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PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:  
AN INQUIRY INTO INDIGENOUS EVALUATION  
AMONG THE GBAYA OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

A Dissertation Presented

by

CARL C. STECKER

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

February 1996

Education

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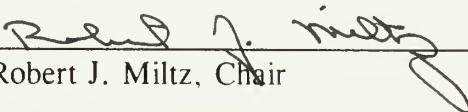
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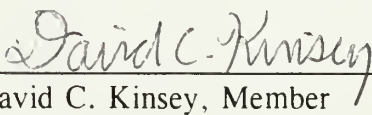
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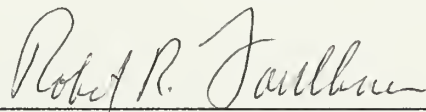
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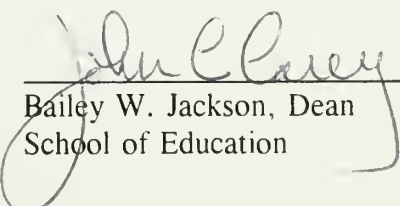
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To the Gbaya, and to my friends and colleagues of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic—fellow saints in Christ.

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ABSTRACT

PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:  
AN INQUIRY INTO INDIGENOUS EVALUATION  
AMONG THE GBAYA OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

FEBRUARY 1996

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Participation in community development work has been emphasized since the late 1960's; Participatory Evaluation (PE), however, was not introduced until the mid-1970's. At about that same time, Participatory Research (PR) was seeking to help shift the ownership and control of community development work and social research back into the hands of the local community. One important contribution of PR, has been the recognition of the importance of indigenous knowledge. As indigenous knowledge and indigenous practices were being recovered by communities during PR, it soon became evident that the Western model of development—and its emphasis on the transfer of Western technological knowledge—was often insufficient, inappropriate, or culturally unacceptable.

Although evaluation practitioners increased the participation of the local community in the evaluation of its own development work, PE was often limited to "participation-in-evaluation" (PiE). The ownership and control of the evaluation

process often stayed within the hands of the evaluation "experts", often using Western evaluation methods.

The first part of the study examines the emergence and evolution of PE in community development work during the past three decades.

The study then explores the indigenous evaluation practices of the Gbaya people of western Central African Republic, where the researcher has lived and worked with health and community development since 1982. Ethnographic interviewing of key informants explored the following questions: What are the indigenous evaluation practices of the Gbaya? How is information gathered and used? Who can be involved in decision-making, in what contexts?

The study further investigates Gbaya forms of evaluation through the participant observation of the participatory evaluation of a Lutheran church-sponsored development program in western Central African Republic.

A framework for better understanding PE, including the factors of "power", "facilitation methods", and "previous training and experience", are also presented. Using criteria from the framework, the following sub-categories of PE are offered: Participation-in-Evaluation (PiE), Less Participatory Evaluation (LPE), and Highly Participatory Evaluation (HiPE).

Finally, a "Gbaya Way of Decision-making" is presented as one model of indigenous evaluation. This is followed by recommendations to practitioners of PE, as well as recommendations for the further research of Indigenous Evaluation.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The first contact of the Gbaya people of the Central African Republic (CAR) with Western culture occurred when the early French colonial administration explored the western area of CAR at the turn of the century. However, sustained contact with Western culture came with the subsequent arrival of other French colonial entrepreneurs and members of various missionary societies from France, Sweden, and the United States.

In the short span of sixty plus years, Gbaya culture—which had been primarily a society of hunters and gatherers with minimal sedentary agricultural experience—had been exposed to a number of different foreign cultures, lifestyles, ideologies, and a myriad of technological innovations. Unfortunately, some traditional Gbaya culture and indigenous practice has probably been lost, abandoned, or displaced. For better or for worse, life for the Gbaya people has changed.

Various social aid programs which were initiated by the former French colonial administration and foreign mission societies contributed much to this change. Prior to the mid-1960's, most of these programs fostered dependency on foreign aid and foreign experts, requiring little or no participation from the local communities which were the intended beneficiaries of their development efforts. However, by the late 1960's and early 1970's, a new model of community development took shape, one which emphasized the necessity of community participation at all levels of program development and implementation.

The importance of community participation in all phases of the development process has led some evaluators and community development facilitators to give considerable thought and effort towards making the evaluation of community development, participatory, as well. Unfortunately, the use of the traditional "positivist paradigm" of evaluation has continued to be the norm. The "positivist paradigm" of research is rooted in the idea that whatever is being studied can be objectively known. Furthermore, outside influences can be controlled in order to objectively observe the subject in its pure state. Communities are not "objects" which can be studied under controlled conditions; they are comprised of living human beings who have a right to control their own existence, and cannot be "objectified". The community itself should be involved in its own investigation, as they so choose.

This study examines the emergence and use of participatory evaluation (PE) in community development work during the past three decades. The subsequent focus of the research is upon the identification of various forms of indigenous evaluation among the Gbaya people, and the exploration of how these methods could possibly be adapted or integrated into a new model for participatory evaluation of community development.

### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this paper, "Evaluation" has a two-fold meaning. First, it refers to the activities of decision-making, judgement-making, and in the assigning of value to individual or group activities, procedures, or objects; however,

evaluation also refers to the process or steps by which individuals or groups accomplish these tasks. The study is concerned with both aspects of this definition.

"Participatory Evaluation" (PE) is the promotion and facilitation of evaluative processes which assist individuals, groups, or communities to make decisions or judgements, or to assign value to activities and circumstances which affect them. This is done by using methods which encourage the participation and involvement of everyone who will be affected by the evaluation in all steps of the entire evaluation process. It is further implied that their participation in the evaluation process will help them to take control of their own social reality and plan for needed, self-sustaining change. Within the context of community development, this change should be oriented towards the transformation of social reality in favor of the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized of the community.

"Indigenous Evaluation" refers to the culturally unique processes which have been practiced traditionally within the community for the purpose of informing local decision-making, judgement-making, and valuing.

"Community Development" relates to those activities which involve the cooperation, collaboration, and participation of an entire community in order to achieve a commonly identified goal which will result in potential benefits for the entire community. Community development also refers to the process by which this occurs.

The "Gbaya" are an ethnic people group, found in Cameroun and the Central African Republic, who refer to themselves as the "Gbaya" and speak a number of dialects within the Bantu language group also referred to as "Gbaya". The study is

concerned with the indigenous evaluation practices of the Gbaya of the extreme western portion of the Central African Republic, principally the Gbaya-Bodoé and the Gbaya-Tonga.

### Statement of the Problem

We need to look for an evaluation style that recognizes the dignity and validity of the local community and does it justice (Pratt & Boyden, 1985, p. 99)

### Community Development, Participation, and Evaluation

Since the late 1960's, "community development" and "participation" have become almost inseparable terms. In fact, one sees the term "participatory community development" almost as often as one sees the term "community development". Many institutions and development agencies have made participation in development a matter of policy. The United States Congress, through the Foreign Assistance Act of 1966, mandated the "participation of the poor majority in the development process as a central concern in [USAID] programs, if not always yet in their activities" (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977, p. ix). Unfortunately, the "effective participation of the rural poor in the development process is more easily mandated in programming documents than achieved in the real world of program implementation" (Korten, 1984a, p. 176).

The kind of participation envisioned by the United States Congress was not made explicit in their mandate to USAID. However, a six week conference was held at Massachusetts Institute of Technology during the summer of 1968 to discuss

the implementation of the Congressional mandate. Three areas in which the participation of the potential beneficiaries in future development work should be incorporated were identified and emphasized at the conference: decision-making, implementation, and benefits. To these, Cohen and Uphoff (1977) added a fourth area: "participation in evaluation" (p. 7).

As community development work which is facilitated by outside change agents has become more participatory—shifting from a "top-down" approach towards development to a more "bottom-up" or "grass roots" approach—the incongruity of the continued use of outside evaluation "experts" schooled in the positivist paradigm of evaluation, has become more evident. As a result, Cohen and Uphoff (1977) have concluded that "unless specifically provided for in the project design . . . there will be no evaluation in which local people or local leaders can participate" (p. 57).

Many development agencies and community development workers have been advocating more participatory methodologies. Singh (1988) contends that, "People's participation in development . . . is not as universal as it is sometimes claimed. . . . Participation is still most common at the stage of implementation, where people are recipients. . . . [and] is least in the evaluation stage of the programme" (pp. 35-36).<sup>1</sup>

The type of evaluation, how it is carried out, who is involved, and who determines what to evaluate and for what purpose, become critical questions. These questions need to be addressed jointly by the community, the community

development worker, and the funding agencies involved, in order to ensure that the control of the evaluation process rests in the hands of the community.

It has been generally recognized that the participation of the community in its own development process is not only desirable, but also necessary for sustainable community-controlled development. Development ideology and practice has slowly evolved from merely asking the proposed beneficiaries to participate in the implementation phase of community development programs, to including their participation in planning and evaluation as well.

Beginning in the early 1970's, as a result of the increased emphasis on participation, Participatory Research (PR) struggled with the question of the ownership of development work and social research. Although local communities and groups were the proposed beneficiaries and participants in the development/research process, the ownership—the power and authority over these programs—continued to rest solidly in the hands of the donor agencies. Decrying this situation as neo-colonialism, PR sought to shift the ownership of community development and social research back into hands of the local people.

An important contribution of PR to development work has been the recognition of the importance of indigenous knowledge. As indigenous knowledge and indigenous practices were recovered during PR and community development, it soon became evident that the Western model of development and its emphasis on Western technological knowledge was often insufficient, inappropriate, or culturally unacceptable.



Although PR helped open the door for the investigation and recovery of indigenous knowledge and practices, evaluation research has been slow to follow. Despite an effort by evaluation practitioners to increase the participation of the local community in the evaluation of community development, PE has often been limited to: participation in evaluation. Ownership of the evaluation process has often stayed within the hands of the donor agencies and evaluation "experts", using Western evaluation models.

### Traditional, Positivist Evaluation versus Participatory Evaluation

Reinharz (1981) states that positivist research—and here I would also propose traditional, positivist evaluation—confuses, "mystifies and puts-off the public, hides common sense under thick terminology, and forces social scientists to communicate primarily among themselves" (p. 423), and therefore, is of little practical use to the participants of a development project.

Another common critique of traditional evaluation is that it is often carried out by an outside evaluator who then carries off the data to analyze back in their home office—often in another country. This often serves to benefit the researcher or evaluator by increasing his or her prestige in academic circles, but is of little benefit to the local participants in the program who may not be able to understand the final report—if they ever see it (Feuerstein, 1986).

