Accessibility self-advocacy at an independent living center: a participatory research approach.

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ACCESSIBILITY SELF-ADVOCACY AT AN INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER:
A PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH APPROACH

A Dissertation Presented
by
MARY LEANOIR BRYDON-MILLER

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PROLOGUE

Talking Wheelchair Blues

I went for a jog in the city air
I met a woman in a wheelchair
I said "I'm sorry to see you're handicapped"
She says "What makes you think a thing like that?"

And she looks at me real steady
And she says, "You want to drag?"

So she starts to roll and I start to run
And she beat the pants off my aching buns
You know going uphill I'd hit my stride
But coming down she'd sail on by!

When I finally caught up with her
She says "Not bad for somebody able-bodied.
You know, with adequate care and supervision
You could be taught simple tasks.
So how about something to eat?

I said that'd suit me fine
"We're near a favorite place of mine."
So we mosied on over there
But the only way in was up a flight of stairs.

"Gee, I never noticed that," says I.
"No problem," the maitre d' replies.
"There's a service elevator around the back."

So we made it upstairs on the elevator
With the garbage, flies, and last week's potatoes
I said "I'd like a table for my friend and me."
He says "I'll try to find one out of the way."

Then he whispers, "Uh, is she gonna be sick,
I mean, pee on the floor or throw some kind of fit?"
I said "No, I don't think so,
I think she once had polio."
But that was twenty years ago.
You see, the fact of the matter is,
If the truth be told,
She can't walk.

So he points to a table, she wheels her chair
Some people look down and others stare
And a mother grabs her little girl
Says "Keep away, honey, that woman's ill."

We felt right welcome.

Then a fella walks up and starts to babble
About the devil and the holy bible
Says "Woman, though marked with flesh's sin,
Pray to Jesus, you'll walk again!"

Then the waiter says "What can I get for you?"
I said "I'll have your best imported brew."
And he says "What about her?"
I say "Who?" He says "Her."

"Oh, you mean my friend here."
He says "Yeah." I say "What about her?"
"Well, what does she want?"
"Well, why don't you ask her?"

Then he apologizes.
Says he never waited on a cripple before.

Well, she talked to the manager when we were through
She says "There're some things you could do
To make it easier for folks in wheelchairs."
He says "Oh, it's not necessary.

Handicapped never come here anyway."

Well, I said goodnight to my newfound friend
I said "I'm beginning to understand
A little bit of how it feels
To roll through life on a set of wheels."
She says "Don't feel sorry, don't feel sad,
I take the good along with the bad
I was arrested once at a protest demo
And the police had to let me go.

See, we were protesting the fact
That public buildings weren't wheelchair
accessible.
Turned out the jail was the same way.
Anyway, I look at it this way--
In fifty years you'll be in worse shape
than I am now.
See, we're all the same, this human race.
Some of us are called disabled. And the rest--
Well, the rest of you are just temporarily
able-bodied."

Fred Small from the album
The Heart of the Appaloosa
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the interest and involvement of the members of the Community Accessibility Committee and the other people who have participated in this project. I want to thank you all for the time you have spent, the ideas you have shared and the enthusiasm you have provided me over the past months. I hope that the work we have done together and will continue to do in some way contributes to building a more accessible world for all of us. I promise to do everything I can to make that happen.

I also want to thank the staff of Stavros, Inc., especially Pat Spiller, Donna Liebl, Seren Derin, Sandy Cohen and Joanne Nahlovsky. Thank you all for your support and encouragement. Thank you, Pat, for convincing me that I have something to contribute. I hope I prove you right. Thank you Joanne for all the phone calls, and typing, and organization which have been the mainstay of this project. And, Seren, thank you for keeping me in line, and for your willingness to share. I would also like to extend thanks to Steve Spinetto of the Architectural Barriers Board for his assistance and support.

The members of my committee deserve more than mere thanks; you all deserve awards for meritorious patience and unending support far beyond the call of duty.

Howard, thank you for taking this on in the first place, mostly because you knew no one else would and had some vague trust that I'd do something worthwhile. I hope you still think so.
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Finally, I want to thank Jim Thompson--he's been through a hell of dazed tuna-sandwich dinners and fits of uncertainty. And finally, thanks to my parents, John and Kibber Miller and all the other members of MOTLEY who always knew I could do it, no matter how long it seemed to be taking.
Every field of inquiry and every group of people develops its own set of words and phrases to describe important shared concepts and experiences. But language can also be used to indicate persons and ideas outside that experience. Such language when applied to other people is often used in a derogatory fashion and, perhaps even more frequently, seems to perpetuate stereotypes and misconceptions of others without the conscious intention of the user. Further, there is a certain component of fashion to language--an acceptable term at one period may be perceived as highly discriminatory at a later time.

The terms "disabled" individual or "person with a disability" are used most frequently in this paper in referring to those individuals who have a degree of physical impairment which causes them difficulty in interacting with the environment. The term "handicapped individual" is used by many others and appears often in citations made in the text. More commonly now, the term "handicapped" is used to apply to the environment rather than the individual. The individual may be physically disabled, but the environment is handicapped to the extent that the disabled individual experiences difficulty in negotiating that environment.

The terminology used in this paper coincides with current usage. If the usage appears out of date or in any way discriminatory to the reader please accept my apology and feel free to substitute whatever
Regarding the Use of Personal Pronouns

It is customary in scholarly treatises in psychology to adopt the use of third person pronouns in the presentation of research method, data, and discussion. This stylistic convention is utilized to reflect the assumed objective nature to the inquiry itself: the experimenter, having removed himself or herself from possible influence in the experimental situation, likewise removes his or her presence from the description of the method and results of this inquiry.

The mode of inquiry utilized in this project, as described in detail in the body of the dissertation, rejects the positivistically-informed notion that objectivity of necessity forms the core of scientific inquiry. Rather the project described here has applied a critically-informed participatory research approach which explicitly acknowledges the role of subjectivity in scientific inquiry and which incorporates the active and informed participation of those impacted by the research process. To maintain the traditional convention of using third person pronouns would serve no purpose in this case and, in my opinion, would, in fact, do violence to the objectives of this alternative research approach by forcing a distance and anonymity on those participating in the project which I have endeavored to overcome throughout the course of this project. Confidentiality is, of course, maintained but an attempt has been made to present participants as complete individuals and to communicate the quality of the
interactions between myself and the participants. An understanding of these personal and interpersonal aspects of the research process is crucial to achieving an understanding of the research process itself and the knowledge generated through this process. The knowledge is not limited to the technical information we have, by custom, assumed to comprise the results of scientific or scholarly inquiry.

The interpretive tradition in psychology gives us one model for expanding the limits of what is considered acceptable scientific inquiry, and a growing body of research and critique extends this process yet another step to explore the contribution which critical knowledge might make to the field. It is as a part of this critical tradition that the project described here might be located. The reader must, of course, judge for himself or herself the merits of this inquiry and come to his or her own decision concerning whether or not such inquiry provides an important alternative research model in psychology. It is to be hoped, however, that a simple change in the use of pronouns will not form the basis for this determination and that the reader will consider this an opportunity to examine the implications of literary conventions which are all too often taken for granted.
ABSTRACT

Accessibility Self-Advocacy at an Independent Living Center:
A Participatory Research Approach

(May, 1984)

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Directed By: Professor Howard Gadlin

The accessibility self-advocacy project described here represents an effort to identify the architectural and environmental accessibility needs of disabled persons in the Western Massachusetts area and to determine what advocacy strategies might be developed to address these needs. The project, which was conducted under the auspices of a local Independent Living Center, then goes one step further in planning and carrying out specific action based on the results of this preliminary investigation. The project began with a series of interviews which guided the development of a consumers' workshop on accessibility advocacy. This first workshop has since resulted in specific accessibility-related action and in the establishment of an on-going participants' accessibility advocacy committee, active in addressing local accessibility-related concerns.

Rather than approach the issue of accessibility planning and advocacy from a traditional research perspective, however, a critically-informed, participatory research process was employed, emphasizing the active and informed involvement of disabled
participants. The participatory research approach is a dynamic, process-oriented research method which rejects many of the demands of positivistically-informed research, focusing instead on the achievement of social change and on the increased awareness on the part of participants of their ability to control this process.

A justification of this alternative research approach as a valid form of knowledge generation is based on a discussion of critical theory as an alternative epistemological basis for research in the social sciences.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The thing that makes me the maddest about it is that they will never ask a handicapped person. Apparently if you're handicapped, you can't use your arms or legs, you can't use your brain or mouth either.

Mary Jane Kerr

The accessibility self-advocacy project described here represents an effort to identify the architectural and environmental accessibility needs of disabled persons in the Western Massachusetts area and to determine what advocacy strategies might be developed to address these needs. The project, which was conducted under the auspices of a local Independent Living Center, then goes one step further in planning and carrying out specific action based on the results of this preliminary investigation. The project began with a series of interviews which guided the development of a consumers' workshop on accessibility advocacy. This first workshop has since resulted in specific accessibility-related action and in the establishment of an on-going participants' accessibility advocacy committee, active in addressing local accessibility-related concerns.

Negative and patronizing societal attitudes have long made people with disabilities the object of oppression and discrimination in every facet of life. While society may no longer condone the practice of abandoning disabled infants to die of exposure on barren mountainsides, we have created a modern Mount Taygetus by our practice of excluding persons with disabilities from our very social awareness. Educational
and employment opportunities have been withheld, political and social involvement discouraged, even personal relationships and intimacy have been denied on the basis of disability. Disabled people, like other groups which have experienced such discrimination, have in recent years begun to recognize the inequities inherent in this experience and to demand recognition and equal rights. The Independent Living Movement, which has developed over the past decade into a powerful political force, has achieved important advances both in insuring the rights of disabled people and in developing services and programs to enable disabled individuals to live as independently and actively as possible. A central tenet of this Independent Living Movement has been its emphasis on individual autonomy and personal control. Disabled individuals themselves determine where and how they will live, work, and play and take responsibility for coordinating the services they need to make this possible. Independent Living Centers provide training and peer-counseling to individuals and act as advocates to see that the necessary services are available, and that the rights of disabled people are protected.

Architectural accessibility has been an important focus of these recent efforts on the part of people with disabilities to achieve independence and equal rights. Without access to town halls and governmental offices, disabled people have been excluded from participation in the political process. Stores, offices, and businesses which are inaccessible have forced disabled people to seek other, often more costly alternatives or to rely on other people to transact their business for them, while architectural barriers in
restaurants, theaters, concert halls and other recreational facilities have made it impossible for people with disabilities to freely choose how they will spend their leisure time, and have encouraged continued segregation of disabled individuals from their communities.

Recent legislation, much of it the result of concentrated lobbying on the part of disability rights organizations, has acknowledged the importance of architectural accessibility and has established guidelines and requirements for insuring that new construction and large-scale renovation projects will be barrier-free. There is still much to be done, however. Enforcement has been lax, due to ambiguity in the assignment of responsibility and insufficient funding. Private homes and apartments, as well as many businesses which pre-date the regulations do not fall within these guidelines and there seems to be an overwhelming lack of concern on the part of many designers and planners to ameliorate the situation.

The Community Accessibility Project described here represents an effort to identify the accessibility needs of disabled persons in the Western Massachusetts area and to determine what accessibility advocacy strategies might be developed to address these needs. The project then goes one step further in planning and carrying out specific action based on the results of this preliminary investigation.

Rather than approach this issue from a traditional research perspective, however, a participatory research perspective was employed, emphasizing the active and informed involvement of disabled participants. This alternative research approach was utilized in part because it seemed more consonant with the participatory-action
orientation of the Independent Living Movement. At least as important, however, in making this choice is my own conviction that traditional social science research has contributed to the continued powerlessness of oppressed groups and has purchased our status as well-paid scholars and pundits at the price of the freedom and autonomy of those we have made the subjects of our benevolent inquiry. The participatory research approach, on the other hand, demands the active involvement and commitment of the researcher to the people and to the issues addressed in the research process.

As Paulo Freire observes, in traditional social science research, it is as if the researcher has said:

...I think of myself as a neutral or impartial scientist, I view both people and reality as the object of my research. Thus I analyse them as if the world were a morgue in which a body is dissected.

(Freire, 1982, p. 30)

I agree with Freire when he responds to this attitude by stating, "This is not for me" (1982, p. 30).

The participatory research approach is a dynamic, process-oriented research method which tends to develop and assume focus as a result of earlier phases in the research process. The statement of strict hypotheses and the reliance on predictability as an indication of validity are thus replaced by a detailed discussion of expectations and project objectives while validity claims are judged by the level of understanding and involvement on the part of participants and by the achievement of concrete social change. A justification of this alternative research approach as a valid form
of knowledge generation is based on a rejection of a strict positivistically-defined epistemology in favor of a broader definition of knowledge as defined by critical theory.

A more detailed critique of the traditional research perspective and description of the participatory research approach are discussed in the following chapter. A brief history of the Independent Living Movement and of accessibility advocacy is then presented in Chapter 3. The results of the Community Accessibility Project itself form Chapter 4, while the final section, Chapter 5, attempts to examine the objectives of the project and the results and to come to some conclusions concerning this specific project and the applicability of the participatory research perspective as an alternative mode of inquiry in social science. The Appendix is devoted to the presentation of documents related to project planning and the action which has resulted to date.
CHAPTER II

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO A TRADITIONAL RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a "circle of certainty" within which he also imprisons reality. On the contrary, the more radical he is, the more fully he enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he can better transform it. He is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. He is not afraid to meet people or to enter into dialogue with them. He does not consider himself the proprietor of history or of men, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he does commit himself, within history, to fight at their side.

(Freire, 1970b, p. 24)

A Review of Traditional Research Method in the Social Sciences

As social scientists, our own embeddedness in a traditional, positivistic research paradigm blinds us to possible alternative approaches. This entrenchment results, I believe, from the ubiquitousness of positivistically-informed research in texts and journals in the social sciences and from the general lack of efforts to examine the assumptions of this research paradigm as something less than natural law. Before considering the alternative proposed here, that is, the participatory research approach informed by critical theory, it would be worthwhile to review the assumptions of the traditional research approach, noting the limitations inherent in this method. Detailed examinations of the foundations of positivistic social science can be found in Fay (1975), Oquist (1977), and Park (1982), and much of what is reviewed here is extracted from those sources.
Fay defines the term "positivist social science" as "that metatheory of social science which is based on a modern empiricist philosophy of science" (1975, p. 13). It is important to note, however, that while a positivistically-defined science does rely on empirical practice, it goes beyond mere empiricism by positing this form of inquiry as the only valid source of knowledge. Positivism thus "recognizes only positive facts and observable phenomena, with the objective relations of these and the laws that determine them, abandoning all inquiry into causes or ultimate origins, as belonging to the theological and metaphysical stages of thought, held now to be superceded" (compact edition, Oxford English Dictionary, 1971, p. 2248).

A number of basic assumptions follow from this theoretical stand. Perhaps most central to this positivistic notion of science is the emphasis on objectivity, that is, the notion that the researcher makes no interpretation in noting the results of inquiry but records them in such a way that any other observer would perform in precisely the same fashion. The notion that this form of scientific inquiry is also value-free and politically neutral are corollaries of this conceptualization of objectivity. Ideally, if a researcher is successful in carrying out objective research there is no manner in which personal values or politically-informed sentiments can color the results. Another central requirement related to these same notions is the demand for experimenter control to guarantee objectivity. The researcher is obligated to insure that possible sources of bias are removed from the research setting. In order to accomplish this goal,
complete control over the research process is necessary. This need for control also implies that a strict dichotomy must be maintained between the researcher and the objects of the research, who, as Park points out, in social research are "referred to as research subjects with an unintended irony." (1978, p. 2). If this distance is not maintained, bias may be introduced into the data-gathering procedure by subjects attempting, consciously or unconsciously, to influence the results.

In Fay's analysis this emphasis on control plays an even more central role. The very notion of explanation within a positivistic view is essentially equivalent to prediction and prediction implies, at least some degree of control. This refers not simply to the control of extraneous variables or of some contrived research setting, but, to the control of the phenomenon under investigation. "It is thus that the ability to control phenomena provides the framework in terms of which scientific explanation is possible." (Fay, 1975, p. 40) The result of this emphasis on control in the case of the social sciences is the emergence of what Fay refers to as "policy science" with its goal of technical control of social relations (1975, p. 38).

Tandon summarizes these concepts,

The classical paradigm lays emphasis on value neutrality of the researcher; makes objectivity as the hallmark of the research process; suggests complete unilateral control by the researcher over the entire research process; treats people as objects only responding to the researcher's questions; and attempts to study people and social phenomena as the natural sciences do. (1981c, p. 21)

In addition to these characteristics of traditional research,
Park (1982) notes the role of the related demands for universalism, generality and abstractness in determining the current form of research in the social sciences. Science, as Park observes, "explains an observed phenomenon by deducing the statement describing it as a logical consequence of statements, or laws, pertaining to general invariant relationships between two or more entities. . . . This conception of science would have it then that universal statements are at the very foundation of scientific explanation and hence the business of science is not possible without building universalism into its very fabric." (p. 2) The concept of universalism thus posits that knowledge should be "valid at all places and at all times." Note that the demand for universalism then carries with it the assumption that knowledge is ahistorical as well as being universal in a geographic sense.

Generality is an allied assumption which indicates the notion that "that theory is best which encompasses most." Finally, Park also considers the concept of abstractness which, as he notes, is closely tied to that of generality in that "general statements constituting scientific laws in an explanatory scheme entail abstract concepts." (p. 4)

To review, then, a positivistically conceived social science will exhibit, or attempt to exhibit at any rate, the following characteristics:

--it will be objective, and hence, value free and politically-neutral;

--it will be universalistic, ahistorical, abstract and as generally applicable as possible;
--it will maintain the "researcher-researched" dichotomy;
--the success of the research will depend to a large part on the degree of experimental control which can be achieved; and
--successful explanation in this model will imply a degree of predictability or control over the phenomenon being studied.

How feasible is the achievement of these requirements in research in the social sciences? And what are the implications of conducting research within this perceptive? These are concerns raised by a number of critics who have examined and ultimately rejected the traditional research perspective.

The possibility of achieving objective, value-free social science research has, for example, been challenged. As Farganis points out,

Those who claim that value-free social science is possible delude themselves with false notions of scientism and objectivity: for, the very existence of social facts implies an evaluative structure, and the social analyst who denies their presence implicitly accepts ideological limitations by which a social order is maintained, that is to say, social scientists, in their efforts to understand and effect social reality, necessarily participate in non-objective, value-laden inquiry. (1975, p. 490)

Even assuming that social scientists might reject the responsibility of determining what goals and objectives they should seek to promote through their research, the notion that they will seek the "best" or "most efficient" solution implies a value-laden system in itself.

Thus, by falsely assuming that objective, value-free research is possible within the social sciences, the researcher "is able to ignore
the mechanisms of control and domination, while at the same time participating in them and receiving their rewards." (Gaventa and Horton, 1981, p. 40) In a political sense then this implies that by denying the true nature of traditional social science research, social scientists "have turned their discipline into a kind of knowledge which fosters and perpetuates oppressive social structure." (Park, 1982, p.1)

The assumption of universalism contributes to this process of continued oppression as well, as Park notes, "sociological theories of a universal character expressed as statistical tendencies are written in the language of organized control." (1982, p. 26) This is due, in part, to the fact that "universalistic sociology is modeled after physical science functions primarily as ideology." (Park, 1982, p. 19) This positivistically-generated ideology makes it possible, for example, for social scientists to exclude direct human experience and community from their analysis, and to reify society in such a way as to make true human action seem impossible, and to support the supposedly beneficial intervention of the social scientists. As Park notes, "this view of the social world justifies regimentation, management, and molding--in short, domination of people." (1982, p. 20) In addition, the probabilistic nature of this form of knowledge creates a situation in which, as Park explains, the results of such a research process can only be effectively put to use in large-scale situations where the number of cases will make application of statistically derived truths "rational and/or profitable." For individuals or small groups such risk-taking is
impossible, thus placing the control of research again outside the grasp of the individual.

The ahistorical nature of knowledge within the traditional research model has also been questioned. For example, the development of specific concepts and topics within the social sciences and the ways in which they are addressed have been examined from an historical perspective. This leads to the conclusion that rather than being objective and value-free, social science research, in the very definition of the problems it examines as well as in the nature of the research practice, is determined by existing social, political, and economic values and ideologies. One important contribution that has been made by critical theory is, as Bernstein suggests, "to provide us with an accurate depth understanding of our historical situation." (1976, p. 217) Excellent examples of this type of historically based critique have begun to bring into question the possibility of an ahistorical understanding of science and of scientific knowledge. This is true of the natural as well as the social sciences (Park, 1982), although the examination here is limited to a consideration of examples from the social sciences. For example, Gadlin's (1977) examination of the historical role of intimacy forces the reader to question socially-supported but implicit assumptions concerning the role of the community in family life and other issues related to our culturally determined notions of the nature of intimate relations. In a similar vein, recent feminist critiques of social science research point out the historically-bounded nature of theories related to women and women's issues which
have created a "patriarchal social science." These critics have as a result rejected the conclusions of research thought to be "scientifically-proven", as male-identified and discriminatory toward women (Laws, 1978). Other examples of this same type of critique have been presented by Foucault (1977), Marcus (1978), Rothman (1978), and Sontag (1978).

The impact of the researcher-researched dichotomy has also been examined. Given the impossibility of achieving objectivity, this dualism ceases to be justifiable. Currently, "research is often conceived of as an academic exercise which elevates the researcher above other levels of society." (Swantz, 1982, p. 118) This stand, as Singh notes, has had the effect of leading to "the deterioration in their [the group being researched] state of dependence since it confirmed them in their self-image as persons only fit to receive orders from their masters or favors from their benefactors." (1981, p. 170) This imposition of oppressive social distinctions can no longer be justified by turning to scientific method for support. The justification for this rejection of the researcher-researched dichotomy goes beyond this critique of objectivity and its political implications by recognizing the former objects of research as knowing subjects in their own right. The ability of those being researched to understand their circumstances to reflect on this situation and to take part in the inquiry must, therefore, be acknowledged and the research process modified accordingly.

This rejection of the researcher-researched dichotomy implies that the demand for experimenter control becomes insupportable, as
well. What interests would such control serve except those of the social scientist seeking power and status? The rejection of the assumptions concerning the objective, value-free nature of social science inquiry also implies that social control, if it cannot, in fact, be scientifically validated, should lie, not in the hands of the scientists, but rather in the hands of the individual members of that society. Social policy decision-making can no longer be hidden in the mystique of scientism but must be recognized as a politically determined process, subject to public scrutiny and control.

