Chapter 2
Empowerment: Definitions and Meanings

In this chapter we will define the concept of empowerment, indicate the meanings given to it in various contexts, and discuss each one of these meanings.

Verbal Definition

Empowerment is related to the word power. In English, the concept leans on its original meaning of investment with legal power—permission to act for some specific goal or purpose (Rappaport, 1987).

The new meaning of the concept includes mainly references to power that develops and is acquired. People are managing to gain more control over their lives, either by themselves or with the help of others. The form *to be empowered* relates to what is both a process and an outcome—to the effort to obtain a relative degree of ability to influence the world (Staples, 1990).

Initial Meanings of Empowerment

Three of the first writers to relate systematically to the concept have had a most fundamental influence on the development of its use. Barbara Solomon (1976, 1985) emphasized empowerment as a method of social work with oppressed Afro-Americans. Peter Berger and Richard Neuhaus (1977) proposed empowerment as a way of improving the welfare services by means of mediating social institutions. Julian Rappaport (1981) developed the concept theoretically and presented it as a world-view that includes a social policy and an approach to the solution of social problems stemming from powerlessness.

These writers emphasized the important connection between individuals and community, and encouraged a contextual-

ecological approach to the treatment of social situations. They discussed the failure of social programs to provide social solutions, and the destructive by-product of these programs—the creation of powerlessness among those in need of the programs. The root of the evil, they claimed, is that local knowledge and resources are ignored in the course of corrective intervention, and that the missing resources are provided insensitively, without consideration for what is already there.

Since the eighties, four ideological approaches have provided the framework of ideas for the discussion of empowerment. The first is an ethnocentric approach, which seeks a solution for difficult social problems of ethnic and other minorities (Solomon, 1976; Gutierrez & Ortega, 1991). The second is a conservative liberal approach that seeks to revive the community as a social unit which among other things has to care for its weak citizens as well (Berger & Neuhaus, 1977). The third is a socialist approach which demands of equity and social responsibility in the treatment of social problems (Boyte, 1984). The fourth approach wants to see empowerment as a profound and professional implementation of democracy—one that will contain every legitimate social ideological current in the democratic society. This is a progressive democratic world-view which resolves to live in harmony with the other approaches and attempts to create an integration of them. Its distinctive spokesman is Julian Rappaport (1981, 1985, 1987). The present book is a continuation of this approach. Where there is a multiplicity of shades it is not always easy to distinguish a new color, and not everyone who is interested in empowerment is interested in interpreting the ideologies behind it. Since empowerment is declaredly also a world-view, it is worth acknowledging that different and even contradictory value-systems have participated in its creation.

In order to develop empowerment into a theory I first had to sort the accepted meanings, to discuss them, to analyze them in order to evaluate them, and then to recompose the

concept anew. The method I have chosen is not the only possible one (see, for comparison, the books by Judith Lee [1994] and Enid Cox and Ruth Parsons [1994]), but it has determined the character of the present study. I have chosen to divide the discussion into three categories, or levels, which in the literature on empowerment sometimes appear on their own and sometimes together, though not always in a differentiated way: individual empowerment—which focuses on what happens on the personal level in the individual's life; community empowerment—which emphasizes the collective processes and the social change; and empowerment as a professional practice—which sees empowerment as a means of professional intervention for the solution of social problems.

Individual Empowerment

The personality structure, as we know, is significantly influenced by environmental conditions. A person is not formed only by heredity and conditions of growth and care, but also by opportunities and experiences in the world around him. Among these, especially important to us is the ability to make decisions and to act in order to attain goals. This ability (or its absence) shapes the person's character and influences the degree to which she will be the effective actor in her life (Pinderhughes, 1983).

Empowerment is an interactive process which occurs between the individual and his environment, in the course of which the sense of the self as worthless changes into an acceptance of the self as an assertive citizen with socio-political ability. The outcome of the process is skills, based on insights and abilities, the essential features of which are a critical political consciousness, an ability to participate with others, a capacity to cope with frustrations and to struggle for influence over the environment (Kieffer, 1984).

The process of empowerment is an active process. Its form is determined by the circumstances and the events, but its

essence is human activity in the direction of change from a passive state to an active one. The process brings about an integration of self-acceptance and self-confidence, social and political understanding, and a personal ability to take a significant part in decision-making and in control over resources in the environment. The sense of personal ability connects with civic commitment. Individual empowerment is an expression on the individual level of a multi-leveled process which may be applied to organizations, communities, and social policy (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

Empowerment is a process of internal and external change. The internal process is the person's sense or belief in her ability to make decisions and to solve her own problems. The external change finds expression in the ability to act and to implement the practical knowledge, the information, the skills, the capabilities and the other new resources acquired in the course of the process (Parsons, 1988).

Some writers call the internal change psychological empowerment and the external change political empowerment. According to this distinction, psychological empowerment occurs on the level of a person's consciousness and sensations, while political empowerment is a real change which enables a person to take part in the making of decisions that affect his life. To achieve psychological empowerment a person requires only internal strengths, while to realize his political personal empowerment a person requires environmental conditions, mainly organizational ones, which will enable him to exercise new abilities (Gruber & Trickett, 1987).

In this discussion I do not intend to deal with the practical and the psychological processes of empowerment and the differences between them; rather, I want to emphasize the need for an integration of both. While the traditional approach sees political power as the possession of sufficient influence or authority to bring about a change, or even to impose it, the idea of empowerment adopts a different approach to power, one that does not attribute possession of power to anyone. When power is not conceived as a resource or a concrete

position in any particular site, then it is in any case both political and psychological. Indeed, people have testified that in their empowerment process they did not necessarily acquire more social influence or political control, but they did become more able participants in the political process and in local decision making. They estimated that they did not possess more absolute power to dictate the character of their environment, but they believed that they were beginning to be more effective in the dynamics of social and political negotiations (Kieffer, 1984).

Psychological Constructs and Empowerment

Several attempts have been made to define individual empowerment by means of psychological constructs. Especially conspicuous is the desire to connect empowerment to two groups of psychological constructs. The first group is that of personality constructs which are called *locus of control* (Rotter, 1966); the second group is that of cognitive constructs, which focus on self-efficacy, i.e., the belief in one's efficacy to alter aspects of life over which one can exercise some control (Bandura, 1989).

Locus of control is a concept with an internal-external continuum, which in general terms determines that someone whose *locus of control* is inside him is *internal*—he expects reinforcement from himself, possesses inner motivation, and therefore his achievements will be more under his control as opposed to someone whose locus of control is external. The *external* person perceives reinforcements as beyond control and due to chance, fate or powerful others (Rotter, 1966, Levenson, 1981).

Several studies have attempted to define individual empowerment by means of the locus of control construct. Here an internal locus of control indicates the realization of the empowerment process, while an external locus of control means the continued existence of powerlessness (Chavis, 1984;

Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Hoffman, 1978; Gruber & Trickett, 1987; Sue, 1981, in Hegar & Hunzekar, 1988).

However, studies on the *locus of control* construct indicate that there is no unequivocal connection between important factors connected with the concept of empowerment and this construct. For example, no significant connection has been found between the locus of control and political social activity. Likewise, especially in extreme states of powerlessness, no indication has been found of the advantage of *internality* over *externality*, particularly not among women. In many studies the *locus of control* has been revealed as a situation-contingent quality which may appear or disappear according to the circumstances, with no clear connection to the personality (Levenson, 1981; Sendler et al., 1983; Parsons, 1988).

The critique of *locus of control* sees it as a culture-dependent concept, which discriminates against those who are in a social and cultural state of powerlessness and lack of control. The *locus of control* research in fact presupposes that the researchers themselves have an *internal* locus, and attributes an *external locus of control* to certain especially weak population groups. If so, it is preferable to see this construct as an indicator of the social situation of those population groups, instead of using it to measure the personality of individuals (Antonovsky, 1979).

Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989) is a central and ongoing individual mechanism (which operates by means of cognitive, motivational and affective processes) which is comprised of a person's perceived belief in her capability to exercise control over events. Studies indicate that a person's belief in her ability to achieve outcomes is, among other things, connected to her thinking patterns — to what extent they help or hinder her to realize goals. This belief determines how a person will judge her situation, and influences the degree of motivation that people mobilize and sustain in given tasks, their degree of endurance in situations of stress and their vulnerability to depression, and the activities and the environmental frameworks that people choose. The

social influences operating in the selected environments can contribute to personal development by the interests and competencies they cultivate and the social opportunities they provide, which subsequently shape their possibilities of development (Bandura, 1989, 1997). The connection between the self-efficacy mechanism and the empowerment process is so clear that there can be no doubt about the value of an integration between them.

The psychological constructs are not the subject of this book, for if we assume that every powerless person needs empowerment, and that potential empowerment exists in every person, then personality qualities are not essential for an understanding of the various levels of the empowerment process or its outcomes. Beyond this, the hidden message in the personality constructs is that an empowered person has changed psychologically in ways that only professionals can understand and measure. Such a message contradicts empowerment language, which calls for equal and transparent relations between professionals (including researchers) and the people in whose lives they intervene (Rappaport, 1985). I recommend that as part of adopting an empowering professional practice we should avoid using concepts which brand people in advance.

Since empowerment is not a particular quality of a person, but an important condition for his existence, its realization must correspond to the most diverse (theoretically, at least, the infinite) number of human variations. Paradoxically, this very complexity is what enables the process to harmoniously absorb a vast quantity of psychological constructs (Zimmerman, 1995). Although we cannot dismiss the attempt to make connections between psychological theories and the concept of empowerment, my preference is to develop empowerment in a less psychological and more social direction.

Individual Empowerment as a Political Concept

The advantage of the concept of empowerment lies in its integration of the level of individual analysis with the level of social and political meaning. This conjunction appears in feminist thinking, which connects the personal with the political: what happens in the life of an individual woman is not only her private affair, it is also an expression of her social situation (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brentley, 1988).

If we acknowledge that politics is the everyday activities of ordinary people who are attempting to change social and economic institutions, individual empowerment cannot consist only of personal assertiveness, mobility, and a psychological experience of power (Morgen & Bookman, 1988).

Feminist thinking presents the personal and the political as two sides of one coin, in remonstration against a common social tendency to divide what is considered worthy of public discussion and is openly and publicly discussed from what is not such and belongs inside the private sphere (Ackelsberg, 1988). This division defined women's problems as *private*, prevented public recognition of their importance, excluded them and separated them from one another, and thus prevented them having a community life which would strengthen their perceptions, establishing a vicious circle that augmented their exclusion and institutionalized their disconnection from politics. In this way, too, the private space and the public space were divided: the home and the residential environment as one entity, and public life and work as another. Men are connected with the public domain—the world at large; women with the private domain—the home.