Several authors who have been involved in participatory research (PR) and PE have criticized the inappropriateness of positivist research and evaluation methods in development programs which have been otherwise participatory

(Acevedo, 1988; Brown, 1985; Campos, 1990; Feuerstein, 1978; Feuerstein, 1986; Tandon, 1981a). Often traditional evaluation methods "are so broad in scope that they fail to acknowledge the complexity and problematic concerns of the lives of the people being evaluated" (Campos, 1990, p. 195). As such, they fail to take into account the evaluation needs of the people and focus instead on the evaluation needs of the individual researcher or of academia.

Traditional research and evaluation has tried to make people fit their evaluation approach rather than trying to fit the evaluation approach to the people and their needs (Feuerstein, 1986, p. ix). Because PE focuses primarily on the self-expressed evaluation needs of the people—as opposed to the needs of the funding agency or the evaluator—and because, ideally, it is carried out by the people, the results may be less than perfect, but more useable by the local participants of community development projects (Feuerstein, 1986; Feuerstein, 1988).

One of the underlying assumptions of PE is that it focuses on the self-identified evaluation needs of the community. In other words, the entire evaluation process is based on the interests and concerns of the community as opposed to those which might be unilaterally imposed by an external evaluator (Campos, 1990). Concerning local participation in needs assessment and priority setting in community development, Cohen and Uphoff (1977) underscore that this aspect of participation may be the most crucial to program success.

## Indigenous Evaluation and Participatory Evaluation

One of the potential outcomes of PE is the collective learning which can take place. Often this collective learning takes place through the joint exploration of indigenous knowledge. In the past, evaluators have made poor use of this wealth of knowledge, supposing that Western knowledge was more informed, scientific, and objective, and therefore, more valid.

Molwana and Wilson (1990), combining the dictionary meanings of development and communication, arrived at a new meaning for communication which adds to our discussion here. They define communication and development as the "unfolding of knowledge" (p. 204); but, how does knowledge unfold? I suggest that one way is through the joint exploration of indigenous knowledge during the participatory community development process.

In order to uncover and make use of indigenous knowledge, it becomes necessary for the evaluator to encourage the participants (local community, special interest group, farmers organization, etc.) to formulate the questions to be asked and to facilitate the data gathering to be carried out using qualitative, as well as quantitative methods. Merryfield (1985) states that the needs and abilities of the local people should shape the evaluation process since they are themselves the center of the evaluation. This not only increases the community's sense of ownership of the evaluation and of the evaluation process, but also increases their sense of empowerment by facilitating their control of the process.

### Significance of the Study

By investigating the indigenous evaluation forms of the Gbaya people of the Central African Republic, as well as the factors and issues which influence (or have influenced) the evaluation practice of community development work among the Gbaya, the study hopes to add to the body of knowledge concerning PE, and to demonstrate a new model for PE resulting from the merger of indigenous evaluation practices with those of Western evaluation.

It is hoped that this study, and the participatory research process which was used will help the Gbaya people to rediscover and re-validate their indigenous forms of evaluation. Furthermore, it is also hoped that the study will help them to find meaningful ways to use some of their indigenous evaluation practices within the principles of PE for the purpose of evaluating their own community development work.

### Statement of Purpose

If participation is considered essential for sustainable self-directed community development, and if evaluation is considered an integral component of the development process, then the use of PE should be promoted for the evaluation of community development work. Furthermore, assuming that the Gbaya have indigenous forms of evaluation which they use in their everyday life, it would seem appropriate to try to use these indigenous evaluation practices by facilitating their integration into the participatory evaluation of their own community development work.

With these assumptions in mind, the study attempts to address three main areas of interest:

- 1) The examination of the emergence and evolution of PE, and the various factors which influence its practice within community development work,
- 2) The investigation of the indigenous forms of evaluation of the Gbaya people of western Central African Republic,
- 3) The exploration of how these indigenous forms of evaluation could potentially inform or influence the current practice of PE in community development.

Finally, pertaining to the investigation of the indigenous forms of evaluation, special attention is paid to various attributes of these indigenous forms of evaluation, such as: (1) the role of community participation, (2) the role of women, and (3) the contexts (familial and community) in which various forms of indigenous evaluation are used, (4) the influence of the relatively recent presence of Western culture among the Gbaya, and (5) the role of the outside evaluator.

### Clarifications and Delimitations

#### Assumptions

Although the sustained presence of Western culture among the Gbaya people can only be traced back to the early 1930's, the influence of technological innovations and "foreign" values and ideologies from the West has displaced some elements of traditional Gbaya culture causing it to lose or forget certain indigenous knowledge and practices, such as the initiation rights of puberty. Therefore, it is

assumed that the recovery of lost indigenous knowledge and indigenous practices is not only of interest from a purely anthropological perspective, but is also potentially helpful to current society from both a cultural and pragmatic perspective. Thus, as indigenous knowledge and practices are jointly uncovered by the researcher and the community, perhaps they will be found to be useful either as they are, or in a modified format.

Central to the study is the assumption that all peoples and cultures evaluate; and secondly, that these indigenous forms of evaluation can be observed and investigated by someone outside of the culture. Moreover, it is assumed that some indigenous evaluation forms will be found which will be potentially helpful to the community for the evaluation of their community development work.

One of the basic values of this study concerns the ownership of the community development process. I believe that the community itself should "own" the entire process of community development, including evaluation. Furthermore, the ownership of the community development process is more important than whether the "project" is a "success" or a "failure", and contributes to more sustainable development.

### Exclusions and Limitations of the Study

The western portion of the Central African Republic is not a mono-cultural area; however, it is predominantly populated by the Gbaya, and many communities in the rural areas are uniquely comprised of Gbaya. Although the area was controlled from the mid 1800's to the 1920's by Rey Bouba—the Fulani king of the

Adamawa kingdom centered in northern Cameroon—the area was chiefly used as a source for slaves which were exported as tribute to Rey Bouba and very few Fulani actually settled in the area during that time period. At present, some communities have small numbers of sedentary Fulani—mostly small-time merchants—who have chosen to live in Gbaya communities in small self-segregated groups. Also, one can often find nomadic Fulani—those who migrate with their cattle herds across much of West Africa—temporarily residing in—or on the fringes of—Gbaya communities as they travel through the area with their cattle herds.

Furthermore, in some communities, those which are large enough to merit certain government institutions such as public schools or police stations, *fonctionnaires* [government civil servants] from other parts of the country (hence, other ethnic groups), have also become temporary residents in these predominantly Gbaya communities. For the purpose of this study I will not be studying the indigenous evaluation practices of these other ethnic groups which reside in the area.

Finally, although the author has spent a considerable amount of time living and working in Gbaya culture—more than 13 years—I have discovered that the more I have come to know and understand about Gbaya culture, the more I realize that there is so much more <sup>to</sup> know. Although some of my research data is comprised of the recorded voices of some of the participants, and the participant observations that I have made, the interpretation and the conclusions drawn from the data are mine alone and limited in their perspective as a knowledgeable insider.

## Organization

Following this introductory chapter, the study contains seven other chapters. Chapter II presents the literature review pertaining to participatory evaluation, its origins and its evolution over the past 30 years. It also includes a framework for better understanding the difference between Participatory Evaluation and other participatory research and evaluation paradigms.

Chapter III presents the context and background in which the study took place. It contains a brief review of Central African Republic's history and the current socio-economic and political environment, as well as more specific historical and current socio-economic and cultural information about the Gbaya.

Chapter IV describes the methods used for the research, including the collection of data through the qualitative methods of participant observation and ethnographic interviewing.

Chapter V presents the findings of the ethnographic interviewing of four key informants about Gbaya forms of indigenous evaluation. It also includes a brief description of the informants and the guiding questions used in the interview.

Chapter VI presents the observations made during the participant observation of the participatory evaluation event of a Gbaya church development program in the Central African Republic.

Chapter VII analyzes the results of the ethnographic interviewing and the participatory evaluation event. A framework for understanding Participatory Evaluation is presented along with three continuums which influence the process and outcomes of Participatory Evaluation. Furthermore, a model of Gbaya indigenous



evaluation is presented. Finally a critique of the PE event of the Gbaya church development program is presented along with three bias which influenced the process and the outcome of that particular event. The impact of the researcher as a participant observer is also reviewed.

Finally, Chapter VIII presents the final conclusions concerning indigenous evaluation among the Gbaya, recommendations for future research in Participatory Evaluation, and recommendations for Participatory Evaluation practitioners.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This final statement is also corroborated by several other authors (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977; D'Abreo, 1981).

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to update the reader on the "state-of-the-art" of Participatory Evaluation (PE), by exploring its historical origins, its theoretical underpinnings, and its implications for community development. The section pertaining to the historical origins of PE includes a brief overview of Action Research (AR), Participatory Action Research (PAR), Participatory Research (PR), Stakeholder Evaluation (SE) and Popular Education; a framework for understanding the similarities and differences between these different research and evaluation paradigms is presented along with a working model of the inter-relationship of PR and PE.

Other sections in this chapter examine the overall goals and outcomes of PE, its strengths and weaknesses, as well as the various preconditions which are necessary—but perhaps not sufficient—for successful PE. These include the attitude of the evaluator and the socio-cultural-political environment. The role of the evaluator in PE and the implications of certain variables on the process and the outcomes of PE, such as power, prior education/training background of the evaluator, and facilitation methods, are also examined.

A typology of assorted methodologies for PE, as reported or suggested in the literature, are presented; these methodologies vary from "participation-*in*-evaluation", to more standardized methods, to methods in which no preconceived evaluation question is suggested before entering the field.

Finally, some concluding remarks concerning the implications of PE for community development and the field of evaluation in general follow.

### Origins of Participatory Evaluation

According to Midgley (1986b), the participation of the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized, in decision-making for their own social development, has only been formalized and popularized since the early 1970's (p. 13). Furthermore, according to Feuerstein (1986), the advent of PE appeared in the late 1970's (p. ix). Although PE has been around for nearly 25 years, there continues to be a lack of agreement on the meaning attributed to the term "participatory evaluation" and its practice.

Because PE focuses primarily on the evaluation needs of the people, as opposed to the needs of the funding agency or the evaluator, and is carried out by the people, the results may be less than perfect, but more useable by the local participants of community development projects (Feuerstein, 1986, 1988). According to Brown (1985), "participatory researchers often violate the procedures and constraints by which positivist researchers seek to validate their findings" (p. 72). Participatory researchers tend to use qualitative methods which rely on the researcher as instrument, and therefore the data is viewed through the subjective eyes of the researcher and open to interpretation, rather than the neat, supposedly objective data obtained by traditional researchers (Fernandes & Tandon, 1981).