Thus, traditional social science research, far from being the bastion of objective knowledge and benevolent social justice it has seemed, has, in fact, been a partisan to the continued oppression of the powerless by the political and economic elite which have purchased its favors in research funds and social status. As Myrdal has observed, "Research is always and by logical necessity based on moral and political valuations, and the researcher should be obliged to account for them explicitly." (Hall, 1982, p. 13) This is precisely what practitioners of participatory research have attempted to do, proposing an alternative to traditional social science research.

Participatory Research

Participatory research has been defined as "research pursued and constructed by members of a community and the social scientist, with the explicit intent of transforming social reality and improving the lives of those involved." (Marshall, 1981, p. 1) Thus, rather than lay claim to objectivity, participatory research explicitly acknow-
ledges the values which underlie this method, defining the method further as "a process of liberation which begins with faith in the people and in their capacity to make their own decisions (Fernandes & Tandon, 1981, p. 21)

Participatory research is often described as a tripartite process of "social investigation involving the full participation of the community; an educational process; and a means of taking action for development." (Kraai, McKenzie, & Youngman, 1982, p. 154) In fact, recent trends in adult education practices have been a major impetus for the development of a participatory research method. The work of Paulo Freire (1970a; 1970b; 1982; 1983), in particular, has served as a model not only for work in adult education but in a variety of participatory research settings.

Freire's work has been especially effective in providing an alternative to the reseacher-researched dichotomy which has dominated social science research to date. Instead Freire regards both educator and student, or by extension, researcher and researched, as equal and active participants in the formation of the education or research process. "In doing research," he observes, "I am educating and being educated with the people." (1982, p. 30)

Being "with the people" also implies a commitment to working toward a solution to the problems they face. Participatory research is a social-action, social-change directed process. As Tandon observes, the participatory research approach is "solely in response to and for the fulfillment of the needs of the less powerful, weaker segments of a social setting and is part of a process of their growth
This emphasis on the development of individual consciousness and group empowerment as necessary components of social action is very much a part of the participatory research method. Freire reflects this same emphasis in his concept of "conscientization," "the process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality." (1970a, p. 452)

Active and informed involvement of the group in each phase of the research process is critical in achieving these goals of conscientization and citizen empowerment (Hall, 1981). From the conceptualization of the problem to the application of the results, ownership of the research process resides with the people involved (Horton, 1981, p. 8).

This focus does not obviate the need for trained researchers. However, as Mduma points out, "outsiders should regard themselves as co-workers ... and not as alien redeemers." (1982, p. 204) Similarly, Mukkrath & de Magry observe that "the external agent has a catalytic role to play in this process" (1981, p. 191), and caution that during the research process, particularly in terms of data analysis and interpretation, "one is tempted to leave this work to specialists. Such an approach can continue the monopoly of knowledge by a few and turn learning into one more tool of domination." (p. 189)

Budd Hall provides a summary of some of these characteristics of participatory research:
- The problem originates in the community or workplace itself.

- The ultimate goal of the research is fundamental structural transformation and the improvement of the lives of those involved. The beneficiaries are the workers or people concerned.

- Participatory research involves the people in the workplace or the community in the control of the entire process of the research.

- Focus of participatory research is on work with a wide range of exploited or oppressed groups; immigrants, labour, indigenous peoples, women.

- Central to participatory research is its role in strengthening the awareness in people of their own abilities and resources and its support to mobilizing and organizing.

- The term 'researcher' can refer to both the community or workplace persons involved as well as those with specialized training.

- Although those with specialized knowledge/training often come from outside the situation, they are committed participants and learners in a process that leads to militancy rather than detachment.

  (1981, pp. 7-8)

While there seems to be general agreement about the characteristics and objectives of participatory research, the methods used to achieve these objectives are varied and incorporate both empirical and non-empirical techniques, for participatory research is not a rejection of empiricism. As Fals-Borda points out, "only the extremist groups erroneously confused the empirical with the positivistic." (1977, p. 12) Thus, while an alternative to positivistically-
conceived research, participatory research often utilizes fairly traditional information gathering and analysis methods. However, rather than limiting the potential range of methods to those used in traditional research, participatory research incorporates a wide range of methods.

Tobias (1982) provides a fairly complete list, including:

- group discussion
- public meetings
- research teams
- open-ended surveys
- community seminars
- fact-finding tours
- collective production of audio-visual materials
- popular theatre
- educational camps

Many participatory research projects, including the one to be described here, utilize a number of these methods to provide converging sources of information to address the problem at hand.

Validity, in a traditional research perspective, refers to the extent to which the research design addresses the stated problem or experimental hypotheses. Participatory research judges validity through action and critical learning (Comstock & Fox, 1983, p. 16). The main questions are, to what extent has the research project resulted in the solution of the social problem or issue it was generated to address, and, how have participants gained through their involvement in the research? "The final outcome of participatory research is participatory action, which is characterized by an equal distribution of power, reliance on local resources, continued control by the people, small and locally evolved technology, and processual, qualitative human outcomes." (Fernandes & Tandon, 1981, p. 10) The
participatory research endeavor has been successful to the extent that these goals have been achieved.

Despite the fact that participatory research (as distinguished from related fields such as adult education or community organizing) is a relatively recent development, there are a wide variety of examples available to illustrate the process in the form of case studies. Representative examples might include a women's health program in India (Chand and Soni, 1981), a grain storage project in Tanzania (Mduma, 1982), a popular theater project in Botswana (Kraai, et al., 1982) and a rural training program in Peru (deWit and Gianotten, 1980). This brief sample reflects the preponderance in the literature of projects conducted in Third World nations. Much of the development of the participatory research method has taken place in Third World countries because, as Fals-Borda points out, "neither the terms of reference, nor the categories operating within the standard sociological paradigms received from Europe and the United States were satisfactory ... these were found to be inapplicable to the existing reality." (1977, p. 5) Fals-Borda has also noted that the problems addressed by participatory research, though "more dramatic in dependent countries, also can be found, when looked for, in marginal or depressed regions of the rich countries themselves." (p.2)

Examples of Participatory Research

Just as it was difficult for researchers working in Third World settings to apply traditional, Western research methods, so much of the participatory research conducted in these countries, while of
great interest, are difficult to translate to a Western cultural and social setting. For this reason, the four case studies to be considered in greater detail are those which have been conducted in the United States, or in other Western nations.

The development of participatory research in the area of adult education is reflected in two of the studies to be considered here. From a more traditional adult education program, Fordham, Poulton, and Randle (1982) sought to create a problem-oriented program of community organizing and education. This project, conducted in a sub-urban community near Portsmouth, England, was initiated in response to problems experienced with existing adult education programs. The first six months of the project were spent "not doing anything." Researchers moved into the community and spent this first period "listening to local people, talking with them, finding out what might be possible and deciding on the things to which people might respond." (p. 133) They began to develop communication with local groups and with existing providers of adult education services. During the second phase of the project, researchers attempted to bring the adult education services and their research project into more direct contact with the community by stationing a mobile office at local shopping centers, eliciting local interest and input. The objective at this point was not necessarily to register more students for existing classes, but rather to start a dialogue with local residents about community needs. Within the larger project, individual student interns also carried out a number of smaller scale studies, including one informal discussion group focused on child-rearing
problems which succeeded in becoming self-sufficient and self-supporting. In reflecting on the research process, the authors note the importance of an "ecological" approach, focusing on real problems as they are experienced and expressed by people in the community. They also emphasize that "it is necessary to establish a belief in the abilities, a respect for the values and a reinforcement of the potential of people, whatever their class or background might be." (p. 147)

A second study (Draper, 1982), conducted with four tribal communities in Canada, demonstrates the need for new definitions and approaches in social science research. In this case members of the community who applied for research funds were granted support, "on condition that a reputable research agency, namely a university, would administer the project funds, supply the principal investigator for the project, and ultimately be responsible for the study." (p. 175) Despite the fact that the community had been able to organize, to conceive of the needs assessment project and to apply for funding, the government ministry refused to deal with them as a group of competent, committed individuals. The government also "perceived research in traditional and quantifiable terms" (p. 176), while these notions were negatively perceived by community members themselves who perceived research "as an academic exercise intended to serve academic institutions." (p. 176) Community members were concerned with examining their own educational needs and with taking action to improve the situation, not with lengthening the vitae of researchers with little interest or understanding of their needs. Fortunately,
the author had worked with the group before, was trusted by them and was willing to relinquish his authority for the project to group members despite the legal responsibility demanded by the funding agency. A number of information gathering methods were used including examining existing school and community records, holding community workshops and interviews, and participation in actions. In fact the importance of taking action was emphasized by community members and was incorporated at an early point in the research process.

This clash with traditional research method is not a necessary component of a participatory research process. In some cases highly technical, empirical research methods might be employed in a participatory research project. In these cases, however, community members themselves receive training in conducting the research and the generation and utilization of results remains their responsibility. A recent study of land ownership in Appalachia (Gaventa, 1980; Gaventa & Horton, 1981; Horton, 1981), for example, organized local residents around the issue of large-corporate land ownership which contributes to the poverty which typifies much of the region.

As in the Tribal community education project, initial progress on the land ownership project was hampered by bureaucratic efforts to undermine the work. The bureaucracy, in this case represented by the Appalachian Regional Commission, originally couched its objections in demands for a more "scientific design" and it was not until organizers threatened to go to the media with the story of delays and bad faith negotiations that the contract was finally approved. In order to gather data, residents of the various communities involved
recorded information from the town tax rolls.

Page after page of property figures which would have been tedious, meaningless numbers for the outside expert became items of great intrigue for the citizen researcher. To them, the numbers and names represented power and powerholders they knew. The data quickly gave them insights into local community affairs. (Gaventa & Horton, 1981, p. 127)

A successful, large-scale participatory research project, "the citizens' research process has produced one of the most comprehensive surveys of land ownership patterns and their related impacts in the United States." (pp. 128-129)

The results of the study, which have been accepted even by opponents of the project, are now being used by local tax reform and community organizations to advocate the needs of local citizens and to demand more equitable tax programs.

Another highly-successful, large-scale participatory research project is reported by Comstock and Fox (1982). The researchers were called in by the residents of the town of North Bonneville in Washington state, population 470. The town, located on the Columbia River Gorge, was scheduled to be demolished by the Army Corps of Engineers and the people were to be relocated in order to construct a new dam along the river. The residents accepted the need for the new dam and were willing to relocate but they found that the Army Corps of Engineers intended to simply create a modern diaspora. The residents, on the other hand, wanted to be relocated as a community and found the Army Corps of Engineers unwilling to cooperate with this plan. A community-wide organizing effort was undertaken and the North Bonneville Life Effort (NOBLE) organized. A survey of
research as a valid form of inquiry.

Pragmatism because it "views knowledge as eventual rather than as antecedent" (Conchelos and Kassam, 1981, p. 54) has difficulty justifying the value-laden nature of most participatory research (Bryceson, Manicom, & Kassam, 1982, p. 77). However, the emphasis on action over empty theory-testing and the commitment to concrete problem-solving which characterize pragmatism would be consistent with this system.

Many other participatory researchers base their understanding of the research process in a strict dialectical materialist framework. The dialectical materialist view which incorporates historical materialism as the theoretical framework to guide social analysis (Oquist, 1977, p. 19), is in many ways consistent with the goals of participatory research. For example, this perspective holds that "human needs, socio-historically defined in concrete contexts, are the point of departure in the process of knowledge production." And the justification for the social change orientation of participatory research was perhaps best stated by Marx in his well known thesis, "The philosophers have only interpreted the world differently, the point is to change it" (Oquist, 1977, p. 26). However, researchers taking a very strict historical materialist perspective (see Fals-Borda, 1977; Mshana & Bita, 1982) tend to ignore the economic, historical and cultural differences which define each research setting in their efforts to maintain a strict Marxist perspective, "immobilizing Marx," to use Freire's words.

There is another epistemological system which to my mind provides
the most complete and consistent theoretical foundation for participatory research; this is critical theory. There are fine reviews of critical theory available (see, for example, Berstein, 1976; Connerton, 1976; Held, 1980), and my intention here is not to review the entire history or philosophical system of critical theory. Rather I will attempt to summarize why I believe critical theory provides a strong theoretical foundation for participatory research validating this alternative form of knowledge generation, and addressing the objections which have been raised concerning the traditional research process. Comstock and Fox (1982) provide an excellent summary of critical theory as it applies to participatory research and much of the discussion to follow is based on their work, along with recent works by Park (1978, 1982).

As discussed earlier, positivism holds that only objective, empirical-analytical knowledge can inform scientific inquiry. But, as we have also seen, "what is taken for granted as the starting point for empirical research, as the realm of 'brute fact' that presumably grounds such research, is itself the product of complex processes of interpretation which have historical origins." (Bernstein, 1976, p. 230). Thus, even within the empirical-analytic sciences, human subjectivity plays a major role in determining what issues will be addressed and how this research will be conducted. Rather than deny this subjective element, critical theory makes an analysis of the role of subjectivity and of human values an explicit component of the research process. Subjectivity ceases to be the bane of the research process and is recognized as a valid source of knowledge,
subjectivity implying a recognition of the role of the thinking subject not a solipistic fixation on the individual's personal thoughts and feelings. This recognition of valid, alternative forms of knowing is due in large part to Habermas' analysis of the forms of human knowledge and their relationship to human interests (Habermas, 1971). Habermas discusses three distinct "categories of processes of inquiry for which a specific connection between logical-methodological rules and knowledge-constitutive interests can be demonstrated." (p. 308) The empirical-analytic knowledge familiar from positivism supports the technical interests which allow us to establish control over our environment. As Bernstein points out, Habermas "is not criticizing or denigrating this type of knowledge. On the contrary, insofar as he claims that it is grounded in the dimension of human life that involves human survival, he is stressing its importance and its basic quality for any social life." (1976, p. 194) But, as Bernstein goes on to explain, "Habermas' primary object of attack is the ideological claim that this is the only type of legitimate knowledge, or the standard by which all knowledge is to be measured." (p. 194) It is this positivistically-held notion that is rejected by Habermas and other critical theorists.

A second and vital form of human knowledge which cannot be understood through empirical-analytic inquiry is based in what Habermas refers to as the practical interests of humankind, expressed through human communication and language. These practical interests can only be understood through the interpretive, or historical-hermeneutic sciences in which "access to the facts is provided by
the understanding of meaning, not observation." (Habermas, 1971, p. 309)

Finally, in addition to these two forms of knowledge, Habermas posits critical knowledge, knowledge born of social action which supports the emancipatory interests of humankind. Critically-informed inquiry generates a form of knowledge which results in and grows out of the liberation of those generating the knowledge, it is simultaneously knowledge based in action and action based in knowledge. It is only through this dialectical process of action and reflection that the praxis of critical theory can be achieved (Freire, 1970, p. 36).

Habermas discusses the necessary relationships between these three types of knowledge and the interests associated with them. Bernstein states this relationship emphatically, "an adequate social and political theory must be empirical, interpretive, and critical." (1976, p. 235) I would go further in insisting that, as Bernstein again notes, while this emancipatory interest is in some respects "derivative" of the others, it is at the same time "the most basic cognitive interest." (p. 198) The empirical-analytic and historical-hermeneutic sciences do generate valid forms of knowledge, but if we are to act in the interest of humankind, these sciences must be placed in the service of the critical sciences. Participatory research is an attempt to provide a model for this incorporation of the various forms of inquiry in the interest of human liberation.

To return, then, to the objectives raised on pages 9 and 10 concerning the traditional research approach, it should be clear that a critically-informed participatory research approach provides an
alternative which explicitly addresses these objectives.

As I have tried to demonstrate, a critically-informed approach, while it does not reject the empirical-analytic sciences, does reject the positivistic notions that science can and must be objective. Instead, a variety of types of knowing are acknowledged, and the degree of subjectivity inherent in any form of inquiry explicitly recognized. Thus, a critically-informed science at the same time rejects the demand that research be value-free and politically-neutral, recognizing the fact that "all scientific knowledge about social reality carries with it, either implicitly or explicitly, certain ideological, political and evaluative convictions." (Farganis, 1975, p 483).

In order to examine the nature of these human values, critical theorists and participatory researchers working within this framework have adapted the method of immanent critique developed by Hegel and Marx (Antonio, 1981, pp. 332-334). This method, as Antonio describes, provides "a means of detecting the societal contradictions which offer the most determinate possibilities for emancipatory social change." (p. 330). The method of immanent critique allows the researcher, together with those with whom s/he works, to examine accepted values and their social expression in a critically-aware manner.

Comstock and Fox provide a more detailed description of the method of immanent critique which they state "can be schematically presented as follows:

1) a comparison of an ideology with the social structures experienced by the people,
2) a critique of the contradictions between the ideology and the social structures it purports to describe,

3) the discovery of immanent possibilities for liberation by applying current ideals to the specific historical development of social structures, and

4) the negation and transcendence of both the ideological and material bases of domination."

(1982, p. 5)

The authors go on to point out that this method of immanent critique "provides a logic for participatory research methods." (p. 5) This method of immanent critique thus provides a means for the participatory researcher to come to a common understanding with the people with whom s/he works of basic shared values and, based on this common understanding, to establish joint objectives for the research process in a manner which makes domination by the researcher impossible. The method of immanent critique then defines the manner in which a critically-informed participatory research process might deal with the human values and political implications which are simply denied in a traditional research method.

Critically-informed participatory research also rejects the universalistic and ahistorical notions of traditional research. As noted earlier, historically-grounded critique has formed an important component of the literature of critically-informed inquiry. This work has explicitly acknowledged the historical nature of human understanding and inquiry and by tracing the development of this understanding forced a recognition that science must be understood within history not as an entity outside history.
Critically-informed examination of the notions of universality and generality has also resulted in alternative ways of understanding the nature of scientific inquiry. Park utilizes a historical critique of the concept of universalism to develop the notion of indigenization as an alternative more consistent with a critical understanding of the research process. "Indigenization in the emancipatory meaning of the term should signify returning science back to the people from whom it once arose" (Park, 1982, p. 29), and is thus an important characteristic of participatory research.

The dichotomy between the researcher and researched is likewise rejected by a critically-informed participatory research in favor of a more conscious examination of the role of the researcher or outsider and an acknowledgement of the role that popular knowledge plays in the generation of critical understanding, relying again on the notion of immanent critique. What is needed, as Comstock and Fox point out, is "a method of collective analysis and action which proceeds from, but criticizes and transcends popular knowledge ... Critical knowledge that is not popular knowledge invites alienation and renewed domination." (1982, p. 10)

Finally, though the justification of alternative forms of knowledge has already been suggested in the discussion of Habermas' theory, it should be made explicit that the validity of critically-informed participatory research will be judged in terms of both concrete social action and critical learning among participants. Comstock and Fox summarize the objectives of this form of research as "praxis which is not simply problem-solving activity but new
understandings which guide social groups in struggles to eliminate their domination ... Praxis requires that theoretical insights generated by participatory research contribute to political action that reduces and eliminates oppression and gives power to the powerless and voices to the silent." (1982, pp. 15-16)

The research to be described here represents an attempt to follow the example set by Comstock and Fox, by Park and others to pursue research informed by these notions from critical theory.
In its broadest implications the independent living movement is the civil rights movement of millions of Americans with disabilities. It is a wave of protest against segregation and discrimination and an affirmation of the right and ability of disabled people to share fully in the responsibilities and joys of our society.

(Roberts and Pfleuger, 1977, p. 1)

The History of the Independent Living Movement

The Independent Living Movement represents a recent development in the history of society's attitude toward and treatment of individuals with disabilities (Crewe and Zola, 1983; Wolfensberger, 1977). From the provision of "outdoor relief" in the Colonial period, through the development of almhouses following the American Revolution, to the development of the large institutional care settings which until very recently have served as the main source of "treatment" for people with a wide variety of physical and mental disabilities, American social policy toward disability has served to segregate and infantilize those it purports to serve.

Wolfensberger, for example, has noted various ways in which society has perceived of disabled individuals in the past and describes the impact this labeling has had on social policy in relation to disability and deviance. Though Wolfensberger's discussion focuses on mental retardation, many of the depictions he presents have historically been shared by persons with physical disabilities. The
major roles he reviews "include those of the deviant person as subhuman, a menace and object of dread, a diseased organism, an object of ridicule, an object of pity, an object of charity, an eternal child, and a holy innocent" (1977, p. 13).

As he goes on to note, "most of these roles have distinct architectural as well as larger socioenvironmental implications."
For example, if the disabled individual is perceived by society as somehow "sub-human", the environment must be durable and "abuse-resistant" and "since the perceived subhumans are not believed to be capable of making meaningful choices, they are permitted minimal control over their environment" (1977, p. 139).

Because it has in many ways served as the impetus for the development of the Independent Living Movement, the casting of the disabled individual in the role of the sick or impaired person is of particular concern here, as both Wolfensberger (1977, pp. 142-143) and DeJong (1979) have noted. This perception has had a profound influence on the development of recent social policy in regard to persons with disabilities. Under this model, the disabled individual is provided with care and physical support but is not expected to participate in "normal" activities, not expected to work, to seek an education, to have intimate and sexual relationships, to marry or have a family, to participate in political affairs. Again, this model has distinct environmental and architectural implications. The individual is most often housed or "treated" in some type of health facility, generally either a hospital or nursing home, and is expected to accept the depersonalizing lack of privacy and control which typify these
settings.

Disabled individuals, reflecting these various role expectations, are expected to act as "everyman's reliable inferiors, society's eternal children." (Nosek, Narita, Dart, and Dart, 1982, p. 9) But these roles and their environmental implications have been rejected by increasing numbers of disabled individuals and the Independent Living Movement is a statement of their demand for equality.

