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Literature Review of the Two Baskets Measure Approach to Poverty

Prepared by: Julius Salegio

Edmonton Social Planning Council

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The universal Declaration of human rights states that , “Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well--being of himself [herself] and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond [their] control.” (The Long Haul, 1998)) Poverty is going without , is living in fear and worried about being able to provide. It perpetuates illness [physical and psychological], depression and isolation (Synnott, 1996). Dr. Riches (1991, 13) adds that poverty is about powerlessness and can only be resolved when people are democratically empowered to control their own personal and collective lives. Its abolition also needs an enormous amount of political will. The purpose of this document is to look at the cost of living measures for Edmonton. The approach will review the literature that discusses and defines the concept of two baskets measure. This will include both the basic needs basket and the social participation basket. While the former refers to a survival measure, the latter will examine social participation. The literature review will also examine participatory action research as a methodological tool used for direct community involvement in the research process.

The two prevailing definitions in poverty are absolute and relative poverty. A distinction must be made between absolute and relative measures of poverty. Absolute measures have been associated as having the necessary minimum: the materials needed to sustain physical life. Absolute measures of poverty include individuals and families who lack access to certain basic resources such as adequate nutrition, shelter, education, and income. The definition of absolute poverty does not include quality of life nor with the levels of inequality in society. It would not address those people who have basic resources but maintain a very low quality of life in comparison to other groups of a community. Absolute poverty fails to acknowledge that individuals are members of communities and that have crucial conventions and customs; and it does not recognize that individuals have

important social and cultural needs (UNESCO, 1997). Relative measures, on the contrary, is concerned with the distribution of household incomes. It includes income inequalities and not just the incomes of the absolute poor: "People are poor if they fall below prevailing standards of living in a given societal context" (Ibid, 1997:2). Relative measures refer to a level of poverty that includes issues of social participation, beyond physical existence. One could assume that absolute poverty lines would be lower than relative poverty lines, but this is not the case (Leadbeater, 1992). Second, another distinction refers to the degree to which the measure is context-bound and related to social change. Sarlo (1996), however, infers that a complete absolute measure is non-existent. In fact, an absolute measure could quickly become obsolete if it was not updated with changes in population income and commonly used items. Absolute and relative measures of poverty are concerned with income and consumption. Insufficient income is not an adequate means of measuring social deprivation, inadequate housing, poor diet, lack of education, inability to travel, inability to exercise fundamental rights. Such barriers lead to an unacceptable loss of human dignity.

There has been an attempt to re-define the concept of relative poverty or relative deprivation. The 1997 UNDP Human Development Report (UNESCO, 1997) puts forward three perspectives: The income perspective which suggests that a person is poor only if his income is less than the country's poverty line. The basic needs perspective increases the basic definition of relative poverty since it goes beyond the income perspective and lack of private income. This includes the need for the provision by a community of the basic social services: including employment and full participation. The capability perspective argues that poverty represents a lack of some basic ability to function, and it reconciles the notions of absolute and relative poverty. A causal relationship may exist between income deprivation leading to absolute deprivation. The definition of social exclusion, that resulted in reaction to a narrow definition of poverty, contributed toward including multi-faceted indicators of ill-being into the conceptual understanding of poverty (Ibid).

When examining the basic needs basket, an absolute approach is being used. The absolute approach refers to “a minimum subsistence..., some bundle of goods and services that [are] regarded as essential to the physical well-being of a family unit.” (Schiller, 1995:20). Those who lack the economic resources to acquire these goods and services are considered poor. McGregor and Borooah (1992:53) discuss two measures of welfare: “income which reflects the entitlement analysis of poverty and the other on expenditure, reflecting the standard of living.” The standard of living measures the outcome of the participation of the individual, or family, in the economic process. It constitutes a direct concept of welfare defined in terms of intrinsic goods such as consumption or quality of life. The notion of entitlement suggests an individual’s participation in society as being conditioned on generating a minimum level of resources. In fact, if someone is malnourished because of lack of affordability to purchase sufficient foods, that individual is considered poor. Entitlement is an indirect notion that is interpreted in terms of resources or income.