Hornik (1980) lists four myths concerning evaluation; one myth, which I would like to present here, is that "evaluation is an objective apolitical activity,

providing unbiased information" (p. 1). Taylor's (1991) critique of traditional evaluation goes beyond that of Hornik by stating that,

Evaluation necessarily involves a large element of subjective judgement, for the personal values of those engaged in evaluating are always a part of the evaluation process itself. In fact the evaluation of social development programs is a far less pure, scientific and objective process than is sometimes claimed, and we should be less defensive about the role of personal values, convictions, impressions and opinions than is sometimes the case (p. 8).

Brown (1985) further comments that "participatory research may not be good for social science in positivist terms, but it may be better than positivist social science for many development purposes" (p. 73). However, among PE facilitators, it is still recognized that PE is not intended to replace the traditional, positivist approach to evaluation, and that there is still a place for traditional evaluation approaches in evaluation research (Feuerstein, 1978b, 1978c, 1986; Uphoff, 1991).

### Confounding Terms in Research and Evaluation

The past twenty-five years have been a time of change for social science researchers and evaluators involved in community development work. New theories about research and evaluation, new models for testing those theories, and new methodologies for applying them to community development have been proposed regularly. Each have had their heyday of prominence and influence, only to be replaced by subsequent versions—often variations on a theme.

Similar experimentation and theory-building in research and evaluation has taken place in other academic fields such as education, public health, community development, women's studies, agricultural extension, and even landscape

architecture. In order to reflect the subtle differences between these new theories, new titles were ascribed to them: Action Research, Participatory Action Research, Participatory Research, Popular Education, Stakeholder Evaluation, and Participatory Evaluation.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, the similarity of these new titles and the mixture of terms and definitions used in the literature from the mid-1970's to the mid-1980's, has often been the source of much confusion among students—and even professionals—of research and evaluation.<sup>2</sup> Adding further to the confusion is the fact that one cannot simply look at a time-line and see an orderly progression of theoretical thought leading from one theory to the next, rather, many of them were developed almost simultaneously over a space of about 10 years. It might be helpful to think of the differences between the theories by making a comparison based on their positions on various continuums such as power, facilitation, and training.

In order to clarify some of the confusion, the following section contains a brief summary of the major differences between the various types of research and evaluation listed above.

### Action Research

Action research (AR) is generally recognized as having its roots in the social science research of Kurt Lewin in the late 1940's. Historically, it has been primarily associated with social research in business and industry (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Ketterer, Price, & Politser, 1980), although, it quickly found acceptance in educational settings.<sup>3</sup> It was not until the 1970's and 1980's that it really came into vogue in community development.<sup>4</sup>

"Action research aims to contribute *both* to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework" (Rapoport, 1970, p. 499). This encourages client involvement at least in the problem identification stage and in data collection and analysis (Brown & Tandon, 1983). According to Carter (1959), the research problem should stem from needs recognized by the community and involve those who are expected to implement the recommendations of the research. Furthermore, AR implies the teamwork of research professionals and lay people from the community, relying on the technical assistance of the professional researcher to insure the objectivity and accuracy of the data collected. Ultimately, the research activity should lead to recommendations for action or social change. As Weiss (1972) states, "The research aspect is clearly subordinated to bringing about needed modifications in the structure and functioning of the group" (p. 113). "As a result, the distinction between research and action becomes quite blurred and the research methods tend to be less systematic, more informal, and quite specific to the problem, people, and organization for which the research is undertaken" (Patton, 1990, p. 157).

Although AR is oriented toward the needs of the people, it must be remembered that there is an implicit "dual agenda" in AR: the solving of the client's problem and the academic goals of "pure and disinterested knowledge" (Rapoport, 1970, p. 506). Unfortunately, the term "client" has often meant "management" and therefore, research has often been oriented towards the problems of particular interest to management (Maguire, 1987). It was hoped that by formalizing AR, that

it would also make the academic goals of the researcher explicit, perhaps even contractual.

From this brief review, we see that AR works from within the existing social system and encourages the participation of the client in the problem identification stage, as well as the data collection and data analysis stages. The client owns the problem and supposedly has the interest and wherewithal to effect some kind of change within the system, but the social scientist has the technical skills required to carry out the research in an objective and scientific manner in order to arrive at an "acceptable solution" (Rapoport, 1970). The result is not only the practical solution to the problem at hand, but also the development of scientific knowledge. As pertaining to the social order, AR aims to reform—as opposed to transform—the existing social system, thereby improving its efficiency.

### Participatory Action Research

Historically, Participatory Action Research (PAR) originated during the 1970's in Third World countries (Fals-Borda, 1984; Fals-Borda, 1991). Participatory Action Research is not merely an intermediate step between Action Research and Participatory Research. Although it shares some of the aspects of AR, there is a shift in the philosophy of knowledge production—including a shift in the *type* of knowledge to be produced—an increased orientation towards local ownership of the process as well as the results of research, and the use of more participatory methodologies throughout the research process. Of special note here is the explicit



shift from the business and industrial community to the poor, marginalized, and disenfranchised, especially of the Third World.

Whereas AR limits its sphere of action to the immediate problem at hand, PAR moves to include problems which are societal in nature and aims at transforming the system—as opposed to reforming it (Fals-Borda, 1984; Fals-Borda, 1991). This is done collaboratively with the practitioners being involved both as subjects and co-researchers at all levels of the research process, including the reporting stage (Argyris & Schon, 1991; Fals-Borda, 1984; Fals-Borda, 1991; Rahman & Fals-Borda, 1991). The result of this participatory methodology is meant to promote the people's wielding of transforming power and increase their socio-political knowledge as well (Fals-Borda, 1984; Rahman & Fals-Borda, 1991).

Fals-Borda (1984, 1991) describes four major techniques involved in the practice of PAR: 1) collective research, 2) critical recovery of history, 3) valuing and using of popular (folk) culture, and 4) production and diffusion of (new) knowledge. Increased emphasis has been placed on the participation and collaboration of the oppressed in society, the use of existing indigenous knowledge (both past and present), and the importance of the production of new knowledge and its availability to the community for future action.

Although a major shift in the scope of action from local to societal takes place as one shifts from AR to PAR, it stops short of becoming Participatory Research because of the continued importance placed on the objectivity of the research process, the need for validation of the knowledge produced, and the need to

report the findings scientifically, in order to increase knowledge for the scientific community as well.

### Participatory Research

Participatory Research (PR) also traces its roots back to the early 1970's (Maguire, 1987). Like AR and PAR, PR is based on the participation of the local people in the research process. The major difference here is in the degree of participation. In PR the community owns both the research question and the whole inquiry process. It is a process of collective investigation, collective analysis, and collective action (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Comstock & Fox, 1982; Gaventa, 1988; Hall, 1975; Kassam, 1980; Park, 1989; Tandon, 1988).

Such key phrases as, *liberation of human creative potential, mobilization of human resources, fundamental structural transformation, equitable distribution, empowerment of the oppressed, and increased self-reliance* are important themes which reflect important values attributed to PR (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Fernandes & Tandon, 1981; Elden & Taylor, 1983; Freire, 1970; Hall, 1978, 1981; Park, 1993; Srinivasan, 1981).

Participatory research makes the assumption that any problem that might be researched exists because of some kind of oppressive situation. It further assumes that the oppressed will be able to make a critical analysis of the *limiting situation*—to use Freire's words—and that through critical consciousness, they will be further empowered take action, thus releasing their human creative potential. According to Park (1993),

Participatory research chooses to work with the poor, who are, by definition, oppressed and powerless, but the aim is not to just alleviate or even eliminate their poverty while keeping them dependent and powerless. The solution it seeks is not one of paternalism, a kind benevolent despotism that would provide while robbing its beneficiaries of their adulthood. Its aim is to help the downtrodden be self-reliant, self-assertive, and self-determinative, as well as self-sufficient (p. 2).

Ultimately, this should result in a more equitable distribution of the world's goods through a fundamental structural transformation of society.<sup>5</sup> "The explicit aim of participatory research is to bring about a more just society in which no groups or classes of people suffer from the deprivation of life's essentials, such as food, clothing, shelter, and health, and in which all enjoy basic human freedoms and dignity" (Park, 1993, p. 2).

According to Bryceson and Mustafa (1982),

The goal of participatory research in general is the dissolution of the social division between mental and manual labour. The means to the goal is in fact its solution, i.e. continual democratic interaction whereby men, women and children are respected and respect one another as politically capable of knowing and acting upon the resolution of their own physical and social needs (p. 107).

This has a direct impact on the role of the outside researcher. The outside researcher becomes not only a facilitator in the research process, but should also identify with the community and work in solidarity with them (Hall, 1981; Brown & Tandon, 1983; Kassam, 1980; Mulkath & de Magry, 1981; Rowan, 1981).

This causes the concept of knowledge production to become an issue in PR. According to Maguire (1987), PR must take the stance that "*we both know some things; neither of us knows everything. Working together we will both know more,*

*and we will both learn more about how to know"* [emphasis mine] (pp. 37-38). In this climate there is no dual agenda of producing *practical knowledge* and *pure and disinterested scientific knowledge*, as in AR and PAR, rather, all research energy is geared toward the production of useful knowledge (people's knowledge) for the transformation of society (Hall, 1981; Shiva & Bandyopadhyay, 1981; Tandon, 1981a; Park, 1993). As such, any benefits to the academic community, in terms of research on PR, must necessarily be a by-product of the research.

### Popular Education

Popular education is a product of alternative education in Central and South America. The reason I include it here in the discussion of the origins of PE is because of several of its characteristics and its appearance during the same time period as PAR and PR—during the late 1970's and early 1980's (Acevedo, 1992).

Acevedo (1992) describes five major characteristics of popular education: 1) popular education is political in nature and as such, is political education; 2) because it is political in nature, it is integral to popular organizations which have developed their own methods of promoting participation and collective action; 3) it promotes education in a dialogic atmosphere which recognizes the role of the learners knowledge in the production of new knowledge and a new society; 4) it recognizes that the ruling class has its methods of reproducing and imposing its culture and therefore its control over the masses, and it attempts to develop a critical ability to differentiate liberatory and oppressive forces in society; and finally, 5) it is

a transformative process incorporating research and action as integral parts of the educational process (Acevedo, 1992).

Furthermore, popular education promotes collective, investigative learning as opposed to the mere transfer of knowledge. The role of the outside agent in popular education is that of a facilitator who supports the "processes like collective learning, recovery of popular history and culture, and the transformation of reality, undertaken by the latter" (Acevedo, 1992, p. 36).