The Independent Living Movement can in some respects be traced back to the first vocational rehabilitation legislation enacted after World War I. However, as a response to institutionalization and as an alternative to vocational rehabilitation which has never been available to the most severely disabled, the Independent Living Movement is generally considered to have begun with a group of disabled students at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. In 1962 a group of four disabled students moved from a nursing home to specially adapted housing near the campus. That the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana campus is now among the most accessible in the country speaks to the impact these efforts have had. In fact, the Independent Living Movement has found its most fertile ground for development in large, academic communities. The first Independent Living Center was founded in Berkeley, California in 1972 by a group of students and former students of the University of California, and is still an active and innovative center for the development of new approaches to Independent Living. Other Independent Living Centers followed with the Boston Center for Independent Living, founded in 1974, as one of the first. Legislative support has also developed
over the years with recent federal support being provided through Title VII "Comprehensive Services for Independent Living" of the 1978 amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Independent Living Centers are consumer-controlled service and advocacy organizations and are the vehicle whereby the philosophies of the Independent Living Movement are expressed. The Independent Living Center has been defined as "a community-based program having substantial consumer involvement that provides directly or coordinates indirectly through referral those services necessary to assist severely disabled individuals to increase self-determination and to minimize unnecessary dependence on others." (Frieden, 1980, p. 169) The types of services provided by Independent Living Centers can include: residential services, peer-counseling, independent living skills training, attendant care, advocacy, financial aid counseling, transportation, social and recreational programming and mobility training (Frieden, 1980, p. 172). Both disabled and non-disabled persons may be employed at Independent Living Centers but federal law mandates that there be "substantial involvement in policy direction and management by disabled consumers." (Varela, 1983, p. 46)

In this sense, the Independent Living Movement, as expressed in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, can be considered the Civil Rights Movement of the disabled. Linking the Independent Living Movement to other social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, DeJong (1978) cites three basic assumptions made by its proponents. First, "consumer sovereignty"--that is, the conviction that
disabled persons (consumers), not professionals, are the best judges of their own interests; they should ultimately determine how services are organized in their behalf.

Secondly, "self-reliance"--

disabled persons must rely primarily on their own resources and ingenuity to acquire the rights and benefits to which they are entitled.

And finally, "political and economic rights"--

disabled persons are entitled to freely pursue their interests in various political and economic arenas.

(p. 34)

It should also be noted that the Independent Living Movement, with its insistence on the recognition and acceptance of non-vocationally oriented rehabilitation goals, marks an important advance over the traditional focus on vocational rehabilitation. In the past, rehabilitation services were only available to those disabled individuals judged capable of pursuing gainful employment. This policy, the expression of our capitalistically-generated insistence on the central importance of the individual's productive capability, effectively denied full human status to the most severely disabled.

The Independent Living Movement, on the other hand, acknowledges the wide range of opportunities for every individual to act as an autonomous and contributing member of society, and provides rehabilitation consistent with individual goals and abilities.

Accessibility Planning and Barrier-Free Design

As Edward Roberts, one of the founders of the Independent Living Movement has observed,
Our greatest handicaps are outdated social attitudes, lack of opportunities and physically inaccessible environments. (Nosek, et al., 1982)

The major focus of this research has been to organize disabled individuals to participate in accessibility planning and advocacy. Accessibility planning with the ultimate goal of achieving a completely barrier-free environment has been a long-term objective of the Independent Living Movement. However, as Bednar has noted, "For the most part, the handicapped have had little control, if any, over the imposition of barriers, and they are only now becoming active in promoting their removal" (1977, p. 2) In this section, I would like to review briefly some of the research that has been conducted concerning the psychological and social impacts of architectural barriers and to discuss the progress that has been made, particularly in terms of federal and state legislation, to insure complete architectural accessibility to all citizens.

First, it is important to define terms such as "architectural accessibility" and "barrier-free environments" which are so often used inappropriately by architects and others involved in the design and construction of public spaces. For the purposes of this paper, the term "accessible" is defined as it is in the 1982 Massachusetts Rules and Regulations of the Architectural Barriers Board as "safely approached, entered and/or used by physically handicapped persons." (p. 5) "Physically handicapped person" is here defined not only as one using a wheelchair but includes persons who experience "difficulty" or "insecurity" in walking, persons with "faulty
coordination," those who are visually or hearing impaired and those whose "mobility, flexibility, coordination and perceptiveness are significantly reduced by aging." (p. 6) It should be clear from these definitions that the common assumption that accessibility can be achieved by putting a ramp to the back entrance of a building is woefully inadequate. Accessibility extends across different disability groups and encompasses all aspects of the design and construction of the environment, both indoors and out. It is this level of accessibility that is being advocated by the group involved in this project as well as by disability rights groups across the country.

One critic of current architectural policy has remarked facetiously, "The simplest, cheapest way to provide access for handicapped people to a building is to put a ramp out back 'among the trashcans'." (Hineline, n.d.) He then goes on to point out that this is neither good architecture, nor does it reflect a positive attitude toward disability. Steinfeld, Duncan and Cardell, too, note the relationship between such accessibility and societal attitudes and suggest that "the fact that the able-bodied population has full use of public places means that they have a socially dominant position in respect to those with disabilities." (1977, p. 11) They go on to point out that "exclusion through environmental barriers can be viewed as a form of territorial behavior whereby the able-bodied claim the best space. The disabled act out their lowly position in the dominance hierarchy by occupying stigmatized, and often institutional, space." (p. 14)
Architectural barriers can impact on the lives of disabled individuals in a variety of ways. The lack of accessible housing can force the disabled person to live in an institutional setting or can greatly increase dependency even outside an institutional setting by forcing the individual to rely on family and friends for even a minimal degree of mobility (see, for example, Lifchez and Winslow, 1979). Environmental barriers in public buildings and offices make it difficult for the disabled individual to participate as a full and active member of the political system reinforcing the role of the disabled person as a "second-class citizen." Barriers in stores, offices and places of business also prevent the disabled person from participating in the economic system—first by severely limiting employment opportunities and secondly by making it more difficult for the individual to act as a consumer of goods and services.

Paralleling the growth of the Independent Living Movement, the past few years have witnessed a tremendous development in awareness of the importance of architectural accessibility at a societal level (Varela, 1983, p. 34). The first Architectural National Standards for Accessibility were established by the federal government in 1961. This was followed in 1968 by the passage of the Architectural Barriers Act which requires all buildings constructed with or utilizing federal funds to be made accessible. Most recently, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 established the federal Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board to investigate and enforce compliance with the law.

At the state level, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been among the leaders in the development of accessibility standards and
legislation. The Rules and Regulations of the Architectural Barriers Board are among the most stringent in the country and apply to virtually all public buildings or facilities open to the public.

However, a legislative mandate whether at the state or federal level cannot guarantee even a moderate level of enforcement and an unwillingness to provide adequate funding to accessibility related boards and governmental offices continues to limit the impact of this body of legislation. One of the most pressing tasks of any Community Accessibility project, then, will be to advocate for stricter enforcement of these regulations and to work with governmental agencies to insure accessibility.

A Description of the Research Setting and a Summary of Past Involvement

Stavros, Inc., the Independent Living Center which sponsored this research, provides independent living services to disabled individuals in the Western Massachusetts area. Founded in 1974 by Christos Palames, Stavros is one of five Independent Living Centers in Massachusetts at this time.

The office is located in an older farmhouse in Amherst, which has been made accessible to disabled individuals. Services provided by Stavros staff include: peer advocacy/counseling, transportation, information and referral, independent living skills training, personal care attendant training and coordination, and accessibility consulting. Both disabled and nondisabled people are employed at Stavros and, as stated in the by-laws of the organization, a majority of the members
of the Board of Directors are themselves disabled.

Stavros has a long history of concern for architectural accessibility and commitment to participatory planning and advocacy. The organization was very active in the 1979 Amherst Community Accessibility Project (ACAP) which provided greater access to disabled individuals to the downtown Amherst area (Palames, n.d.). More recently the agency co-sponsored the development of the John Nutting apartments, an award-winning state funded housing complex which was specially designed to maximize architectural accessibility.

Participation and self-advocacy have also been the focus of recent transportation planning efforts which have been highly successful in providing innovative solutions to the transportation difficulties experienced by disabled persons.

As has been discussed earlier, the participatory research process requires a level of involvement and commitment on the part of the researcher unprecedented in more traditional research settings. For this reason, I feel it is important to give a fairly detailed account of my involvement at Stavros over the past year and a half as a preface to discussing the development of the actual research process.

My interest in accessibility has grown out of my work in housing design for elders where issues of accessibility play a vital role in successful planning. Due to the demands of federal and state funding sources, much elder housing is actually designed to serve younger disabled persons as well. Thus through my work with housing design, I became familiar with some of the younger residents in the local housing developments and first heard of Stavros through them. My
earliest work at Stavros in the summer of 1982 was as a volunteer van driver. This was an important service for the organization and provided me an opportunity to become familiar with the people and work there. After turning in my resignation in September in anticipation of a hectic semester I returned in October having come to the realization that the people and work had in fact become an important part of my life. Rather than returning to work as a van driver, however, I worked with Ms. Patricia Spiller, the Executive Director of Stavros to develop an accessibility consulting service, which allowed me to utilize my training in environmental psychology and design in practical, problem-solving situations. This service, offered free of charge to individuals and businesses in the community, provided consultation and evaluation concerning architectural accessibility planning. Without any publicity concerning the service, I still found my time filled with visits to local churches and synagogues, health facilities, businesses and homes. I became familiar with the Massachusetts Architectural Barriers Code and began to take note of barriers to accessibility wherever I went.

While I enjoyed this work and felt it made an important contribution to the organization and community, I was dissatisfied in two respects. First, the program was limited to serving those who took the initiative to call the office. I would occasionally speak to someone about specific problems or write letters requesting that attention be paid to some particular barrier but I could not act as an effective watchdog and advocate alone. Secondly, I had initially hoped that the majority of my time might be spent in working with
disabled individuals to make their home environments more accessible. Instead, the great majority of the consultations were provided to businesses and other public facilities, giving me little opportunity for interacting with individuals on a more personal basis. Related to this, I felt a need for increased involvement and direction on the part of disabled participants in planning the program and advocating for increased accessibility in the community. These various concerns seemed most appropriately addressed by organizing a group of disabled individuals to participate with me in the planning and action of the accessibility consulting service.
Believing in people, the radical has the job of organizing them so that they will have the power and opportunity to best meet each unforeseeable future crisis as they move ahead in their eternal search for those values of equality, justice, freedom, peace, a deep concern for the preconsci-ousness of human life, and all those rights and values propounded by Judeo-Christianity and the democratic political tradition. Democracy is not an end but the best means toward achieving these values. This is my credo for which I live and, if need be, die.

(Alinsky, 1971, pp. 11-12)

A Summary of Project Objectives

In reporting a traditional research project a neatly defined methods section describing what one did is followed by an equally well defined results section. The very nature of participatory research makes such a distinction impossible because the research itself is an interactive process, the direction of later components of the work taking shape from the results of initial interactions. Rather than force an arbitrary distinction on the research process as it evolved through the course of the present project, I have chosen to present a more chronological record of the entire research process including the informal analyses and interpretations which led me to make the decisions I did as the project progressed.

While the participatory research process is by design a dynamic one, this does not release the researcher from the responsibility of providing initial structure and direction. However, unlike the
statement of hypotheses developed in a traditional research method, the expectations with which the participatory researcher enters the research process must remain negotiable, must suggest rather than demand a possible context for the research process which can be amended in interaction with participants. These expectations or objectives must also be consistent with the demands discussed earlier that participatory research address the stated needs of participants in such a way as to build an awareness of the strengths and resources already extant within the group.

My own initial research objectives for this project can be considered within three distinct categories. First, and most basic to the explicitly stated aims of the project are what might be termed "product objectives." These included:

1. to provide participants with useful information and/or skills for advocacy work;
2. to identify specific accessibility related problems experienced by disabled people in the area;
3. to share possible solutions to these problems with one another;
4. to target areas for further development and discussion;
5. to share these concerns with policy makers;
6. to advocate for change; and,
7. to plan strategies for future action.

At another level, however, overall project objectives must also address the process through which these concrete goals are to be achieved. It is these "process objectives" which most clearly
distinguish the participatory research approach from an applied traditional research method which evaluates the process solely in terms of its efficacy in achieving the product objectives. In the case of participatory research, the ends do not justify the means but rather the means are seen as ends in themselves.

The initial "process objectives" of the current project included the following:

1. to encourage participants to see themselves and each other as legitimate experts in the field of disability;
2. to encourage policy makers to acknowledge this expertise;
3. to demonstrate to participants the value of engaging in dialogue with one another and with policy makers;
4. to demonstrate the potential for advocacy efforts to achieve social change; and,
5. to develop a sense of community among participants, and a sense of ownership on the part of participants in relation to the research process.

Finally, overall project objectives must recognize the educational function of the project for the researcher and its potential relevance for future participatory research planning. These "research objectives" reflect the theoretical foundations of the research process and examine the relationship between the theoretical and epistemological issues and their expression through the specific project. In this case, these "research objectives" included:
1. to examine the role of the social scientist and "outsider" in a participatory research process;

2. to evaluate the project development process as an application of the participatory research method; and,

3. to validate the mapping of the concepts of critical theory in a specific participatory research project.

**Interviews with Individual Participants**

My initial plan was to organize a participants' accessibility advocacy conference. Local legislators and policy makers were to be invited and attendance would be open to all Stavros participants. The conference would provide participants with an opportunity to meet with policy-makers and advocate for their own interests and needs. In discussions with staff and Board President Ted Martineau it became apparent that the chief obstacle in planning a successful conference would be in generating enough interest to insure a reasonable level of attendance. In this regard, Pat Spiller pointed out that I could always count on the people I had gotten to know on a personal basis. It seemed obvious, then, that in order to increase attendance I must get to know more people. On this purely pragmatic basis, I determined to begin the research process by holding face-to-face interviews with individual participants. I was to discover that this decision contributed more to the development and subsequent success of the project than perhaps any other.

Because I was working at the agency at the time, arranging for these interviews presented some logistical difficulties in terms of
maintaining participant confidentiality and insuring that potential participants did not feel pressured into responding. A system was finally devised which involved sending an explanation of the research and interview process to each participant with a cover letter signed by Pat Spiller introducing me and encouraging participation while at the same time assuring participants that their involvement was in no way required (see copies in Appendix). Interested participants were asked to call the Stavros office to arrange for an interview. Nine interviews were arranged in this way, with another five resulting from personal contacts with participants. One interview which was scheduled is not included here because it involved a relative and care-taker rather than the participant herself and centered around specific accessibility issues related to home design. I completed the home evaluation but did not attempt to conduct an interview. Apart from three interviews with Stavros staff which were held in the office, all interviews were held in the homes of the participants. Most of the Stavros service area was represented in the interviews, with participants from Amherst, Northampton, Springfield, Greenfield, Orange, Pittsfield and Williamstown included. Interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to one and a half or two hours and were all tape-recorded with the consent of the participant. Rather than using a formal interview schedule, a general set of topics was used to guide the interview which covered various aspects of accessibility planning, self-advocacy and attitudes concerning accessibility (a copy of this list of topics is included in the Appendix). Aside from my practical goal of generating greater
interest in the workshop, I also hoped that the interviews might begin to address some of the project objectives I have outlined. Specifically, I counted on the interviews to provide me with information concerning accessibility-related problems experienced by each individual participant, and to provide an opportunity for participants to begin to examine the strategies they had developed to deal with such concerns. I also hoped that by demonstrating my own interest in their experience, by acknowledging the legitimacy of that experience, that participants would develop a better sense of their own expertise in the field of disability. Finally, I would attempt in the context of the interviews to share with participants some of my notions concerning this alternative research process and to ask for their reactions and suggestions concerning the future direction of the project. Interviews were conducted from September 27, 1983 through December 2, 1983, although the majority were completed by mid-November. Without describing these interviews in minute and tedious detail, I do want to present each individually, as each interview helped to shape the next and, together to determine the subsequent course of the research. For this reason I feel it is important to at least draw out the ideas and insights I found to be most important in building my own understanding of the issues and in influencing my decisions concerning the project itself as these developed. In addition I think it important to represent each participant as a distinct individual with a unique set of experiences and concerns. While there is a good deal of commonality among participants which will be discussed as well, to dissect each interview at the outset
into shared categories and percentage agreement and to discuss ideas apart from the people who have them seems to miss the point of participatory research which is to put people, not numbers, first.

* * * * *

My first interview was conducted in Springfield with J.S., a vivacious and outspoken middle-aged woman. A wheelchair user herself, J.S. also has a daughter and son-in-law who are disabled and has a wide variety of experiences to draw on in examining the issue of architectural accessibility.

One of the first issues I had to face was the necessity imposed by the University of getting signed informed consent before beginning the interview. While I understand and agree with the concerns reflected in this procedure for providing some degree of participant control over the research process, I also felt that in this case the form served to reinforce the distinction between myself as the researcher and the participant as research subject especially insofar as consent had already been granted when participants chose to call the office to arrange an interview. On the other hand, the consent form I designed did make it very explicit that the participant had "complete access to any non-confidential information produced as part of this project" (see Appendix for a copy of the consent form). In this way, the consent form specifically places ownership in the hands of the participants and in each interview I made a point of emphasizing this verbally as well. My concerns seemed to be unfounded since J.S. has been a part of the medical and social service system
long enough to be quite aware of the omnipresence of consent forms and other similar documents and seemed much less concerned about its potential impact on the research situation than I was.

The first concern raised during my interview with J.S. and one which recurred often in this and later interviews was in regard to the lack of accessibility of public buildings. Using the Springfield School Department as an example, J.S. explained that when her daughter was in the public school system she had been called in for a parent conference. When she said that she could not get there, the administrator responded, "Well, it's parents like you that make these children the way they are." "All right," she said, "I'll be there." And she made arrangements to be there. "Why didn't you tell me you were in a wheelchair?", he asked her when she arrived. "I wanted to show you that you didn't know everything." J.S. notes that, "after that he'd call me up and tell me, 'Mrs. S., I'm making a home visit.'"

The lack of educational and job opportunities due to inaccessibility were also a concern. J.S. currently attends Springfield Technical Community College, which she feels is very accessible. However, she would prefer to attend a different campus but feels her options are limited due to problems with accessibility. Job opportunities, too, have been limited; J.S. cites the example of a position she applied for with the Red Cross. When she arrived for the interview, she found that the facility was inaccessible and "the girl had to come outdoors to interview me. She sat down on the steps and was interviewing me sitting on the steps ... They told me to forget about it."
Housing has also been difficult to find. In one case the landlord of a duplex J.S. was living in with her daughter objected to a ramp they had put up, saying he wasn't "running a nursing home" and demanded that it be taken down. While she has no complaints about the accessibility of her present housing in a high-rise elder/handicapped development, she does feel that there are few alternatives available to her and that she might prefer a different type of housing if such were available.

More specific problems with accessibility were discussed as well. Banks, for example, often present difficulties and on one occasion when J.S. tried to use the "drive-up" window, the teller told her "No walkers." "Do I look like I'm walking?", she asked and was then allowed to do her banking. Recreational facilities and restaurants, specifically Friendly's, were also mentioned as presenting barriers to accessibility.

In dealing with this almost overwhelming list of problems, J.S. has developed a number of strategies for gaining access. She talked about numerous occasions on which she has called the police to assist her in entering a building. She recognizes that this presents some difficulties to the police and feels their complaints are an effective impetus to achieving change. On another occasion, J.S. succeeded in gaining the attention of a Thrifty's store manager by knocking over a large aisle-blocking display. The accessibility problem has not been solved but this same manager now provides J.S. personal service when she enters the store. Another strategy J.S. has used involved going to an inaccessible restaurant with a number of other disabled friends.
She felt her point was made when patrons of the restaurant were enlisted to carry each wheelchair into the building.

In many situations, such as the case with the landlord, J.S. feels that architectural inaccessibility is simply a reflection of negative attitudes toward people with disabilities. She feels that many non-disabled people believe that disabled people should be passive and inactive. This opinion, she believes, extends to the governmental level. "As far as the state is concerned, recreation for a handicapped person is a bag of pot and a bottle of booze and stay home and get high." It was obvious from this interview and from her continued involvement that J.S. has no intention of doing anything of the sort.

I left J.S.'s apartment having lost my feelings of uncertainty and ambivalence about foisting myself and my project off on people. I was pleased with the interview, had thoroughly enjoyed myself and felt excited about continuing the process. In fact, in almost all cases I left the interview having experienced this same renewal of enthusiasm and investment in the project.

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Leaving Springfield to drive immediately to the Pittsfield area left me little time to reflect on my first interview before I began the second. Arriving at M.J.K.'s home, I found that M.K., her personal care attendant (PCA), was also interested in the topic and would be participating in the interview as well. The two women have worked closely together in the past on accessibility advocacy and are both interested in continuing their efforts.
Again, and a bit more confidently this time, I pulled out my consent form and went through my explanation. But M.J.K.'s reaction when I mentioned confidentiality took me aback. She said that if she had good ideas she thought she should be given credit for them.

Right! I would not consider not giving full references for the ideas of a colleague, that would be "plagiarism". However, it is "confidentiality" when practiced upon a research subject. I offered to share with M.J.K. the draft discussion of the interview and use whatever name or designation she prefers. Conducting participatory research requires a good deal of unlearning. Fortunately I have had patient and insightful teachers like M.J.K. to instruct me.

M.J.K., having been involved in accessibility advocacy in her own community, has a clear idea of what the priorities for planning are. One project that both she and M.K. worked on during the International Year of the Disabled Person (1981) identified supermarkets, churches, and medical care facilities as important targets for accessibility advocacy. A meeting with representatives of the supermarkets in the area during which members of the committee explained the advantages of increased accessibility and offered concrete suggestions for improvements was very successful. Efforts with churches and medical facilities were less successful, however. In the case of churches this seemed to be due to the nature of the process of going through boards which inevitably slows things down and to the cost of making changes especially when any changes made must comply with a strict architectural barriers code which can increase the cost. With doctors the problem was perceived as simply a lack of
interest and responsiveness. Although M.J.K. did relate that after voicing her concern about accessibility problems to her dentist he moved his entire office to a more accessible location.

The town library, too, has apparently been the focus of on-going and, to date, unsuccessful accessibility advocacy, which is a source of considerable frustration to both women. And, banks were again mentioned as a problem, in this case a specific bank which cannot be entered at all by an individual in a wheelchair.

Over the past years, M.J.K. has made extensive changes in her home in order to increase accessibility, including adding a porch and ramp to the rear entrance and converting a downstairs pantry area into a bathroom. Rather than using a wheelchair to get about indoors, M.J.K. uses an Amigo, a kind of motorized scooter. It is very maneuverable and seems to provide greater freedom of movement than a standard wheelchair.