Room (1995) suggests that the set of items used is usually interpreted as a set of necessities. These items are considered to be necessary in the community as a whole. Ong (1997) suggests that needs have to be considered within a context relevant to the participant population. Therefore, needs must not be evaluated in absolute terms. Rather, it has to be compared within a reference framework. Townsend (cited in Room, 1995:31) defines these necessities as the ‘deprivation indicators’ approach. In looking at the concept of poverty, Townsend considers 12 major dimensions: diet, clothing, fuel light, household facilities, housing conditions, work conditions, health, education, environment, family activities, recreation, and social relations. Nolan and Whelan (1996) point out that Townsend selected a sub-set of 12 sub-categories or dimensions of deprivation: a refrigerator, an evening out, a week’s holiday away from home, fresh meat four days a week, and a cooked breakfast most days. The social deprivation scale incorporates the notions of

preference interdependence and reference groups. Thus the lack of a specific item is more serious if it is typical or considered a necessary consumption in a group (Ibid). The reference groups are households similar to the respondent's, in terms of overall deprivation score, age and education. Muffels (1995:35) carries out a 'principal components' analysis, which examines the structure of the 42 original deprivation items. He identifies 15 dimensions including: "income, money resources, facilities in the home, mental and physical health status, fixed housing costs, durable, quality of house, hot meals, employment, facilities in the community, quality of the neighborhood, food and clothes, education, social contacts, social participation, and luxuries.

Mack and Lansley (Nolan and Whelan, 1996:64) base their study on a designed 'Breadline Britain'. This defines poverty as an "enforced lack of socially-perceived necessities, enforced from the sense of lack of resources". They are concerned with the barrier to attain the minimum acceptable way of life in the community. These life-style items are chosen for inclusion in their deprivation index in terms of what constituted a necessity, where as Townsend's approach is to include items that included ordinary living patterns. Mack and Lansley make use of respondent's views of what constitute a specific necessity. They use a more direct approach, using deprivation indicators to identify the poor. People who did not have or would like to have but could not afford three or more items were determined as poor. Low income peoples are considered to be experiencing an enforced lack, including those who had done so by choice. Mack and Lansley also adjust the estimated number in poverty to leave out high income households which were taken not to be experiencing enforced lack of an item even if stated that they could not afford it (Ibid). The most attractive feature of this notion is that it casts aside self-appointed, self-opinionated experts and 'let the people decide'. The 'Breadline Britain', repeated in 1990, demonstrates that there is an increase for most items included in the percentage stating that it is a necessity, consistent with expectations rising as average incomes increased.

Townsend and Gordon (Nolan and Whelan, 1996), based on Townsend's earlier work, draw a distinction between material and social deprivation. They divide their study into thirteen specific types of deprivation, and a total of seventy-seven indicators or groups of indicators selected. Their indicators cover both "deprivation in terms of food, clothing, housing and home facilities, and family and recreational activities, but also local environment, working conditions, employment experience and rights, participation in social institutions and education attained." (Ibid, 1996:66) Townsend and Gordon also separate indices of material and of social deprivation which were eventually constructed and aggregated (Ibid).

Nolan and Whelan (1996) argue that the constitution of deprivation, lack of the item or failure to be involved in the activity must reflect an inability to participate. Deprivation refers to the "inability to obtain the types of diet, clothing, housing household facilities, and environmental, educational, working, and social conditions interpreted as acceptable by the community." (Ibid, 1996:72) It implies the results of the barriers on people's choices, not just the outcomes themselves. The former is difficult to observe since we can measure whether people lack or fail to do specific things, but it becomes difficult to determine why. Deprivation, then, refers to conditions, including both material and social issues of life. It is also multidimensional in terms of a state of generalized or multiple deprivation exists when it is experienced in a number of aspects of life. As already mentioned, Mack and Lansley (Ibid) identify socially-perceived necessities and select items for inclusion in their deprivation index on the basis of views as to what forms a necessity. They suggest that items become necessities only when they are socially perceived: 'needs' have no meaning outside that of the perceptions of the people. The meanings are socially constructed, but perceptions determine the importance and significance that can be attached to the various aspects of people's life standards. The intention is to identify those who (owing to lack of resources) fail to meet what are seen as the minimum standards in the community as demonstrated by enforced lack of socially defined necessities.