Finally, popular education is concerned with indigenous knowledge and popular history:

Popular Education is a process of re-creation of knowledge. Rather than a process of transmitting information, Popular Education emphasizes the systematization of people's practical knowledge (which has been traditionally dominated and restrained) and its transformation into a structured whole through collective analysis and discussion. In this sense, Popular Education and Participatory Action Research (PAR) are closely related (Acevedo, 1992, p. 54).

### Stakeholder Evaluation

Stakeholder Evaluation is very similar to AR, but is more interested in the evaluation of existing programs and projects rather than in research for the sake of problem-solving and knowledge building. The stakeholder approach arose in the 1970's mainly from the critique that traditional evaluation's focus was too narrow, unrealistic, irrelevant, unfair, and unused (Weiss, 1983). Furthermore, according to Weiss (1986b) it was a means for the National Institute of Education to divest itself of the sole responsibility of monitoring and evaluating educational programs under its umbrella by sharing control and "thereby reducing NIE's responsibility" (p. 186).

The aim of Stakeholder Evaluation is to increase the use of evaluation results by empowering all groups who have a stake in the evaluation to participate in the process (Byrk, 1983; Weiss, 1983, 1986b; Patton, 1982; Whitmore, 1988). It is meant to take into account the information needs of the decision-makers in the program by including them in the decision-making process of the kind of information should be collected for analysis. Unfortunately, as Weiss (1983) points out, "having a stake in a program is not the same thing as having a stake in an evaluation of the program" (p. 9). In other words, the people who have a stake in the evaluation—who have to make decisions which affect the program—often are not the beneficiaries of the program. Reciprocally, in the case of social programs, the supposed beneficiaries of the program have no voice in the evaluation of the program because they hold no decision-making role in the program and therefore, are not included as stakeholders in the evaluation process either.

As is the case in AR, control of the evaluation process rests firmly in the hands of the *experts*, except for the stakeholders input into the kind of information needed for themselves as decision-makers in the program. According to Weiss (1986b), this may increase the fairness of the evaluation process, improve the kind of information collected and its usefulness to its recipients, and it may "make the stakeholder group more knowledgeable about evaluation results and equalize whatever power knowledge provides" (p. 194).

## Participatory Evaluation Literature

Up to this point, I have tried to give a brief overview of some of the common misgivings about traditional, positivist evaluation which make it inappropriate for use in the evaluation of participatory community development. "There is an implicit assumption that an evaluation carried out by 'experts' is far more valid and authentic than a participatory evaluation exercise which makes the learners and field educators the primary agents of the process of evaluation" (Tandon, 1995, p. 29). I have also tried to untangle the often confusing nomenclature used for the various types of research and evaluation theories which have contributed to the formulation of participatory evaluation (PE) by briefly summarizing the major tenets of each theory, as well as pointing out their origins, their commonalities, and the differences between them.

Although PE was developed during the same time period and from some of the same ideological ferment as AR, PAR, PR, Popular Education, and Stakeholder Evaluation, it is distinctly different from them. Participatory Evaluation is an attempt to respond to the inappropriateness of traditional evaluation methods with their focus on financial and quantitative indicators. In PE an appropriate response is found to Oxfam's statement, "We need to look for an evaluation style that recognizes the dignity and validity of the local community and that does it justice" (Pratt & Boyden, 1985, p. 99).

In order to better understand PE, it is necessary to attempt to define it; examine its underlying assumptions; compare and contrast it to the other theories

mentioned above; and talk about its various goals and attributes, as well as its drawbacks and pitfalls. This is the subject of our inquiry in the present section.

### Some Definitions

Participation means different things to different people and should not be thought of as a single phenomenon, rather, "It appears more fruitful and proper to regard participation as a descriptive term denoting the involvement of a significant number of persons in situations or actions which enhance their well-being, e.g., their income, security or self-esteem" [emphasis in original] (Uphoff, Cohen, & Goldsmith, 1979, p. 4). I would also add here that a "significant number of persons" is not sufficient if it does not include the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized as well. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, participation would perhaps be better thought of as a continuum with different programs exhibiting various degrees of participation.

During the summer of 1968, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology hosted a summer conference to discuss how to implement *participation* as mandated by the United States Congress in 1966 for USAID's international development programs. The participants at the conference explored the meaning of participation and concluded that,

Participation is both a means and an end. It is a means to greater control over one's environment and to improvements in one's living conditions. It is an end in that it provides the dignity and psychic satisfaction of having a share in the control of one's environment and the structure of power (Hapgood, 1969, p. 105).



They further concluded that participation in development should include people's involvement in the areas of decision-making, implementation of programs, and sharing in the benefits of growth (Hapgood, 1969, pp. 23-25).<sup>6</sup> To these, Cohen and Uphoff (1977) add *evaluation* and further conclude that involvement in these four activities "encompass[es] most of what would generally be referred to as 'participation' in rural development activities" (p. 6). Bugnicourt further adds the task of analysis of the community situation and community action (1982, p. 69). Pearse and Stiefel (1979) insist that "participation in making the decisions that can control or alter the life of the individual must be considered a *basic human right* [emphasis mine]" (p. 6).

According to Awa (1989), "participation requires (1) mental and emotional involvement, not just mere physical presence, (2) a motivation to contribute, which requires creative thinking and initiative, and (3) an acceptance of responsibility, which involves seeing organizational problems as corporate problems—'ours,' not 'theirs'" (p. 307).

The word *evaluation*, like the word *participation*, also means different things to different people. According to Apple (1974), evaluation should be considered a process of social valuing involving the assigning of values to activities, procedures, or objects by individuals or groups. Patton (1982) defines evaluation as: "(1) the systematic collection of information about (2) a broad range of topics (3) for use by specific people (4) for a variety of purposes. . . . that aim to improve program effectiveness" (p. 15).

The following is a list of definitions of evaluation found throughout community development and evaluation literature which illustrate the scope of evaluation:

Evaluation is a collective reflection on the actions taken by individuals within a group, and the group itself and the methods of functioning of a group (Charyulu & Seetharam, 1990 p. 393).

Ernest House: "Evaluation is the assignment of worth or value according to a set of criteria and standards, which can be either explicit or implicit" (Alkin, 1990, p. 81).

Michael Kean: "Evaluation, according to this definition, is the process of delineating, obtaining, and providing useful information for judging decision alternatives" (Alkin, 1990, p. 82).

Milbrey McLaughlin: "Evaluation is the process of providing reliable, valid, relevant, and useful information to decision makers about the operation and effects of social programs or other institutional activities" (Alkin, 1990, p. 83).

Evaluation: is a systematic way of learning from experience and using the lessons learned to improve current activities and promote better planning by careful selection of alternatives for future action (WHO, 1981).

Weiss (1972) proposes that "the purpose of evaluation research is to measure the effects of a program against the goals it set out to accomplish as a means of contributing to subsequent decision making about the program and improving future programming" (p. 4), thus including elements of both formative and summative evaluation in her explanation. Patton (1981, 1982, 1990) lists more than one hundred different types of evaluation, each with its own specific emphasis, some of them somewhat problematic.

In terms of PE, we are perhaps most interested in the following general types of evaluation: summative evaluation which takes place at the end of a program;

formative evaluation which can take place in an on-going, monitoring type situation; and baseline data gathering or needs analysis which usually takes place before a project is proposed or implemented (Patton, 1982). Summative evaluation is concerned with examining the outcomes of a program at its completion. This is often done in order to make judgements as to the program's effectiveness in attaining its expected outcomes. Formative evaluation, on the other hand, takes place at some point(s) during the program in order to find out if the program is progressing as planned, thereby providing information for decision-making in order to correct or change the program's course.

Paula Donnelly Roark (1988-89), of the African Development Foundation, underscores the idea of PE as being "an analytic and problem-solving process, used by the people themselves to generate the type of knowledge *they* need to control the direction of their own self-reliant and sustainable development" (p. 46). Patton (1990) defines PE as "a process controlled by the people in the program or community. It is something they undertake as a formal, reflective process for their own development and empowerment" (p. 129).

According to Campos (1990), PE is a form of PR "in which the supposed beneficiaries of a given activity can engage in dialogue with an external evaluator and critically reflect on the very strategies formulated on their behalf" (p. 3). Her definition of PE implies the necessity for an external evaluator and further implies that such evaluation is for development programs imported from the outside. Ideally, PE would be used to evaluate programs that were formulated by the people themselves, as an integral part of the participatory research cycle.

Others have defined PE as a process for raising the consciousness of people (Srinivasan, 1981), or as a process of community self-realization in which a community takes stock of the strengths and weaknesses of its program (Chand & Soni, 1981). Walker's (1991) Chilean development organization, *Centro de Investigacion y Desarrollo de la Education (CIDE - Center for Educational Research and Development)*, views "participatory evaluation as a series of activities which allow professionals and beneficiaries, together, to share their perspectives about the results of a given intervention in order to collectively reach decisions leading to the improvement of program strategies" (pp. 15-16).

However one looks at PE, the emphasis is on making the entire evaluation process participatory. Ideally, the grassroots are involved in every step of the process, from initiating the identification of the question(s) to be asked in the evaluation, through the returning of the information gathered in a manner appropriate to the different audiences of the evaluation results (Fals-Borda, 1991). Furthermore, Tandon (1981a) states that "Participatory research and evaluation maintain that the actors in the situation are not merely objects of someone else's study but are actively influencing the process of knowledge-generation and elaboration" (p. 20).

### Underlying Assumptions about Participatory Evaluation

Having presented the elements of *participation* and *evaluation* in the term *participatory evaluation*, and having presented several definitions of PE, our attention now turns to some of the underlying assumptions concerning PE. I have

identified four underlying assumptions: (1) that PE is process-oriented, (2) that it is participatory, and (3) that it focuses on the self-identified evaluation needs of the community, and (4) that the issue of power plays an important role in all three of the above mentioned assumptions.

First, participatory evaluation—like participatory community development—is process-oriented. By this I mean that "greater emphasis is placed on the *process* by which change occurs rather than on the results of the change" (Pietro, 1983, p. 11). According to Walker (1991), "Participatory evaluation often puts more emphasis on the educational process than on the final results of the program. . . . Therefore it is necessary for participatory evaluators not to lose sight of the goals and to understand how the process relates to the goals" (p. 17). Acevedo (1992), in his study of Popular Education, concludes that the *process* of inquiry takes precedent over the *content* of the inquiry, especially when investigating and promoting values such as social justice, equality, cooperation and solidarity. As he states, "it is not only *what* people learn, but *how* they learn and interact" (p. 45). Norman Uphoff (1991), reflecting upon the community self-evaluation methodology which he used in Sri Lanka in 1988, arrives at the same conclusion, that "the answers they [the local people] arrive at are in themselves not so important as what is learned from the discussion and from the process of reaching consensus" (p. 272).