This division has been harmful not only to women. Any division that contributes to isolation and separation between domains in the individual's life brings it about that people do not comprehend the connection between what goes on in their work situation and what happens in their home and community, just as they do not understand the connection between political decisions (or non-decisions) and personal

economic outcomes. The severance between the private and the public has reinforced the view that citizens, as individuals, or as residents in a community, are not capable of effecting a change in politics or the economy: they are busy realizing personal goals and are involved in conflicts with one another for the sake of their own interests. *Self-interest* is natural (Perloff, 1987), and this implies that for people to cooperate and contribute to the general interest there needs to be a great change in behavior, attitudes, and human nature. Empowerment is a political concept because it comes out against these views, and connects the individual with a public, a community, and with politics. Individual empowerment is a political demand by women – and men – not to stop them at the door of their residences (Ackelsberg, 1988). Empowerment promotes involvement in politics because it broadens a person's social understanding and connects her with others in the same situation; empowerment broadens a person's horizons, imbues him with faith in social change, and accords him the ability to change.

Group Empowerment—The Group as a Means of Empowerment

Anyone who has gone through the experience of joining a self-help group in order to get help, and has discovered that she can also help others, knows how someone who begins the journey towards empowerment feels (Rappaport, 1985). The group is the perfect environment for consciousness-raising, for mutual help, for developing social skills, for exercising problem-solving, and for experiencing inter-personal influence. Empowerment means coming out from the limited boundaries of the *I* into the expanse of possibilities of the *we*. It was only natural that the professionals who in the seventies developed the concept of the self-help group would add the concept of empowerment to it in the eighties (Reismann, 1983, 1985; Kahn & Bender, 1985).

When the empowerment process is undergone by the individual in a group, it also includes the enabling influence of a peer group within a collective-organizational structure, and also relations with a mentor that enrich the experience (Kieffer, 1983). The conjunction of empowerment with mutuality – *mutual empowerment* – broadens people's possibilities of controlling their lives. It has been found that people in self-help groups who have both provided and received help have gained more satisfaction from their participation in the group and more self-esteem than people who only received help or only provided help (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Maton & Rappaport, 1984).

Participation in a self-help group is considered an ideal (though not exclusive) means of encouraging individual empowerment, for such a group produces empowerment beyond the individual as well: people receive emotional and social support in the course of a change process in which they provide concrete help to others and acquire new skills, including development of ability for future public action (Dodd & Gutierrez, 1990; Chesler & Chesney, 1995).

Critical Consciousness and Individual Empowerment

The development of critical consciousness is, without doubt. The most significant personal experience in the empowerment process. Critical consciousness is the process by means of which people acquire an increasingly greater understanding of the cultural-social conditions that shape their lives, and of the extent of their ability to change these conditions. A person lives not only in the present but also in history, and is capable not only of interpreting but also of interpreting interpretations—hence a critical consciousness is essential and basic to all human learning (Freire, 1970).

Critical self-consciousness includes people's recognition of their right to give their experiences a name. People learn to speak in their own language, and to give names to the elements of their world (Van Den Bergh & Cooper, 1986).

Critical consciousness is people's better understanding of their powerlessness and of the systematic forces that oppress them. The success or failure of a particular struggle or activity are only one aspect of empowerment. The change in people's outlook on themselves, and in their ability to understand the world in which they live, is more important. The empowerment of a woman who is poor, belongs to an ethnic minority, and is at the bottom of the social status and income levels, expresses itself in her understanding and her consciousness of the dynamics of her oppressed condition, and not in her success to liberate herself from it. Her power expresses itself in a translation of her consciousness into action with others in her situation in order to withstand the heavy burden of their lack of resources (Gilkes, 1988; Bookman, 1988).

We may distinguish two main approaches to the significance of critical consciousness in the empowerment process: those who see empowerment as essentially an internal process see the development of critical consciousness as the main realization of empowerment. On this view, critical consciousness is the outcome of empowerment (Luttrell, 1988; Morgen, 1988). Those who claim that the goal of empowerment is actual achievements see the development of critical consciousness as an important stage, but only an initial one in the process (Kieffer, 1984; Gruber & Trickett, 1987).

Consciousness is formed by means of praxis in the course of action (Morgen, 1988). Hence, one may also join in collective action without such consciousness and, through actual experience and learning about such experience, one may achieve consciousness and empowerment. Action alone does not deepen critical consciousness, just as learning with no experience at all does not achieve this. Theories of learning and education have long since recognized the importance of experiential learning. The empowerment process makes manifest the importance of the application of this approach to

the social domain (Rivera, 1990; Freire, 1970; Lane & Sawaia, 1991).

Empowerment, then, is a pro-active concept that encourages an active and initiative-taking approach to life, on the individual level as well. The individual process entails the will to influence the environment on all levels: it begins with a sense of faith in one's own strength, advances to activity in inter-personal domains, and continues from there to activity for social change. An elderly woman may feel empowered from the very fact that she is still independent and controls her own private affairs, but she can feel much greater control over her life when she is involved in neighborhood activity for herself and for other citizens in her situation. Action and consciousness are bound up with one another and vary from one person to another. They, together with the other constituents of the process, contribute to the vast variety of forms and contents of the empowerment process.

Individual empowerment is a process of personal development. The process involves both a development of skills and abilities, and a more positive self-definition. People testify to a better feeling about themselves, a sense of more self-respect and self-esteem. A new self-confidence and a feeling of self-efficacy are connected with a redefinition of the self, and the latter is closely linked with a real improvement in personal knowledge, abilities, skills, resources and life opportunities. A higher level of personal activity makes possible more effective inter-personal relations. Since self-perception is based on achievements in the real world, there is a clear positive interaction between development of self-confidence and reinforcement of personal ability.

The ability to redefine yourself and to act efficiently for yourself is the essence of individual empowerment. But individual empowerment cannot be an exclusive or principal component of the concept of empowerment because powerlessness is not only an individual problem, but also a social and structural condition. People, generally, are not

powerless because of lacks in their private lives or their personalities, but because they belong to a powerless group. Of course, in each such group there will always be those who, thanks to exceptional talent or luck, will attain to personal success and power (the converse situation also exists: in a group that possesses power there will always be some powerless individuals). Nonetheless, although these are known and accepted truths, psychological and individual explanations of success and failure are still prevalent, and the conservative social policy that reinforces them is still in vogue. These explanations remain in force because they cast the responsibility for the situation and the onus of change on the individual victims of inequality and oppression, instead of on the social structure which is the root of these problems. Empowerment is the opposite approach, and that is why its social dimensions are so important. Individual empowerment is only one constituent of the process which as a whole connects the personal and the individual with the collective and the social in people's lives.

Community Empowerment

Community empowerment is the increased control of people as a collective over outcomes important to their lives. Before discussing community empowerment we need to clarify the concept *community* in the sense used in the present book.

The Community and the Common Critical Characteristic

Community has a meaning of a life that is more egalitarian, participatory and intimate than life in society at large, which demands the objectification of man and anonymous obedience to authority and law. The community as an image is a kind of antithesis of the bureaucratic, hierarchical, formal and judiciary society. The concept is to a certain extent abstract, but at the same time concrete, because it operates in the geographical, the ethnic, and the functional sense. The

need for a community is a need to live together, to trust, to communicate. In the Middle Ages the concept *commune* was used to describe a settlement with an independent identity and government. In English, *community* and *communication* are derived from the same root (Handler, 1990).

There are several approaches to community:

1. A utopian approach oriented to a vision of a future community whose members will be able to fulfill their human and social potential. This approach draws its inspiration from the utopians of the 19th century. Although it is far from the idyllic scene of adults and children who are cultured, educated, strong, healthy, and possess high moral qualities, who group together in a rural setting to grow vegetables and weave clothes, it too preaches egalitarianism and autarchy. The separation from society at large is necessary in order to realize important social goals of the members (Friedmann, 1987).

2. A rehabilitational approach which focuses on the situation of ethnic minorities, and more recently also of other minorities, such as the disabled (Dolnick, 1993). On this view, the community struggles with life beside a different and sometimes hostile society, and grapples with the dilemma of integration into this society. Here too a utopian vision exists: to revitalize the intimate and supportive community in which, more by necessity than because they want to, people whom the society isolates and discriminates against live today (O'Sullivan, 1984; Friedmann, 1989; Rivera & Erlich, 1984, Cendeluci, 1995).

3. A social approach which redefines community and departs, perhaps too sharply (because quite a few people still live in traditional communities in our time too) from the traditional community as it used to be (Warren, 1975). The new community is a social collective entity, and the image appropriate to it is one of people with common problems and generally a common dependence on service

providers. This is a community which does not include all the aspects of existence, but responds to those needs in people's lives for the sake of which it was created (Reinharz, 1984). Parents of children with Down's Syndrome can create a community for themselves to deal with all aspects of their lives as parents of these children: the care, the raising and the development of the child. However, they may also have life interests which they do not share with this community (Handler, 1990).

I will be referring mostly to this kind of partial and changing community. It has advantages for analysis on both the macro and the micro levels. On the macro level—the partial community which changes according to circumstances constitutes a recognition of the fact that not all the social needs can, or have to, find a response in a community setting. Community is not the supreme end, but a supportive and complementary means for human existence (Handler, 1990). On the micro level—this community softens the friction between the individual's needs for autonomy and the demand for loyalty to the collective and the imposition of group values implicit in the idea of the community. The individual can choose, and can create a community; he is free to leave a community and join a new one at his discretion.

The concept *common critical characteristic* (Sadan and Peri, 1990), too, supports the conceptualization of the partial community. For example, a geographical place is at times a common critical characteristic of many of the people living in a certain deprived neighborhood. When the basis for solidarity with others is not geographical, it is necessary to seek the common critical characteristic which causes people (or others in their environment) to define themselves in a similar way and apart from the environment. The common critical characteristic is what defines and distinguishes people, and cannot be ignored. Hence it has a potential for the creation of a community. For example, people suffering from hemophilia do not usually live in one geographical community, but they

have a potential to create a community around their common critical characteristic: they need special services, some of which are provided, and some of which are lacking, partial, or defective. Their everyday lives and the problems that preoccupy them are similar and they share a common fate. All these are a common basis for connection. The connection may be partial, unstable and changing, or permanent and requiring more commitment, but it exists, and a community may be built upon it.