Deciding whether deprivation indicators are selected in terms of being possessed by a majority of the sample or that they are regarded as a necessity does make a difference to the items selected. When the items selected as deprivation indicators attempt to reflect socially perceived necessities, the next step is whether there does in fact appear to be a broad consensus in the sample about what constitute necessities, and whether views vary between different groups (Nolan and Whelan, 1996). For instance, a remarkable degree of uniformity across classes is observed. A majority regard a refrigerator, a damp-free dwelling, an indoor toilet, a bath or shower, a meal with meat chicken or fish four times a week, a coat, and two pairs of shoes as necessities. This shows little variation across the classes in the actual percentage giving that response. Mack and Lansley found a similar pattern of agreement across classes (Ibid).

Nolan and Whelan (1996) found that responses are influenced by whether the household itself contains the item in question. They demonstrated this through the percentage stating each item is a necessity for the following groups: “those who have the item, those who do not have but say that they could afford it, and those who do not have it because they can not afford it.” (1996:77) Those who have the item are inclined to declare it as a necessity: a refrigerator, a washing machine, a telephone, a car, a color t.v., a week’s annual holiday, a dry damp-free dwelling, heating( for living rooms), central heating, a toilet, a bath and shower, a meal with meat, chicken four times a week, a hobby or leisure activity, new clothes and presents for friends or family once a year. A majority of those state that 19 items are considered a necessity except for the television. Those who do not have an item, and say it is a choice, are less likely to regard it as a necessity (Ibid).

When determining the items as indicators of deprivation, Nolan and Whelan (1996) were interested in regarding them as a necessity or possessed by most of the sample, but also determining their relationship to income. The measuring of the absence of an item can not in itself represent deprivation or poverty. Nolan and Whelan suggest that the objective is to

measure the enforced absence of lack of resources. Basics needs refer to a survival measure, but it does not include social participation.

According to the family budgeting guide (1995), there are a number of factors that form a budget component. This is divided in basic, secondary and tertiary expenditures. Basic expenditures involve food, rent, household operations, clothing, healthcare and personal care. Secondary expenditures include telephone, transport, childcare, and school needs. In tertiary expenditures, there are furnishing equipment; recreation, communication, gifts and readings; life insurance, contingency fund, taxes, UIC and CPP. The lack of any of these items might result in less community participation. In fact, the lack of money to acquire a bus pass may result in being unable to hold a job and attend appointments; or the lack of an income to install a phone line may lead to being isolated from services and community events. For Albertans, there are six factors that contribute to quality of life: “to meet basic necessities, hope, self-determination, health and well-being, security and community.” (Quality of Life Commission, 1996:6) Notice that hope, self-determination, well-being, security and community are added to basic needs. The Edmonton Life report (1997) provides four main indicators that measure well-being: indicators for a Healthy Economy, indicators for Healthy People, indicators for a Healthy Environment, and indicators for a Healthy Community. Each one of these main headings are divided into subheadings that provide a broader picture of what people consider to be indicators of well-being, and they are also applicable to the cost of living measures, and what people consider to be needs of survival and needs of social participation. While in a healthy community , there might be a need for leisure activities that measure visits to recreational activities and events, a healthy economy might cover people with income to meet basic needs that includes population with adequate after-tax income to meet basic needs expressed as a percentage of the total population.

Henry Bruton (1997:19) states that “well-being is a well-lived life, a life rich in meaning and personal growth, a life that emphasizes humanness and one’s belonging in a



community, as well as a life that is built from some sort of conscious thought and reflection.” Basic needs, poverty relief, and employment prove difficult to define poverty in a way that eliminated confusion or that led clearly to specific policies. Amartya Sen (cited in Bruton) goes beyond the understanding of the development objective by examining the standard of living in terms of functioning and capabilities. Sen suggests that functioning refers to the capability to achieve different aspects of living conditions while capabilities emphasizes freedom and the available opportunities regarding the life people may lead. Functioning’s and capabilities are intended to add the notion of rights and freedoms: “members of the society should have the right and the capacity to participate fully and equally in the life of the community.” (Bruton, 1997:21) Sen offers Adam Smith’s example of the man who can not show up in public without shame unless he has a linen shirt. Although these considerations are identical to basic needs, they go beyond a more fundamental definition by offering of what an economy should provide and what society should make to ensure is provided to all its members. People consider social acceptance as desirable and it adds to feelings of security and communalness. Well-being refers to being part of a community, and participating in society is part of well-being (Ibid).