Others, such as Brown (1985), look at PR as an educational or "people-centered learning process" (p. 70). Kinsey (1981) states that PE has "*pedagogical potential*" (p. 156). Several others see PE as an educative process (Campos, 1990; Cuthbert, 1985; Feuerstein, 1978b, 1978c, 1988; Hellinger, Hellinger, & O'Regan,

1987) while Bryceson, Manicom, and Kassam (1982) add that it is educative for both the community and the evaluation facilitator.

As mentioned previously, if PE is considered a process of self-realization (Chand & Soni, 1981) and consciousness-raising, its goal is to "transform reality in the very process of defining it and is certainly useful at the community level" (Srinivasan, 1981, pp. 71-72). According to Roark (1988-89), "ADF's [African Development Foundation's] goal is to develop a participatory evaluation *process* that assists local communities and organizations in assessing information and making decisions, taking responsibility and control, and therefore, power to evolve and sustain needed intervention" [emphasis mine] (p. 47).

As can be seen, PE's importance in community development lies at least partially in its emphasis on the process of evaluation as opposed to a mere interest in the results. It is hoped that through PE, that the community will learn certain skills which will help it to look critically at reality and to plan future action and evaluation in order to improve their situation, both as individuals, but more importantly as a community.

The second underlying assumption is that PE is participatory.

If the goal of the development effort is to assist the poor, the endeavor should begin in their context, not in the planning office, not in the research station, and not from theories and constructs of far-removed-institutions. As a result, participation is not a supplementary mechanism "diffused" to expedite external agendas, or a means to an end. It is a legitimate goal in itself (Servaes & Arnst, 1992, p. 18).

This should be obvious from the title, however, as stated earlier, participation should be thought of as a continuum with varying degrees of participation possible.

Here, one should be aware of the tendency which I call *participation-in-evaluation* (PiE), which poses as PE. This is often seen as a sincere desire on the part of the evaluator—usually an outsider—to include people in evaluation at different stages in the process, without allowing the entire evaluation process to be under the control of the local people.

Comings (1979), in his discussion concerning the participatory development of educational materials and media, describes five categories of participation as viewed from the perspective of the client—or the local intended beneficiaries of a community development program: 1) non-participative, 2) feedback, 3) directed, 4) collaborative, and responsive. Only in the "collaborative" and "responsive" categories is any of the decision-making power shared. The major difference between the two is that in the "collaborative" model, the practitioners initiate the project, whereas in the "responsive" model, the clients initiate the project and the practitioners participation is directed by the client (pp. 18-19).

Participatory evaluation is based on the belief that the "local people *can* be the experts, because it is they who best understand and have the power to change their own social reality" [emphasis mine] (Roark, 1988-89, p. 46). It naturally follows that if the local people are considered to be the experts, that in order to be a truly participatory process, the local people must be given control over their own affairs—development and evaluation being most definitely *their* affair (Midgley, 1986a).

Freeman and Lowdermilk (1985) offer an excellent example of the reason why local people should be considered experts in their own right and should have control over the evaluation process:

Control of irrigation water by the farmer is critical. Only one individual—the farmer—combines the factors of production in a particular field and either succeeds or fails to bring in a crop. Whatever the attributes of organizations upstream, the farmer must possess adequate control over water to place it in the crop root zones when it is most productive. No bureaucrat, no engineer, no sociologist, no official, however powerful or prestigious, ever accomplishes this task. It is attained, against great odds, only by individual farmers, many of whom are voiceless nonparticipants in the irrigation system (p. 94)

Borrowing from Fals-Borda (1991), in his discussion about PAR, I would apply the following to PE as well:

Ideally . . . the grassroots . . . are able to participate in the research [evaluation] process from the very beginning, that is, from the moment it is decided what the subject of research will be. They remain involved at every step of the process until the publication of results and the various forms of returning the knowledge to the people are completed (p.7-8).

The following excerpt from *Aid for Just Development* by Hellinger et al. (1987), adequately sums up this section on participation as an underlying assumption of PE and underscores its importance in participatory community development:

Local commitment is perhaps the most essential factor in the fostering of self-sustaining development. Authentic commitment is, in turn, most appropriately fostered through meaningful participation, since the most appropriate solutions to problems will arise from, and be best implemented by, those most directly affected by the problems at hand. Effective and meaningful participation in development begins with the articulation of needs by intended beneficiaries and requires their ultimate control over the process of planning to meet such needs (p. 27).



The third underlying assumption is that PE focuses on the self-identified evaluation needs of the community. In other words, the entire evaluation process is based on the interests and concerns of the research participants as opposed to those which might be unilaterally imposed by an external evaluator (Campos, 1990). Concerning local participation in needs assessment and priority setting in community development, Cohen and Uphoff (1977) underscore that this aspect of participation may be the most crucial to program success. If participation in the establishment of goals and objectives is considered to be an integral part of community development, then this is most certainly true for successful PE as well.

As mentioned earlier, several authors have discussed the inappropriateness of traditional evaluation in development programs which are otherwise participatory (Acevedo, 1988; Campos, 1990; Feuerstein, 1978b, 1978c, 1986; Davis-Case, 1989). Traditional evaluation methods often fail to grasp the complexity and concerns of the people they are evaluating (Campos, 1990). By not taking into account the evaluation needs of the people, they focus on the needs of the funding agency, of academia, or of the individual researcher. For this reason, PE focuses on the concerns and interests of the evaluation participants.

Finally, the fourth underlying assumption of PE recognizes the issue of power in the process, participation, and focus of PE. How power is used by those in authority positions and how power is shared or relinquished by those in authority affect the evaluation process. In participatory work in a community, the diverse interests of various power structures need to be taken into account in order to change factors which may prevent people's participation in planning, programming,

and evaluation processes (Acevedo, 1988). "It is no longer viable or healthy for the world that a few chosen ones investigate and decide the truth, while the majority remain excluded from that process and are the recipients of the results" (Dinan, 1980, p. 67).

According to Cohen and Uphoff (1977), "One of the most crucial characteristics qualifying the participation of persons or groups in various project activities is the *degree of power they have to make their participation effective* [emphasis mine]" (p. 105). However, power is not an all-or-nothing proposition. Varying degrees of having or not-having power will affect participation, one of the quintessential elements in PE. The ultimate importance of power in participatory community development activities, such as PR and PE, is summed up in the concept of knowledge—whose knowledge and what kind of knowledge is important. "The nature of participatory evaluation is such that it underscores the relevance of the concept that *knowledge is power* [emphasis mine]" (Bogaert, Bhagat, & Bam, 1981, p. 181).

### A Framework for Understanding Various Research and Evaluation Models

In order to facilitate a discussion comparing and contrasting PE with, AR, PAR, PR, Stakeholder Evaluation, and participation-in-evaluation (PiE), it is necessary to have some kind of framework with which to examine them. I have attempted to make such a framework using by the question "Who wants to know What for what Purpose? (WWP)" developed by David Kinsey (1987) and presented

as part of his evaluation planning model. The framework is presented in Table 2.1 on page 42.

According to Kinsey's (1987) model, three questions need to be asked as one plans for evaluation. The first question, "who?", is an attempt to identify the individual or group that needs information in order to make decisions. The second question, "what?", attempts to identify *what* information is needed in order to make that decision. The third question, "for what purpose?" or "why?", seeks to identify *why* the information is needed, or how that information will be used to make a decision.

I found it useful to use these same three questions to compare and contrast the focus of the various types of research and evaluation which were investigated. To these I also added the question of *ownership* of the problem or question of inquiry, the question of who is in *control* of the research or evaluation, and the consequences on the *role of the investigator* or evaluator—especially if s/he is external to the community in which the investigation is taking place.

As can be seen from Table 2.1 (on page 42), all of the research and evaluation approaches discussed include participation at some point. In AR, participation becomes part of the research process only at the point of "ownership of the problem" and in deciding what to investigate by answering the question "What?" they want to know, the rest of the process is under the control of the researcher. There is also a dual agenda in terms of "purpose"; on the pragmatic side, there is an attempt to solve a real problem through experimentation, but there is also the agenda of the researcher to advance social science through the scientific rigor

Table 2.1 Differences Between Different Research and Evaluation Approaches

	ACTION RESEARCH (AR)	PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (AR)	PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH (PR)	PARTICIPATION-in-EVALUATION (PiE)	STAKEHOLDER EVALUATION (SE)	PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION (PE)
Brief Definition	Research undertaken by those in the field (teachers, administrators, supervisors) in order to improve their own practice (Hodgkinson, 1957). Dual agenda of solving client's problem and advancing social science, "within a mutually acceptable framework (Rapoport, 1970).	Collaborative research on local problems, but with the aim of making changes at the societal level by transforming the system. Shift from business application to the poor, marginalized, and disenfranchised.	"A people-centered learning process that can transform local patterns of self-awareness, equalize distributions of power and resources, and increase participation in development activity" (Brown, 1985) -Based on local participation during all stages of research	Evaluation in which participants are asked by the outside researcher to assist in one or more of the tasks in the evaluation process.	Evaluation of existing programs calling upon those who have a "stake" in the evaluation to participate in its design. It is meant to take into account the information needs of the decision-makers in the program. Its main goal is to increase utilization of evaluation results by providing useful information.	-"A form of PR in which the supposed beneficiaries of a given activity can engage in dialogue with an external evaluator and critically reflect on the very strategies formulated on their behalf" (Campos, 1990). -an analytic and problem-solving process, used by the people themselves to generate the type of knowledge they need to control the direction of their own self-reliant and sustainable development" (Roark, 1988-89)
ownership of problem or question	management, group, or individual	the local people	community	funder, agency, researcher	stakeholders	community
who's in control	control of process belongs to the researcher	local people, but researcher in charge of process	community	researcher	researcher	community
who wants to know?	owner of problem for pragmatic reasons, researcher for academia	local people for pragmatic reasons, researcher for academia	community	funder, agency, researcher,	various stakeholders (funders, agencies, program directors, field workers)	community
What do they want to know?	based on needs of management/client	based on the needs of the local people	based solely on the needs of community	needs of funder, agency, or researcher	based on the information needs of various stakeholders	based solely on the needs of community
For what Purpose?	-dual agenda -to improve work, practice, or business -reform the system -advance social science	-dual agenda -to improve local conditions -eventually transform society -advance social science	-production of knowledge and critical consciousness leading to social action and transformation of society. -no dual agenda for researcher	-to include the participants in the process of evaluation wherever helpful to the researcher. -Not related to the needs of the community.	-to improve the program or increase efficiency -decide whether to continue program or not -make the results more useable to decision-makers	-to generate knowledge leading to self-sustaining development (Roark) -To demystify evaluation by involving participants as researchers in every aspect of the process.
Role of external evaluator	-assures scientific, objectivity of research -facilitator	-assures objectivity -validation of local knowledge produced -facilitator	-facilitator, catalyst -identifies with and in solidarity with community	directs and controls the process and results	directs and controls the evaluation process	facilitator, catalyst
Common misconceptions				use of qualitative research methodologies make it participatory evaluation		results not generalizable

attached to the research process through experimentation. Unfortunately, although the research is based on the need of the client, the client is often a member of the upper hierarchy of a business or industry and participation is often limited to solving management's problem without the participation of those who will be primarily affected by the change.