M.J.K.'s approach to accessibility advocacy is direct and persuasive. She and M.K. have kept a notebook recording their efforts which chronicles a very successful career in accessibility advocacy over the past years. In discussing the supermarket project, M.J.K. stated that, "The only place people are going to feel it is in their pocketbooks." In serving as an advocate, M.J.K. points out to store managers and others that the disabled represent fifteen percent of the population and that few businesses can afford to exclude such a large portion of their potential clientele.

An important barrier to effective accessibility advocacy in M.J.K.'s opinion are the attitudes of others toward people with
disabilities. In response to a question concerning the role of Independent Living Centers in accessibility planning and advocacy, M.J.K. said:

I think probably what I'd like to see more than anything else is handicapped people realizing that they can do a lot more for themselves. Just because you're handicapped doesn't mean you're stupid. That's what I resent more than anything else is the minute someone sees you're handicapped, they mentally pick you up, put you in a box, mark the box "Handicapped" and put you way up on that shelf up there. Well, I'm sorry, but I have kicked off the cover of my box and I'm sitting up on that shelf yelling. Screaming and yelling, "Get me down from here, I've got too much to do!"

* * * * * *

My next interview a few days later was much more difficult but was later to prove to be one of the real successes of the project. From the outset of my interview with M.A., I felt that her interest in participating was based more in loneliness and a need to share some of her personal concerns with someone else, than in a concern for the more esoteric interests I was pursuing. I listened and began by attempting to bring the discussion back to the topic of accessibility and, finally, just listened while she spoke of her childhood in the Amherst area and of her husband's anger and frustration with her disability. I left feeling shaken. I had learned an important, though difficult, lesson. Everyone who agrees to participate in research does so for reasons of their own. When these reasons coincide with the researcher's, conducting the research is simple. When they do not, researchers must either compromise their goals to some extent or disregard the respondent's interest in
favor of their own. I had chosen not to do this and in the end had entirely abandoned my original intentions for conducting the research.

A couple of weeks later, though, I received a message from M.A. at the Stavros office for "the person who gets you into places." I called back to find that she had just been to the dentist's office, had noticed that it was difficult for her to enter and had decided that she should see what could be done about it. I told her that I would write a letter to the landlord and would send her a copy and suggested that she write a letter as well since the complaints of consumers are often the most effective. I hung up without thinking more about it and it was not until a couple of days later that I realized what had happened. It had worked! Here was someone taking action, now aware of the problems of accessibility and doing something about it. I was very pleased, though somewhat chagrined at my own thick-headedness.

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Fortunately, immediately following my interview with M.A., I had scheduled an interview with L.C., an acquaintance from the Stavros office. Living in a home he built before he was disabled, L.C. has done accessibility evaluations at Stavros himself and is very familiar with the issues involved in accessibility planning and advocacy. L.C.'s advice concerning advocacy is to "keep bitching." He feels that too many people expect things to happen immediately. Instead, he says it is a matter of keeping at it until finally, "just to quiet you down, they're going to do it."

L.C. has been successful in advocating for accessibility in his
own community. Although he notes that they might have been planning to do it anyway, L.C.'s letter to his bank regarding accessibility certainly seemed to have resulted in great improvements in terms of accessibility. As L.C. says, "I just wish I'd blown my stack a little sooner."

An important problem that L.C. noted is that in some cases renovations have made buildings less, rather than more, accessible. A case he cites is Alberti's Restaurant in Greenfield. Although it used to be accessible, recent renovations included building a stair at each entrance. "What happened to the building inspector? ... Somebody's not on the ball." Another frequent accessibility problem encountered in restaurants is the tendency for the management to put in accessible parking, maybe even a curb cut, then have restrooms that are not accessible. This makes L.C. particularly angry, "'Cause you get in there, you can eat all you want, but just hold your breath if you have to go to the bathroom!" An access sign in the parking lot, L.C. believes, should only be allowed if the entire building is barrier-free.

L.C.'s experience as a contractor and accessibility consultant has made him aware of the variety of approaches to accessibility planning. He particularly noted recent work at the Inn in Historic Deerfield which has been made completely accessible without detracting from the historic beauty and value of the building. L.C. also described a project in which he was involved to make the Greenfield Public Library accessible. Plans were being made to put in a ramp but L.C., who had entered the building for the meeting,
pointed out that there was already an accessible entrance and suggested that they consider putting in an elevator instead, which would make the librarian's work easier as well as increasing accessibility for disabled people. L.C. emphasized that accessibility applies to everyone, not just individuals with a disability, and feels that accessibility planning should be done with this in mind.

It was after I came home from my interview with L.C. and sat down to transcribe the tapes that I began to worry. Nothing made any sense! Here were four, or at least three, different interviews and I couldn't see any direction. As I had feared, absolutely no method to my madness. However, after I sat down and went back through all the transcripts and began to make notes, pulled out common themes, shared concerns, different methods for approaching problems the beginnings of an idea for a workshop began to take shape, not the grand legislative forum I had envisioned, but a more informal working session to share strategies and perhaps set some common goals. Crisis averted—-at least for the time being.

* * * * *

My next interview took me to Orange, Massachusetts. I think that it was at about this time that I began to be concerned about the possible impact such geographical distances could have on our ability to get together and function as a group. Not only was travel a problem even for me, but it seemed highly unlikely that people in Pittsfield, Orange and Springfield would share the same accessibility-related concerns. This problem still presents itself although it is being addressed in ways which will be discussed in relation to the
workshop planning and follow-up.

H.P. was the first person I interviewed who for the most part uses crutches rather than a wheelchair to get around. A particularly severe form of arthritis also makes it difficult for H.P. to do a lot of reaching or stretching. As a result he has adapted his home environment to better meet his own needs. One particularly innovative adaptation is a slant-top table with a fabric covering that prevents objects from sliding and bevelled shelves that hold most of his handicraft projects. H.P. would like to have a much larger workshop but has been unable to find a suitable location and feels constrained in using his power tools in the apartment building where he now lives.

H.P. also noted some specific problems with the apartment which is technically supposed to be handicapped accessible, including an oven which opens down, making it difficult to reach inside from a wheelchair and cabinets which are too high to be used by many disabled people. To deal with this latter problem, H.P. has moved many of his dishes and kitchen utensils to a free-standing cabinet in his living room where they can be reached easily. H.P. also uses a microwave oven which he says is especially good for someone who has difficulty in standing for long periods of time. H.P. did mention the oven problem to a representative of the Athol Housing Authority and feels he "may have done a little good there."

In terms of general accessibility, H.P. feels that public buildings present the biggest problem, citing local town halls, libraries and police stations as major offenders. While stairs still present a major barrier, heavy doors and small thresholds with doors
opening out across the first stair make access particularly difficult with crutches.

H.P. feels that educating the public and business community are important steps in accessibility advocacy. Things are changing, he says, but slowly. And while he feels that disability is seen as less of a stigma now than it was twenty years ago, he has still had his crutches kicked out from under him on more than one occasion. Most people though, H.P. believes, are fairly helpful and in terms of making places like churches more accessible, H.P. feels that people should be encouraged to get together and do the work themselves rather than relying on money from the government to make changes possible.

R.P., the next participant I interviewed, is currently living in an apartment in Amherst which is not particularly accessible. In fact, at present, he is unable to enter or leave the apartment on his own. Discussions with the Amherst Housing Authority have resulted in plans for an elaborate renovation which R.P. feels is unnecessary. He explained his alternative solution, which I agreed would be as accessible and much less expensive but he feels that no one wants to consider his ideas and the work has yet to be done. There are other problems with the apartment including a narrow doorway which makes it impossible for him to use the bathroom but despite the urging of friends, he refuses to move into one of the apartment buildings in the center of town. "I'm not city-born and I'm not city-oriented." Unfortunately, there are not accessible housing alternatives in more rural areas so R.P. must compromise his own needs to be able to live
in an area he prefers.

R.P.’s preference for a more rural lifestyle is also reflected in his interest in accessible outdoor recreation. Before becoming disabled, R.P. was an avid hunter and trapper. He maintains these interests and still goes out for the paraplegic hunt but feels that more emphasis should be placed on making outdoor recreational areas accessible.

As other accessibility problems, R.P. also mentioned the Hampshire Mall and movie theatres where space is not available for wheelchairs except in the very front of the theatre. The Amherst Town Hall was also cited as an important accessibility advocacy priority. R.P.’s general feeling is that "people are spending money on accessibility and a lot of times things don’t seem to work."

In terms of the role of the Independent Living Centers in accessibility advocacy, R.P. would like to know more about the rights of disabled people concerning implementing accessibility. A second priority would be in getting some consensus about accessibility issues from consumers but R.P. also realizes that people have different interests and that his own concern for recreational facilities might not be shared by others.

Current efforts at accessibility education and advocacy R.P. feels fall short of the mark. Citing the politically popular "day in a wheelchair" campaigns in which politicians make a show of concern for the difficulties experienced by disabled persons by spending a day in a wheelchair or blindfolded, R.P. notes that at the end of the trial, "they step up and get into the car."
R.P. feels that in many cases societal attitudes reinforce physical barriers. He describes one situation in which he phoned for transportation only to have the other person respond, "Oh, you're the one who needs all the help." Reactions like this make him feel guilty about using the services that are available and create a very real barrier to accessibility.

I have known J.D. as a casual acquaintance for a couple of years but this interview was my first opportunity to talk with him at length about accessibility planning and the need for increased advocacy. J.D.'s views on advocacy have been formed over years of work and involvement with the disabled community here and in Boston, so I saw him as a tremendous resource in my planning efforts. I had been trying to make more concrete plans for the participants' workshop and began my interview with J.D. by asking how he thought consumer involvement might be increased. He described the current situation regarding accessibility advocacy in the state as he sees it. Although there is a strong set of standards and regulations related to accessibility, there has, in the past, been little enforcement of these regulations.

As he noted, the Massachusetts Association of Paraplegics had at one time acted as a watchdog agency by monitoring new construction and renovations in the state in terms of architectural accessibility. This program no longer operates and J.D. felt that a similar project could be very effective and would require only a minimal amount of planning and commitment of time. We talked at length about the
logistics of such a project and discussed the possibility of holding a participants' workshop to initiate the idea.

J.D.'s advice concerning the workshop was that I "ask myself, 'Do I really want to go to all this effort and have no one really give a damn.'" This admonition aside, he felt it would be worth a try and advised me to use a workshop format, "rather than a conference with an array of specialists." This would, in his opinion, increase the level of involvement and investment in the project on the part of consumers. I expressed my concern that there had been so little response to my planning efforts to date. By this time, phone calls for interviews had stopped coming in and it looked as though I would have about ten respondents from the 120 letters I had sent out. J.D. did not feel that this was unreasonable. "What percentage would you guess of the overall population gets involved in anything? Take that percentage and apply it to the people you sent to and that's probably what you got ... That's fine; just let the other people know what you're doing."

A question concerning the accessibility of Daisy's Restaurant led into a discussion of the accessibility consulting service I have been providing. J.D.'s suggestion was that if a disabled person were not involved, that I go in a wheelchair myself. I realized that I had some resistance to this idea. Not, I think, because I am concerned about experiencing discrimination myself but because it seems somehow disrespectful of me to feign disability. That I would react in this way despite the fact I knew that this is not what I would be doing but rather that I would be simply using the wheelchair
as an evaluation tool indicates to me that I am still dealing with issues related to disability myself. The issue of my role as a non-disabled person involved in this project has continued to concern me and there are aspects of this issue which have yet to be resolved. These concerns are addressed in greater length in the discussion of the role of the outsider presented in Chapter V.

We concluded the interview with a discussion of the importance of community coalition building. J.D. feels that there may, in fact, be positive aspects to the recent budget cuts in that community groups will look to one another for support rather than attempting to undercut one another's programs in attempting to secure federal support. "My ideal," he says, "is that we're going back to a way of life where people do things for and with one another."

S.J., a recent University of Massachusetts graduate, feels that leaving his family and home to come to college made a dramatic impact on his perception of architectural accessibility. "Before I came to college I gave very little thought to ramps because it was always taken care of ... there was always someone around to help me. But now my attitude has changed since I've been to college. I'd rather be able to get into a place on my own and not have to rely on having somebody with me."

When he does want to go some place that is not accessible he says, "I just grab some poor innocent soul off the street and say, 'Hey, could you help me get up the step?' and for the most part it's worked out fairly well." In more extreme cases of inaccessibility
he just finds another alternative. "I'm one who finds if the place is inaccessible I don't really dwell on the fact that I can't get in. I just go to another place."

S.J. doesn't consider himself a "fist-shaker," feeling that the more militant style of advocacy serves more to frighten and alienate people than to win them to your side. S.J. has, however, taken an active advocacy role such as in calling the manager of the Pub when renovations were being made to inquire about accessibility. He also believes disabled people should be more active as members of the policy-making boards and advocate for their interests in this way.

And he has had his more radical moments, occupying the University of Massachusetts bus station, for example, which was, in S.J.'s words, his "one militant act as a college student." The Pioneer Valley Transit Authority system is somewhat notorious because they invested a large amount of money into accessible buses which never operated correctly. To address this issue, disabled students at the University, S.J. among them, took over the bus station one morning demanding to see the head of the University's transit office.

Promises were made but, to date, the problem has not been resolved. S.J. feels that delays and frustrations of this kind are a major reason that more people do not become involved in advocacy efforts. "I've had to do so much waiting in the past twenty-five years ... Having to wait more for other things is out of the question. I want immediate action. I know that's not always the way it works but that's how I'd like it to be." He agreed that group action might be more effective and that mutual support would be an important factor
in maintaining the individual's interest in advocacy. As he says, "it's hard to be a troubadour all by yourself."

In terms of accessibility priorities, S.J. says his priorities tend to change over time. "As a student it was the social establishments. Every possible bar would have been accessible till I ran out of money." Now he is more concerned with public places like the Amherst Town Hall and Post Office, neither of which is very accessible. Sports arenas are another priority and even in those that are technically accessible, S.J. objects strongly to the practice of setting aside an isolated "Handicapped Seating" area which segregates the disabled patrons from the non-disabled.

Finally, transportation, whether on the local bus system or in international airports, provides an important, and often weak, link to accessibility. Airlines, in S.J.'s experience tend to be willing to transport disabled passengers but often at the price of the individual's dignity and convenience. Subway stations are often inaccessible and even those that are technically "barrier-free" may require the disabled person to use a separate entrance, ring for service and wait for someone to open a special gate. "As far as being independent--just booking down and hopping on a train--it's not."

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B.B. has a pragmatic approach to accessibility planning and advocacy which helped to restore a sense of balance in my own thinking. The more I had talked with people, the more adamant I had become--we're not stopping until the whole world is completely
accessible! "What does accessibility mean?" B.B. asked me. "You're defeated before you start to make a facility accessible because you're never going to make it accessible to everybody. The best you can hope for is not to make it more difficult for anybody to enter or use." He noted the limitations inherent in advocating total accessibility. "What do you do? Modify the whole grocery store so everyone, short and tall, can reach the toothpaste?"

B.B. also has a more practical attitude toward the issue of funding of advocacy-related projects. I was advocating making money freely available from the public coffers to provide access to places like churches. But, as B.B. pointed out, those buildings are private. "I'd say that the members of a church should pitch in and build the ramp themselves out of their own pockets ... Nobody subsidized the original building. I don't see why it's any different now."

In the case of public buildings, however, B.B. believes that the demand for accessibility is justified. "I think there's an obligation for any facility, organization, project, what have you, that's funded by taxpayer money to become accessible. That's a bottom line." This includes town meeting places, voting booths, post offices, hospitals, and schools, and some sort of accessibility for transportation. In the case of transportation, however, B.B. feels that its unreasonable for disabled people to demand access to "the same kind of transportation that every ambulatory person has access to because of the enormous amounts of money involved in making public transportation accessible." Rather than viewing special demand-response systems as discriminatory, B.B. feels that, "It's unrealistic for disabled people
to jump on the bandwagon and say they're just like everybody else when in fact they're not just like everybody else, they have special problems."

We spent a great deal of time discussing public awareness and involvement. And, while he agreed that some kind of monitoring project might be a good idea and believes in the potential value of lobbying, he drew a line at my demand for a disabled representative on every town planning board.

That's a bias on your part--assuming that if ... [someone] were on the zoning committee that he's in a position to speak to all kinds of concerns. He only has a physical disability. He can hear, speak or write. You're committing a cardinal sin. Why not get a pregnant mother or someone with a broken leg or high blood pressure. If you follow that thinking all the way through you'll have the entire population on each and every committee.

* * * * *

Unlike B.B. and many of the other people I interviewed, Z.Z. has had relatively little experience with independent living or with negotiating the outside world on his own. For this reason his experiences and reactions reflect another important perspective in accessibility advocacy and planning.

Z.Z. has only recently moved from the home he had lived in with his family since 1922 to his own apartment. He finds the apartment very convenient although he noted that there are some problems including a poorly designed ramp in the front hallway and doors that are difficult to use. Living alone is made easier by the Life-Line program to which Z.Z. subscribes. This program allows Z.Z. to alert the local hospital if he falls, they then contact someone to come to
his apartment. Z.Z. says if it hasn’t saved his life it has at least kept him from spending some pretty uncomfortable nights on the floor.

Z.Z. feels that the two most important accessibility priorities are Bradley’s and the Hampshire Mall. While the Mall is generally fairly accessible, Z.Z. described having a great deal of difficulty using the men’s room because the design of the entry makes it extremely difficult for a disabled person to enter or leave independently. When he went to the Mall with his female peer counselor recently he could not get out of the men’s room on his own, and apparently felt uncertain about asking for assistance. Finally, his peer counselor, who had been waiting outside the door for him asked another man leaving if he had seen a man in a wheelchair. He had and was asked to go back and hold the door, much to Z.Z.’s and his peer counselor’s relief.

While I was interviewing Z.Z. he had a visit from the building’s maintenance man which served for me as a sour reminder of the paternalistic way in which disabled people are often treated. There was a knock and without waiting for a response, a young man walked in with a co-worker calling to Z.Z., "Hi, it’s your buddy" and said that they needed to check some valve. As they were leaving Z.Z. called after the man to ask him if he could hang up a mirror and picture for him. The man came back into the room and responded "Say please." He then told Z.Z. to let the building manager know because, "I have a few projects going and might forget." He left and Z.Z. just laughed. "See what I get around here," he said.

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A native of Turkey, S.D. says she finds this country and, specifically the Amherst area, much more accessible by comparison, not that there are not problems. S.D. cites a number of problems, giving the lack of accessible housing top priority. In Turkey, she says, different general building practices make most houses fairly accessible. Corridors are wider and bathrooms are designed to serve as laundry areas as well and are, of necessity, much larger. S.D. and her husband are now designing a home together which will be more accessible. Before they decided to build their own home, however, they made an effort to locate an existing home which was, or could be relatively easily made, accessible. They could find no suitable structures and S.D. feels that this lack of accessible housing creates a major problem for people with disabilities.

S.D. has also been involved with me in conducting accessibility evaluations at local apartment complexes. Here, too, we found that the amount of accessible housing in the area is quite limited. This seems to be especially true for those whose income levels are too high to allow them to live in subsidized housing where accessible apartments have been especially designed.

In addition to housing, S.D. noted that there are problems in accessibility at the Hampshire Mall and at some of the small stores in downtown Amherst. There are some restaurants which S.D. finds are not accessible but she feels that this "isn't a problem because there's always a wide variety of other restaurants." S.D. also mentioned problems with some public buildings including the town hall and the post office, but she thinks there may be "some secret opening at the
back of the post office" although she has not been forced to find out. The library, which has been made more accessible by the addition of a ramped side entrance, is still difficult to use because the elevator is old and somewhat unreliable. After being caught in it once she has decided to let her husband and daughter bring books and records down from upstairs. But for people who do not have families, she notes, this is impossible.

S.D. also noted barriers which seem minor, but are perhaps all the more frustrating for being so easily remedied. Drinking fountains, for example, are rarely placed low enough to be used by a person in a wheelchair. Telephones, too, are still often placed out of reach and S.D. finds this particularly annoying at the University Health Center, where she feels planners should have been more aware of the issue of accessibility.

This lack of awareness, S.D. feels, is a major reason that these problems exist. "Many people are very willing to make their places accessible, but they're not aware. And when you talk about accessible something people have the idea that it should be like a hospital or something." Making people more aware of what architectural accessibility means and providing incentives to builders and businesses, S.D. suggests, are important strategies for advocacy.

As we finished the interview S.D. said, "Also, in your dissertation, you should emphasize how accessibility ... what a difference it makes in people's lives. Because I lived in two different environments; one was totally inaccessible, the other is quite accessible. I don't say 100%—not quite—I have high expectations."
So I know what a difference it made in my life. So maybe, you know, go to the psychological aspects of it, too. How accessibility makes me feel more independent and productive. Contributes to the society. Whatever psychological terms you use."

"I don't know how to use psychological terms," I replied, "I'll just quote you."

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M.M., the next person I interviewed, has three separate disabilities: she is hearing-impaired, a congenital amputee, and now uses a wheelchair as the result of an accident. As a child M.M. was mislabeled as Educably Mentally Retarded. Despite this she was able to complete her primary and secondary school education successfully, insisting on taking part in all the activities her schoolmates were involved in, including trying out for cheerleading. Her mother’s reaction to this was very negative; she did not want M.M.'s feelings to be hurt and M.M. admits that she had "never heard of a deaf, amputee cheerleader," but says "I wanted the same experiences as kids I grew up with so I tried anyway."

She did not receive her first prosthesis until she was a senior in high school. This enabled her to get a job and pay for her own tuition to a local community college, the state rehabilitation agency being unwilling to finance her college education because they felt this goal was "unrealistic." M.M. has since completed college, graduating with honors, and is now completing her doctoral work in the School of Education at the University of Massachusetts.

Because she is multiply disabled, M.M has a very broad view
of accessibility needs. For example, she described how in a very large lecture hall space may be left in the back of the room for wheelchairs. However, due to her hearing impairment, this space is not "accessible" because it does not allow her to be close enough to the speaker to lip read. Similarly, the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority "accessible" transportation service is inaccessible to M.M. because the dispatching office does not have a TTY, the teletypewriter used instead of a telephone by hearing-impaired persons. These are very real barriers to M.M.'s independence. M.M. says that it was not until she started using the wheelchair, though, that architectural accessibility really became an issue for her. "As long as I was mobile on my crutches, I could still get around in an 'upwardly-mobile' society. Being chair-bound has allowed me to see physical barriers to my access."