McCall (cited in Kennedy, Northcott and Kinzel, 1977:4) states that the quality of life stems from at least two distinct sources: “a popular concern and lack of satisfaction over what life has to offer, and a desire on the part of social scientists to provide, for purposes of governmental decision-making as well as of intellectual interest, measures of social progress.” The former refers to an idea of destiny-control, or the “welfare” component of quality of life: “Man’s welfare is defined as the individual’s command, under given determinants, over resources with whose help he can control and direct his living conditions.” The latter regards the problem of measuring social change and leads to a debate over the nature of social indicators devised as means for measuring change. It is argued that objective social indicators do not usually relate to subjective social indicators. Rodgers and Converse (Ibid) argue that both subjective and objective indicators are crucial

aspects for establishing a true perspective on the quality of life and that neither one can be properly interpreted without the other. Objective indicators regard objectively observable facts of social life, without referring to people's perception assessment of these facts. Subjective indicators, however, refer to people's subjective perception and assessment of their lives under certain circumstances (Oppong, Ironside, and Kennedy, 1987). There appears to be a general agreement that both types of indicators are needed to interpret one another. Abrams (cited in *ibid*) states that there is the need for adding a new dimension to the concept of quality of life that includes: a level of satisfaction (happiness, contentment, and psychological well-being interpreted by those who form the community, are the final consumers of society's goods, and are the best judges of society's performance.

Peter Golding (1986) suggests to expand the logic to the poverty debate. Defining a poverty threshold implies examining a level of living that will enable people to participate in community life. The community must determine the content of such a level. Although poverty, in the eyes of the beholder, makes it individually subjective, poverty is determined by the norms and expectations of the community which transforms it into socially subjective conditions. The level of the poverty threshold, the specific contents of the level of living flowing from a citizen's economic entitlement, must be established by the community. It is, therefore, necessary to sever the connection between paid work and entitlement to a minimum income. It also suggests that the minimum income is not related to physical survival-to subsistence, but to being able to perform a number of unpaid tasks that the community requires of its citizens. The community must set the limits which a poverty line must respect. The community carries this out in two forms. First, the practice of day to day living determines empirically what is required in a certain cultural social context to live as full members of the community. It is the consumption practice- the style of living on which any poverty norm must be based. Experts can not determine this, and can not be allowed to presume what is necessary and what is secondary to daily living. The experts require to be subordinate, and not superior to the community (*Ibid*). Individuals,

families and groups live in poverty when lacking the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in activities and have the living conditions which are customary and approved in the communities to which they belong (Golding, 1986).

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (1998) of the United Nations, committee to active eradication of poverty, adds that poverty is a denial of opportunities, and it is a violation of human rights. Poverty implies not having enough to eat and clothe a family, being unable to attend school or a clinic, not owning land to grow food or a job to earn one's living, and not having access to credit. It suggests insecurity, powerlessness, and exclusion of individuals, households and communities. Action to address poverty must cover a broad front, with the full inclusion of governments and other development actors in society. The effort has to aim to fitting national and local circumstances, and anchored on needs assessments of the poor. In determining the needs of the poor, it must support their empowerment, their active involvement, participation in poverty reduction strategies as well as improved access by the poor to well functioning institutions (Ibid). Communities need measures of the extent to which poor people are excluded from what is called citizenship, a fully participative life of the normal standards of the community. Although lack of money has a role in this process of exclusion, it is not the only factor (Craig, 1992). Craig (1992:130) states that "the poor shall be taken to mean persons, families and groups whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the member states in which they live." The Administrative Committee on Coordination emphasize that empowerment, participation and social capital are crucial aspects for action against poverty (1997). Supporting and mobilizing social capital include policy and institutional changes that support empowerment of the poor and the full realization of their rights as citizens. It requires changes that promote the political, social and economic advancement of marginalized groups. Society must address this challenge of inclusion. Eyben (1998:1) discusses the issue of social

exclusion which has a number of different definitions. Some definitions are re-statements of a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty,

What can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. The challenge to tackle the interaction between these and preventing them arising in the first place.