In PAR, not only does ownership of the problem belong to the local people, so does control of the research process. The researcher and the local community collaborate and participate at all levels of the research process; however, the researcher is in charge of the process in order to insure that proper scientific rigor is observed. Like action research, there is still a dual agenda: 1) to solve the local problem at hand, and 2) to advance social science. In addition to the increased participation at all levels of the research process, there is also a shift from the business and industry client, to the third world, with the eventual goal of transforming the system as opposed to merely reforming the system in order to maintain the *status quo* which is advocated by AR.

The major difference between PAR and PR is that there no longer exists a dual agenda for the purpose of the research. Researchers decided that in order to make the research process truly participatory, that they should relinquish control of not only the process, but also of the outcome of the research. In other words, the researcher in PR should so identify with the local people and the transformation of their social environment, that there can be no more concern for the advancement of social science as a result of the research process.

Moving from research theories to evaluation, Stakeholder Evaluation is participatory like AR in many respects. It is participatory in the areas of "ownership of the problem" and in answering the question "what?" they want to know. Furthermore, like AR, the process is under the control of the researcher in order to insure scientific objectivity. Of major interest in Stakeholder Evaluation is the concern that the results be useful to decision-makers. Therefore, participation is limited to those who have a "stake" in the evaluation, the decision-makers or "stakeholders". As a result, the proposed beneficiaries of the program in question often are not consulted, nor do they become participants in the evaluation.

Participatory evaluation is similar to PR in that the evaluation question, the process, the control, and the results are all in the hands of the community. The main purpose being to generate knowledge which will lead to self-sustaining development and to demystify evaluation for the participants by facilitating their control of the entire process.

The category which I have identified as *participation-in-evaluation* is not really a separate theory or model of evaluation, rather it is an attempt to show that not all evaluation which is called PE is really very participatory. This framework provides a way of distinguishing between evaluation programs which merely encourage participation at various points in the evaluation process, or whether it truly merits the title PE.

A Model for Understanding the Relationship Between Participatory Research and Participatory Evaluation

In order to better understand the relationship between PR and PE, I would like to present a model with which to visualize the relationship (see Figure 2.1 below). I have made the model in the form of a continuous spiral in which I have identified several key elements: PR, critical consciousness, action, and PE. To help interpret the model, remember that circles and curved lines indicate processes, whereas squares indicate distinct activities.

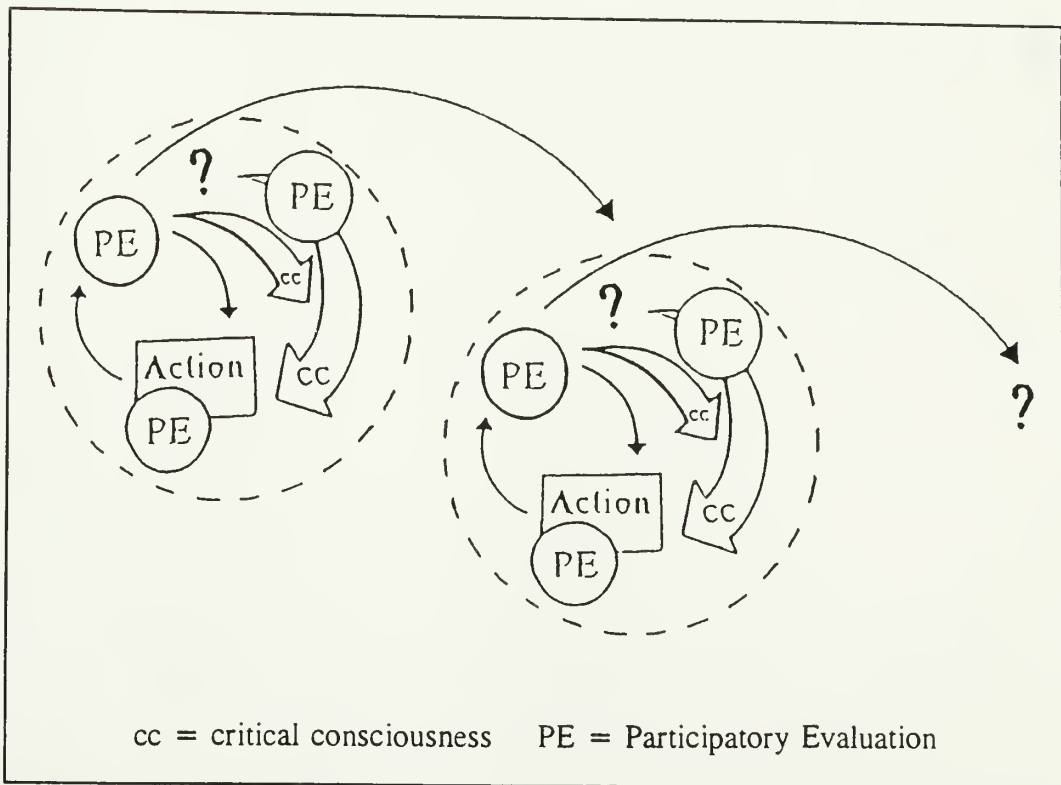


Figure 2.1 Participatory Research and Evaluation Spiral

Each cycle in the spiral is a participatory research cycle bounded by a large circle indicating that it is a process unto itself. Ideally, the starting point in the cycle is the asking of a research question, indicated by the large question mark. Once the question is formulated and the collaborative investigation begins, critical consciousness begins to form, eventually leading towards a specific action.

Participatory evaluation can take place at several points in the research cycle. If the participants decide that baseline data is needed before action is taken, it can occur immediately following the formulation of the research question, during the phase of increasing critical consciousness. It can also occur during the action phase as monitoring or formative evaluation. Or, it can occur following the action, as summative evaluation.

When PE occurs following the action, there are several directions that the cycle can take as a result of the evaluation, all of which occur as critical consciousness increases. Either it can lead back to the action in the present cycle, or it can lead out of the present cycle and into a new participatory research cycle with a fresh question resulting from the increased critical consciousness.

The circle surrounding the participatory research cycle is bounded by an interrupted circle to indicate that it is not a closed system. Rather, it is open to other influences and can be entered at several points. The ideal participatory research cycle was described above, but the model can also be used to show how PE can be initiated when it is not entered upon ideally, as in the case of an existing community development project.



When PE is desired because of the increased social consciousness of the funding agency or staff of an existing community development project, it could be encouraged during the action phase of project itself (formative evaluation) in order to begin to make the current program more completely participatory and responsive to the needs of the community. If this be the case, we would see entry at the action phase and continuation of the cycle from that point on.

Alternately, for community development projects which have already been completed, PE could be encouraged at the completion of the project (summative evaluation) in order to pave the way for making future projects more participatory and geared towards meeting the local needs (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977). If this be that case, the increasing critical consciousness which begins with the summative evaluation, follows the possible directions indicated in the model from that point on; either it leads through critical consciousness to changes for possible continuation of the project in an altered, more participatory state, or it leads through critical consciousness to a new question in a new participatory research cycle.

### Goals of Participatory Evaluation

According to Roark (1988-89), the overall goal of PE is "to develop a participatory evaluation process that assists local communities and organizations in assessing information and making decisions, taking responsibility and control, and therefore, power to evolve and sustain needed interventions" (p. 47).

Borrowing from PR, the overall goal of PE is to use participatory evaluative processes to *transform* the existing social system which allows the marginalization of

the poor, and promote in its place a more equitable system which recognizes the poor and gives them control over their own lives (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Fernandes & Tandon; Freire, 1970; Hall, 1981; Srinivasan, 1981).

Finally, of a more pragmatic nature, Patton (1982) promotes the use of evaluation to improve program effectiveness; if by "program effectiveness" he means such things as the promotion of local ownership of the program, increased self-reliance, and transformation of the system, I would allow this as a goal of PR as well.

Therefore, as we relate PE within the field of participatory community development, we can see that its overall goal contains the following elements:

- 1) the development and use of evaluative processes which assist communities to take control of their own social reality,
- 2) the improvement of development program effectiveness through the resultant local ownership and control of the development process, and
- 3) the transformation of social reality in favor of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized in the community.

### Outcomes of Participatory Evaluation

In evaluation literature, many outcomes are cited as the result of PE. Whether these outcomes are the direct result of the evaluation or are the result of the participatory process of doing PE, I have found it helpful to divide them into three areas:

- 1) those results which are concerned with the issue of *control/ownership* of PE,

- 2) those results which are concerned with the *pedagogical potential* of PE, and
- 3) those results which are concerned with the *dialogic* nature of PE.

Issues of Control/Ownership. The first category deals with the issue of *control/ownership*. The most prominent feature of PE is that it is participatory; evaluation *by* the people, *with* the people, and *for* the people, not something which is done *to* them or *on* them by professional researcher/evaluators (Cooper & Hewitt, 1989; Fricke & Gill, 1989). It is people participating in their own evaluation, investigating aspects of the program that are of interest and importance to the people themselves.

According to Sick and Shapiro (1991), "One distinct advantage to utilizing participatory evaluation as a research methodology is that the design promotes a high level of commitment with those involved in the research" (pp. 16-17). Pratt and Boyden (1985) of Oxfam, found that "Participation is crucial to the identification of the goals of a programme, its implementation, organisation and evaluation, and is thus a vital factor affecting its potential for success" (p. 16). Furthermore, the *Programa Integral para el Desarrollo Rural (PIDER)* described by Michael Cernea (1984), found that:

Local participation was conceived as a way of improving the quality and effectiveness of these investments [community development funds]. In many cases, decision making without the involvement of the beneficiaries misdirected funds, while the participatory approach succeeded in improving their allocation (p. 41).