It is important to remember not to define all people who share the same common critical characteristic as a community: not everyone who carries the critical characteristic has to belong to a community even if it exists—joining a community is a conscious and voluntary act. Nonetheless, these two concepts – community and common critical characteristic – complement and reinforce one another in very important ways. One of these, perhaps the most important one, is that the creation of the community helps the surrounding society to understand the critical characteristic as a social problem, instead of seeing it as an individual problem. While an individual view isolates those who suffer from a problem, and casts the responsibility for their situation and for changing it upon them as individuals, the creation of a community around a critical characteristic is an expression of an improvement of the human ability to cope with a social problem: there is an improvement both in the ability of those suffering from the problem to ease their suffering, and in the society's ability to understand their distress and to seek a social solution for it.

The definition of community empowerment contains processes that have diverse collective bases. As already noted, community empowerment on a basis of geographical boundaries, as in residential neighborhoods, is only one of the possibilities. Also important is community empowerment of people whose common characteristic is ethnic origin, gender (women), age (the elderly), or a difficult and limiting life problem (such as deaf or paraplegic people). Further on we

will discuss these various categories and also some issues that are common to community empowerment of all kinds.

Community Empowerment on a Geographical Basis

The first thing that the idea of community empowerment brings to mind is a neighborhood, or any other defined residential area. It should be made clear that since human existence as such is anchored in a locale in a specific space, the discussion of community empowerment on a non-geographical basis may also take place within the bounds of a geographical neighborhood. In such a case, however, the common critical characteristic of the people involved may be their origin and not their place of residence (e.g., Greeks in Arcadia, New York, or Armenians in Jerusalem).

The discussion of community empowerment on a geographical basis is conducted almost separately in a number of professional disciplines, e.g.,: community psychology (Wandersman & Florin, 1988), community work (Rubin & Rubin, 1992), urban studies and planning (Friedmann, 1992; Brower & Taylor, 1998), social action (Boyte, 1984), and social policy (Page-Adams & Sherraden, 1997). I have chosen to present the essentials without relating to each domain separately.

Techniques of resident participation in the affairs of their neighborhood are considered as encouraging individual empowerment: participation encourages perceived self-efficacy, expectations of successful group solutions, and increased civic commitment (Wandersman & Florin, 1988). Community empowerment is manifested in the increasing actual power of neighborhood groups, especially when the participation produces a change in decision making in the neighborhood and leads to residents' organizations having more control over their affairs (Biegel, 1984). Only when residents' participation in their neighborhood's agenda becomes an accepted procedure (where poor neighborhoods are concerned, this is in most cases an achievement that

entails considerable efforts) can community empowerment be defined as collective knowledge of problems and alternative solutions and skills in the presentation of issues, in groups leadership, and in implementation of tactics (Fawcett et al., 1984).

Community work builds the individual's ability to act together with others and to create a community. It teaches people to cooperate—to make group decisions, to solve common problems and to mobilize resources for the general good. The belief in an active democracy, in maximal participation of residents in the life of their community, in the realization of people's right to influence important decisions in their lives, are the basis of thought about empowerment, and undoubtedly originate in the values of community work.

However, in community work, as in any professional practice, the values do not attest to the actual practice. Hence it is possible to measure the degree of empowerment that is encouraged by community work in the process of professional intervention by means of the *DARE* criteria: 1. Who Determines the goals? 2. Who Acts to achievement the goals? 3. Who Receives the actions? 4. Who Evaluates the actions? (Rubin & Rubin, 1992).

The test of community empowerment, then, is the active participation of the people themselves in processes of decision making that affect the community, starting from the stage of formulating the goals, through to the stage of evaluating the outcomes of the effort. The more the *DARE* criteria point in the direction of resident groups and organizations and less in the direction of formal services and/or factors external to the community, the more community empowerment there is in that area of intervention.

Some writers believe that community empowerment is expressed in the community's ability to create new human, existential, economic, social and political values for its residents, as an alternative to dysfunctional values that penetrate into the community from the capitalist economy, such as intensive consumption separated from daily life,

isolated individualism. Community empowerment therefore depends on a de-linking from the system at large, and on greater local self-reliance based on resources that the community households can produce (Friedmann, 1987). The outcome may be an making change: *the recovery of the political community*. The goal is not community empowerment, but the reactivation of political life—a society whose residents are active in the processes of civil governance. This is an ideal way of life that includes: cooperative production of consumer goods, democracy at home and outside the home, and active participation in political and community life. Household economy, the society and the world economy are integrated together in the framework of a *moral economy* that is based on social justice in the division of resources and the care of people (Friedmann, 1989).

In the domain of urban planning models that declare goals of empowerment are occasionally presented (Bradbury et al., 1987); these models accord people more choice, proclaim a message of more equality, recommend that people should not be labeled, nor isolated in services of their own. The danger in these models is disempowerment resulting from inattention to the importance of the empowerment process. For example, the establishment of a city-wide pilot project means most significant changes in the lives of people who will not be participants in the planing or the implementation of the change. The deterministic premise that the outcomes of such a plan will lead to empowerment of people has no connection with the empowerment approach as it is presented here. A social plan which makes use of the word empowerment to describe final outcomes only, and does not deal with processes of community development or mobilization of participants from the area of intervention, is not empowering.

Following Berger and Neuhaus' classical article (1977), the idea of turning the community into an exclusive provider of welfare services to its members has also been called community empowerment. The critique of this trend stems from concern about the erosion of the idea of the welfare

state by means of such solutions. Although not all the present institutions are efficient as service providers or promoters of public participation, neighborhood organizations too can be "institutionalized, rigid, inaccessible, insensitive and undemocratic just like professional bureaucracies" (Kramer, 1988). Exaggerated enthusiasm about voluntary activity in the community, mutual help and social networks may cause harm, because the replacement of bureaucratic state services by community services is problematic for three reasons: 1. The social networks on which they rely do not always exist, or are not always acceptable to those in need. It also happens that the most needy are not wanted by the geographical community or by the community services (Borkman, 1984). 2. The resources of the community service may be inadequate to provide efficient service. 3. The accountability of community organizations is still particularly problematic. We often tend to forget that the present, formal and bureaucratic form of service provision developed in the wake of the failure of the mediating institutions – the community, the family, the church and the voluntary organization – to provide a response to complex needs.

John Friedmann (1992) claims that community empowerment is the creation of access to social and economic resources. Poverty, then, results from lack of access to essential resources, not only economic but also political and social resources. This being so, some writers claim that politics, not planning, is the major process by means of which needs should be identified and responses for them should be located (Marris, 1987; Hajer, 1989).

The term community empowerment hints at the (at least theoretical) possibility that in a certain sense it is the community itself, and not only the individuals who belong to groups or organizations that comprise it, that undergoes an empowerment process. The question that precedes such a possibility is whether the geographical community can act collectively. Urban neighborhoods lack the primal connections of kinship, emotional connection and economic inter-relations

that in the past created a community and enabled community activity. The typical urban neighborhood of today is, in most cases, a place where individuals and families are separate entities which, by chance or intentionally, have chosen to live in a particular place. Such a divided and thin foundation cannot serve as a basis for solidarity (Davis, 1991). But solidarity can emerge in a residential area when the interests on which it is based stem from non-geographic sources, such as relations of race, religion, ethnicity and class that are expressed in residential neighborhoods. In other words, neighborhoods may serve as arenas in which races, religions, nations or classes are separated spatially and concentrated socially. People who live in the same locale can act collectively on the basis of political and material interests which are not local in origin (Harvey, 1973). However, experience shows that people act collectively on the basis of interests and out of a solidarity that are created in the place itself. Neighborhoods act as a community in order to improve security, services or quality of life, at times in order to protect the value of local property, and at times because inaction means participating in the destruction of the community through silent agreement (Davis, 1991).

Beside the organization of groups which manage to pool their resources into a common effort, there are also groups that act apart from one another. There are situations in which one neighborhood organizes itself for action against the establishment; there are cases when these neighborhood groups initiate separate efforts for interests of their own; and there is activity of neighborhood groups against one another and against the establishment (Atzmon, 1988). The relevant question is: what is the connection between all these kinds of community activity and community empowerment.

Some writers describe an empowered community as a place in which the residents have the skills, the will, and the resources to act in order to regulate the quality of life in their community, and where there exist a structure and relations between the organizations and the agencies: the

empowered community responds to threats to its quality of life, or initiates efforts for the improvement of the quality of life, by means of a network of community organizations. In addition, in an empowered community the following conditions exist: 1. Political openness, which is manifested in serious consideration of the residents' criticism and claims. 2. A strong leadership which seeks the residents' advice, and knows when to confront external forces and when to receive help from the outside. 3. Strong connections between the community's formal and informal leadership. 4. Access to the mass media, such as radio, television, the press, which reflect all sectors of the community (Zimmerman, n.d.). In my estimation, the conditions posited in these descriptions of the perfect community and the perfect environment are not attainable in most community empowerment processes. They may be aspired to, but positing too high a target for the realization of empowerment disregards the importance of primary stages in the process which involve development in the direction of control over the environment and the creation of a community.

Situations in which the community struggles for its survival connect well with community empowerment. In such situations, organized community activity to prevent external intervention that threatens its very existence is essential. If the community does not act, or does not act in time, or does not act efficiently, it does not survive. Those neighborhoods which lack consciousness of the danger they are in, and/or the organizational tools to prepare against it before it happens, are annihilated (Levine, 1982; Gans, 1982; Erikson, 1994). Community empowerment stems from the immense sense of achievement that comes from safeguarding the community's continued existence, and from the assurance of the well-being of its residents, but also from the struggle itself (Couto, 1989; O'Sullivan et al., 1984).

Community Empowerment on the Basis of a Common Critical Characteristic

The common critical characteristic makes it possible to reveal further aspects of community empowerment, and especially to reinforce the non-geographical aspect.

Ethnic minorities

Belonging to an ethnic minority is a common critical characteristic such as origin, language, at times religion or a difference in outward appearance, and life in a different and a more or less hostile environment—all or some of these signs. The dilemma in ethnic community empowerment (even if it is not always articulated explicitly) stems from the tension between the negative and the positive aspects of the barrier between the ethnic community and the environment in which it lives. While isolation by coercion and rejection leads to powerlessness, alienation and backwardness, voluntary segregation facilitates safeguarding of values, uniqueness, and authenticity.

Community empowerment of ethnic minorities, then, involves two sets of needs: needs for control, required by people who live in conditions of permanent marginality (Gutierrez & Ortega, 1991; Solomon, 1976), and need for autonomy, especially cultural. Autonomy is important to the ethnic minority in order to restore its lost dignity, and to enable the community to continue living in frameworks of its own—including the retention of their language and customs (O'Sullivan, 1984; Rivera & Erlich, 1984).