M.M. has been very active over the years in accessibility advocacy, and active at a time when the rights and needs of disabled people were not as well protected by law as they are today. M.M. fears that "people become complacent because it's already done" and is concerned that so few disabled people take an active role in advocating for their rights despite recent efforts, especially on the part of the federal government, to undercut the progress that has been made. She would like to see more people with disabilities active as members of boards of government agencies and in other advocacy roles.

Locally M.M. has been a long-time accessibility advocate. She describes the campaign she and other disabled residents of Amherst launched to convince the owner of Chequer's restaurant to put in a
ramp. "There was a year where almost every disabled person in this town must have hit Chequer's for this entire year. There was always a chair in that place on the weekend." Without being "overly pushy to the point where you're obnoxious," they pointed out the advantages of making the restaurant accessible and won the ramp and accessible parking as well.

More recently M.M. noticed that Daisy's restaurant in Amherst was going to be renovated and wrote to the owner to suggest that she keep accessibility in mind. "When renovations were complete--we thought the ramp was just a temporary ramp put in while they were renovating because the wheelbarrow would always be on it but it's remained in ... Now I can go to breakfast there."

"To me accessibility means, in a very basic sense, being able to come and go when I please with as little assistance from others as possible ... to have that option to be able to do it myself to the best of my ability without having the environment decrease that ability."

P.M. believes that accessibility is important for two reasons. First, she says, "for my own growth and self-esteem, for my own independence." And, secondly, "To be sort of high brow about it, if I can't put my input into society by saying 'Yes, I'm here and have these views,' then they miss out, too."

I became acquainted with P.M., a student at the University, when I sponsored an independent study for her last year examining the architectural accessibility of the campus. In discussing
accessibility priorities, P.M. says that she knows that there has been a major effort to make community service agencies and state buildings accessible. P.M. feels it is also important to raise the awareness of the private sector concerning architectural accessibility. She mentioned specifically the Hampshire Mall, which she feels should consider putting in a set of electric doors and the sweet shop in Amherst, which is also inaccessible. She suggested instituting an accessibility audit program similar to the energy audits that were available in the past. The service itself would be similar to the one now offered at Stavros but an effort would be made to publicize the service widely, perhaps by calling businesses individually to offer the free evaluation.

Housing, too, was mentioned as a priority. The tendency now is to construct housing for older and disabled people together. P.M. says she does not want to seem "age-ist," but "I'm twenty-two years old and I don't want to live with Grandma." Even the housing which is designed solely for disabled people serves to segregate them from the rest of the community and is surrounded by elder housing. P.M. feels that accessible housing should be available in all of the private apartment complexes, particularly those with a pool. "I mean--summer--a pool!"

I asked P.M. how she feels when she encounters architectural barriers. She said it depends a lot on her mood at the time although her general attitude seems to be very philosophical. "It's lousy that it's one extra thing you have to think about, but them's the breaks."

* * * * *
By the time I had reached the final interview with J.G., I had developed a fairly nonchalant attitude toward the consent forms, handing one to J.G. with my usual explanation. Taking it, J.G. quipped, "I assume the names will be changed to protect the idiots!"

I shared M.J.K.'s reaction that she felt she should be credited for her good ideas and J.G. agreed, "In this case you should get credit for the ideas you come up with."

A large part of my discussion with J.G. centered around his involvement as a student with the accessibility planning committee at Westfield State College. He recounted how he had become involved in the committee shortly after entering school in part as a result of having written a letter of complaint to the campus newspaper. In general, he said, college administrators were very responsive to his needs and would reschedule classes to make them accessible. "That's fine in the short run," J.G. responded, "but it doesn't solve the problem with accessibility."

In addition to college campuses, J.G. cited city halls, meeting houses and restaurants as important accessibility priorities. He also emphasized the need for accessible transportation, especially on an inter-regional basis. Despite the fact that he lives almost on the town line between Springfield and West Springfield, J.G. recently found it impossible to arrange transportation from one town to the next because of the strict geographical service policies of the local transit systems.

J.G. also mentioned temporary barriers such as those created by snow and ice which had not been brought up in earlier interviews. He
has had problems with one local business person refusing to shovel her walk and sees this as both a barrier to the disabled and a general safety hazard.

When asked what role Independent Living Centers should be playing in accessibility advocacy and planning, J.G.'s response seemed to summarize well the reactions of many of the people I had spoken with over the course of these interviews.

To let their participants know that people can do something about accessibility. Education, I think, is the key. Support about being advocative (sic). It's okay to assert yourself in this situation. I think a lot of people know things are out there and need to be changed but they say, "Oh, what can I do about it." They need to be educated that this is what you can do and they need to be assured that it's okay to do this. "It's your right." I don't mean to sound militant but there are a lot of people who just sit and say "What can I do, I'm only one person." If they're educated about what they can do and how to go about doing it and are encouraged to do it, that, I think is the most important job.

I took this as a directive in planning the participants' workshop which followed, based on the ideas and concerns raised throughout this initial period of interviewing.

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It may be helpful at this point to summarize briefly the issues and ideas generated during this initial period of interviewing and the impact that these interactions had on subsequent research planning. A variety of accessibility-related concerns, both specific and general, had surfaced during the course of the interviewing, as well as a range of individual strategies for dealing with inaccessible environments. In terms of accessibility planning priorities, there
seemed to be general agreement on the importance of making public buildings and governmental offices accessible. At this level, accessibility is viewed as a basic right due to every citizen and a necessary link in full participation in public and community affairs. Privately owned businesses were also mentioned frequently as well as medical facilities, places of worship and recreational facilities. Housing and transportation were also important concerns mentioned by many participants during the interviews.

A wide variety of accessibility strategies had also been generated and as will be discussed, these strategies served as the basis for much of the subsequent workshop planning. However, the interviews were not designed solely for the generation of concrete information but were also meant to provide an opportunity for me to become acquainted with participants on an individual basis, to serve as a forum for participants to examine their own experience in relation to accessibility and in this way to begin to define the participatory research process.

In becoming acquainted with the participants, I was most struck by the range of experiences and abilities among individuals. Disability is perhaps the only thing all the participants had in common, this and the experiences of discrimination and exclusion which accompany disability in this society. The existence of such vast differences in interests, resources, and experience did not come as a surprise to me, but did make me realize that to draw all of these people together to address issues of accessibility planning and advocacy would present some difficulties and challenges I had not
anticipated.

Becoming acquainted, or in some cases simply better acquainted with participants also reinforced my conviction that people can take an active and informed role in decision-making and cemented my commitment to participatory research. I think the interviews also helped to generate a greater humility on my part as I came to see how little I actually understood of the experience of disability and as I learned more about the barriers met and overcome by participants in coping with a physically and socially inaccessible environment. I do not intend by this to suggest canonization for all disabled people but rather that it is important to develop an awareness of the reality of disability. I appreciate the honesty and openness with which participants were willing to share this reality with me and believe I have profitted greatly by these interactions.

It was my impression that many of the participants I interviewed had already developed a conscious awareness of the impact of inaccessibility and had been active in addressing these issues in various ways. For some, however, it seemed that the interview provided their first opportunity to examine these issues and the first acknowledgement they had received that their experience and insight were valid and should be shared and acted upon. In addition to this, I think that for all the participants, as well as for me, the interviews provided an opportunity to review past experience and action, and a forum for examining possible avenues for future efforts.

As a beginning to the participatory research process, the interviews provided some important insights into the expectations
generated by the idea of "research" and provided an opportunity to
begin to examine these expectations and to explore ways in which
research might be different. The fact that I arrived with a loosely
defined set of issues to be discussed, rather than with a precisely-
worded, consistently presented questionnaire generated comments such
as "I don't know if we're giving you the answers that you want,"
while my own sense of confusion and uncertainty in attempting to
develop some direction for the project based on the interviews,
reflects the same difficulty in understanding an alternative research
method. However, as Freire has suggested, it is largely a matter of
"learning to do it by doing it" (Freire, 1982, p. 29) and as the
project has progressed I think we have all developed more confidence
in this process as a vehicle for change and, on my part at any rate,
as a viable alternative research method.

The "You Can't Get There From Here" Workshop

The interviews were still only the first step in the research
process and served as the basis for subsequent workshop planning.
As I have mentioned, early in the interviewing process, I realized
that my enthusiastically conceived plans for a participants'
legislative conference were not so enthusiastically received by the
participants themselves. After grudgingly giving up this idea and
going through a period of confusion and dejection in trying to bring
some semblance of order into the results of the interviews which
might serve as a foundation for some other focus for the workshop,
I began to see a potential direction. In each of the first three
or four interviews I had noted a variety of accessibility-related
problems or concerns. In addition, each respondent seemed to have
developed his/her own strategies for dealing with environmental
barriers. For example, in J.S.'s case, she took a fairly aggressive
approach in knocking down a display that blocked access within a
store, while M.J.K. worked with an organized committee to present
accessibility concerns to local merchants. Others wrote letters,
made phone calls or asked for assistance from passers-by. Each of
these strategies seemed to work for some people and in some situations
and it seemed reasonable to plan a strategy-planning workshop and to
ask individuals to share with one another their accessibility advocacy
experiences. This plan had the advantage of explicitly recognizing
the experience and expertise of participants and, even if this
workshop were a one-time event only, I felt that participants would
profit by their participation by becoming familiar with a number of
alternative advocacy methods. In subsequent interviews, then, I was
more specific in asking about advocacy strategies and experiences.

My interview with J.D. provided a more concrete direction for
workshop planning in J.D.'s description of the Massachusetts
Association of Paraplegics Watchdog Program. This particular strategy
seemed especially appropriate to our situation. Over the course of
the interviews, a number of examples of new construction and
renovation projects which had not been made accessible were mentioned.
Participants with whom I spoke seemed to feel frustrated that places
were still being built without attention paid to the accessibility of
the structure and some had mentioned having called or written letters
to encourage owners to consider making the building accessible—in some cases successfully, in others not. With little or no knowledge about existing architectural accessibility regulations and their enforcement procedures, however, individuals tended to voice their concern as a matter of individual interest rather than utilizing the force of the law in backing their legitimate demands. There was much confusion, on my part as well as on the part of respondents, concerning the exact wording of the law and concerning the appropriate procedure for filing a complaint. An informed group of community watchdogs might be more successful in preventing such problems from recurring in the future.

A monitoring project would also succeed in making the geographical spread of participants an advantage rather than a detriment to our efforts by making it possible for a relatively small group of advocates to impact on the accessibility of communities throughout Western Massachusetts.

While this seemed an ideal project for the accessibility group I hoped would come together as a result of this workshop, I felt very ambivalent about proposing this idea to the group. To date my interactions with participants, while I think they were for the most part warm and informal, still maintained the researcher-respondent dichotomy. While there was a sharing of ideas and concerns, I was still at an advantage through having interacted with a number of participants giving me the opportunity to gain a broader perspective on the issues involved. My intention was that the workshop, by providing all the participants a chance to gain this same breadth of experience, and by acknowledging the expertise and insight of
individual participants, would provide participants with a greater sense of membership and control over the research process than I had been able to engender through the interviews. Providing a prefabricated advocacy project would, I feared, only perpetuate my own control over the process. On the other hand, I have also had experience with groups in which no clear agenda is established and no direction provided and it has been my sense that such groups rarely survive their first meeting. Trying to keep these conflicting concerns in mind, I finally developed a strategy which I hoped would be successful.

First, in order to provide a common base of knowledge and an explicit recognition of the importance of the information provided in the interviews, I prepared a brief summary of the issues and ideas which had already been generated (see Appendix for copy of summary). While presenting a number of possible alternative directions, I did highlight the monitoring project and proposed to bring all of those involved in the project together to "discuss this idea and other ideas that were suggested." This summary was directed to "Accessibility Planning Project Members" and I emphasized the importance of involvement:

"People agree that accessibility is an important part of independent living and we could really make a difference if we could work together. Your ideas and involvement are a vital part of having the Accessibility Consulting Service work, and I hope you'll be able to come to this meeting. I'm looking forward to seeing you again!"

This summary was mailed to all of the people who had participated
in the interviews, and was also distributed to the peer counseling staff members at Stavros. After discussing the matter with Ted Martineau, we decided that rather than make a general invitation to all of the participants at Stavros, we would limit the invitation to those who had already shown an interest through their participation in the interviews. A smaller group of workshop participants, we felt, would be more effective in encouraging active participation and involvement.

While invitations were being distributed and the logistics for the meeting worked out, I was also in the process of making up the agenda. In planning any event or workshop such as this there are bound to be compromises between what you would ideally have happen and what can be realistically achieved. In this case I felt that the two came closer to coinciding than I could have hoped. In keeping with the overall project objectives, I had three major concerns in setting the agenda for this participants' workshop. Of greatest importance was that the participants' workshop would be just that. As J.D. had warned, I didn't want to bring people together only to confront them with "an array of experts" and no opportunity to become acquainted with one another and to share their own ideas and concerns. Secondly, I wanted to insure that participants would profit by their attendance. Again, I hoped that if this were the only such meeting to take place, participants would come away with new information or skills which would be of use to them. Finally, I wanted to relinquish my own control over the research process and to be seen by participants as a technical advisor or facilitator rather
than as a group leader. The precedent for a leadership role had already, and necessarily, been set by my interactions with participants during the interview process. I did not wish to see this precedent carried into the workshop. If, as I hoped, the group determined to meet on a regular basis and undertake some form of accessibility advocacy, I wanted ownership of this process firmly in the hands of the participants.

During the interviews, I had become aware of how little information most participants had concerning their rights to equal accessibility. What types of buildings were included in the law? What were the standards? How were they enforced and by whom? These were all questions which had been raised during the interviews. Some I had addressed, in other cases I was uncertain of the answers as well. If the workshop were to have no other impact, it seemed to me that to clarify these issues, to make participants aware of their rights and of their own role in the enforcement process would make the experience worthwhile. To this end I wrote a letter to Mr. Steve Spinetto, a member of the Massachusetts State Architecture Barriers Board, inviting him to attend the workshop and outlining our concerns. I telephoned him a few days later and found that he had already planned to be in the area on the date we had tentatively scheduled for our workshop. However, his schedule prevented him from being at our workshop for the entire afternoon since he would be at another meeting until 3:00 p.m., while our meeting had been set for 1:30-4:30 p.m. I therefore set up the agenda around Mr. Spinetto’s schedule.

In order to deal with the issue of ownership and to downplay my
own role in the workshop, I asked Mr. Theodore Martineau to make some welcoming remarks and to chair the meeting while I would serve as facilitator for the group problem identification and action planning session which would precede Mr. Spinetto's presentation. Following this we would have an opportunity to socialize more informally during a small wine and cheese reception (copies of the letter to Spinetto and the agenda are included in the Appendix).

The weeks preceding the workshop were wrought with problems, real, potential and merely imagined. While I had hoped that it would still be early enough in the winter to present no problem in terms of weather, the weekend before the workshop, which was to take place on December 8, we had our first substantial snowfall. The response was not as great as I had hoped and I was concerned that there might not be enough people attending to make it worthwhile to continue. Then on Tuesday I found out that Ted Martineau might be unable to come due to an important commitment which had come up suddenly. I was frantic. But Thursday dawned bright, Ted was able to come after all, as were many of the people who had been uncertain that they would be able to attend and I went out almost happily to lay in provisions for our party.

The workshop, which was scheduled to begin at 1:30 p.m. did not actually get started until about 1:50 p.m. Many of the people attending knew one another or knew staff members and there was some visiting and re-acquainting to be done before we could address the issue of accessibility. Of the twelve people attending the workshop, I had interviewed six. Of the others, besides myself and Ted
Martineau, three were Stavros staff members and one a personal friend and representative of the University Handicapped Student Affairs Office. I had also asked Joanne Nahlovsky, the secretary from Stavros, to take minutes of the meeting (see Appendix for a copy of the minutes).

Ted opened the meeting by introducing himself and asking workshop participants to do the same. He then spoke briefly about "the barrier we all face regardless of disability: the barrier of attitude." He spoke about the importance, not only of the attitudes of society toward disabled people, but of the attitudes people, disabled and non-disabled, hold toward themselves and toward their own power to create change.

We had discussed his presentation briefly before the workshop but I had not known what the content of his remarks would be. I was both moved and delighted, personally moved and delighted that other participants seemed to share my reaction. This opening presentation seemed to create an atmosphere of enthusiasm and empowerment that vitalized the entire afternoon.

Ted then introduced me as workshop facilitator and I took a few minutes to review the project to date and to go over the workshop agenda. I had been calling this the "You Can't Get There From Here" workshop, so I began by telling the story of the New Yorker who gets lost on a ski vacation in Vermont and is told, when he stops to ask directions from one of the natives simply "You can't get there from here," then went on to explain why I felt that was a fitting motto for a workshop concerning architectural accessibility. I also discussed
my own involvement in the project, noting my plan to make the project
the basis of my graduate work and my reasons for wanting to bring
people together to discuss accessibility and advocacy.

We had gathered in a large circle with a free-standing chalk
board on which I had taped sheets of newsprint to record participant
reactions and ideas at the end where Ted and I were seated. I began
by asking workshop participants to identify important accessibility-
related problems or issues and as we went around the circle, I would
note each response. S.J. sat to my immediate right. "Bars," he
suggested playfully, then "parks and recreational facilities." At
some point we moved to the next person and "voting places" was
suggested. And then someone from across the room made another
suggestion and someone else responded to that and suddenly ideas
and suggestions were flying fast and furious, accompanied by much
discussion. I recall thinking at about this point, "It really works!"
I had spent so much time trying to get everything perfectly coordinated
and had fretted over how to encourage involvement and generate
enthusiasm. I had tried to find some balance in my own mind between
providing too little and too much structure and finally made a real
commitment to relinquishing control, to letting whatever would happen,
happen. At one level, though, I think I always doubted that it would
"really work," but at some point during this process I felt that the
ownership of the workshop moved almost physically from myself to the
participants. I was there to moderate and to record ideas but the
group had ceased to rely on me for direction. The minutes of the
meeting provide an accurate summary of what transpired during the
workshop but I do not think they can reflect the sense of enthusiasm and the developing group cohesiveness that seemed to me the most critical aspect of the meeting.

After discussing specific accessibility problems (I have more than thirty taken from that newsprint list), J.D. discussed the accessibility monitoring project. There was a great deal of interest in following up on this suggestion but a feeling, at the same time, that we should also be involved in some more immediate form of direct action. We decided that the Hampshire Mall would be our first target and spent a good deal of time discussing various advocacy tactics. As it turned out, there had already been efforts to suggest changes to the Mall management. On two separate occasions, letters had been sent from the Stavros office, noting the problems and requesting action. In neither case had there been any form of response. At this point, the group was divided. One faction (I numbered myself among them) felt that the Mall management had had enough opportunity to respond to more polite inquiries and that more direct action, picketing was suggested, would be most appropriate. The other faction, and the one that finally won out, felt that such a move was premature, that those currently in charge could very easily deny knowledge of earlier efforts and suggested instead that we visit the Mall, making note of specific accessibility-related problems and note these in another letter to the management. If this didn't bring action, they agreed, we would consider more aggressive tactics. A committee of five persons, myself included, was formed to make this evaluation and to draft the letter.
The group also decided to continue meeting on a monthly basis and, after some discussion, chose a name. The Community Accessibility Committee was officially established.

After a short break, Steve Spinetto who had arrived a few minutes earlier, took the floor to speak about the Architectural Barriers Board and the importance of consumer involvement. Spinetto, who is disabled himself, is an animated and very engaging speaker. He emphasized the importance of community involvement and outlined in some detail both the regulations and enforcement procedures of the Board. He explained the procedures for filing a complaint, and concluded his presentation by reiterating the importance of consumer involvement, telling participants that "the Board will not take violations seriously until consumers do." A question and answer period followed and we adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

At the conclusion of the workshop, I distributed a short evaluation form asking for feedback and suggestions for future planning. Seven of the eleven evaluations were returned. All seven respondents said that they would be interested in participating in future sessions. Asked to identify the good things about the workshop, respondents noted: identifying problems and learning about the Architectural Barriers Board's activities, pooling ideas from many people, learning about new legislation and having the opportunity to meet Steve Spinetto.

When asked what changes they would like to see made, respondents suggested that a more specific agenda be drawn up and that "basic information [be] given first followed by plans for working." As
this respondent noted, "Our time discussing what to do would have been more effectively used after we knew what was possible legally."

Respondents felt that the session had been informative and that people had been able to ask questions and to share ideas. When asked to suggest specific topics for future sessions, respondents noted: transportation, a session reviewing the Architectural Barriers code, one on reading floor plans and a problem-solving session to determine how we might, as a group, identify violations of the code and seek enforcement. People also suggested that we form subgroups to take on specific tasks, and narrow our focus to more specific topics. Finally, all respondents agreed to have their names and addresses distributed to other members of the group.

Before leaving the meeting, the Hampshire Mall Evaluation Committee got together to set a time for our trip. We decided to go the following Saturday morning, although this resulted in losing one member who could not make it at that time.

The morning of the evaluation I arrived at the Mall and, with other members of the team, made note of all accessibility-related problems in the Mall itself. We decided to leave the evaluation of individual stores for another time, although we did note those with which we were familiar that seemed most glaringly inaccessible. (The results of this evaluation are presented in the Appendix.)

As we had expected there were a number of violations, most importantly perhaps, the height of thresholds and weight of doors at the entrances. The only real difficulty we encountered in conducting the evaluation was that other people were so helpful that we sometimes found it
impossible for team members to even attempt to enter the building independently before someone would be there holding the door or giving a hand. It restored my faith in humanity but, judging by the glares I got as I stood passively watching the struggle, absolutely destroyed their faith in me! After we returned I had a copy of our notes typed up and distributed to team members for comments then prepared a draft letter which I also distributed. This letter, with the signatures of all team members, was sent to the manager of the mall. I made one call to determine whether or not the letter had been received and to inquire about plans for amending the situation but was unable even to speak with the manager. A report from the team and decision concerning subsequent action are on the agenda for the next meeting.

To summarize, I felt that the workshop exceeded my expectations, in fact exceeded my highest hopes for success. The fact that the participants have decided to meet on an on-going basis and have already begun to take action suggests that all that was needed was an opportunity for people to come together and to share common concerns. The rest seemed to grow naturally from that simple act of coming together, as if each participant's interest and experience served as a catalyst for the interest and involvement of others.