As Hellinger et al. (1987) have stated,

Local commitment is perhaps the most essential factor in the fostering of self-sustaining development. Authentic commitment is, in turn, most appropriately fostered through meaningful participation, since the most appropriate solutions to problems will arise from, and be best implemented by, those most directly affected by the problems at hand. Effective and meaningful participation in development begins with the articulation of needs by intended beneficiaries and requires their ultimate control over the process of planning to meet such needs (p. 27).

Furthermore, when local participants have been involved in the process of evaluation itself, the results are likely to have more of an impact on the participants (Uphoff, 1988; Whitmore, 1988). This was also echoed by Walker (1991) after 25 years experience working with the poor in Chile (p. 15). On the other hand, Uphoff (1985) states that information which has not been obtained in a participatory manner, will probably result data which is less valuable (p. 382).

Where development programs have been externally introduced into the community, "participatory evaluation can provide the impetus for increasing local control and ownership" (Bogaert et al., 1981). Midgley (1986a) states that "to be effective, participation must be direct and give ultimate control to local communities so that they can themselves decide their own affairs" (p.9). Furthermore, Pearse and Stiefel (1979) insist that "participation in making the decisions that can control or alter the life of the individual must be considered a *basic human right* [emphasis mine]" (p. 6).

"Putting people first" in development projects means giving people more opportunities to participate effectively in development activities. It means empowering people to mobilize their own capacities, be social actors rather

than passive subjects, manage the resources, make decisions, and control the activities that affect their lives (Cernea, 1985, p. 10).

Therefore, it is not surprising that one of the major outcomes of PE is the encouragement of the community to take control of local development projects and institutions in the community (Acevedo, 1988). Too often, local people have become dependent on outside people, such as, missionaries, government institutions, and other NGO's. This has led to dependency and disempowerment in many places. Unfortunately, the problems of these communities are often seen by the local people as problems for the outside agencies and, consequently, view themselves as powerless to address them as a community. Participatory evaluation has tried to address this important issue by encouraging local participation in the evaluation process, hopefully leading to local control and ownership of the development and evaluation processes (Tandon, 1981c; Zacharakis-Jutz & Gajenayake, 1994).

According to Cohen and Uphoff (1977), empowerment is the ability of people to be effectively involved in the decision-making and implementation processes of programs that affect them, such that it leads to the results they intend. It is difficult to measure empowerment; however, we see this in the increased self-confidence of the community's understanding its social situation (Pagaduan & Ferrer, 1983; Singh, 1981; Tandon, 1981a; Taylor, 1991) and in their ability to take collective action in their interest (Acevedo, 1988, 1992; Heredero, 1979; Tandon, 1981a; Whitmore, 1988). The participatory community development approach "accepts the idea that evaluation enables those affected by the programme to engage

in the decision-making process and to have the opportunity to gain confidence and responsibility in the control of policies and activities" (Rifkin, 1985, p. 62).

Associated with self-confidence is self-esteem which Kinsey (1981) states results from "participation in deciding what to evaluate and how" (p. 156).

Unfortunately, speaking about PE in adult education, Tandon (1995) states that "learners coming from the disadvantaged community have a sense of low 'self-esteem' to begin with. They consider themselves, as a consequence of decades of domination, incapable of critical reflection and analysis" (p. 31). Rahman (1993) adds, However, that "*there can be no development (which is endogenous) unless the people's pride in themselves as worthy human beings inferior to none is asserted or, if lost, restored*" [emphasis in original] (p. 218).

Self-reliance is another way in which one can see the results of empowerment. According to Nyoni (1991):

Participation and the empowerment of people are not possible without an element of self-reliance in terms of attitude of mind, a strong organizational base and an ability to organize their own resources to improve their situation. On the other hand, self-reliance cannot be achieved through projects alone. People need first to engage in a participatory process. Participation, self-reliance and people's empowerment are therefore inseparable. You cannot have one without the others and true advancement of all the people is not possible in a non-participatory society (p.120).

Stone (1989), however, cautions that individualism, self-reliance, and equality, are Western values "which may not have universal cultural applicability" (p. 207). Stone (1989) further adds that "the insistence on the part of outside developers that all development activities be embedded in ideas of 'self-reliance' and 'taking initiative' strikes me as a clear case of using development as an arena for the

advertisement and transfer of Western cultural values" (p. 211). Finally, Stone (1989) adds that "given the experience the villagers have had with previous development projects, their idea of 'participatory' development is to obey, willingly or otherwise, [follow] a government order to make material or labor contributions to specific projects" (p. 212). Therefore, rather than encourage independence, development should seek for interdependence among villagers, outside agencies, and governments (Stone, 1989, p. 212).

Finally, as Feuerstein (1988) points out, the area of empowerment and self-determination may be one of the most controversial aspects of PE because the underlying issue may be a sensitive one to external evaluators; "While many people in development activities may be ready to share responsibility, there are few who are genuinely ready to share power" (p. 16).

Issues of Pedagogical Potential. The second category of outcomes is concerned with the *pedagogical potential* of PE. As mentioned previously, many participatory researchers and evaluators consider PE to be a learning process (Brown, 1985; Bryceson et al., 1982; Comings, 1979; Feuerstein, 1978b, 1978c, 1988; Hall, 1978; Kinsey, 1981; Rifkin, 1985; Roark, 1988-89). Others have suggested that it can increase collective learning (Acevedo, 1992; Kinsey, 1981). Bagadion and Korten (1985) state that "addressing social issues often involves building new capabilities among the people at the community level" (p. 52).

Often this collective learning can take place through the joint exploration of indigenous knowledge. In the past, evaluators have made poor use of this wealth of

knowledge, supposing that Western knowledge was more informed, scientific, and objective, and therefore, more valid.

Molwana and Wilson (1990), combining the dictionary meanings of development and communication, arrived at a new meaning for communication which adds to our discussion here. They define communication and development as the "unfolding of knowledge" (p. 204); but, how does knowledge unfold? I suggest that one way is through the joint exploration of indigenous knowledge during the participatory community development process. A further discussion of indigenous knowledge follows in a later section.

Issues of Dialogic Nature. The third and final category of outcomes is concerned with the *dialogic* nature of PE. As dialogue, PE "asks adults to be interdependent participants and co-learners" (Brown, 1985, p. 73). Moreover, it is based on the two-way communication between the research/evaluation facilitator and the local participants in the program (Brown, 1985). According to Bryceson et al. (1982):

The concept of *dialogue* between the researcher and the community is emphasized as a reaction to the manipulateness of positivist social researcher, the over-simplification of social reality through the use of conventional research methodologies such as the survey approach and the alienating, dominating and oppressive character of such methodologies (p.70)

An important difference between participatory research/evaluation and traditional research/evaluation is that it is dialogic, generating greater understanding through action and reflection, and leading to social change (Tandon, 1981a), even radical social change (D'Abreo, 1981). Furthermore, dialogue leads to joint



conscientisation (Bogaert et al., 1981), critical consciousness, and praxis (Freire, 1970).

This brings us back to the definitions of PE offered by both Campos (1990) and Patton (1990), in which they state that *critical reflection* is an important element of PE. As a result of this dialogue, this critical reflection, PE can become part of a liberating process (Srinivasan, 1981; Hall, 1978)) involving social and political critique (Midgley, 1986b), and leading to social change (Tandon, 1981a). Because it may lead to social change, PE like PR, Popular Education, and participatory community development, is never apolitical, in fact, it is inescapably political.<sup>7</sup>

### Indigenous Knowledge

According to Compton (1980), we need to turn away from the evolutionary process of development which insists on doing things *for* people rather than *with* them, and turn our attention to participatory community development which emphasizes doing things *with* people to help them achieve their own ends. He further asserts that this implies understanding and appreciation of traditional culture on the part of the development worker (p. 308).

Indigenous knowledge is an important part of the PAR, PR, Popular Education, and PE. All of these paradigms place an emphasis on the recovery of indigenous knowledge and on the generation of new local knowledge by the participants themselves. This is in direct response to the traditional research paradigm which emphasizes objective, exogenous, Western, scientific knowledge to the complete disregard of local indigenous knowledge. Shiva and Bandyopadhyay

(1981) claim that research's reliance on scientific knowledge is due to the "built-in epistemological constraints on the modern research system" (p. 114).

On the one hand it creates compartmentalised, dis-coordinated and fragmented expert knowledge and, on the other, it renders invisible the knowledge of the people involved in the real life activity at which research is aimed. However, there are two very good reasons for taking people's knowledge as an important element in research which tries to provide a more holistic understanding of the natural and social world. Firstly, assuming that the people are ignorant, it is they who know better than the experts, exactly where the shoe pinches. Secondly, it turns out that people are really not as ignorant as the experts take them to be, at least in matters related directly to their activities. Particularly for agrarian societies like India where the majority of the people are involved in primary production, their informal knowledge accumulated over centuries of practical experience has its own built-in reliability and viability (Shiva & Bandyopadhyay, 1981, p. 114).

"Such a reliance on exogenous knowledge betrays a paternalistic assumption in current development theories and the insensitivity of such theories to local beliefs, local values, and local expectations. It also tends to build resistance among local peoples to the adoption of 'foreign' ideas, even when such ideas have face validity" (Awa, 1989). Participatory Research and PE view the participants as actors in the process of knowledge-generation and not merely as objects of the study (Tandon, 1981a, p. 20). Most of the authors link the concept of knowledge-generation and the reclamation of indigenous knowledge as a political act because "knowledge is power" (Hall, 1978; Bogaert et al, 1981).

Acevedo (1992), discussing the principles of Popular Education, points out that "the educator may have a more systematic knowledge, but the community has experiential knowledge (*vivencias*) and both of them are equally important" (p. 36).

Tandon (1981a) asserts that more trust should be placed in the knowledge of the

community. Bryceson et al. (1982) also insist that indigenous knowledge be respected.

So, what is indigenous knowledge? Indigenous knowledge is local knowledge, knowledge which is unique to a given culture or society. This is in direct contrast to knowledge which has been generated by outside organizations such as universities, private research groups, or commercial enterprises. According to Warren (1991), indigenous knowledge "is the basis for local-level decision-making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities," and "provides the basis for group decision-making and the generation of new knowledge and technologies when current problems and how to cope with them are discussed" (p. 1).

Brokensha and Riley (1980) suggest that,

Anyone who seeks to change the social and economic system of any people should first carefully examine existing indigenous knowledge and beliefs because: a) even if most beliefs proved to be empirically unverifiable, it would still be courteous, and efficacious, to find out what people believe, before trying to persuade them to adopt new beliefs; b) in fact, Mbeere [ethnic group in Kenya] and other folk-belief systems contain much that is based on extremely accurate, detailed and thoughtful observations, made over many generations. . . . The point here is that accumulated familiarity and shared experience gives advantage to indigenous rather than to exotic evaluations; they undoubtedly have something to teach us; c) third, any innovation should be built on what is already there (pp. 114-115).