Consequently, two approaches to ethnic community empowerment may be identified: a *corrective* approach and a *preserving* approach. The corrective approach sees empowerment as a method of treatment which will ease problems created as a result of prolonged deprivation and discrimination, and will help a group overcome obstacles on the path to social equality. This approach affirms that it does

not cast blame on the victim, but it still contains a strong emphasis on the adaptation and adjustment of the minority itself to the society around it (Weaver, 1982; Solomon, 1976, 1985; Luttrell, 1988). The preserving approach also wants to overcome discrimination and deprivation, but to preserve the ethnic group's special qualities as well. This approach also demands from the society at large a degree of adjustment to the existence of an ethnic minority in its midst. The ethnic community as a deprived and discriminated-against minority needs empowerment in order to be able to contribute to the society within which it lives from the resources innate in it – original knowledge, values and life-style – and all these are not considered valuable as long as the community is powerless. Hence preserving community empowerment emphasizes the benefit the society at large may obtain from the ethnic community's valuable resources: the community values, the moral economy, the protection of ecological values and new sources of knowledge (Rivera, 1990; Friedmann, 1989, 1990). Instead of seeing the provision of services to ethnic minorities as an organizational problem, ethnicity should be seen as a permanent component in the deploymentof the social services. The society at large needs to make an adjustment to the minorities living in its midst and to provide them with services in the appropriate language and in a style appropriate to the social values that are important to them (Morales, 1984).

We must beware, however, of a one-dimensional approach to the ethnic minority—to remain content with a sensitivity to the ethnic culture, and non-intervention in the minority's norms and the cultural expectations, cannot present a full picture of the ethnic group's situation. This is to attribute too much value to the cultural common denominator within the group, while ignoring the low and powerless status which informs the principal experiences that shape the life of the individual who belongs to this minority. Lack of self-esteem and a sense of self-blame are a part of the ethnic experience, no less than the culture (Horton & Freire, 1990).

Attention should also be devoted to those ethnic minorities whose absorption difficulties are not temporary. They live in separate communities in a society which is not interested in them. Their main goal is survival in a hostile environment. The more skilled these communities are in survival, the more distinctive in character they become. In contrast to the description of the open and partial community referred to above, communities which live in a deterministic life-reality of racial segregation and economic exploitation tend to be relatively closed and permanent. The points of entrance and exit into and out of them are sharply defined, and are based on the cultural, socio-political, and economic situation of the people (Rivera & Erlich, 1984).

Community empowerment of an ethnic minority has to do with overcoming the direct and indirect obstacles of power which are responsible for the ongoing disempowerment of this minority (Solomon, 1976). Some writers see self-help groups as method for empowerment of ethnic minorities (Gutierrez et al., 1990; Neighbors, 1991; Gutierrez & Ortega, 1991). Others side with organization and social action as main vehicles for solving difficult social problems of minorities, and attack the individual (and group) approach to solutions as unsuitable and hindering (Russel-Erlich & Rivera, 1986). Insistence on diverse means, which will always also include community methods, is the key to adapting empowering social solutions to the many and contradictory needs of these groups (Rappaport, 1987). People with special needs, such as disabled people, are beginning to interpret their special situation in society as analogous to that of an ethnic minority (Finkelstein, 1993; Dolnick, 1993; Deegan, 1998). Hence, the path to community empowerment of people with disabilities may be similar in some aspects to that of ethnic minorities (Morris, 1997).

Women

Being marginal and powerless does not indicate a population's numerical weight in the society. Although women constitute half of the world's population, they are discussed in the present context because like the elderly, children, and disabled people, many women are powerless. At times it seems that the only population in the Western world that does not need empowerment is that of healthy, white, male members of the upper classes. This is also a superficial but quite comprehensive description of the decision and policy makers in Western democratic society who shape the social and physical environment and allocate resources, leaving the majority feeling worthless and marginal.

The significant connection between women and community empowerment is their high numerical participation in efforts to create community. The question of how it is that women are more active than men in the residential environment has occupied many researchers (Reinharz, 1984). Some writers explain this by the women's responsibility for social reproduction, an activity which is not acknowledged and is thus rendered valueless by the economic system. The kind of community action that women are generally involved in, at least at the outset of their empowerment process, is close to their social reproduction functions, like organizing a club for children or running a neighborhood laundromat. In this way women create community as an extension of home (Markusen, 1982; Feldman & Stall, 1992).

The greater participation of women in creating community among poor and weak populations is also explained by the fact that women can adopt alternative criteria for the definition of social success. While men of the same social class accept the definition of success that is accepted in society at large – that a successful man is rich and fulfills a valuable social role – society defines a successful woman as married, a mother, mature, responsible and caring. As a result of this difference, women do not experience the powerlessness that

stems from their social situation with the same intensity that men do (Luttrell, 1988). These interpretations suggest that the community empowerment process of women converts the sources of their powerlessness, which are their traditional roles as housewives and mothers, into a power base. From this starting point they become stronger and continue to extend their activities to additional domains with a political character.

The Elderly

Another *special* population which also constitutes a considerable part of human society are the elderly. Especially powerless among these are the poor elderly. Elderly people suffer from lack of economic security more than other populations do. Elderly people suffer from physical and emotional stress, which stems from physical deterioration and from the loss of a marriage partner and of friends of the same age. Elderly people generally lack political influence. Western society has a negative attitude to old age and aging, and in this way increases the powerlessness of the elderly, as well as the social and psychological pressures upon them. The social services for elderly people encourage dependence and helplessness. They do not enable clients' involvement, and that is why the alienation of the elderly from the inappropriate services given to them is increasing (Cox, 1988).

The needs of the elderly are universal and are connected with their age and not with special problems. That is why their powerlessness must be understood as stemming from a social policy of deprivation and from discriminatory social values. Hence their conspicuous need for an empowering environment. Since they are very dependent on public services, encouragement of empowerment among the elderly depends on the creation of a service system based on empowering principles (Gallant et al., 1985).

People with Disabilities

I refer here to the empowerment of people with severe physical or mental disabilities, including people who are released from mental health institutions into life in the community. In addition to empowerment, these groups need advocacy (Rose & Black, 1985; Wolff, 1987). Advocacy/empowerment is an approach to empowerment which sees representation of the powerless as an essential preliminary stage in the empowerment of the most vulnerable people. This approach emphasizes the important role of the change agent who, among other things, serves as an advocate of the people who need empowerment. In contrast to the strong emphasis on self-help and the diminished role of professional assistance so common in empowerment practice, the advocacy/empowerment approach emphasizes the need for an external agent. The reason for this is simple. Very weak people will not succeed in embarking on an empowerment process without help in creating the minimal conditions for managing the environment. The goal of advocacy, then, is the creation of environmental conditions that will enable even the weakest people access to empowerment processes.

The environment relates to the mentally and physically disabled with hostility and rejection. These people need empowerment as part of a survival plan: they have to learn how to survive by their own strength and how to conduct independent lives. They need community empowerment because life isolation from others endangers their existence. For them, the residential area in which they have to learn to live is an object of social change, rather than a community to become integrated in, and the advocacy process is oriented primarily towards achieving this goal. To enable vulnerable people a basic existence and their rightful access to the various services, they need advocates who will pave a path for them to walk on so as to begin processes that will gain them some control over their lives (Rose & Black, 1985).

Community Empowerment as Political Concept

Some writers argue that community empowerment is a political concept, mainly because it does not content itself with local change and individual achievements, and openly aspires to social transformation. Empowerment means liberation of people from the oppression and deprivation they are subject to, and is oriented to populations which do not obtain social justice. Hence, someone who sees community empowerment as only a means of delivering public community services is manipulating the concept of community in order to exclude the local community and to prevent its members from developing a social consciousness (Russel-Erlich & Rivera, 1986; Boyte et al., 1986; Friedmann, 1987).

People's discovery that they have the right and the ability to control their destiny, their lives and their environment is the basis for political change. In spite of this, many people choose to ignore the political meaning implicit in the concept of empowerment. On the other hand, there are people who relate literally to the power component of empowerment, and interpret it as partisan intervention (Messinger, 1982). Politicians frequently make use of the word empowerment, and have made it a common political slogan, and hence a clich?. This state of affairs has only an indirect connection to the subject of the present chapter—it is a further proof of the reception and broad acceptance of the concept, but does not suffice to clarify its political meaning.

Political community empowerment opposes the conservative approach, which is also heavily represented in the empowerment literature. The conservative-liberal writing is not less *political* than the radical writing, but the consensus ideology has the ability and the talent to put on the form of a neutral, apolitical and rational paradigm, while writers on the left wing of the political spectrum appear more political in their outlook (Goodwin, 1980).

In determining that people come to politics as individuals and equals, conservative liberalism denies the roots that people

have in communities; it denies the creation of communities around class, race or ethnic origin, and ignores the influence of economic inequality on participation in politics. In the name of protection of individualism, the liberal viewpoint isolates people, and at the same time turns them into a homogeneous mass. A community whose members share interests only is a reduction of the ideas of the human community into an instrumental, arbitrary and unstable alliance (Ackelsberg, 1988).

Much evidence exists that people in the lower classes and in minority groups are not isolated in terms of community. Women, as noted, are especially known as *community builders* (Reinharz, 1984), and hence, creating a community is probably not the difficult part of their empowerment. The political problem encountered by the poor and vulnerable is their inability to connect their problems, desires and outlooks and those of their peers with the political establishment which is detached from them yet controls their lives. Politics is not a narrow framework of activities in which only a few people are involved with the aim of influencing structures of governmental power. Politics is a range of activities which people are involved in out of a concern for everyday problems of caring for the life of the home, the community and work. The basis for political activity and the source of community empowerment is, therefore, the need for social relations and for human contact, which is as universal as the need for profits and for representation of interests (Ackelsberg, 1988).

The political approach to community empowerment is part of the critique of conservative liberalism and its abandoning of the welfare state. The background for this is the hard social conditions in the United States, not only among the poor, but also among the lower middle class (Ehrenreich, 1992; Philips, 1993). Added to this is the perpetual lack of social security of elderly people, women, and ethnic minorities these past two decades (Edelman, 1997). The radicals accuse the conservatives of creating insoluble social problems as a consequence of a Darwinist social policy that supports only

slight reforms and ameliorative steps. The conservatives' use of an identical concept – empowerment – creates a new arena where an argument can take place between the various approaches. Moreover, the use of the same concept serves other interests of both sides as well, For example, each side can go on camouflaging its real intentions for tactical purposes. The liberals are interested in appearing more innovative and the radicals are interested in sounding more reasonable than they actually are. The creation of a social consensus is, on the face of it, an interest of conservative liberalism. Hence, the liberal approach prefers to pour its own contents into new concepts rather than to come out against them. This may be seen as a linguistic imperialism. The most important common interest is that the entire range of participants in the political discourse has a real need to reach new audiences by means of new messages—and empowerment is one of these messages.

