportunity for a shared learning experience which brought together scholars from across disciplines to explore the concept of empowerment. Each participant contributed their unique perspective and experience to the development of a common conceptual language. This collaborative process, combined with an emphasis on the integration of action, theory and research, may be useful for multi-disciplinary examination of many other topics and issues.

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Appendix A

PCMA Empowerment Seminar Series 1988-89 Academic Year

- Jan 6 Lorraine Gutierrez
Empowerment: Definitional and Conceptual Issues
- Jan 18 Rob Williams
Finding Voice: The Process of Becoming A Change Agent
- Feb 2 Links Between Conflict and Empowerment
A. Edie Lewis
 Empowerment and Conflict at the Community Level
B. Jim Crowfoot
 Empowerment and Conflict at the Individual Level
- Feb 16 Links Between Conflict and Empowerment
A. Libby Douvan
 Empowerment in the Family
B. David Schoem
 Empowerment in the Classroom
- Feb 23 Alex Aleinikoff
Management of Conflict in Race Relations Cases
- March 9 Empowerment and Organizations
A. Mark Chesler
 Self Help Groups for Families of Children With Cancer
B. Barry Checkoway
 Detroit Neighborhood Organization Study
- March 22 Percy Bates
Program in Educational Opportunity
- April 6 Empowerment at the Community and Organizational Level
A. Barry Checkoway
 Empowerment at the Community Level in the Developing World
B. Barbara Israel
 Empowerment at the Organizational Level
- April 20 Issues of Empowering Women of Color and Feminist Organizing for Women of Color
A. Sandra Tongri
 Surrogacy and Empowerment
B. Lorraine Gutierrez
 Issues of Empowering Women of Color and Feminist Organizing For Women of Color

May 4

Issues of Empowering Women of Color
Edie Lewis
Women of Color, Money, and God

Appendix B

Summary of Empowerment Seminars

The content of the presentations and discussions for each of the empowerment seminars is summarized below. The summaries are drawn from the notes taken at the seminar sessions.

January 6: Empowerment: Definitional and Conceptual Issues

Power and powerlessness are the center of theory and practice in empowerment. The empowerment process is cyclical, involving dialogue with others in similar situations to link individual experience with larger social processes, and praxis, the process of reflection and action as members of a group initiate action and discuss results.

Challenges to those working from an empowerment perspective, and conflicts within the empowerment literature include:

1. Fundamental to the empowerment concept is the notion of a facilitator whose role is that of a catalyst, rather than a problem solver or mediator for the individual or community. The process of professional education may conflict with this role, emphasizing the 'expert' role of the professional change agent. A challenge for the educational system is the promotion of change agents who act as catalysts, rather than problem solvers. The former role fosters independence and the development of skills and personal power in group members, while the latter does not promote the development of leadership from within the community.
2. Human service agencies and other organizations may have structural features which interfere with empowered action on the part of human service professionals and others. A challenge for these organizations is to develop structures and processes which empower individuals within the system: human service workers who are empowered are more likely to facilitate the empowerment of clients.
3. Can an individual 'empower' others or facilitate the process in others? Discussion regarding this question suggested that individuals empower themselves, but that an empowered model and a facilitative environment may be important components of the process.
4. Individuals may experience resistance/defenses against becoming empowered: there may be resistance to seeing the self as empowered, or to transforming personal identity.
5. Does the process of framing a collective consciousness result in the formation of groups, increasing divisiveness between groups and making coalition building more difficult?

January 18: Finding Voice: The Process of Becoming a Change Agent

Qualitative interviews with 13 outstanding grassroots leaders were conducted in order to explore the process through which their activism evolved. Based on the results of these

in depth interviews, the following themes were identified and discussed:

1. **Sense of Power of Discrimination:** Family and cultural aspects of the early childhood experience of many of these leaders both supported and challenged discrimination.
2. **Sense of Marginality:** A sense of self or family moving across cultures or groups, not central to either, but playing a role in both.
3. **Sense of the Disempowering Potential of Negotiation/Mediation:** A conviction that parties in a negotiation or mediation process must maintain or gain relatively equal power.
4. **Sense of Discontent Dancing With Hope:** A strong sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo was combined with a sense of hope or belief that action can bring us closer to an alternative vision.
5. **Religious Background:** While most of the advocates in this study were not currently active in an institutionalized religion, many had strong religious backgrounds and expressed a sense of social justice rooted in that background.

Discussion focused on the mix between the opportunity structure and individual choice in the development of social change advocates. The process involves learning to challenge the authority or belief system, and may occur over a period of years. The transition to become a change agent is a self-directed process which grows out of personal experience and self reflection.

February 2: Links Between Conflict and Empowerment

Presentation I: Links Between Conflict and Empowerment at the Community Level

A case study was presented of social change within a community. The model used in the analysis views the individual as embedded within the family and the community: individuals are prepared to anticipate change, and reactions to change, on multiple levels. In this case, a group of women came together to define a core problem and took action to create change within their community. Problems and reactions to the change effort were anticipated on multiple levels, while other, unanticipated effects occurred and required spontaneous reaction.

The change agent in this case acted as a catalyst: successful empowerment was defined as that which continued after the catalyst disengaged.

Discussion following the presentation explored the entree of an outsider into a community as a change agent. Issues of trust building, definition of boundaries, and the role of the facilitator were considered. Psychic and social-situational risks may arise in the process of acknowledging power: these risks may act as barriers to personal or collective empowerment.

Presentation II: Links Between Conflict and Empowerment at the Individual Level

In this presentation intra-psychic barriers to empowerment and personal transformation to overcome those barriers were explored. Socialization into victim roles- whether based on gender, age, race or other factors- results in disassociation of parts of the self with internalized expectations and behaviors which often are unconscious. Internal conflict, often outside of awareness, results from this socialization.