As of this writing, the Community Accessibility Committee has met twice, a third meeting will be held in another month, with regular monthly meetings to follow. The original action planned in relation to the Hampshire Mall is still being pursued. In a recent letter the manager of the mall expressed his willingness to make
necessary changes to bring the building to code. At the second meeting the Committee decided to submit detailed results of the evaluation we performed, along with citations from the regulations, and to follow with a formal complaint to the Board if changes are not made. Another project was also proposed at the second meeting of the Committee, to make the Fine Arts Center at the University accessible, and an evaluation team will set up a trip to the Center before the next meeting.

In addition, a smaller subcommittee was formed to discuss an Accessibility Awareness Awards project to recognize local businesses which have demonstrated a particular concern for accessibility. A certificate of recognition will be awarded on a monthly basis and news releases distributed to local media to help create a public awareness of the importance of accessibility. The Committee is also exploring the possibility of getting buttons made up to promote the activities of the group. My favorite slogan suggestion was "Are You Accessible?", but after discussion the group decided to hold a button-slogan contest, open to the general public, awarding dinner for two at an accessible restaurant or a trip to the hot tubs to the winner.

While I can describe the activities and decisions made by the new Community Accessibility Committee, I find it more difficult to communicate the enthusiasm and atmosphere of creativity and involvement I have experienced at the meetings. I opened the second meeting with the "Community Accessibility Committee Overture", Fred Small's "Talking Wheelchair Blues," the words of which appear as the Prologue to this report. The song generated a great deal
of interest and amusement, participants sharing with one another experiences similar to those described in the song. Fred Small was made an honorary member of the committee and will receive a button as soon as they are ready. We were fortunate that our guest speaker, a local building inspector, never arrived because we worked for almost two hours straight discussing ideas, generating plans and coordinating various activities. To try to describe the feeling, it was like a fermentation process, an active creation and working through of ideas on a broad range of problems but with a concrete action-oriented focus that made it possible for committee members to set dates, plan specific actions and delegate authority to see that plans were carried through. While the first meeting seemed equally as volatile, there was a more well-defined sense of purpose and direction which guided this second meeting. The first session, especially the remarks made by Steve Spinetto, seemed to inspire and empower participants. At the second, sitting around the table with copies of the Architectural Barriers Board complaint forms before us, trying to determine the differences in the legal definitions of "alteration" and "renovation," one could sense that this empowerment was taking shape. Entering the community, filing complaints, making awards, that empowerment becomes action and change.
CHAPTER V

AN EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH EFFORTS

If we desire sincerely and passionately the safety, the welfare and the free development of the talents of all men, we shall not be in want of the means to approach such a state. Even if only a small part of mankind strives for such goals, their superiority will prove itself in the long run.

Albert Einstein
(cited in Nosek et al., 1982)

A Summary of Original Project Objectives

It should be clear from the preceding discussion that the first set of objectives outlined in the beginning of Chapter IV have largely been met during the course of the research to date, although further progress will be expected as the Community Accessibility Committee continues its work over the next months. The first of these objectives, "to provide participants with useful information and/or skills for advocacy work", was a major concern in preliminary workshop planning. As I have mentioned, my realization that many of those participating in the project, myself included, were uncertain as to the current enforcement regulations and complaint process of the State Architectural Barriers Board, was a major impetus for inviting Steve Spinetto, a representative of that Board, to appear at our first meeting. Thus, even had the project ended with this single meeting, participants would have gained important knowledge concerning their own accessibility advocacy rights. Participants who have been
involved since the first meeting have had the opportunity to work with the Regulations in performing evaluations, have been able to watch the advocacy process in action and will continue to develop new advocacy skills through their involvement. The second of these objectives was "to identify specific accessibility-related problems experienced by disabled people in the area." Again, the Community Accessibility Project has been highly successful in achieving this goal. A number of accessibility priorities were identified during the course of the interviews including public buildings and governmental offices, shops, restaurants, churches, private homes and transportation facilities. These same priorities were also brought up in the course of the first workshop and helped to establish a common sense of the extent of the problem, as well as of shared concerns on which we might base joint action.

The workshop, as well as the interview summary distributed to all participants, also provided opportunities to address the third objective, which was "to share possible solutions to these problems with one another." Although there was some disagreement in the course of the first workshop concerning the most effective advocacy strategy, in general I believe the exposure to other approaches was met with much interest and with a willingness to consider alternatives. The introduction to the formal Architectural Barriers Board complaint process was especially effective in this sense as it provides strong administrative backing to advocacy efforts. While the efforts of the committee have to date been directed at private negotiations with building managers in the interest of gaining concessions beyond the
statutory demands, the knowledge that violations can be brought up before the Board is very empowering.

The continuing work of the Committee has largely been geared toward addressing the fourth objective, that is "to target areas for further development and discussion." A number of possible projects have been suggested. However, while the Committee seems to be working effectively to develop a process for future work, the majority of the work to date has centered on the immediate Amherst/Northampton area. I hope that it will be possible to establish local groups for the Springfield, Greenfield and Pittsfield/Williamstown areas in the near future. The time and transportation problems involved in transporting participants from these areas and the heterogeneity of issues and interests have made working as an effective, well-coordinated group difficult. It may be possible, if these separate local groups can be established, to have occasional joint meetings for training or general problem solving on a regional basis and ideally I would like to see similar self-advocacy groups established throughout the New England region. If I am able to continue my work with this group, an expanded advocacy network would be among my priorities for further exploration.

This concern with regional advocacy efforts ties into the fifth objective which was "to share these concerns with policy makers." To a large extent I would say that we have to date been unsuccessful in meeting this objective. However, as I have discussed earlier, during the course of the interviews, it became clear that my emphasis on and enthusiasm for communication with policy-makers was not shared by
project participants. A much greater concern was voiced for information-sharing and strategy planning to precede active legislative advocacy and, in retrospect, I think this was a wise decision. As we become more familiar with the problems and with current legislation regarding accessibility, we will be able to perform as more effective lobbyists. To have invited legislators to our first meeting would probably have served only to intimidate many of us without achieving any positive change. It will be interesting to note any development in our focus on legislation as we gain experience in advocacy at a local level.

We are, however, familiar with at least one influential state-level advocate, that is Steve Spinetto. As the workshop evaluations noted, Spinetto made a very powerful impression on workshop participants and he expressed a willingness to return to the group which I think reflects his interest in our efforts as well. Spinetto seems to share our commitment to participant involvement and this will certainly be a useful relationship in our future work with the Architectural Barriers Board.

As I think has been demonstrated, the final two objectives of this first set, "to advocate for change," and "to plan strategies for future action," are together with the third, the main focus of the current work of the Community Accessibility Committee. Our current efforts with the Hampshire Mall and Fine Arts Center projects reflect the group's focus on concrete problem-solving, while the Accessibility Awareness Awards project demonstrates a willingness to develop innovative strategies for addressing accessibility-related concerns in
creative ways.

The second set of objectives outlined in Chapter IV reflect the more process-oriented goals of the project. These objectives provide a means of evaluating the impact the project has had on the participants on a more personal and experiential level. The first of these objectives, for example, was "to encourage participants to see themselves and each other as legitimate experts in the field of disability." The importance of this expertise has been explicitly acknowledged at every phase of the project and the vital role to be played by consumers in accessibility advocacy was a central theme in Spinetto's comments to workshop participants.

The interviews provided an initial opportunity for participants to reflect on their experience with architectural barriers and to legitimate these experiences and their own reactions to them by communicating them to someone else, someone with an explicitly stated interest in just such experiences. For those participants who attended the workshop, this process of legitimation was extended in communicating concerns and experiences with one another and in seeing that what might have been considered a personal problem was shared by others and might be addressed on a group level.

At the same time, I think workshop participants were also aware that while expert in one sense, that their present level of understanding of the legal status of accessibility issues and their general inability to deal with concrete design considerations might lessen their potential impact as effective advocates. With this concern in mind, participants have shown little immediate interest in getting
together with legislators and other policy makers, preferring instead to focus on becoming better informed. Plans have been suggested for the group to get together with local building inspectors to discuss the regulations and the new legislation which makes building inspectors responsible for their enforcement. A request has also been made for a workshop or training session to educate participants in how to read floor plans and other design drawings.

This decision not to concentrate on legislative advocacy has obviously affected the extent to which the second of these objectives "to encourage policy makers to acknowledge this expertise," has been achieved. However, I agree with the participants in their insistence on developing more concrete design and advocacy skills before addressing policy makers directly. In the meantime, the advocacy work which the committee has done, for example, in contacting the manager of the Hampshire Mall, has been seriously received and seems to be fairly successful.

Again, the third of these objectives, "to demonstrate to participants the value of engaging in dialogue with one another and with policy makers", was stated as a preliminary objective, subject to the opinions expressed by participants in the course of the project. Thus, the focus on dialogue with policy makers, as I have noted, was dropped in response to reactions received during the initial interviews.

Dialogue between participants and myself during interviews and among participants during the workshop and subsequent Committee meetings has, on the other hand, been quite successful. In the
course of these meetings, participants have had an opportunity to express their personal feelings and reactions to architectural barriers and to share with one another the frustration they feel toward continued insensitivity and unresponsiveness on the part of various governmental offices, many businesses and, perhaps most importantly, on the part of the non-disabled public. This was especially apparent in participants' reactions to the "Talking Wheelchair Blues," which reflects so many of the discriminatory attitudes and behaviors disabled people encounter every day. After hearing the song, for example, participants shared personal experiences of having others address questions concerning them to a companion or attendant as if they were unable to hear and speak besides being unable to walk. The impact of these discriminatory attitudes in maintaining an inaccessible environment and in hampering advocacy efforts, and the importance of public awareness and consciousness-raising have also been discussed.

It is really too early to determine the extent to which the fourth of these objectives, "to demonstrate the potential for advocacy efforts to achieve social change", will be successful. Certainly Spinetto's comments instilled a sense that participation and self-advocacy can achieve positive change, but concrete achievements will be required to demonstrate that this is, in fact, true. The advocacy process is often very slow, as evidenced by our current ponderous negotiations to have a threshold replaced at the Mall, and I am afraid that many people share S.J.'s frustration with the lack of immediate results. To a large extent, I believe the success of the Committee
in the future will depend on our ability to maintain momentum despite the laggardly nature of the advocacy process.

Finally, the fifth of this set of objectives was "to develop a sense of community among participants, and a sense of ownership on the part of participants in relation to the research process." I have to admit to a degree of "researcher chauvinism" in having stated this objective. As I proceeded with the project, I discovered that a "strong sense of community" already existed among the participants, many of whom knew one another already or were at least familiar with one another's names. This is probably due, at least in part, to the fact that all of the participants in the project are in some way associated with Stavros, Inc. and also due to the fact that at least for those participants in the Amherst area, available, accessible housing options tend to limit disabled members of the community to a restricted range of housing choices. However, the "sense of community" extends beyond personal familiarity, and is generated, I believe, by a sense of common experience and shared concerns. A shared concern for accessibility brought participants into the project in the first place and I think the first workshop was successful precisely because this sense of community was immanent and needed only an opportunity to be explicitly acknowledged to coalesce into a more tangible sense of group cohesiveness. Thus, rather than establishing a sense of community, I have been allowed to share in a community which was in many ways already there.

The question of project ownership is an important one and one that has in fact created some difficulty in relation to the project
as a research endeavor. However, it seems more reasonable to defer
my discussion of this issue to a more general consideration of the
role of the researcher, and, having evaluated the project in terms of
these original objectives, to conclude this section with a considera-
tion of an issue which was not included in this original statement of
objectives but which has become apparent over the course of the
project and, to my mind, warrants examination.

This concern focuses, not on those who did choose to partici-
pate, but on those who did not. When I communicated this concern to
J.D. his reaction was one of pragmatic resignation to established
experience; most people do not participate and there is nothing you
can do to change that. Of the 120 letters that were originally mailed
to participants, only ten people responded. Given the scope of the
project, the time required to interview each person and the limitations
of time and money I faced, this was an acceptable level of response.
At another level, however, one must consider why over ninety percent
of those contacted chose not to participate, and why, of those who did
participate in the interviews, only half attended the workshop.

The answer, in the first case lies, at least in part I think, in
participants' reactions to past experiences in research. Just before
the initial letter of introduction was mailed to participants, a
representative of one of the local Mayor's Offices of Handicapped
Affairs visited the Stavros office to review her 16-page questionnaire
that was to be mailed to disabled residents of that community—a
16-page questionnaire! It reminded me of an incident I once read about
a woman who, when asked why she refused to participate in an interview
responded, "What happens? The guy running the thing gets famous, the kid asking the questions gets $4 an hour and me? I don't get my laundry done!"

Many people have developed a legitimate avoidance response to research which probably accurately reflects the value of previous participation. I suppose my research is "different," but even assuming this is the case, there is no reason for people receiving the letter to understand or accept this "difference."

I think there are also those who believe they have "nothing to say" or who feel self-conscious or concerned about my reactions, perhaps due to speech impairments or visible disabilities, and who choose not to participate for these reasons. In one case, for example, after I had mailed out the letter of explanation, one of the staff members at Stavros told me that one of the participants with whom she worked had expressed an interest in the topic area and had shared some ideas with her but did not want to arrange a personal interview because he experienced a great deal of difficulty in communicating with others as the result of severe aphasia following a stroke.

Whatever the reason, higher levels of participation are only likely to come about as the group continues to be active over the next several months. We will have to establish the legitimacy of the project in the minds of potential participants by demonstrating our ability to achieve concrete change. We must communicate our commitment to involving everyone at all levels of planning and action and we must provide a variety of opportunities for involvement. For example, the small discussion-oriented group we have now might very well intimidate
someone whose verbal skills are somewhat impaired, but this same person might enjoy being part of a large rally or demonstration, where numbers of people participating is crucial to achieving the goal. There may be others who, though basically house-bound or temporarily unable to come to meetings, might be able to make phone calls, write letters or participate in some other way. A priority should be established on developing alternative avenues for participation appropriate to the interests, needs and abilities of potential participants.

Even so, accessibility is not necessarily the idée fixe of all disabled people nor is the Community Accessibility Committee the only legitimate approach to dealing with accessibility-related concerns, and one-hundred percent participation is not the goal. The goal is to provide an opportunity and support for involvement and to make this opportunity available to as many people as possible.

In terms of meeting its internal objectives, then, the project has been relatively successful and it is to be hoped that continued efforts will result in the further achievement of both concrete social change and increased awareness on the part of participants of their own resources in implementing such change. Has the project necessarily, then, also been successful as a participatory research project? As cited earlier, Hall (1981) notes seven fundamental characteristics of the participatory research process which can be used as criteria in evaluating this particular project.

"1. The problem originates in the community or workplace itself."

Accessibility is certainly an issue in the everyday life of most disabled individuals. In one sense the research depended on the
entrance of an outside researcher to focus attention on this concern. However, I do not believe that this outside influence contradicts the notion that the research actually originated in the community. The interest and concern in accessibility were already there; the response of participants to questions about this issue demonstrates that there was an existing concern and involvement. The research process simply provided a forum for individuals to consider the issue and to begin to identify common objectives and possible actions. The format of the research itself grew out of the interests and ideas of participants, the researcher serving the role of coordinator or facilitator. This is in sharp contrast to a more traditional research setting in which the direction of the project would have been pre-determined and would have coincided with the researcher's interests and needs rather than focusing on those of the participants.

"2. The ultimate goal of the research is fundamental structural transformation and the improvement of the lives of those involved. The beneficiaries are the workers or people concerned."

Here again, I believe the Community Accessibility Project can be said to have been, or at least is in the process of being, successful. It will of course take many months to really evaluate the project in terms of this objective. If the momentum which has been generated can be maintained and if the actions which have been undertaken can be taken to completion, the project will have achieved concrete benefits for participants and for other disabled individuals in the area.

Perhaps more importantly, however, as a source of community education and empowerment, the project has already succeeded in
providing participants with the information and support they need to pursue accessibility advocacy on an independent basis, and has demonstrated the potential power in group action.

If, on the other hand, "fundamental structural transformation" implies that in order to succeed the project must effect a positive change in public attitudes toward disability and accessibility, I can only conclude that it will take time and thousands of similar community-based efforts to begin to achieve this goal on a national level. Attitudes toward disability have changed dramatically over the past several years and I believe the Independent Living Movement has played a central role in this transformation. However, I also know that a great deal of work must still be done if people with disabilities are to achieve equal rights and equal access. The Community Accessibility Project can only play a small role in this process, although as a new approach to research in the area, and as a research method more consonant with the objectives of the Independent Living Movement, I think the Community Accessibility Project might serve as a model for future efforts.

"3. Participatory research involves the people in the workplace or the community in the control of the entire process of the research."

As I noted earlier, the original decision to conduct the research was based on my interactions with participants and on my experience with accessibility consulting over a period of several months at the agency. However, this original decision was mine and was not made with the active input of participants. Following this initial decision, however, the research process itself has been highly
interactive and continues to build participant involvement as the project develops. But while a group of participants has been involved in the entire research process, I do no feel that the project has, to date, been successful in involving a wide range of participants. This shortcoming is, as I noted earlier, an issue of concern and possible avenues for increasing participation will be explored. At present, however, representative participation in the project remains a problem.

"4. Focus of participatory research is on work with a wide range of exploited or oppressed groups; immigrants, labour, indigenous peoples, women."

It would be impossible to deny that people with disabilities have been and continue to be severely oppressed. Economically, recent figures show that "sixty percent of working age handicapped Americans exist near or below the official poverty level" (Nosek, et al., 1982, p. 7), while estimated unemployment among qualified disabled adults is at approximately the same level (Nosek, et al., 1982, p. 7). Architectural inaccessibility contributes to this oppression by making it impossible for disabled people to participate actively in community, educational, vocational and recreational activities.

Underlying all of these manifestations of oppression, public attitudes toward disability continue to generate discrimination and negative stereotypes toward disabled individuals which hinder effective change at more concrete levels.

"5. Central to participatory research is its role of strengthening the awareness in people of their own abilities and resources and its support to mobilizing or organizing."
If the Community Accessibility Project has been successful in any way, I feel it has been most successful in making participants aware of their right to equal access and of their power to achieve that goal. The initial interviews contributed to this process by providing an acknowledgement of the participant's reaction to architectural barriers and by making explicit accessibility strategies that the participant had developed to address this issue.

However, it was largely in terms of the interaction which took place at the workshop, especially in Spinetto's discussion with participants concerning their rights and power as a collective that this awareness was developed. Subsequent organizing and action have served to cement this sense of ability and empowerment which, it is hoped, will be put into action and be communicated to others over the next several months.

"6. The term 'researcher' can refer to both the community or workplace persons involved as well as those with specialized training."

This criterion relates closely to the third characteristic of participatory research and as stated in the discussion there, participants have taken active roles as researchers throughout the entire project. Participants have identified issues, examined possible avenues for action and have organized action to address these concerns. In many respects, in fact, disabled participants are "those with specialized training" since their experience with disability has made them experts in the field in a way I cannot be. I bring to the project an understanding of the research process and some organizational skills which help to guide the process; partici-
pants provide the content of the research and determine the product.

"7. Although those with specialized knowledge/training often come from outside the situation, they are committed participants and learners in a process that leads to militancy rather than detachment."

I did not seek out this research situation in order to pursue an academic interest in participatory research, but rather I sought out participatory research as an expression of my existing commitment to participant involvement and empowerment which I found were unacceptable in a traditional research perspective. It was and is my firm belief that social science is an inherently political pursuit and to deny this fact is, as Gaventa and Horton observe, "to obscure partisanship" (1981, p. 40).

I prefer to make my partisanship explicit and to make whatever knowledge and training I have received available to people to serve in the achievement of their own goals and interests rather than to pursue my own idiosyncratic research objectives or those currently in fashion in my field. However, the very fact that I do have specific research and academic objectives in addition to my concern for architectural accessibility, has raised issues which impact on my role as a researcher and as a non-disabled person, which affect the way in which I am perceived by participants and which are closely tied to issues of experimenter control and true participation. In concluding this summary of the project as participatory research I think it is important to consider these concerns at greater length.

This project is my first experience in participatory research and while I am committed to this research method, I have to admit to some
feelings of ambivalence in turning away from the more traditional research method in which I have been trained and with which I feel very competent.

The most dramatic, and most difficult, change from traditional research has for me been the relinquishing of control over the research process. Experimental control is the very bedrock of traditional research methodology; turning this control over to participants generated a great deal of anxiety on my part. This anxiety was created by my sense that, while I was giving up control I could not, at the same time, turn over responsibility for the project to participants. I felt that somehow I still had to see that "everything turned out all right" and that the project succeeded despite the fact that I could no longer determine what course the research process might take. Resolving this paradox by accepting the fact that for the project to be truly participatory both responsibility and control must rest largely in the hands of participants enabled me to develop a more relaxed, more accepting attitude toward the project which has, in turn, enabled me to enjoy my own participation in the process and to appreciate my relationships with the other participants more.

This is not to imply that I now feel absolutely no responsibility for the research at all, but rather that I have attempted to define this responsibility as a more process- rather than product-oriented role. My tasks as researcher are: to listen, to explore ideas and concerns with participants, to provide resources and references to contribute to a shared educational process and to assist in making opportunities for communication and action available to participants.
My primary goal as a researcher is to enable participants to examine their situation and to take action to achieve change. I am responsible for these tasks; I am not responsible for the actions and decisions of the participants. I think my greatest accomplishment in this project has been in recognizing this distinction; the greatest task still facing my development as a participatory researcher will be in really accepting it.