Organizational Empowerment—The Organization as a Means of Community Empowerment

Participation in organizations and groups in the community is part of the definition of the empowerment of the individual and of his community as well. This combination leads to the question of how much empowerment the individuals bring to the organization and how much empowerment they receive from the organization. In other words, are organizations empowering because powerful people have joined them, or is empowerment what the people gain by means of their participation in the organization? (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988; Maton & Rappaport, 1984). Since empowerment can be realized only in connection with others, in groups, organizations and communities of people who feel and act together, the small local organization that is managed democratically is a dual vehicle of empowerment, both for social change and for individual empowerment (Crowfoot et al., 1983).

On the theoretical level, I think that organizational empowerment as a separate category of empowerment leads to a dead end, because the concept is defined by identical means to those of community empowerment (Zimmerman, n.d.). Beyond the tautology this produces, concern with organizational empowerment also entails an ethical flaw. Just as concentration of individual empowerment alone ignores the context of the individual as part of a collective with a history of powerlessness, so too emphasis on the organization as the goal of empowerment subordinates the goals of social change to organizational reforms, a knowledge-packed subject in itself, which in any case makes use of the concept of empowerment for its own purposes (Crowfoot et. al., 1983).

These organizations, then, are means of empowering individuals and communities, and not goals of empowerment in themselves. The creation of community organizations and their extension to as many as possible of the life domains that are important to the community are an indication of community empowerment (Couto, 1989). The sophistication of the community organization and the degree of cohesion of its members are expressions of community empowerment. A number of studies indicate that organizations that were created in a community by the community members (as distinct from organizations for the sake of the community created by outsider volunteers) have been responsible for a number of improvements: for physical improvements in the neighborhood; for more stability in the neighborhood; for the creation of a sense of community; for coping with social problems by setting up new services for the growth and development of the people who are members of the organizations (Florin, 1989).

Since empowerment is a process which can be set in motion only by the people concerned themselves, community organizations can provide the climate, the relations, the resources and the administrative means that enable people to achieve more control of their lives; in other words, community

organizations create empowering environments. While the environment that promotes individual empowerment is more intimate, involving interpersonal relations in a group framework, in an environment that promotes community empowerment the organizational aspect is conspicuous in two dimensions: 1. The organization itself: the climate, the relations, the resources and the procedures of the organization and their influence on members of the organization. 2. The community: the climate, the relations, the resources and the procedures that are established between the organization and its environment, which includes the community, other organizations in the community and outside it, and other factors that the organization decides to exert its influence on in order to achieve its goals (Simon, 1990). If so, it is not only the organization's success that signifies the community empowerment process; the very existence of community organizations is an indication of the process. In this context it is important to remember the warning against the use of *success* criteria as signs of empowerment, for success can be defined in more than one way, and an attempt to define it *objectively* and *professionally* may have disempowering effects (Rappaport, 1984).

Community empowerment is realized through organizations, and may be defined and identified by them. Community organizations exist at all levels of organization, starting from support and task groups through to volunteer organizations and social protest movements. The level and the sophistication of the organizations certainly have an important role in empowerment, but the very existence of community organizations, their number and their deployment over the various life domains point to the realization of community empowerment.

Some Issues of Community Empowerment

Resistance

Activity, organization, and creation of a community originate in resistance. People protest against injustice, deprivation, lack of resources and opportunities. Resistance is a catalyst for activism and empowerment (Kieffer, 1984; Feldman & Stall, 1994). Community empowerment develops in conditions of injustice by protest against the harsh conditions, the indifference and the lack of cooperation on the part of the bureaucratic institutions that are responsible for providing services to the neighborhood. When the injustice is overt and glaring it can be paralyzing (Gaventa, 1980). It is important to recall the vulnerability and the fragility of powerless people, beside the very same people's powers and the abilities to withstand failure and conditions of pressure (Erikson, 1994).

Some writers combine the establishment's hostility and indifference into a single thesis if disempowerment. In my view, in order to understand resistance that develops into empowerment, it is particularly important to differentiate between the two (Schuman, 1987). Indifference and lack of interest in what happens in the community on the part of the establishment make possible a certain level of organization and empowering activity within the community, while under a hostile regime the attempt to develop the empowerment process is difficult and even dangerous, for it arouses the regime to brutal activity against the community and its residents (Sanchez et al., 1988).

In a particular combination of circumstances and factors an empowerment process that will strengthen the community for further action may develop despite establishment hostility. But there are places and circumstances in which the hostility of the public mechanism, or of the regime itself, manages to effect disempowerment. The practice of empowerment, perhaps the

art of it, is the search for the *right* combination, which arouses resistance without defeating the people's spirit.

Conflict

Part of the community experience is the division between the people who feel they are members of the community and the people who do not belong to it. Hence, the community may be a very stormy framework. Conflict is part of the reality in which the very idea of community is formed, and it is very possible that dealing with disputes and success in resolving them is an essential experience for the creation of people's social consciousness (Ackelsberg, 1988; Davis, 1991).

The literature is not rich in examples of actual implementation, but projects in which empowerment practice has been implemented (Rose & Black, 1985; Couto, 1989; Schuman, 1987; Heskin, 1991) show to what extent conflict is inevitable. Implementation of empowerment principles (in the organization, in the community and anywhere else), exposes the disempowering practices of existing services, and creates a confrontation with the accepted procedures and methods of these services. The ability to survive in a situation of inevitable conflict depends on the allocation of resources to train activists and practitioners for life in conditions of conflict and uncertainty (Delgado, 1986).

The indirect but systematic violence that the establishment exerts against weak people is a principal pretext for the rise of conflicts in the first stages of the empowerment process. Establishment violence manifests itself in the various ways in which people are barred from access to resources, knowledge and information that are essential for their existence and for their ability to control their lives. Like, for example, the delaying of material resources by means of budgetary policy, or control over information and data services in order to leave people in ignorance with regard to their rights and to possible options of change in their situation (Crawfoot et al., 1983; Solomon, 1976).

The literature on empowerment sometimes emphasizes harmony and social integration, but since conflict is an inseparable part of political life in a democracy it should not be feared; it certainly is inevitable in conditions of social injustice, and cannot be skipped over into realms of tranquillity which originate in quiescence and in lack of social consciousness.

Community Awareness

Couto (1989) defines community awareness as the important part of the empowerment process, as a process of the community's rediscovery of its powerlessness. This is a recognition by people who have just achieved a degree of control over their lives and their future that there are limitations to their new ability. Empowerment is not merely action, says Couto; it is also reflection. Especially important is the community's understanding of the constraints on improving their situation in domains where the sources of the problems lie outside the community—the social, political and economical limits to their empowerment. Awareness is also the community's evaluation of its strengths and advantages and of how to exploit these usefully. For example, recognition of the ecological values of the physical environment, or understanding the economic worth of the land on which it is built.

The question of community awareness is interesting because of the surprising use of the terms *awareness* and *consciousness* in the community context. After all, these are in a very basic sense cognitive processes experienced by the individual. Yet here, in the context of community empowerment, we find writers presenting the ability to arrive at a collective consciousness without preparing a basis in theory or by research for understanding such a phenomenon. The main questions requiring clarification are: How does collective consciousness manifest itself? Is it synergetic? (Katz, 1984). Can it be subjected to empirical investigation? If so, with what

means? Who are the people in the community who represent this consciousness—activists? professionals? members of the community? a combination of all these? Is it possible to point to distinct manifestations that are characteristic of community-collective awareness?

Organizing and Creating a Community

The basis of community empowerment is people organizing themselves around a common critical characteristic. Since the meaning of empowerment is, among other things, the overcoming of difficult experiences of isolation and alienation, it can be realized only in a stable and ongoing connection with others.

   Organizing turns a collective into a community, while collectives are comprised of people who have a common characteristic of age, race, gender, occupation, income and the like. Where there is no organization, this common characteristic is a burden and a limitation that narrows the individuals' possibilities and their perception of reality. Community organizing is a step towards appropriation of the physical space the people live in. A residential neighborhood can become a community through the organized effort of the people living in it to appropriate their home place—an effort which brings about social change in this place and a personal change in the activists themselves (Feldman & Stall, 1994).

Outcome and Product

Another question that remains open for discussion is whether community empowerment produces an outcome, and if so, what this outcome is. For the empowerment process, as already mentioned, is a creative process which transforms a powerless community into one that is capable of action for its interests and its environment. There is a synergy in the creation of a community, an abundance that stems from co-operation (Katz 1984). People who have a common goal, or

who have shared a common experience, become a community with new and expanded abilities, the influences of which spread beyond the place where they began. Empowerment is a dynamic process, and therefore has no final or absolute outcome. Just as there exists no final state of synthesis, so too there is no final state of empowerment. Empowerment is a continuing process which strengthens the capacity to act successfully in changing circumstances. Some writers distinguish between the empowerment process, which involves a feeling of control and of ability to act successfully, and its outcome, which is the real ability to act effectively (Staples 1990).

In empowerment there is a close connection between the process and the outcome, for both the feeling of ability and real ability are parts of a single, positive and self-reinforcing whole. Yet it is possible to gauge the success of empowerment at a given point in time from a number of what may be called *process outcomes*, such as the existence of community activity, the quality of its decision-making, the degree of its purposiveness, the standard of organization of community activity, and the usefulness of the latter to the community's interests (see also the DARE dimensions [Rubin and Rubin 1992], each of which may be seen as a community outcome). One could claim that the final product of empowerment is power, but power is not a legitimate goal, and hence must not be allowed to be more than a means for the attainment of moral goals. It is always essential to ask: Power for what?—as well as the Foucaultian question: What are the positive and negative by-products of the power that has been attained, and how do they find expression in the community, the society, and the environment?

The process through which a residential area, or a collective possessing a common critical characteristic, becomes transformed into a community is a complex one. Community empowerment is dependent on context, environment, behaviors and circumstances—some overt, and some covert. The present study aims to identify at least some of these:

personal motivations and qualities of the participants in the process, professional practices, and the organizational means which give expression to the aspirations and efforts of all the participants. The particular contents of the process may vary, but they have to include activity which on the one hand contributes to the growth and learning of individuals and groups, and on the other hand has a beneficial influence on the environment (Hegar & Hunzeker, 1988).