These internalized group and individual patterns often contribute to a lack of social conflicts needed to bring about change to achieve greater justice. This occurs because many individuals are internally blocked from being aware and able to act on their needs and their power.

Often involvement in social conflicts by individuals and groups is an unaware experience of the internal conflicts and attendant feelings described above. The source of anger or other affect may be masked and linked on the surface to ongoing community, organizational or interpersonal issues. Feelings which are projected outward to group, organization and/or community may appear in both active and passive forms as rage, suspicion or lack of trust.

Experiencing intensified levels of conflict is part of the empowering/healing process, as the individual works to confront and reintegrate disassociated parts of the self. As this occurs the individual becomes aware of previously hidden patterns of becoming involved in conflicts. They also develop new abilities to act on their own needs, to interact in unjust structures to bring about change, and to become more flexible and creative in problem solving.

New conflicts must be nested in order to engage intra-psychic conflict and social conflicts to become empowered and to exercise power strategically and effectively in bringing about change. Conflict is seen as an inevitable component of empowerment at both the intra-psychic and the behavioral level.

February 16: Links Between Conflict and Empowerment

Presentation I: Empowerment in the Family

Power relationships within the family may provide a model for relationships outside the family. When adults in the family of orientation have power only in relationship to a child, it may prove difficult for the child to move from dependence toward autonomy and self control. Empowerment of the child (growth toward autonomy) may depend in part on the access of the caretaker/parent to power in other arenas: when the caretaker has power only in relation to the child, it may be difficult for the child to move toward autonomy.

Presentation II: Empowerment in the Classroom

Empowerment in the context of the classroom was explored through two case studies: the first examined empowerment of Teaching Assistants through training to create an empowering

classroom atmosphere, while the second examined student empowerment in the classroom. Empowerment of Teaching Assistants through training, peer support, and positive role models was discussed as a component of providing a classroom environment which is empowering for undergraduate students. Teaching Assistants whose own graduate experience has been disempowering may be unable to provide an empowering classroom experience for undergraduate students.

A classroom environment which draws upon and validates student's own life experiences as contributing to the learning process, and which provides opportunity for discussion and confrontation/challenge can be an empowering process for the students involved. A case study was presented exploring this process, based on the classroom experience of the faculty presenter for the session.

March 9: Empowerment and Organizations

Presentation I: Self-Help Groups for Families of Children in Crisis

Disempowerment may result from individual experience of loss of control over self and social place through illness. Power differentials between patient and health care providers contribute to disempowerment associated with an illness. Research with self-help groups suggests that involvement may empower individuals through the translation of the personal into collective experience, and through opportunities to share skills and develop collective action. Self help groups may work effectively to challenge the medical care system: groups led by lay people but which include some medical staff are most likely to effectively challenge the medical care system. In groups led by professionals, conflict appears to be tempered sufficiently to dampen social change efforts, while groups without professional members or linkages may lack channels to institutionalize change.

Presentation II: Detroit Neighborhood Organization Study

A study of 113 community organizations in Detroit explored the dual questions: 1) Is living in a Detroit neighborhood a disempowering event; and 2) Is forming a community-based organization an empowering event? Preliminary results of this study suggest that many of the organizations studied were not active or effective advocates for their communities. It was suggested that some organizations may represent entrenched, structural *dis*-empowerment, with leadership acting in collusion with the city power structure rather than effectively challenging that structure.

April 6: Empowerment at the Community and Organizational Level

Presentation I: Empowerment at the Community Level in the Developing World

A community health project in Ajoya, Mexico provided a basis for a discussion of the role of the outside change agent in community empowerment and social change. In this community, an outside change agent has lived and worked within

the community for 25 years, acting as a catalyst for change and bringing in outside resources to help support change. Discussion considered the effects on the community of the withdrawal of this individual. It appeared that access to medical care and fundraising are the two components of the change effort which are most reliant on the change agent for continuation.

Presentation II: Empowerment at the Organizational Level

An intervention to decrease the effects of occupational stress on health through increased participation, influence and social support within an organization was presented. A multi-level and multi-departmental team worked to collect and analyze data, prioritize areas for change, and develop interventions related to these priorities. Discussion centered around constraints to empowerment in this arena, and on the role of the facilitator in change efforts.

April 20: Surrogacy and Empowerment

Ethical issues in new reproductive technologies were discussed using an empowerment framework. Questions raised included: what are the effects of payment for reproductive services on the empowerment/disempowerment of the gestational mother? The social mother? The social/genetic father? For whom is the new technology empowering? What factors determine which technologies are developed and who has access to them? The use of technological solutions to social problems was also discussed, rather than social or structural change.

April 20 and May 4: Issues of Empowering Women of Color and Feminist Organizing for Women of Color

Women's perspectives define the process of organizing as well as the goals and outcomes. Feminist theory explicitly seeks to eliminate 'isms', yet the feminist movement has been perceived as exclusionary by Women of Color. The emphasis in European-American feminist ideology on gender as the most important basis for group identification or consciousness does not recognize that the experience of racism may be more powerful than gender discrimination for Women of Color. Failure to understand and acknowledge differences in experience and meaning have contributed to the failure of feminist organizers to build coalitions between Women of Color and European-American Women.

Similarities and differences between Women of Color and European-American Women affect the content and the meaning of empowerment. The European-American women's movement has frequently assumed that all women find similarities in their experience as women, failing to recognize the oppression experienced by Women of Color. These similarities and differences influence the role of insiders/outsideers in the empowering process. Feminist organizers have assumed that all women are 'insiders' due to common experiences as women: this fails to recognize boundaries based on race, common mission, geographic community, or some other commonality.