The relinquishing of control for the final outcome of the research process has been made especially problematic due to the fact that I decided to make this foray into the unknown the basis of my doctoral work. The specter of failure looms large in this particular situation and has been all the more potent to me because I have elected to pursue an alternative research approach which is largely unaccepted in my field. And it was precisely because it was my perception that I had, in fact, taken a risk in deciding to pursue a participatory research approach in completing my doctoral work, that I was so dismayed when one participant, after reading a short section of my dissertation, told me that she had been "disappointed" and "hurt." No methodological or philosophical challenge could possibly have the impact on me that this observation had. She said she felt that she and the other participants had "been used." I was stricken. She said she had forgotten that I was only doing it as a research project and that when she read about herself and about the other participants as I described the workshop that she realized that I was only using them as "guinea pigs" for my own academic achievement. If despite all of my best efforts at creating an alternative research process I was
still perceived as a manipulative, self-serving social scientist, I felt I might just as well concede defeat. The participant who shared these feelings with me is also a friend, and I felt her criticism, not as a personal attack, but rather as a direct, and angry, challenge to my involvement as a social scientist. We talked about her reactions and about my own intentions and response to this challenge for over an hour. I tried to explain that my interest in accessibility had preceded, and would continue beyond, my dissertation. I also asked her to review the edited draft of my dissertation to be certain that I communicated accurately and respectfully, the events of the workshop and Committee. But I am also left with the realization that the distance between myself and the other participants in the project remains. I did have other reasons for my involvement, and though I feel I was straightforward about these other interests, I may not have achieved an appropriate balance between my roles as participant and researcher. This is a dilemma which I have not fully resolved even in my own mind, and one which will not resolve itself simply because I complete my graduate work. As a researcher, I will continue to have my own reasons for involvement in various projects, I will continue to be interested in relating my work to a more general consideration of participatory research and will continue to attempt to interpret the results of my work in the light of a critical theoretical perspective. I would not expect other participants to share these admittedly idiosyncratic interests, but, on the other hand, I would expect other participants to have their own reasons for involvement and I do not believe that individual motivations for participation need denigrate
the sincerity of one's commitment. I can thus justify my actions and my involvement as a researcher to my own satisfaction. This does not, however, address the problem of possibly making participants feel used or manipulated if the results of the research are made the basis of a report or presentation. One possible solution would be to draft any report or presentation together with project participants. In some cases I think this approach would be quite appropriate and workable. Though, again, I can hardly insist that the people with whom I work become conversant with the entire participatory research literature, this would in no way address their needs or interests. Nor would it be in my own interests to abandon these issues in the interests of a forced notion of equality. Equality is not the question here, personal autonomy is, and I am unsure as to how best to project my own independence and freedom to act while maintaining my respect for that of others.

In this particular situation, there is a second factor which must be considered in regard to my role in the research process—I am not disabled. How does this impact on my interactions with disabled participants and how does it affect the research process?

My first reaction to the issue of being a non-disabled researcher was that it was an unavoidable liability to the project. I felt that it would have been preferable had the researcher been disabled but since I was the only researcher interested and available, I would have to deal with the situation as best I could. Besides, I reasoned, if I wished to pursue a career as a participatory researcher, unless I satisfied myself with working with white upper middle class American
women, I would inevitably be placed in situations of being an outsider, so I had better learn to accept this limitation.

I have discovered that, far from being a liability, the fact that I am not disabled has in some ways contributed to my effectiveness as a researcher. This is not to say that a disabled researcher would not have been able to do a similar research project, but rather that there are distinct advantages to being outside the experience of the participants with whom you are working--it necessitates their involvement in the research. I cannot know what it is to be disabled. I have some understanding of what this means, everyone has had some personal experience with discrimination and can bring this to mind in trying to understand another's experience. The same is true of disability, we are all un-able or disabled in some respect and can thus share some understanding of the experience of disability. But at another level I must base my understanding of the experience of disability on the perceptions of others whose experience is more direct and can better inform our research and action. This demands the active involvement of disabled participants, in identifying accessibility priorities, in suggesting appropriate action and in pursuing change. I have a set of technical skills I can make available. I can represent the possibility of change by presenting alternatives and I can devote time and energy to bringing the research process to fruition but I can only do this in partnership with others.

Finally, my involvement in the project has also contributed to my own knowledge of disability and architectural accessibility, has forced me to examine my own attitudes concerning disability and has
increased by awareness of public attitudes toward disability.

However, this issue, too, was raised in my discussion the participant described earlier. In this case, the fact that I am not disabled seemed to exacerbate the feeling that I was using the participants and the research process to my own ends. Ironically, I think the reaction was stronger because I had achieved a degree of acceptance and writing the dissertation seemed to have betrayed this trust. Again, I do not know how best to deal with this type of situation. In rereading Park’s (1978) description of his work with Asian immigrants, I envied his ability to identify, and to be identified, with the members of that community. On the other hand, I know that there must be much that distinguishes him from other members of that community and, at the same time, I know that there is much I have in common with other members of the Community Accessibility Committee. And I do not believe that segregating non-disabled from disabled people could serve any purpose whatsoever; accessibility must be a common concern and will not be achieved unless people can work in coalition with one another. Still, I am reminded of Myles Horton’s experience after years of civil rights work, of reaching out at a large demonstration in which he was the only white person present, only to find that no one was willing to take his hands (Moyers, 1981, p. 26). I do not believe I could receive such a rejection with his understanding and acceptance.

These are certainly important issues to be examined further and, hopefully, resolved. However, I do not think that these concerns have undermined the success of the project nor do I believe that they argue
against pursuing participatory research as one alternative to traditional research. If anything I think that these problems stem, at least in part, from the expectations that people have generated from their previous experience in research settings, which would suggest that research is manipulative and does take advantage of people. It is this experience and these expectations that we must counter by developing an alternative. And I continue to believe that the philosophy behind the Independent Living Movement makes this an ideal situation for the pursuit of participatory research.

To summarize this evaluation, the Community Accessibility Project, while it has experienced some problems, has, for the most part, achieved the goals of a participatory research endeavor. In some respects this evaluation is premature. My only justification for this is that though my dissertation must be completed, the project itself will continue, and my involvement will not cease with my obligation to the graduate school.

General Implications of the Research

The Independent Living Movement, as noted earlier, is "an affirmation of the right and ability of disabled people to share fully in the responsibilities and joys of our society" (Roberts and Pfleuger, 1977, p. 1). If this notion of shared responsibility and the related concept of participant control which forms a central core of the Independent Living Philosophy were translated into a directive for the development of a research perspective it would sound very like a definition of participatory research. "The foremost implication for
participatory research is its clear attempt at power equalization, by eliminating the distinction between the researcher and the people" (Fernandes and Tandon, 1981, p. 11). In my mind participatory research is the only appropriate method of conducting research if that research process is to be consistent with the basic philosophy of the Independent Living Movement.

Convincing agency administrators and funding sources of this fact, however, may not be a simple task. Traditional, positivistic research is still considered by most people to be the only valid approach to conducting research, and it is understandably difficult for people to comprehend or accept an alternative perspective. The expectation of a traditional research approach has been expressed even by participants. In one interview, as I've noted, a participant commented that she was concerned that "I'm not sure we're giving you the answers that you want," and as I have also observed earlier, most disabled individuals are thoroughly familiar with the exigencies of traditional research and enter any "research setting" with some notion that they will be expected to fill out forms, answer a pre-determined set of questions and, generally conform their behavior to the demands of the researcher. When a researcher arrives with a loosely-defined set of issues and seems willing to discuss issues and share his or her own thoughts and experiences openly, the participant naturally experiences some confusion. At the beginning of each interview, I explained the differences between participatory research and a more traditional method but a true understanding of the distinction has only grown through our joint participation in the process, and even
here difficulties have developed.

When I discussed the project and the notion of participatory research at a recent meeting of the New England Regional Independent Living Center Directors, I met with much of the same skepticism. Some felt that participants would be unable to take such an active role in the research process while others seemed to have difficulty viewing the project as a valid form of social science research rather than as simply an elitist nomenclature for community organizing. Some members, on the other hand, seemed able to make the translation from the Independent Living concept of consumer-control to the notion of participatory research and responded positively to some of my observations and suggestions. Overall, however, it seems that the hold of traditional research on the thinking of researchers and non-researchers alike is still very strong and it will require an immense effort on the part of participatory researchers to effect change in this system. What direction might that effort take? How are we, as participatory researchers, the sans-culottes of academia, to storm the Bastille of traditional research method?

I think our first task must be simply to do more participatory research; to increase the number of participatory research projects which are conducted. For those of us working in more industrialized nations I think it is imperative that we demonstrate that participatory research is not a method for peasants and campesinos only but to force a recognition that oppression and exploitation are very real phenomena in the Western world and that the participatory research method can be successfully translated into these situations.
Secondly, we must improve our methods for communicating the results of our research both to other participatory researchers but as importantly to researchers working with more traditional methods. It will be difficult perhaps to gain any level of recognition but if a number of researchers working in a participatory research perspective form subgroups within professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association and demand a voice at national conferences and in professional journals recognition will begin to develop.

Most importantly, perhaps, the effort will require an accessible and succinct epistemological critique of traditional method and a clear statement of critical theory as an alternative to positivism. My experience in the field of psychology has been that while there has been some questioning or examination of the epistemological or metatheoretical basis for the positivistically informed research model that forms the basis for our work at a philosophical level, that this debate has had little impact on actual practice in the field. When non-quantitative research is conducted, though there is a well-established tradition of qualitative inquiry especially in the field of psychology, it is received by the "mainstream social scientists" (Berstein, 1976) as a lower form of research, research performed by those incapable of pursuing true, or quantitative inquiry. A major task facing participatory researchers will be to justify this inquiry as a valid form of knowledge generation.

This effort must begin by demonstrating, as I hope I have at least begun to do here, that the assumptions underlying the positivistic model of research cannot be supported. However, the distinction must
be clearly made between the untenable assumptions of positivism and
the technical application of empirical-analytic inquiry which, as
Habermas points out, is a necessary, though not sufficient, source of
human knowledge. This distinction is sometimes blurred, as I think
is the case in Fay's critique of positivism and policy science. To
deny the importance of technical, instrumental knowledge in this way
serves no purpose and, in fact, makes any alternative proposed seem
naive. To acknowledge the role of empirical-analytic inquiry in
solving technical problems, while recognizing that the problems
facing humankind cannot all be reduced to this level, opens the way
for a more balanced consideration of the alternatives. Psychology,
despite the field's current myopia concerning the role of non-
positivistic forms of knowing, does, as I have noted, have a well-
established tradition which competes with empirical research for
recognition in the field. The presentation of a third approach to
inquiry which incorporates the first two in the interests of achieving
human emancipation, seems to me to provide a long-needed synthesis of
conflicting perspectives. Critical theory offers an epistemological
basis for this synthesis, participatory research reflects the practice.

The methods used in conducting participatory research draw from
each of these three knowledge-generation systems. When technical
knowledge best serves the emancipatory interest upon which the
research is based, empirical-analytic techniques will be utilized.
This is the case with the work of Gaventa and Horton (1981). The
work is non-positivistic in that it encourages those most affected
by the problem to become involved in the generation and utilization
of knowledge, but the skills developed to perform data-collection and analysis technically fairly sophisticated.

On the other hand, methods which reflect the role of dialogue and human interaction as forms of knowledge generation are also employed by participatory researchers. Much of Tandon's work with villagers in India (1981a; 1981b; 1981c) reflects this type of inquiry.

Finally, there is participatory research which focuses on social action as a form of knowledge generation. In most cases this research will incorporate empirical and interpretive techniques, but the knowledge gained in joint social action is the ultimate objective here. As an example of this type of effort, I think of the work on the women's health program (Chend and Soni, 1981) in which women through their common effort in addressing health-related problems, begin to see themselves as active participants in the research and to see their potential as active members of society as well.

The Community Accessibility Project described here falls, I believe, into this third category. We have used interpretive techniques such as open-ended interviews and group discussion to identify issues and to generate action, but at the same time these activities have been undertaken in the interests of the achievement of concrete social change and the learning which accompanies participation in the social change process. It is quite possible that in the future we may also undertake a more traditional, empirical inquiry into some specific problem, but again the process will be participatory and the goal, the achievement of social change.

Personally, my own acceptance of these various forms of knowledge-
generation has presented the greatest difficulty in carrying out this project. I am committed to the overall objectives of participatory research and feel comfortable in working with groups to identify problems and to develop research strategies. But my training and skills are still grounded in an empirical form of inquiry and I found myself constantly wondering how I could justify my work as research, and to question my own ability to contribute to a research process which did not rely on my technical skills in data collection and statistical analysis. I am still somewhat ambivalent about this issue, not so much in terms of accepting alternative forms of knowledge generation, but rather in determining how I can best contribute to the further development and recognition of participatory research.

At present, I see my future role in this process as threefold, first, to use the empirical skills I have developed to make traditional research methods more generally accessible. Positivism has not been dethroned yet, and even if it is, empirical inquiry, as I have noted, will continue to form a critical component of the overall research process. If the power of such empirical-analytic inquiry is to be put in the hands of people who have not received extensive technical training in their use, the methods must be translated into understandable terms. A non-mathematical guide to interpreting common statistical procedures would be an important first step in empowering people through an understanding of traditional research methods and terminology.

An equally important translation process must be undertaken to increase the accessibility of critical theory to other researchers
and students as well as to community organizers and other members of
the community. There seems to exist an irony in the statements of
critical theorists and many participatory researchers in that their
message of liberation is spoken in a language which is totally outside
the experience of those it seeks to liberate. As Horton (1981) and
others have suggested, a variety of levels of communication must be
simultaneously available to make the results of participatory research
and the ideas of critical theory more generally available. At present,
I do not consider myself at all capable of undertaking such a task, my
own understanding and familiarity with critical theory being still so
tenuous. However, this is one of the goals I have for my work over
the next several years.

Finally, and I think this objective should be considered by
other researchers as well as myself, I believe we need to examine our
attitudes and actions as researchers carefully. We must continue to
follow the examples set by Paulo Freire, Myles Horton and others who
have explicitly made their professional and political lives one.
Political activity must be recognized as an integral part of our
professional training and practice. We must insist on descending
from that ivory tower of academia and become involved members of our
communities, not in addition to our practice as social scientists
but as a critical component of that work. I know that for me the
temptation is still there to remake this new, still intractable form
of research into something more familiar, more manipulable and more
acceptable to peers and potential employers. I also know that it is
only with the example set by others and with the support of the people,
with whom I work in these participatory research efforts that I, or any of us, can hope to succeed in creating a new, emancipatory approach to inquiry in the human and social sciences.

Conclusion

In terms of accessibility planning and advocacy, the Community Accessibility Committee has been highly successful in meeting its goals to date. We have identified a number of accessibility advocacy priorities to serve as the focus of our continuing efforts and have begun to develop a better understanding of the advocacy process to guide these efforts. Beyond these more concrete forms of learning, the Community Accessibility Committee and participation in the research process have provided an empowering experience to participants, have aided participants in examining the impact that architectural barriers have on their ability to live independently and have provided a forum for jointly asserting their right to equal access. The future work of the Committee will be to continue these efforts and to encourage wider participation in the activities of the group.

As research regarding the Independent Living Movement, this project has provided an important example of a research approach more consistent with the goals of the Movement which emphasize participant control and community action. This participatory research approach should now be extended to other issues of concern to service providers and administrators of Independent Living Centers to build a more general research and evaluation model based on these goals.
As a more generally applicable research model critically-informed participatory research, such as this project, provides an important alternative to traditional research in the social sciences which can expand our understanding of human behavior while it allows us to work with oppressed people to address specific human needs. A major focus of future work in this area will have to be on the development of alternative models of communication more appropriate to the type of knowledge being generated through such efforts. The presentation given here points out one possible direction for that development by consciously having rejected the traditional use of language in adopting a literary style which is more consistent with the interactive nature of the research. Other alternatives must be developed as well and a continued challenge to archaic definitions of the bounds of scholarly inquiry voiced.

Critical theory, as noted earlier, in no way denies the vital importance of empirical-analytic inquiry in the generation of technical knowledge. Rather it provides a critique of the positivistic notion that this technical understanding is the only form of valid, rational human knowledge. A choice between critical theory and empirical inquiry is, thus, unnecessary. A critically-informed social science will open new avenues for inquiry, will expand our potential for understanding human action while it acknowledges that this understanding can only be valid when it is shared with others and when it forms the basis for liberatory social action. The task now is to contribute in whatever ways possible to the development of a critically-informed social science which incorporates the now
divergent aspects of empirical-analytic and interpretive inquiry within a new form of inquiry which holds human emancipation as the overriding goal of all social science.
The term "participatory research," while it describes the interactive nature of the research process well, can lead to confusion with other research methods such as "participant observation." But, as Byrceson, Manicom, and Kassam point out, participant observation is "merely a more effective means of data collection still bound up with the positivist methodology which held objectivity as the primary requisite of social research" (1982, p. 69), while "participatory research" as presented in this paper rejects this reliance on positivism. There may also exist some confusion between Lewin's term "action research" (Sanford, 1981, p. 174) and "research action." Parks describes the first as a process in which "the action (the end) follows the data gathering (the means)." (1978, p. 9) Instead, Park has suggested the use of the term research action, which is analogous to the notion of participatory research and implies a process wherein "data gathering and action merge as one unified activity." (p. 9)
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APPENDIX
Dear

I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce Mary Brydon-Miller to you. Mary has served Stavros in many ways during the last year. Some of you will recall her work as an accessibility consultant. In that capacity Mary has worked with individuals, families, businesses and churches to create more accessible environments.

Because response to Mary's availability and work has been great, she has chosen to make physical accessibility the subject of a special graduate-school project. I've been involved with Mary in shaping and defining her project which will be an Advocacy and Accessibility Planning Project.

Mary is anxious to meet with you individually to ask your opinions and/or special problems with access. I've enclosed a note from Mary which describes her project in better detail.

I would certainly encourage you to contact Mary here at Stavros, if you are interested in this project, to make an appointment to explore this most important area.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Spiller
Executive Director

ps/jn
DATE: September 19, 1983

TO: Stavros Participants

FROM: Mary Brydon-Miller, Accessibility Consultant

RE: Accessibility Planning Project

As you may know from the latest issue of Western Independent News, I've been working at Stavros as a volunteer accessibility consultant for about ten months. This service is available to individuals with disabilities and to organizations and businesses who want to make their buildings more accessible. Accessibility is an important aspect of independent living and the work is interesting because every project is different. I've reviewed floor plans with people planning to build new homes, made suggestions about rearranging furniture to make current homes more livable and helped to design ramps and other changes to make inaccessible places accessible.

I'm interested in expanding this service and have made this project a part of my graduate-school work to give me more time to spend on it. But I need to get a better idea of what kinds of projects would be of most interest and use to people in the community. Would it be possible for us to get together one day to talk about accessibility and about this project? I'm interested in knowing what kinds of changes you've made in your own home to make it more accessible and in talking with you about changes that you think should be made. I'd like to start a list of offices, stores and other places that are not accessible that you think should be. I'd like to get your ideas about what needs to be done to make our community more accessible.

If you would be willing to meet with me to talk about accessibility and about this service, please call the office at 256-0473 to arrange a date and time that we could get together. I appreciate your time and interest and look forward to meeting you.

mbm/jn
What does "accessibility" mean to you? to me...

What changes have you made in your own environment to make it more accessible?

Are there changes that still need to be made?

Why have these changes not been made yet?

What about accessibility in other places...

work
business
schools and universities
government and community buildings
recreational spaces
transportation facilities

Can you prioritize accessibility planning and advocacy needs? Where is the greatest need for accessibility advocacy and planning?

What impact do environmental barriers have on you? How do they make you feel?

What do you think the relationship between accessibility and independent living is?

What should Stavros' role be in accessibility planning?

Who should pay for accessibility planning services and renovations? What role should government play? How about business?

Discuss possible accessibility projects--How can we work together on these?

conference with policy makers
group meetings
community apartment or business evaluation project
book of photographs or business evaluation project
advocacy or lobbying

What did you hope to get out of this meeting? Have you gotten what you wanted? Are there other ways in which the accessibility consulting service can be of use to you?
CONSENT FORM

As you know from the description you received in the mail, we are interested in finding out about your ideas and concerns about physical accessibility as it effects people with disabilities. As we mentioned in that letter, this is part of an accessibility planning project sponsored by Stavros, Inc. and is also being used as a component of my graduate work. This visit will probably last about an hour, but you should feel free to ask me to leave if at any time you feel you do not wish to continue. With your permission, I’d like to tape record our discussion. This will help me to recall what we’ve said and I may quote information from this tape but your name will not be used in order to insure your right to privacy. After the project is completed, you’ll receive a summary of the conclusions and recommendations that have been made and you are always welcome to read any of the reports or papers that are submitted as part of this project or to get in touch with me if you have further questions or concerns. Do you have any other questions about the project?

After you have read the description above, please ask any other questions you might have about the project and sign below.

"I have been informed of the purposes and procedures of this project and have had questions answered to my satisfaction. I realize that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time and know that I have complete access to any non-confidential information produced as part of this project."

Signature or mark

Witness
DATE: November 21, 1983

TO: Accessibility Planning Project Members

FROM: Mary Brydon-Miller

RE: A Summary of the Interviews and Plans for Getting Together

First of all, I want to thank you again for taking the time to talk with me about accessibility and for sharing so many important ideas and concerns with me. This report is just a summary of all the information and ideas that came out of the interviews and I think we generated a fairly impressive list of ideas and concerns that will keep the Accessibility Consulting Service busy for months! What I'd like to do is to briefly summarize this information and then share some ideas that have been suggested about where we can go from here.

Places

In regard to places that should be made accessible, public buildings were mentioned often, such as post offices, town halls, libraries and school buildings. Privately-owned buildings that are used by the public, such as restaurants, stores, offices, and medical facilities were also mentioned frequently. It was especially interesting that people in three different communities mentioned Friendly's restaurants as problems although some, like the one in the Hampshire Mall in Hadley, seem to be okay. Recreational facilities were also mentioned, such as movie theaters and concert halls, as important places to have be made accessible.

Housing also came up often, especially the general lack of accessible places. Specific problems that seemed to come up often were narrow halls and doorways and tiny bathrooms in apartments. Finding accessible single-family housing also seemed to be a problem.

The importance of transportation as a component of a barrier-free environment was also mentioned frequently. Many people pointed out that no matter how accessible a particular building or area might be, if you can't get there, it doesn't really matter.

Strategies

Besides identifying inaccessible places, people also shared their own strategies for making inaccessible places accessible. These strategies ranged from immediate short-term approaches, like asking for a hand in holding open a door, to more permanent long-term efforts, such as uniting in calling the owners of inaccessible buildings and asking for changes, or holding meetings with a group of building owners to discuss the importance of accessibility.
Most people seem to think that both kinds of solutions were important. We need to develop ways of permanently making places more accessible, but that doesn't help with the immediate situation.