The connection between individuals and their environment is important not only for mutual improvement and development, as implied by what has been said so far, but also for human existence itself, for man's survival in the world (Bateson, 1979). The need to survive demands adaptation to changes in the environment, while the need for a degree of control of one's life motivates the will to influence the direction of these changes and not just to adapt to them. Community empowerment is an organized effort by people who, from a starting-point poor in resources and social advantages, attempt to influence the human environment, to achieve more control of their situation in order to improve their lives.

Empowerment as a Professional Practice

The concept of empowerment was born in the context of the professional discourse on social problems. To a large extent, it expresses the disappointment of professionals with the existing social solutions which, not only do not provide an effective response to distress, but also in themselves constitute an obstacle in the lives of weak populations (Swift, 1984).

Although empowerment may also be realized without the intervention of practitioners, the theoretical discussion of empowerment is by its nature professional and academic. From this discussion arises the need for the development of professional tools that will encourage the spontaneous empowerment process. Not for those exceptional individuals who by virtue of their talents or their good fortune will manage to fulfill their potential for empowerment without

any help, but for the many people who need external support in order to liberate themselves from the powerlessness they are subject to. A systematic understanding of the process and a translation of it into policy and principles of action will advance the realization of empowerment, from an esoteric phenomenon occurring in the lives of a few, to a social and political solution.

In this section we will deal with values and beliefs held by the professional who uses empowering methods; with principles that guide empowerment practice and influence professional goals and the design of social programs; with the roles of the professional who encourages empowerment; with a selection of recommended methods of intervention, and, finally, with empowerment as a need of the practitioners themselves.

Values Guiding Empowerment Practice

Empowerment is based on the assumption that the environment has to be adapted to people, and not the other way around as is commonly perceived. In contrast to radical and Marxist approaches which focus on social change, this is an approach that focuses on the individual. Empowerment is indeed an idealistic approach, but this is a practical and rational idealism which can be implemented. Empowerment represents an alternative ideology of intervention that differs from traditional approaches in that it provides a different experience to the person who needs help, and to the professional as well: without dependence on the expertise of the professional and without any attempt to create such dependence (Payne, 1991).

Empowerment wants to create a practical and meta-practical whole which includes language, ideology, and action principles. It may be seen not as the intervention itself, but as a meta-practice—thought about intervention (Russel-Erlich & Rivera, 1986). Meta-practical thinking is essential in all the human service professions, because the professional's

thinking about the way he performs his role is one of the principal expressions of his professionalism.

The empowerment approach recognizes the paradoxical nature of social problems. Social problems do not belong to the kind of logical problems that have one correct solution; social problems may have a number of solutions which are all logical. Social problems are dialectical in character—they pull in different and contradictory directions. The main paradox that empowerment practice has to deal with is that the person most lacking in aptitudes, most lacking in ability to function, the person in the greatest distress, is the one who needs more, not less, control in his life (Rappaport, 1981).

Is empowerment a special method of treatment for defined – oppressed and deprived – groups, or is it a professional practice suitable for the entire human population? On the face of it, the answer to this question looks simple: just as empowerment is a potential innate in every person, so too empowering practice is suitable to general application. However, the equitable deployment of empowerment has a moral meaning. Indeed, the vision should be implementation of empowering social policy on the macro level—in the society at large. Until this is realized, however, the *equitable* distribution of empowerment is liable to create inequality, because those people who will know how to exploit professional resources better will enjoy more empowerment, and they, in most cases, will not be the powerless. Liberal thought demands social equality of opportunities, in the belief that all the actors in the social game begin competing for all the social resources from an equal starting-point, and that those who win probably deserve it more than others. Empowerment wants to grapple with difficult and complex social problems that have arisen as a consequence of this way of thinking. Empowerment is based on the recognition that a potential exists in every person, but that it is the social context and circumstances that determine who realizes this potential and who finds it difficult or almost impossible to realize it. This being the social reality, empowering professional practice

needs to aspire to become a comprehensive social policy, while focusing principally on programs for those who live in the most difficult social circumstances.

An empowerment approach is in many senses a translation of Paulo Freire's educational theory into the social domain (Handler, 1990; Parsons et al., 1994; Rose & Black, 1985). According to Freire (1985), the need for change is an inseparable part of social life. The conditions also oppress the ability to change, i.e., they distort the social development of the oppressed people. Hence, the professional has to believe in people's ability to learn and to change and, at the same time, to recognize that oppressed people are liable to possess a distorted consciousness due to their life circumstances. The consciousness of a person submerged in an oppressive reality may become distorted to the point of actual reconciliation with the oppression itself.

Dialogue is the core of the empowering change process. It is part of the ideology, and also of the principles of action and the methods of intervention. Dialogue is the true speech, with mutual trust, that takes place between the practitioner and the people she is helping. In the course of the dialogue, both the practitioners and their clients change. Its important components are trust and mutuality, each side relating to the other with attentiveness and equal worth. Without understanding, cooperation and trust, there can be no mutuality and no real dialogue.

The human condition is complex, fluid, and constantly changing. The individual does not live for or by himself. He is part of a context and is defined by his situation. Since the right solution for relations between weak people and the public services they depend on is not known, the creation of partial communities which will respond to selected aspects of life is the answer (Handler, 1990). In the framework of these communities, real dialogue and trust are fragile and delicate, but between practitioners and powerless people there is no substitute for them

Empowerment is based on the belief that people have skills and abilities, but need circumstances and opportunities in order to express them. Belief in empowerment claims that new abilities are best learned by means of activity in the life context itself, and not in artificial training programs controlled by professional experts. The sense of control the empowerment process develops is the converse of the sense of dependence. It fills people with energy, and it is self-nourishing. Empowerment is always a political process because it creates social change. Its political relevance stems from its tendency to spread to further aspects of life.

Empowerment is ecological and contextual in character. In the empowerment approach, the environment is always part of the picture. An ecological outlook on human behavior claims that behavior is a function of the interaction between the organism and the environment. Hence, problematic functioning may in certain cases indicate problems in the personality, but when it exists in the lives of entire populations, it is a consequence of a defective social structure and of lack of resources (Rappaport, 1987).

Principles Guiding Empowerment Practice

The principles of action that stem from the values of empowerment are not rules which determine specifically what the professional should do, but guidelines for selecting suitable practices.

1. Empowerment has to be a permanent component in any problem-solving process, irrespective of the theoretical approach that shapes this process. As a meta-practice, it can and must be integrated into every kind of professional thinking, irrespective of the sort of program or the methods exercised. (Rose & Black, 1985).
2. Giving help. Those who receive help need to be able to give help as well. Hence, as already noted, self-help groups are considered as distinctive promoters of empowerment. Active participation in programs is an

empowering principle, and to achieve this it is worth causing a deliberate under-manning of social frameworks (Rappaport, 1985). This means the implementation of programs without sufficient salaried manning of various functions, a situation that mobilizes participants in the program to perform these functions. Frameworks which operate in this way foster empowerment efficiently, because it is essential for the people to help not only as consumers but as people who care for the organization's operation. They enter naturally into a position of worth, and concurrently receive professional and social support with their problems while they perform their valuable role as helpers.

Manning of important functions in a program by those using it emphasizes a corollary principle, one that is accepted in community work and essential to the empowerment process: the professional must see his role as temporary. As he encourages empowerment, he also works towards a diminution of his professional presence. He trains leaders local functionaries to take their positions as soon as possible, so that they can take responsibility and be less in need of outside help.

3. Lack of power cannot be compensated for by means which increase lack of power. Economic dependence, which is one of the forms of powerlessness, cannot be improved by means of a program that humiliates and oppresses those in need of it. Hence, an empowering professional ascribes the same importance to the means of activating social programs as to their objectives (at the same time, it is necessary to be cautious and to avoid programs where the means are strongly emphasized but the goals are unimportant).

4. Think big and act small. An important principle in empowerment is to analyze phenomena on the macro level, but to intervene with attention to the micro level. Empowerment demands simultaneous concern for the environment, the collective, its organization and the

individuals who organize. This is the distinctiveness of the integration of the personal change as part of the organizing for social justice (Friedmann, 1992).

5. The collective is a central principle of the empowerment process. Even when the objective is individual the means are collective. Collectivity provides a true rationale for empowerment (Staples, 1990); if the empowerment process were solely individual, it would have no social significance. Collectivity is the source of the synergy in the process, because it grows in power and extends the boundaries of its influence.

6. Empowerment is a multi-leveled concept. It integrates individuals, groups, organizations, communities and states, as well as contexts—the environmental, cultural, and historical contexts. The influence that each of the levels of empowerment radiates upon all the other levels is of much importance. The principle of levels leads to the conclusion that we should aspire to a policy of empowerment, and to the conjecture that professionals need empowerment in order to be able to empower people who need their help (Rappaport, 1987).

Principles Guiding the Relationship Between Practitioners and the People Who Need Their Help

Empowerment requires a re-examination of the whole of social public policy, and demands of the practitioner a re-examination of the professional relationship.

1. Different people require different solutions for the same problems. In order to arrive at a variety of solutions we must emphasize the strengths of those in need of help, and to use a mixture of resources: of the practitioners, and of those who come for help (Solomon, 1985).

2. Cooperation between the helpers and the helped is essential to the empowerment process. The helped bring a distinctive knowledge about their lives and their own point of view about their problems, and the helpers bring specialized knowledge that stems from formal training

and work experience with people suffering from the same problems. In this connection the helped are not seen as responsible for the problems, but as responsible for the solutions. This cooperation also changes the research, not only the practice. The researcher has to make the people he studies participants in his research, and to reward them according to the circumstances: if they contribute to the research they should gain from it (Tyler et al., 1983; Sohng, 1998).

3. Respect for people is the basis for professional relationships. Respect is expressed in treating the request for help not as a sign of weakness or dependence, but as an expression of a need to receive professional service. Respect expresses itself in accepting people's interpretation of reality. Respect for a person and recognition of his strengths confirm his very existence and give it a validity. Powerless people tend to cast doubt on the existence of reality as they perceive it. The low self-image of vulnerable people, which involves doubt and self-denial, serves the existing order. People are willing to accept the problems they suffer from as justified, thus reinforcing the negative opinions prevalent about them (Mullender & Ward, 1985; Rose & Black, 1991).

4. Empowerment has a language of its own that influences immediate communication and the meta-communication level. It prefers clarity and simplicity of expression and is very wary of using professional jargon. For example, practitioners who use and think in terms of concepts such as *the placebo effect* and *spontaneous remission* contradict messages of empowerment, because they express a lack of faith in people's ability to help themselves outside the professional context (Rappaport, 1985, 1987).