This appreciation is crucial to understanding the causes, consequences, and characteristics of poverty. Social inclusion involves institutions and actors. The delivery of accessible and relevant services can not be achieved without support of community-based organisations so that people may demand the services they deserve.

#### ACTION RESEARCH AND PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Stephen Small (1995) suggests that action research is the most used form of action-oriented research. This involved the researcher trying to change the system while at the same time generating critical knowledge about it. Rapaport (cited Small: 942) adds that, "Action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework." Action researchers acknowledge that as the research process unfolds, the research problem may evolve requiring a new definition of the situation as well as new methods for understanding it. Action researchers collaborate with nonresearcher participants. The action researcher brings to the research process theoretical knowledge, experience and the skills of conducting social science research. The participant collaborators bring practical knowledge and experience about the situations that are being studied.

Jan Barnsley (1992) defines action research as a systematic collection and analysis of information for the purpose of taking action and promoting change. For Barnsley, action research involves participation. His approach is participatory action research. Research is aimed at making change in a community participation process. Barnsley sees research as part of an ongoing process for change. It is an aid to action and a tool for empowerment.

VanderPlaat (1998) adds that what distinguishes the discourse of empowerment is its acknowledgement and deep respect for all people's capacity to create knowledge based on their experiences and the ability to find resolutions to problems. Empowerment must imply some concept of group participation and self-support (VanderPlaat, 1998). It promotes an interventionary practice that does not create isolated individuals of a state bureaucracy. Rather, it empowers individuals to act together collectively, to develop solidarity and achieves a greater balance of power relations. Mutual support activities that encourage person-to-person rather than person-to-program, interaction leads to the emergence of a sense of security that is communicatively secured.

Action research has the following characteristics. It must involve specific interaction between the researcher and the field (Bowes, 1996). This interaction may include a high or low involvement between researcher and the participants. In high interaction, the researcher interacts with the participants by including their input on the research process. Participants involvement include choosing the research question, determining methods, collecting data, interpreting, and disseminating the findings. Second, findings of the action research process are brought back into practice with the purpose of bringing about change (Somekh, 1995). It involves a specific target that is aimed and directed at changing and improving the social situation through policies, teaching practices, organizational structure, and community activity (Bowes, 1996; Carson et al., 1989). Action research uses information, as community activists, to create effective strategies that decide the direction of change to improve the situation. The researcher's role is to empower participants by giving them a greater sense of where they are and the researcher can suggest methods to bring about desired change. When providing this empowering information, the researcher has to obtain "situation specific insights" to improve the self-help and action-taking competencies of the individual (Baburoglu and Raun, 1992). Third, Action research must be systematic and reflexive. Action research goes beyond data collection by emphasizing reflectivity on behalf of the researcher and participants. By reflecting on the progress made to reach established

goals. Carson et al (1989:3) defines the research process as a “continual process of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and developing a new action plan as a result of knowledge gained from the first cycle.” The research provides a source of empowerment for the participants. Involved reflection provides extensive critical thinking on behalf of the participants. Reinharz (1992:191) discusses this process as the demystification framework where by the “researchers believe that the act of obtaining knowledge creates the potential for change because the paucity of research about certain groups accentuates and perpetuates their powerlessness.”