Why is accessibility important? Especially in terms of public buildings, people said it was important to be able to participate in community activities, like voting and attending meetings. Access to public buildings is a right and cannot be denied on the basis of architectural inaccessibility. People also said that they don't like to have to ask others for help in getting into places and often choose not to go to a place if it's not accessible. Some people said that they feel that the attitudes of non-disabled people play a big role in determining how accessible places will be and that there need to be changes in attitude as well as physical changes. On the other hand, many people said that other people are generally helpful and that everyone, able-bodied as well as disabled, depends on others for many things and that this kind of interdependence is really a positive thing.

Generally, though, people agreed that it would make a big difference to be able to decide when and where you want to go without having to worry about accessibility and environmental barriers.

Where do we go from here?

A lot of good ideas for future planning were suggested. Many people have invented or adapted different kinds of furniture and devices to make things more convenient in their own homes. It might be interesting and useful to get everyone together to share these ideas. People have also developed different strategies for making inaccessible places more accessible and it might be a good idea to get together to discuss these, too. We might also want to select one kind of business to target for accessibility improvements. Banks, for example, were mentioned as problems, or the Friendly's restaurants.

One idea that came up seemed especially important and would be easy to work on. That would be to start monitoring new construction in our communities. In talking with people, it seemed that everyone has had the experience of seeing a building go up in the area only to find out later that it is not accessible. There are state guidelines concerning accessibility standards, but more needs to be done at the local level to see that these regulations are enforced. As I learned in one interview, the Massachusetts Association of Paraplegics was involved in a monitoring program to see that all new construction was made accessible. This program is no longer operating and there's a real need for something like this to be done.

How about getting together to discuss this idea and the other ideas that were suggested? People agree that accessibility is an important part of independent living and we could really make a difference if we could work together.
Accessibility Planning Project Members
Page 3
November 21, 1983

I want everyone to be able to attend this meeting and to do that I need some help with scheduling. If you would fill out the enclosed schedule and return it to me as soon as possible, I'll start making arrangements for a meeting. There's also space on the sheet for questions and ideas or you can call me at the Stavros office if you have questions or suggestions you'd like to discuss.

Your ideas and involvement are a vital part of having the Accessibility Consulting Service work, and I hope you'll be able to come to this meeting. I'm looking forward to seeing you again!

mbm/jn
enc.
ACCESSIBILITY WORKSHOP

☐ Yes, I'm interested in coming!
☐ No, I'm not going to be able to attend the meeting, but please keep me posted on what's going on.
☐ Mary, why don't you leave me alone!

We've tentatively decided to hold the workshop on Thursday, December 8, 1:30 - 5:30 p.m. (with Thursday, December 15, snow date). Could you make it at this time? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, please check days you would be able to come:

- Monday ☐ December 5 ☐ December 12
- Tuesday ☐ December 6 ☐ December 13
- Wednesday ☐ December 7 ☐ December 14
- Thursday ☐ December 1 ☐ December 8 ☐ December 14
- Friday ☐ December 2 ☐ December 9 ☐ December 15
- Saturday ☐ December 3 ☐ December 10
- Sunday ☐ December 4 ☐ December 11

What time of day would be best for you?
- Weekdays:
- Weekends:

☐ I'll need transportation to and from the meeting. (We have to arrange transportation on a first come, first serve basis but will do the best we can.)

What issues do you feel are of greatest importance?

Are there any topic areas you'd like to see included on the agenda for this meeting?

Thanks again! Hope to see you soon! Mary
November 15, 1983

Mr. Stephen Spinetto
Communities Development Office
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202

Dear Steve:

Stavros is planning to hold a participants' workshop on accessibility advocacy sometime in early December and we'd like to have you come to discuss the role the ATBCB board plays in monitoring construction in the state and to discuss with us ways in which individuals might be involved in accessibility advocacy. The workshop will be a small, informal working session to share information concerning the system which does exist for monitoring construction and to explore avenues for increased citizen involvement. Your experience and knowledge would be invaluable and we think it should be an interesting and informative experience for all of us. Besides, we're willing to take you out to your favorite local restaurant for dinner. How could you pass up such an offer? We've set a tentative date of Thursday, December 8, with Thursday, December 15, as a snow (snow?!) date.

We hope you'll be able to join us and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Mary Brydon-Miller
Accessibility Consultant

Pat Spiller
Executive Director

mbm/jn
"You can't get there from here . . ."

ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING WORKSHOP

December 8, 1983

AGENDA

1:30 - 2:00 Welcome - Ted Martineau
   Project Background - Mary Brydon-Miller

2:00 - 2:30 Introduction
   Issue Identification

2:30 - 3:00 Action Planning

BREAK

3:30 - 4:00 Citizen Involvement of the Architectural Barriers Board - Steve Spinetto

4:00 - 4:30 Wrap-Up
   Setting Agenda for Next Meeting

4:30 - 5:30 Wine and Cheese Hour
The workshop began at 1:50 p.m. with some introductory remarks by Ted Martineau. After participants introduced themselves, Ted began by speaking about the barrier that we all face regardless of disability: the barrier of attitude. The general public holds certain views toward individuals with disabilities and groups of disabled people. For an historical perspective, he outlined how this view has changed over the years. Hundreds of years ago villages and tribes used to ostracize their disabled members. Later disability was regarded as punishment from God. This attitude evolved into a more charitable one by which society conceded disabled people's right to exist but insisted on "taking care of" them in institutions. This attitude persists today. Regardless of philosophy, the focus is almost always on society's attitude toward individuals with disabilities; rarely do we hear "the other side", that is, the attitudes of disabled people toward themselves, the people with whom they come in contact, and society in general.

Ted concluded his remarks by saying that life is a struggle for everyone, disabled or not. For disabled persons, however, there are two key factors: the attitude of society and attitude toward themselves. The workshop will focus not on attitudinal barriers but on architectural barriers. He introduced Mary Brydon-Miller, facilitator of the workshop.

Mary explained that the purpose of the workshop is to identify issues and strategies regarding community accessibility. Later Steve Spinetto of the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board will talk about how consumers can be involved in making the community more accessible. As personal background, she explained that originally the focus of her graduate work in environmental psychology was in designing houses for older people. As her interest shifted to disability-related issues, she volunteered to work at Stavros as accessibility consultant. Through interviews with people with disabilities she gathered information about architectural accessibility—what issues are important and what kinds of strategies people use.
Workshop participants identified the following places as important targets:

- restaurants
- medical facilities: Amherst Medical
- housing
- emergency housing/shelter
- bars
- parks, recreational facilities
- colleges
- churches: Unitarian Meetinghouse
- hotels
- post offices: Greenfield, Amherst
- libraries
- public buildings: Amherst Town Hall
- stores
- police stations
- malls
- voting places
- movie theaters

The participants also identified transportation and communication as related accessibility issues. All agreed that accessibility is more than being able to enter a building. Total accessibility includes outside environmental factors (such as sidewalks) and interior design (pay telephones, water fountains, dressing rooms, etc.).

Jim Durant said that the Massachusetts Association of Paraplegics used to monitor new construction for accessibility using the Dodge Reports. In the construction stage it is sometimes only a matter of minor modifications. Preventive and remedial approaches were discussed and compared. It was agreed that both approaches are important—one should not be made a priority at the expense of the other.

Three levels of action were identified: direct action, advocacy, direct access information and referral. The following were mentioned as possible activities: monitoring project, demonstration, awards (for most accessible and least accessible places). Hampshire Mall will be the first target. Accessibility problems include the outside doors and the restrooms. (Some stores inside the mall have accessibility problems, such as crowded aisles, but this was determined to be a separate issue to be taken up with individual stores.) The first step will be to write a letter; next, set up a meeting. In preparation, five people (Mary Brydon-Miller, Laura Rauscher, Seren Derin, Joe Garvey, Helena Negrette) volunteered to go to Hampshire Mall to make notes on accessibility. In addition, a name was chosen for the committee: Community Accessibility Committee. The Committee will meet monthly.

Next, Steve Spinetto of the Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board spoke to the group about the Board's work and how consumers can be involved. The Board has seven members, three of whom must be disabled. The Board's office is on the 13th floor of One Ashburton Place, Boston. He gave his telephone number (617/727-5884) as well as that of the Executive Director (617/727-6255). Meetings are held every Monday and are open to the public. He encouraged consumers to attend meetings because their presence makes the Board more responsive to their concerns. He acknowledged that the Board doesn't listen enough to consumers and that it would be helpful for the Board to meet in Western Massachusetts when local issues arise.

Steve informed the group of a bill currently before the legislature that would require the Board to notify local building inspectors whenever a variance from the Architectural Barriers Code is requested. The Code, enacted in 1974, applies to all new construction except for: commercial buildings of two
stories or less which employ fewer than 40 people; public or private apartment complexes of less than 20 apartments; private housing, including condominiums. He added that buildings owned by the state are not treated any differently than privately-owned property. Buildings must conform to the Code in effect at the time the building permit was issued. Steve promised to send copies of previous codes. Changes in codes are minimal. The Board is authorized to grant variances from the Code. It grants 85% of the variances requested. It should not be assumed, however, that a variance will make a building inaccessible. Most variances involve minor deviations from the regulations.

Complaints about code violations can be made by telephone or letter, but the latter is preferred, with as much information included as possible. Filing a complaint with the Board is much easier than filing a 504 complaint, so Steve recommended going first to the Board with a complaint. Once a complaint has been filed, the Board will notify the local building inspector to investigate. (Legislation enacted about a year ago requires building inspectors to enforce the Code.) If the Board doesn't agreed with the building inspector's findings, it will send a representative to investigate. The Board will also notify the owner, who will have 30 - 40 days in which to respond. Steve added that it is often a matter of ignorance rather than willful disregard of the law.

The Board can levy a fine of $1,000 per day until violations are corrected. This has never been done, however, since the threat to fine usually gets results. Building inspectors can withhold occupancy status until violations are remedied.

Within a building, different (inaccessible) levels are not permitted without a variance. A building is supposed to be accessible in its entirety. In a restaurant, for example, customers in wheelchairs should not be limited to a certain area. Tables should be high enough to permit access to people in wheelchairs, and there should also be adequate turning radius.

In conclusion, Steve stressed that accessibility, in the long run, is up to consumers. Since the Board does not monitor new construction, consumers are important in identifying violations. The Board, he added, will not take violations seriously until consumers do.

The workshop adjourned at 4:45 p.m.
ACCESSIBILITY PLANNING WORKSHOP EVALUATION

Your comments and ideas concerning the workshop and suggestions for future sessions will help in planning future meetings. Please take a couple of minutes to fill this evaluation out and leave it in my box.

Thanks!

1. Would you be interested in participating in future sessions?
   Yes ___ No ___
   If not, could you explain why you're not interested? Could changes be made in the focus or format of the sessions that would make them more interesting to you?

2. What were the good things about the workshop?

3. What changes would you like to see made?

4. Was today's workshop informative?

5. Did you feel that people were able to ask questions and share ideas?

6. Are there specific topics you'd like to see addressed at future sessions?
7. How often would you like to meet?

8. What days and times are best for you?

9. Was the space adequate and accessible? Would you prefer to have meetings held somewhere else? Where?

10. Do you have other ideas or suggestions about the session that might be useful in planning for the future?

Would it be all right to include your name in a list of participants to be distributed to all workshop attendants?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Name ____________________________
December 15, 1983

Mr. Steve Spinetto  
Communities Development Office  
100 Cambridge Street  
Boston, MA 02202

Dear Steve:

I wanted to thank you again for your visit with our accessibility planning group last week. To judge by the evaluations, you were definitely the high point of the afternoon! I think we all appreciated learning more about the Architectural Barriers Board and Code but, even more importantly, I think everyone came away feeling that they have an important role to play in accessibility planning and advocacy. In fact, we went down Saturday morning to do an evaluation of the Hampshire Mall and are planning follow-up on that.

A number of people also mentioned in the evaluations their interest in learning how to read plans, so we'll be planning a session to do that for February or March. Let me know if you're interested in a return engagement.

We look forward to hearing from you regarding those two pieces of legislation and to receiving copies of complaint forms.

Thank you again! I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

Mary Brydon-Miller  
Accessibility Consultant  

mbm/jn
COMMUNITY ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

Evaluation Notes

Hampshire Mall (Bldg. Permit issued 1978), evaluation conducted 12/10/83

Evaluation Team: Seren Derin, Joe Garvey, Helene Negrette, Mary Brydon-Miller

Main Entrances

1. K-Mart Entrance
   --outer door closes quickly; also heavy
   --1" threshold, approximately
   --inner door also heavy; closes more slowly

2. Theater Entrance
   --2½" threshold

3. Main Entrance
   --1½" threshold

4. Penney's
   --most accessible entrance; slight threshold

5. Steiger's
   --fairly accessible

Restrooms

1. Women's Room
   --entry very narrow; 2 sets of doors difficult
   --no lock on accessible stall door
   --lighting poor in accessible stall
   --diagonal grab bars
   --good turning radius in stall
   --sink with cut-out and tilted mirror
   --signage above door: small, no braille

2. Men's Room
   --same as above
Community Accessibility Committee
Evaluation Notes
Page 2

Other - Cafe Square Area
--2 level changes with no ramps
--open grating at trash receptacles
--table height (beneath) 27" - 28"

Specific Stores
K-Mart: hole in floor when barrier-post removed
Upstage: level changes
Great Expectations: level changes
GNC: narrow aisles
January 5, 1983

Mr. Ted Cosmos
Pyramid Company of Hadley
South Maple Street
Hadley, MA 01035

Dear Mr. Cosmos:

We are writing as representatives of the Community Accessibility Project of Stavros, Inc. This is a group of individuals concerned about the physical accessibility of our community for people with disabilities. At our most recent meeting, concerns were raised about the accessibility of the Hampshire Mall, specifically the threshold height and door weight of the entrances to the Mall which make it impossible for many disabled persons to enter or leave the Mall unassisted. A visit to the Mall conducted on December 10, 1983, allowed us to verify these problems and to note a number of other accessibility-related problems which we feel are in violation of the Massachusetts Architectural Accessibility Code and should be remedied.

We have attempted to bring these issues to the attention of the Hampshire Mall management on two earlier occasions and have received no reply. (See attached letters.)

We would be happy to get together with you at your convenience to discuss these issues. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Mary Brydon-Miller

Seren Derin

Helena Negrette

Joe Garvey
January 30, 1984

Mary Brydon-Miller
Stavros, Inc.
691 South East Street
Amherst, MA 01002

Dear Ms. Brydon-Miller,

I am in receipt of your January 5th letter and appreciate your concern for the physically disabled and their accessibility to the Hampshire Mall. We believe that the Hampshire Mall was built according to code through local authorities' authorization and interpretation of this code. If violations do exist, would you kindly point them out more specifically so that we may have them remedied?

I have also received the two previous letters directed to Ms. Burke, wherein you requested that the Mall install an automatic door opener. While it is not likely that we will install such a door (due to budget constraints), I will not rule it out until you send me additional information on this item (i.e. price lists, installers, etc.).

Finally, if Stavros was to donate wheelchairs to the Hampshire Mall, we would be glad to make them available to those in need of them.

Thank you again for your letters, and I await your reply.

Sincerely,

Ted Cosmos
General Manager
Hampshire Mall

TC/sw
DATE: January 5, 1984

TO: Community Accessibility Committee Members

FROM: Mary Brydon-Miller

RE: Our Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Community Accessibility Committee will be held Thursday, February 2, 1984, from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. here in the Stavros office. This seemed to be the most convenient time all around and unless there are major objections I think we'll go ahead and plan to hold meetings every first Thursday of the month from 7:00 to 9:00. Nancy Higgins has been informed of this and will plan to have transportation available, so just give her a call if you need a ride.

Many people suggested following the last meeting that it would be a good idea to get together with local building inspectors to find out more about what their role is in accessibility planning and to establish working relationships with them. I've invited the building inspectors from all the communities represented by our membership and we'll hope to have three or four here to talk with us.

We'll also have an update on the Hampshire Mall issue and will want to discuss how we might work with the Amherst Conservation Commission which has expressed an interest in doing some accessibility planning. We'll also want to take some time to plan future meetings, so come with ideas and issues you'd like to see addressed.

I look forward to seeing you there!

mbm/jn

P.S. - Minutes of the last meeting are attached. You might take a minute to look them over in case any changes need to be made. Thanks.
COMMUNITY ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

February 2, 1984
AGENDA

Community Accessibility Committee overture
Accept minutes of last meeting
Appoint secretary for this meeting
Review and amend agenda
Update on activities:
  * Hampshire Mall
  * AB Board complaint form
New business:
  * CAC buttons
  * Organizing Committee
  * Planning for next meeting
Guest speaker: Edward Tewhill
  Building Inspector
  Northampton
COMMUNITY ACCESSIBILITY COMMITTEE

Minutes

February 2, 1984

Present: Mary Brydon-Miller
Sandy Cohen
Haluk Derin
Seren Derin
Jim Durant

Arlene Fontaine
Ted Martineau
Helena Negrette
Lauren Paul
Deb Pierce

I. Introduction

The meeting began with the playing of a song by Fred Small, "Talking Wheelchair Blues," which tells the story of a disabled woman eating at a restaurant with an able-bodied man and the attitudes they encounter. The Committee voted to elect Fred Small honorary member.

II. Additions to Agenda

The following additions were made to the agenda: (1) Adaptive Environments meeting; (2) window display at Daily Hampshire Gazette office:

(1) Pat Spiller, Seren Derin and Mary Brydon-Miller will participate in Adaptive Environments' sixth annual conference on March 13 - 16, 1984.

(2) Sandy suggested creating a display on accessibility issues in the window of the Daily Hampshire Gazette office. She advised waiting until warmer weather so that more people will have the opportunity to view it. If more than one display is allowed, then the Committee will begin working on it sooner. Donna Liebl will be asked to provide more information.

III. Hampshire Mall Evaluation

The accessibility evaluation of the Hampshire Mall was discussed; the following violations were discovered:

(1) Parking - Inadequate number of handicapped parking places;
(2) Thresholds - too high;
(3) Doors - too heavy;
(4) Bathrooms - entry too narrow; two sets of doors; no lock on accessible stall; poor lighting.

Mary explained the evaluation comments to the group and read the letter to Ted Cosmos, General Manager of the Hampshire Mall. She reported that she called him a week ago and received a letter from him, which she also read to the group. The Committee will respond to his request for more information.
by sending him a letter detailing the problems. Jim Durant suggested specifying the violations in the letter. The Committee will also request a meeting with him.

IV. Complaint Forms

The Committee reviewed the complaint forms sent by the Architectural Barriers Board. Two kinds of forms were sent: regular complaint forms and curb cut complaint forms. Definitions of terms such as "renovation", "reconstruction", etc., that appear on the forms can be found in the Architectural Barriers Code Book. Information such as name and address of architect, cost of work performed, and date of building permit can be found in the building permit. The assessed value of a building can be determined by consulting the assessor's office. Mary suggested making copies of the forms and filling them out as violations are discovered. She also suggested that each committee member find a curb cut violation before the next meeting, at which time the Committee will discuss the process of reporting violations to the Board.

V. Fine Arts Center

Accessibility problems with the Fine Arts Center were discussed:

(1) The seating area for wheelchairs is too far away from the stage.

(2) The "accessible" bathrooms can only be reached by stairs.

The Committee will conduct an evaluation of the Fine Arts Center. Jim Durant volunteered to be one of the evaluators. Laura Rauscher or Paul Appleby of the Office of Handicapped Student Affairs will arrange for permission to enter the building.

VI. New Business

Mary suggested that the Committee have buttons made reading "You Can't Get There from Here". Buttons cost 50¢ apiece. The Committee discussed having a contest in W.I.N. (Stavros' newsletter) and/or local newspapers to solicit a design for the button. Suggestions for prizes included cash ($20-$25), hot tub gift certificate, or dinner for two in an accessible restaurant.

The Committee also discussed ways of publicizing business which have made extra efforts to be accessible. Once a month the Committee will recognize a business with an accessibility award and a photograph for the newspaper and/or WIN. Lauren will design the certificate. Jim suggested writing to the Chamber of Commerce. Once a year the Committee will choose the ten least accessible businesses in the area.

The Committee decided to create an organizing sub-committee composed of Helena, Lauren, Jim and Mary.

The next meeting of the Community Accessibility Committee is on Thursday, March 15, 1984, at 7:00 at the Bangs Center.

Respectfully submitted,

Seren Derin
COMPLAINT FORM

NAME OF BUILDING________________________________________

EXACT ADDRESS________________________________________

NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER________________________________

USE OF BUILDING________________________________________

NUMBER OF FLOORS________________________________________

CHECK ONE:
___ NEW CONSTRUCTION ______ RECONSTRUCTION ______ ALTERATION
___ RENOVATION ______ REMODELING

LIST OF VIOLATIONS: (Use additional sheets if necessary)

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

a. NAME AND ADDRESS OF ARCHITECT________________________________________

   R___________________________________________________________________

b. COST OF WORK PERFORMED (as stated on building permit)_____________________

c. DATE OF BUILDING PERMIT___________________________________________

d. ASSESSED VALUE OF BUILDING ONLY, AS RECORDED IN ASSESSOR'S OFFICE

NAME & ADDRESS OF PERSON FILING COMPLAINT___________________________

   TEL:___________________________

TURN FORM TO:  DEBORAH A. RYAN
               ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT
               ARCHITECTURAL BARRIERS BOARD
               ONE ASHBURTON PLACE, ROOM 1301
               BOSTON, MA 02108 (TEL: 727-625

TE:___________________________
February 27, 1984

Mr. Fred Small  
c/o Rounder Records  
One Camp Street  
Cambridge, MA 02140  

Dear Mr. Small:

As a representative of the Community Accessibility Committee of Stavros, Inc., I am delighted to inform you that you have been unanimously and enthusiastically elected as our first (and, in fact, only) honorary member. Congratulations and Welcome!

At our last meeting, we played your song "Talking Wheelchair Blues" which met with much amusement and a tremendous round of applause from all of us. We all feel that this song reflects a real understanding and concern on your part for the rights of disabled persons and that you communicate this message every time you sing it. We wanted you to know that we heartily support your efforts and appreciate your recognition of the vital importance of equal access for everyone!

On a personal basis, I want to thank you for all your music! I first bought your album because I had heard the title song "The Heart of the Appaloosa" and loved it. The entire album is beautiful and I hope there will be many more to follow.

Do let us know if you plan to be back in the Amherst/Northampton area any time soon. We'd love to come to hear you play (especially if the place is accessible).

Again, our thanks for your wonderful work and best wishes.

Sincerely,

Mary Brydon-Miller  
Access Specialist

MAM/c