Principles Guiding the Design of Social Programs

The quality of social programs is critical in determining people's destiny. In the connection between people in need

of help and the services that provide help, an oppressive dependence may develop, or an opportunity may grow to develop independent social skills. The welfare service system has to change from an obstacle route to a system of opportunities (Solomon, 1985).

All that has been said so far does not imply dilettantism. In order to encourage empowerment, the social service system has to be professional. Outcomes are not produced by policy statements. There has to be training of professionals in the field so that they will understand and respect community norms and work with an open approach to people. On the face of it, this demand for professionalism contradicts the messages of participation and equity that were presented earlier as part of the principles guiding the relations of the professional with those in need of his help. However, I see no contradiction here, because in practice one needs considerable professional confidence and knowledge to work in an equitable and empowering manner (Handler, 1990)

1. Social programs need a structure and a design which serve dialogue and openness to the other. A dispersed organizational structure, a free and informal climate, and professional autonomy for the professionals, are suitable for the achievement of the objectives of empowerment. A centralized structure, rigid rules and hierarchical supervision disempower participants in the program (Handler, 1990)

2. Small-scale local projects are preferable to a large central solution. Social projects have to be small enough to provide participant with socially valuable roles, and large enough to assure themselves of resources from various sources. Some writers believe that in any case a program with an empowerment ideology will succeed better in obtaining resources and developing them than a program dominated by professionals and professional treatment methods, irrespective of its size (Rappaport, 1987).

3. Empowerment needs to express itself on three levels of a social program: on the personal level, between the professional and the person who needs his help, empowerment expresses itself in the increase of the person's resources so that he may control his life better; on the organizational level, people in need of the program have to become an important interest and influence group in the program. On the policy level, greater control of the program participants in the program's resources has to be facilitated, as well as an improvement in their access to alternative services (Handler, 1990).

4. For a social program to be empowering, it should preferably be open to outcomes. It should be built on a principle of an open-ended process, rather than on planning that aspires to one particular outcome, as is generally the case (Adams, 1990).

The Professional's Roles

Empowerment demands that professionals have a different set of expectations than what is customary: instead of relying on their professional training and on their socialization into a structured role, they must dare to open up to situations as involved human beings who have taken it upon themselves to fill a role and to survive in it (Rose & Black, 1985). Empowerment also sets up criteria for criticism of professional models. A professional approach which is contradictory to empowerment requires a change of approach or has to be totally rejected, and this is not simple at all. For example, some writers note the contradiction between the empowerment approach and the psychodynamic medical model which focuses on the person as the source of the problems, blames the victim for them, and mostly ignores the direct and indirect influence that social circumstances have on these problems (Solomon, 1985).

The crisis theory is attacked in a similar way. This theory relates to social problems as transient and extraordinary

phenomena, focuses on the symptoms of the crisis and on changing the victims of the crisis, and ignores the structural conditions that caused it, as well as the need to change people and institutions that create or sustain the crisis. The crisis theory is a soporific for policy makers: they get used to thinking in crisis terms and expect the crisis situation to pass, and thus encourage the seeing of problems as extraordinary and unrelated to one another. The crisis theory has a bad influence on practitioners, because it guides them to deal with immediate problems only, and to neglect work on processes of social change (Crowfoot et al, 1983).

The mainstream of social work earns similar criticism for its conservative social approach, for basing itself on liberal principles, and for its recoiling from politics. The institutional submissiveness of the social services and their agreement to serve as social shock absorbers impede their ability to encourage empowerment of people who receive services and prevent professionals employed in them from developing a critical consciousness and empowering themselves (Russel-Erlich & Rivera, 1986).

In contrast, the role of the professional engaged in empowerment is to help people who live with a continuous and systematic stigma to perceive themselves as capable of exerting influence on their world and on other people. In contrast to conventional professional approaches, in the empowerment approach the emphasis on the individual does not mean looking for the problem in the individual himself, but moving away from the traditional professional models and emphasizing that the individual is a motivating force who creates change and solves problems.

Empowerment is a professional role by means of which the professional involves the (individual or collective) client in a series of activities aimed at reducing the powerlessness that has been created as a consequence of a negative evaluation towards their belonging to a stigmatized group. This series of activities involves identifying the power blocks that contribute to the problem, and specific strategies intended to reduce the

influence of direct and indirect power obstacles (Solomon, 1976).

In the literature on empowerment a number of professional roles are emphasized:

Resource consultant. More than anything, poor people need provision of resources, such as housing, money, health care, homemaker services. The resource consultant is a role which connects people with resources in a way which enhances their self-esteem as well as their problem-solving capacities. The consultant makes his knowledge about resource systems, and his expertise in using them, available to the client. He has to create an intensive partnership with the people, involving them in each step of the process, from the identifying stage through to the locating and activating of resources (Solomon, 1976).

Sensitizer. People require self-knowledge in order to be able to act upon their problems. The role of sensitizer is performed in a variety of methods of intervention, with the objective of providing people with the maximal opportunities of understanding themselves and their environment (Solomon, 1976).

Teacher/trainer. Many people have difficulties learning because of experiences of failure and boredom in formal educational settings during their childhood. The professional's role is to find suitable ways of helping people to acquire information, knowledge and skills. Teaching is a major professional role of empowering professionals (Rose & Black, 1985). Mutuality is emphasized in the empowering teaching process: the professional learns from the people themselves what their preferred social solutions are and what they need to know. Likewise, from settings in which empowerment is realized, the professional also learns how to plan and activate empowerment enhancing programs.

Service planner. Since the structure of the welfare services contributes to the sense of powerlessness and worthlessness of the people who receive the services, it is important to re-plan this system so that it may operate on different organizational

principles through which the services will be able to provide new opportunities to people instead of disempowering them.

Coordinator and networker. It is the professional's role to shape the environment by coordinating and networking the various services that are connected with the people in whose lives she intervenes. The emphasis in this role is on re-planning of services by way of creating mutual connections among them and an atmosphere of community consensus while avoiding conflict (Biegel, 1984; Wolff, 1987).

Advocate. The advocate represents her clients herself, knowing that in the particular situation which requires advocacy, this is the only possible way to stand up for the client's rights. The advocacy aims at a change of environmental conditions that have a bad influence on the immediate situation of people in need of the service. The use of the dual strategy of advocacy/empowerment obliges the professional to watch out for a dual stumbling-block: she must not neglect her responsibility as a leader, and she must not incline in the opposite direction, of excessive directing and taking control of people. The role of advocate complements all the other professional roles, because while encouragement of empowerment is a role performed towards the clients, advocacy is the role towards the environment, and in many cases it precedes empowerment, especially when it is the environmental conditions that create the problems and contribute to their becoming more severe. Advocacy is a role that involves certain professional risks which need to be prepared for well (Rose & Black, 1985, Parsons et al., 1994; Beresford & Croft, 1993). The advocate is often in conflict with the establishment, with other services, and even with colleagues. He is liable to be very isolated; he may not infrequently be considered a crank fighting with windmills, and may even get fired. To contend with all these, organizations dealing with advocacy have been founded in recent years, and people working in them act as a team and have the protection of their organization.

Methods of Intervention

The literature on empowerment is full of recommendations to professionals about methods of intervention that encourage empowerment. The methods of intervention that appear below are a selection from the literature which illustrates how it is possible to implement empowerment in professional practice.

The problem in presenting the various methods of intervention was the great lack of uniformity in their levels and in the content that they represent. I have chosen to classify them in two groups:

1. Strategies, which are methods of intervention that also contain principles, a rationale, and a special role.
2. Tactics, which are more specific ways of action focused on achieving a defined objective and/or a particular outcome which the professional is interested in as part of a strategy she has developed to achieve her goals.

Strategies

Participation is a basic method of intervention for empowerment, which is much emphasized in the literature as encouraging empowerment (Wandersman & Florin, 1988; Beresford & Croft, 1993; Rubin & Rubin, 1992). Participation reinforces a sense of personal and political ability, creates expectations for a successful solution of problems, and encourages civic commitment. People's participation in group and organizational frameworks promotes community empowerment as well as individual empowerment. This method of intervention has aged and become rigid, and needs to be used not in its old form but as a basis for improvements (Arenstein, 1969; Hanna & Robinson, 1994; Condeluci, 1995).

Organization. Organization is the collective voice of those whose voice would otherwise not be heard. By organizing,

people learn alternatives to a life of quiet despair. They learn that what looks like a private grievance is part of a broad pattern which influences many people. They translate their general dissatisfaction with life into a set of practical objectives of changing the physical and social environment. Organizing teaches people to administer, to plan, to write, to speak, to conduct negotiations and to activate projects and large budgets (Boyte et al., 1986).

Integration of Levels of Intervention. Empowerment practice integrates clinical, group and community intervention methods into a single intervention system, in order to respond to people's diverse needs and to encourage empowerment (Cox & Parsons, 1994; Gutierrez & Ortega, 1991; Lee, 1994). Empowerment is opposed to the traditional medical model, which tends to sever the interactional connection between the concrete reality (the environment and its influence) and the subjective reality (self-perception and emotional life), and to emphasize only one side in every field of specialization. An empowerment strategy integrates these two, and focuses on an integration that emphasizes the interpretative, dialectical character, which stems from the mutual connection between social reality and human activity. The professional working with an empowerment approach needs to recognize the existence of a vicious circle in the form of a downward spiral: oppressive conditions create alienation, which leads to powerlessness and lack of self-esteem, which reinforce the oppressive conditions.

Praxis—integration of learning and action. A strategy of empowerment is not interested in a separation between theory and practice. The desirable combination, for both the professionals and their clients, is constant practice and thought about this practice. Thought about practice develops critical consciousness among the community and among the professionals. In the empowerment process the professional too undergoes a change, as a person and as a worker. An integration is created between the professional person's fate and the fate of the people in whose life she intervenes.

Tactics

Enabling. People have resources but are not always aware of possibilities of implementing and using them to achieve what they require. Enabling involves actions carried out by practitioners in order to guide people to information or connections with the help of which they will be able to activate their resources more effectively.

Linking. Professional activity which stems from the need to strengthen people by creating connections among them. Linking aims at providing people with more power in confrontations with external systems. The professional connects among people and creates groups and networks that can strengthen individuals and families by providing them with collective support.

Catalyzing. Although people have resources of their own, they need additional resources in order to be able to activate their own resources fully. The professional seeks complementary resources to accelerate processes and to reinforce the activity.

Priming. The assumption behind this professional activity is that part of the problem of powerlessness is caused, or reinforced, by people's unsatisfactory encounters with services that are important to their existence. These systems respond more positively when the conditions are not threatening to them. For example, if an action is not perceived as an infringement of policy, or as submission to external pressure, there is a better chance that the system will perform it. The professional who deals with priming prepares the systems and the clients for a positive connection between them even before problems requiring solutions arise (Solomon, 1985).