Action research requires qualitative methods that provide descriptions of situations and communities. Pete Alcock (1993:114) states that qualitative descriptions of poverty “give life and meaning to the fairly dry tables and graphs of the arithmetic tradition.” The use of poor people’s experience of their deprivation of items raises the wider issue of the role of the poor people’s determination of and control over the qualitative measurement of their poverty and the presentation to society. Herbert Blumer (cited in Sanders, 1997) states that research should involve interaction with the world. Examining contingencies in the field setting and the relationships within provide notions that go beyond of more importance than what one discovers about the more abstract workings of the social world. Patricia Gathman ( 1997:85) states that “when doing qualitative research, researchers not only take on the perspective and attitude of those being studied, but interpret interactions in the context being studied to reveal participant meanings and perceptions.” The process of doing qualitative leads to situations that test our personal abilities and instructs us about who people are. The interactionist perspective that shapes field research covers everyday experience. The qualitative analytical lens’ view of the world is a crucial tool that orients people through encounters, situations, and relationships that shapes our daily lives.

Valid knowledge that initiates social change originates in the everyday understandings and experiences of those involved rather than conclusions of social scientists. The notion is based on the individual as a “knowing” agent capable of collective

action and promoting change within their community, rather than on the individual as the object of change-producing strategies (VanderPlaat, 1998). This knowledge is fundamental to knowing what actions will make a practical difference to people's lives. Thus, action research makes possible the development of strategies and programs based on real life experience rather than theories and assumptions. People, who experience an issue or who are members of the community, have ownership of the process. Some people are experienced in involving other members of the community in the research process. Community members define the research and control the research process.

## PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Whyte (1995:290) describes research as participatory action research that "involves members of the subjects of study participating actively in all phases of the process." Due to the input provided by participants, the action research claims to involve democratic research practices (Carson, et al. 1989). ). Barnsley (1992) states that participatory action research focuses on learning about how people actually experience the specific issue. A major interest of participatory research is to raise questions about the power relationship between researchers and researched (Martin, 1997). Participatory action research has been defined as attempts to breakdown the distinction between the researchers and the researched, the subjects and the object of knowledge production by the participation of the people for themselves in the process of creating knowledge (Small, 1995). The work of Paulo Freire has been one of the most important factors in the development of Participant research. He related the process of knowing with that of learning, through an ongoing cycle of reflection and action (Martin, 1997). The learning process leads to the growth of critical thinking that raises critical awareness in learners of the world about them.

Budd Hall (in Martin, 1997) has outlined various components in research methodology: research includes professionals working alongside marginalized and oppressed groups; and admitting the knowledge, power and strengths that these groups

already have in attempting to develop these qualities through the process of research. Research questions must develop from the priorities of these groups to become active subjects and to commit participants and learners in the process that leads to a committed involvement. By researching with marginalized groups, participatory research attempts to facilitate the empowerment of the participants through the invention of knowledge and the action process that leads to change on structural and personal levels.

Research is viewed as a process of education and development of consciousness and mobilization for action (Small, 1995). Participatory research involves a combination of the following: research, education and action. The primary goal is to bring about a more just society through transformative social change. Participatory research is committed to the empowerment and learning for all those engaged in the process as well as in the central role played by participant collaborators and its highly politicized goals. Thus, participatory action researchers argue for alternative paradigms that recognize that social science research can never be value free. Human subjects are active objects, affected by the research process. Participants as well as professional researchers have critical knowledge (Ibid).

#### CRITICAL LEARNING FOR PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH

In participatory action research, citizens are full partners in the research process and are usually referred to as co-researchers (Small, 1995). The final control of the research process lies with the citizen participants. Expert researchers are at the service of their citizen collaborators. Participatory research aims at empowering, resulting in much more than just the information gathered. Through active involvement in the research process, participants become more aware of their own abilities and resources and learn how to gather and use research knowledge. This active involvement in the research leads to increased ownership of the findings, opportunities to reflect upon them and greater commitment. In participatory research, the citizen participants are responsible for the design of the study, including deciding how the data will be collected, analyzed and distributed. Martin (1997)