Providing information and knowledge. Professionals provide people with information in areas that they have identified together as important: for example, the socio-economic conditions of the country, past endeavors in community development, and the platforms of political parties. The information is transmitted in various ways, in

written summaries, in talks and informal meetings (Couto, 1989; Serrano-Garcia, 1984). The difficulty that people without a formal education have in understanding professional knowledge and in processing information obliges professionals to be better teachers—to improve the ways of imparting knowledge and information. The principle is that there is no subject that cannot be learned or spoken about. There must be no withholding of information or knowledge from people because of their *difficulties of understanding*. Each difficulty of comprehension that people have is the professional's responsibility.

Developing Skills. Planning, organizational, and evaluative skills are generally developed in a group framework. The professional works in the following ways: she facilitates the participation of as many people as possible in the groups, identifies the community's resources, guides the people on how to pool these resources, makes sure activities are planned in advance, outlines a clear process of decision making that emphasizes problem definition, assessment and choice of alternatives, allocation of tasks and monitoring of their execution; she refuses to perform tasks that the people themselves have refused to perform, promotes group norms that reward the completion of tasks, devotes structured time at each meeting and after each activity to evaluation, and promotes a non-hierarchical organizational structure in which decisions are made in a consensus and tasks are divided as equally as possible (Serrano-Garcia, 1984).

Modeling. The practitioner serves as a model of collaborative behavior and dialogue. In this method, important interpersonal skills are demonstrated by showing, not by telling, and these are thus reinforced in the course of action. Modeling involves performing various tasks such as cooking, cleaning, preparing collection tins for donations, hauling, and the like. Within the organizational framework the professional does everything that the people do, and while doing so reinforces values important to empowerment. For example, women conduct most of the meetings, the participants have a more active

role than the professionals, and decisions are presented as decisions of the entire team.

Precise formulation of values. The practitioners give verbal expression to values that are important to the group and the community, such as: the residents' ability to perform tasks by themselves; the people's abilities to identify their needs and problems; cultural diversity and individual differences; that leadership potential exists in every man and woman; the importance of effective organization; the need to express, together with others, the sense of pride and of belonging to the community; the importance of collective responsibility.

The use of doubt. In the professional's vocabulary, why is an important word. He has to teach the people to doubt and to investigate each situation. Why can this not be done? Why must this be done in the regular way and not otherwise? Why is it always done this way? Why doesn't everyone think this way? The questions are more important than the answers, because the goal is to encourage a critical approach to the social situation (Serrano-Garcia, 1984).

Informality in the professional intervention. An informal structure of activity is important, because courses or workshops reinforce the specialists, emphasize the learners' lack of skill, and create a distance between the professional and the other people, and this may lead to resistance to the acquisition of skills. Some writers prefer intervention methods which focus on observation, team thinking, trial and error, feedback and critical analysis (Serrano-Garcia, 1984).

Developing social technologies. Designing professional tools as a set of procedures which can be duplicated, with the aim of reinforcing abilities and skills in the social domain. A social technology has to be simple, inexpensive, effective, decentralized, flexible, and adapted to local values, beliefs and customs. The *technologies* are particularly important in order to diminish – by means of an accessible set of procedures and briefings – the hegemony of experts in the social domain over certain techniques, and to reduce dependence on these experts and their opinions (Fawcett et al., 1984).

Technical assistance. Many professionals can be engaged in empowerment enhancing technical assistance. They can: teach people how to create connections between the community and other communities with similar needs; help people understand the reasons for local problems; help with research which harnesses local knowledge to planning a better future for the locale; provide specialized help in domains important to community life, such as marketing, economics, pricing and planning of transport (Couto, 1989).

Empowerment of Professionals

In the past decade, new approaches to organizational development connect the empowerment of employees at all levels of the organization with ideas of progressive management and team development (Tjosvold, 1990; Plunkett & Fournier, 1991; Peters, 1992). Empowerment is presented as an essential means for the business advancement of organizations which are in need of innovative ideas and are facing competition. Here the CEO is seen as the empowering professional, and the employees in the organization as the people in need of empowerment. The principal claim of these organizational approaches is that a humiliated and submissive worker will not initiate innovations and will not take responsibility for solving problems at his work place. An active worker who is confident of his own strengths will also act beyond the defined limits of his job, will take initiatives, invent, and contribute to the success of the firm and his own success as well. Education for empowerment means the opening up of possibilities: to take risks, to struggle for a place in the decision-making process, to acquire knowledge in a critical manner, beyond one's immediate personal experience, and to imagine versions of the future world. All these have to be imparted to the professionals themselves.

Through the empowerment process people become strong enough to take part in events, to participate in institutions which influence their lives, and to attempt to influence them.

A person's empowerment involves her ability to acquire knowledge and skills in order to influence and control her life, and to be an active partner in the lives of others for whom she cares. The need for empowerment of professionals stems from the apprehension that they will not succeed in encouraging empowerment of others from a position of submission and humiliation. The claim is that a person who does not implement empowerment in her own life will not be able to encourage this process in others.

Teachers, for example, have to be intellectuals who use knowledge and information to guide pupils to think, not technicians who transmit knowledge. Today the education system isolates teachers, limits them with regulations and instructions, and does not enable them to use their knowledge in the selection and disposition of study material. A teacher who is treated as a person who is incapable of making a mature decision cannot prepare others for maturity; if she is closely supervised and is not trusted, she will not be able to teach others what autonomy and trust are. Teachers are expected to teach how to take risks, to consider alternatives and to form alliances, while they themselves are limited to technical and mechanical aspects of their profession (Giroux, 1987). For professionals to be able to teach clients how to form alliances, set up coalitions, overcome organizational obstacles and act in a political way, they must first experience all these themselves (Pinderhughes, 1983).

Practitioners implement empowerment in their relations with clients, but are captive within a conception of equality that denies the existence of power relations (and of inequality) in their connection with their clients (Hasenfeld, 1987; Hopps et al., 1994). Besides this contradiction, the organization greatly limits their power as autonomous professionals. The responses of powerless employees are characterized by various forms of withdrawal, ineffectiveness, burnout, and leaving the service. The empowering solution proposed is a mutual support group as a means of self-empowerment. We may learn from this recommendation how essential the

group is for any kind of empowerment: professionals will not succeed in attaining to individual empowerment on their own. The mutual support group creates for the professional employees a sub-culture of their own in the organization, and weakens the influence of the disempowering processes that the organizational culture produces (Sherman & Wenocur, 1983). Beyond the peer group, in order to develop an empowerment policy and practice within the welfare services, professionals need more autonomy and more discretion, as well as a different organizational structure —one that is less hierarchical and more decentralized (Handler, 1990).

In my opinion, focus on empowerment of the professionals themselves is a marginal concern which must not become the major issue in the discussion of empowering professional practice. The question of whether empowerment of practitioners will lead to their becoming empowering practitioners has a different meaning for the individual professional and for the professional organization as a whole. On the personal level, empowerment is a value-based ideological choice, and involvement in empowerment demands a moral and a professional decision. A professional choice such as this is not dependent only, or mainly, on the professional's position and status in the organizational power relations, but on his commitment to the profession and on his professional world-view. On the organizational level, the empowerment of employees as a method of organizational development is an efficient method of advancing empowering professional practice, because it proposes empowerment as a comprehensive change, both in relation to clients and in relation to organizational personnel, and presents it as effective and profitable for the organization itself, thus facilitating the dissemination of an empowerment approach both towards the employees and among them. Even when the change process is organizational, the same rules of choice and discretion mentioned above apply to the individual employee. However, in this situation, the organizational context changes completely. The choice is no longer a moral one, because the

empowering practitioner active in an empowering organization is free from dilemmas of conscience and from conflicts of loyalty connected with the choice of empowerment as a professional path.

Empowerment has to be a mutual process. In the relations between the professional and the people in whose lives she intervenes, each side encourages and actively contributes to the empowerment of the other. At the same time, the focus of attention must be on the empowerment of the people, not of the professionals (Adams, 1990). At the conclusion of the discussion it is important to recall that powerful professionals (physicians, lawyers, and other specialists who come to mind in this context) are not famous for encouraging empowerment of their clients. Hence there is no certainty that increasing the power of powerless professionals will lead them to this. It is possible that particularly those professionals who experience or have experienced powerlessness in their private or professional lives are more capable of identification and of understanding the harm in this situation, and of sustaining more equitable relations of help and dialogue in order to change it. This, however, is in the nature of a speculation, and its realization depends on many complex circumstances.

To sum up, empowerment is a source of inspiration and innovation in the domains of practice of professionals who are interested in social change and in the personal change that it entails. It may be assumed that adoption of an empowering professional practice will not limit itself to the professional's working hours, but will influence her as a person on various levels of her views and beliefs. A theory of empowerment is a theory that is conscious that it is a world-view. The professional who adopts it does so because she agrees with a number of premises about professionalism, about subjectivity, and about the origin of social problems, and these correspond to her beliefs, values, goals and intentions.

Summary

Individual empowerment is a process of personal development in a social framework: a transition from a feeling of powerlessness, and from a life in the shadow of this feeling, to an active life of real ability to act and to take initiatives in relation to the environment and the future. Community empowerment also includes a definition of a community as a partial, temporary and dynamic unit that originates in the human need for a sense of togetherness and identification with others. Community empowerment can be realized in geographically defined areas that constitute the common critical characteristic of their residents, or it can develop in groups with other common critical characteristics, such as origin, age, gender, or physical disability.

The discussion of individual and community empowerment has also touched upon the political meaning of empowerment. The perception of the empowerment process on all its levels as a political process is important to the present study, and is influenced by feminist thought, which accords a new meaning to social change.

The group and the community organization are the main means of activating environmental processes. These are the settings which actively connect the individual with his environment and make possible a change which includes the individual, the group, and the environment in the one process.

The *professionalism* of empowering professional practice is expressed in the professional's critical approach to himself and his practice. Empowering professionalism means placing the profession at the service of processes that empower people. Empowering professionals choose, from their professional repertoire, those strategies and ways of action that encourage empowerment.

In the framework of the discussion on professional practice a discussion generally also takes place on empowerment of the professionals themselves, The need for empowerment of

professionals (such as teachers and social workers employed by complex organizations) is emphasized beyond the universal need for empowerment that every person has. The claim is made that empowered professionals will be more empowering professionals; this claim still needs to find support in a reality in which a majority of powerful professionals (such as physicians and lawyers) have no interest in the discourse on empowerment.