states that marginalized groups may become suspicious of experts who must recognize, respect, and value relevant practices and knowledge that the community may bring to the research. Experts must believe in the capacity of local people to address problems and promote change. This will depend on where the experts perceive themselves to be in relation to poverty and injustice: either part of the solution or part of the problem. Novak (cited in Martin, 1997) states that “recognizing that they can be part of the problem, rather than simply accepting that what they do invariably benefits the poor, is an important first step.” This leads to the acknowledgment that as part of the problem, professionals may commit to social justice, to work to empowerment of the marginalized groups. This allows experts to spend time with local people, to get to know them, be known by the people and to be informed by them. In participatory research, respect, humility, adaptability, empathy and patience, born out of critical consciousness, are the most important traits. The researcher selects methods by presenting the various options along with their strengths and weaknesses. The researcher contributes by sharing his/her research expertise and educating participants about how to implement specific methods. The researcher serves as a facilitator of the process, permitting the participants to be the decisions makers (Small, 1995). Participatory research methods have been interpreted as a better approach to monitoring and evaluation (Helzi, 1997). Some of the concepts of participatory methods are that the poor are capable of investigating, analyzing and planning for their own situation. The roles of outsiders including developmental organizations act as convenors, facilitators and catalyst for development activities.

How does participatory action research work? It provides an analysis of issues based on a description of how people actually experience those issues (Barnsley and Ellis, 1992). People’s description of their lives signifies respect since it allows others to learn about the impact of social structures on people. Participatory action research affirms people’s right to be listened and understood. Learning that a problem exists, it allows people to know how to change it. The research itself allows researchers to understand the

experience of the people in a specific community. It determines how empowerment works for the people. Participatory action research is useful in determining the richness and complexity of the people affected. Research must be part of an action plan in order to be useful. It must be distributed and acted upon for it to work. The theory and analysis must be built from people's actual experience. The research questions should focus on people's experiences.

#### METHODOLOGY: QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE METHODS

Qualitative research attempts to describe and interpret a human phenomenon, often in the words of selected individuals, the informants. Researchers must remain clear about their biases, presuppositions, and interpretations, so that (participants) decide what they think about it all (Heath, 1997). Qualitative methods involve exploration, which is the first step of an inquiry. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, require verification. Although preliminary exploration is necessary and beneficial, exploration demands verification (Scheff, 1997). Verification, however, is too narrow and rigid since it involves experiments and other standardized formats. Researchers must have considerable knowledge before an adequate testing procedure. While qualitative methods resemble wide-angled lenses with little depth, "quantitative methods are as narrow as using the wrong end of a telescope" (Ibid, 1997:1).

#### EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Meaning is seldom described by empirical researchers who assume that the meaning of subjects' responses is unproblematic. Some qualitative researchers have been sensitive in this area, but few studies have examined the relationship between text and context in determining meaning (Scheff, 1997). Researchers take the same position as their subjects, they take for granted the construction of meaning. They have avoided the problem of meaning by dividing up into two areas. First, Qualitative research stresses validity, but it

ignores reliability. Face validity is crucial to analysing meaning which can be related to ordinary language. However, ordinary language may be biased and a supporter of the cultural status quo. Second, Quantitative methods stress reliability, but it fails to support validity. Reliability promotes repeatability, but it can never be sufficient enough for establishing meaning. Although both methods are in part rational, reliance on face validity stresses substantive rationality which examines particularities of situations.

Because participatory action research involves people's experiences, this leads to the use of qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodology has some implications. The implementation of old qualitative research methodology involves a different approach to the issue of ethical behavior. Madak (1994:2) states that,

Because qualitative methods are highly personal and interpersonal, because naturalistic inquiry takes the researcher into the real world where people live and work, and because in-depth interviewing opens up what is inside people-- qualitative inquiry may be more intrusive and involves greater reactivity than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches.

Researchers must be aware of the possible ethical dilemmas when employing qualitative methods. In some cases, the principles of a researcher's actions should improve the quality of life of the participants. The researcher must make sure that no harm is done to participants. The notion "no harm to participants" and "improved quality of life" turn into the questions "whose life should be improved? Social researchers must bear in mind the ethical dilemmas surrounding the employment of qualitative methods.

## INFORMED CONSENT

Ethical guidelines established by professional guidelines suggest that the researcher is responsible for informing the potential participation of the purposes of the research study. Informed consent refers to the individual's understanding of what is expected of them, but also consequences of having taken part in the study (Madak, 1994). Second, The evaluator has the responsibility to protect the identity of the individual participating in the evaluation project. In qualitative research, the researcher looks at the context in which the

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