One of Brokensha and Riley's (1980) other points is that development workers, researchers, and evaluation facilitators should make use of this wealth of indigenous knowledge when planning development programs (p. 129). Awa (1989)

refers to indigenous knowledge as subjective knowledge, concerned with "the environment and the social and economic structure, religious beliefs, needs, expectations, and all other types of knowledge that 'make sense' to the individual and his or her community" (p. 309).

Although these are often the very focus of community development work, or at least a facet within the multi-factor process, indigenous knowledge is an essential element in participatory development, however, "[indigenous knowledge] is not a panacea for all development ills" (Awa, 1989, p. 311).

As a starting point, Hellinger et al (1987) emphasize the need to build upon what already exists in a given culture, rather than substituting imported technical knowledge for local skills (p. 34). In addition to building upon existing skills and knowledge, Hall (1981) suggests that the outside researcher is also helping to develop an "*indigenous* capacity for collective analysis and action and the generation of new knowledge by the people concerned" [emphasis in original] (p. 10).

By investigating local indigenous knowledge, the development worker can come to a different understanding of the local situation which would otherwise escape their notice (Servaes & Arnst, 1992). Furthermore, understanding of indigenous knowledge can also help change agents (especially external change agents) to better communicate with the local people and enable them to work in partnership with the local people (Brokensha & Riley, 1980; Warren, 1991), and "speak each other's language" (Awa, 1989).

According to Rahman (1993), "The assertion of people's indigenous culture and the use of its positive elements as a developmental force are salient features of African grassroots mobilisation" (p.7).

In order to uncover and make use of indigenous knowledge, it is necessary for the evaluator to allow the participants to formulate the questions to be asked and allow the data gathering to be carried out using qualitative, as well as quantitative methods. Merryfield (1985) states that the needs and abilities of the local people should shape the evaluation process since they are themselves the center of the evaluation. This will further increase ownership of the evaluation—as noted in the first category—and empower them by putting them in control of improving their lives.

Patton (1985) notes the difficulty of doing evaluation in one's own country, and poses the question: "what happens when we export the ideas, concepts, models, methods, and values of evaluation to other countries and cultures?" (p. 2).

Furthermore, Merryfield (1985) reports from her interviews of 26 evaluators who have worked internationally, that the "reality of a development program is viewed through cultural lenses" (p.7), further implying that evaluators should be culturally sensitive and realize that the application of Western methods of evaluation in non-Western settings may create problems. Hence, the need for joint exploration of indigenous knowledge in the evaluation process.

Finally, as evaluators and participants in the evaluation process join together to prepare the presentation of evaluation results, they are better able to jointly assess the program and make decisions concerning future action (Feuerstein, 1986).

Furthermore, the community learning process which takes place in PE leads to more interest and more commitment to future plans for the community (Feuerstein, 1986). Hopefully, the end result of the learning process and joint exploration of indigenous knowledge in PE can be summed up as they were by the women in a PE workshop facilitated by Feuerstein (1978b):

"We did not want an evaluation that we would not understand, and that would not help us to understand our problems, like just answering questionnaires. . . . Our evaluation is very important because in all the years we have worked we have never so clearly seen the value of our work" (p. 105).

### Contexts and Conditions for Participatory Evaluation

In order for PE to attain its goals of promoting the use of evaluative processes which assist communities to take control of their own social reality, improving development program effectiveness through local control of the development process, and transformation of social reality in favor of the poor, then one must be aware of the context in which the use of PE is being promoted. Additionally, one must also be aware of the various preconditions which can affect attainment of these goals. Among these are the cultural-socio-political environment, the attitude of the evaluator, and the role played by the evaluator.

#### Preconditions

Understanding the cultural-socio-political environment in which the promotion of PE is being proposed is essential if participation is desired. "We need to recognize and appreciate that participation in any form—training, research,

evaluation, or development—cannot be promoted without reference to prevailing socio-cultural and political conditions" (Campos, 1990, p. 202). Cohen and Uphoff (1977) also included physical and biological factors, economic factors, and historical factors in their list of factors of which one should be aware. To this list, Uphoff (1991) implicitly adds an educational factor when he takes into account the literacy and numeracy skills of a community in which he was promoting the use of PE.

It is important to know the political context in which the evaluator will be working. As Tandon (1981a) points out, "research in social settings has always been political. It either maintains, explains or justifies the *status quo* or questions it" (p. 33). This is not to avoid stepping on somebody's toes, but to be aware of who's toes may get stepped on in the evaluation process and to assess the consequences of such action. Furthermore, "Deep social cleavages and other structural factors often explain why more development activity has not been undertaken. Approaches to participation need to proceed from an understanding of this fact, and to circumvent or allow for its effects, if possible" (Uphoff et al., 1979, p. 30). In other words, although PE is not inherently confrontational, the evaluator should know that it *may* involve confrontation with existing power structures.

The evaluator should also look for any existing local community organizations which could be used as an initial contact point in the community and as a potential vehicle for broadening the base of participation (Uphoff et al., 1979). Further inquiry into the longevity of such organizations and of their inclusiveness by asking such questions as "who participates?" and "who's in control?" is also

appropriate. Moreover, are there specific cultural ways of participating which are different from the Western perception of participation, which are equally effective (Cohen and Uphoff, 1977)?

Most communities have a variety of indigenous organizations through which group decision-making takes place. Frequently these organizations can be invisible to the outsider involved in a development effort. By identifying these organizations and understanding their structures and functions, development projects can determine if it is better to work with and through existing organizations or to develop new ones to help carry out project goals and objectives. Working through existing associations can be important first steps towards participatory decision-making in a development project (Warren, 1991, p. 5).

The cultural context of the community in which PE may be promoted is another important factor to examine, especially if it is to be used in non-Western settings. Cuthbert (1985), concerned about Western evaluators working in Third World countries, states that "Unfamiliarity with a specific cultural context makes it much more difficult for the perceptions of outside evaluators to reflect reality" (p. 30). Maclure and Bassey (1991) further insist that "If it is not rooted in existing cultural mores, participation is likely to be a meaningless exercise—at least in a form that a professional researcher might expect or hope for" (p. 203).

In order to become familiar with the culture and to avoid making PE a meaningless exercise, the evaluator should ask the following questions: How might language or the presence of multiple languages affect the evaluation process? How does the community view direct questioning and open dialogue? Does the community leader insist on answering for the community? How is the participation of women promoted or inhibited? Is it inappropriate to answer questions with a



direct answer? Do people answer what they think the questioner wants to hear in order to be polite? (Merryfield, 1985; Maclure and Bassey, 1991). These are questions which need to be explored by anyone interested in using PE.

Furthermore, the outside evaluator needs to be in-tune with the local culture in order to be a useful tool in the PE process (Comings, 1979, p. 50). Being in-tune with the culture is essential, if one is to appropriately facilitate evaluation methodologies which are "largely participatory, processual and continuously negotiated" (Kalumba, 1982, p. 6). This kind of immersion encourages the kind of partnership between the outside evaluation facilitator and the participants which is essential for effective evaluation (de Negri, 1988, p. 68).

In addition to consideration of the cultural-socio-political environment in which PE is proposed, the *attitude of the evaluator* towards the community and towards participation of the community in evaluation is another factor which can influence PE. If we take to heart Hall's (1975) admonition of getting closer to the community instead of trying to invent a better stethoscope, then the evaluator will be able to better understand the reality of the community. Swantz (1982), discussing the implications of external researcher/evaluator understanding or not understanding the community, states that "There can be no true participation unless there is genuine understanding, or at least striving for understanding, of the living forms and concepts of reality of the people who are incorporated in research" (p. 124). Hardiman (1986) also concludes that "understanding the community is an essential ingredient" (p. 57).

In order to have a genuine understanding of culture, Weiss (1986a) notes that the evaluator must become immersed in the local community. Acevedo (1992) also advocates a horizontal relationship with the community, in order to be a truly effective facilitator in the participatory process. In order for this to take place, several authors stress the importance of participating in the life of the local people (Bugnicourt, 1982; Pagaduan & Ferrer, 1983; Campos, 1990)

Unfortunately, as noted by Ferencic (1991),

Outside evaluators are often not familiar enough with the program to know where the main problems are, which aspects need evaluation, and where to look for the answers. They often do not spend enough time with the project and even more often do not recognize all the difficulties that the staff had to surmount to accomplish all that has occurred (p. 3).

However, as Campos (1990) discovered, the participation of the external evaluator cannot be limited solely to the evaluation process, but should also extend to any task at hand, including perhaps, cleaning the toilet:

This example of shared household work is significant in that it demonstrated respect for the trainees as equals. If participatory evaluation research claims to work towards relinquishing positions of detachment, power, and control yet participatory evaluation researchers only do that in their heads and not in their hearts or with their hands how will they come to share power and control in the more formal aspect of a PE effort (p. 106)?

It is only through the sharing of such acts of daily living that the mutual respect necessary to carry out PE can be established. When the outside evaluator has participated in the daily life of the local people, then s/he is in a better position to offer to facilitate the learning which is possible through PE.

This kind of participation in everyday life which goes beyond simple physical help, extends into the heart of the people, their thoughts, and their spirituality. Only by living with the people, and becoming immersed in their everyday life, can the evaluator become attuned to the participants' reality—the reality beyond the physical/material poverty in which the participants find themselves (Campos, 1990).

Pagaduan and Ferrer (1983), found this to be true in their work in *Makapawa*, a health program in the Philippines;

To make research more participative, evocative and educative, the integration of the facilitators and researchers with the participants is of great importance. This refers not simply to physical integration, but rather to solid identification with the basic interests of the people. Without this sort of partisanship the essentials in the people's struggle for change cannot be fully grasped. What is needed is an ability to assess the people's knowledge and ways and feed them back at their own level of political awareness. For this to occur involvement with the people is required, in their work, problems, and way of life (p. 158).

Only with this depth of relationship can the evaluator facilitate the PE process and help the community to explore and define their problems, design appropriate data-collection methods, analyze their own reality, and use the outcomes of the evaluation for future planning (Brown, 1985; Feuerstein, 1988).

Another essential attitude which needs examination pertains to the issue of control. "While many people in development may be ready to share responsibility, there are few who are ready to share power" (Feuerstein, 1988, p. 16). To share power means an explicit decision by the external evaluator to do so.

As pointed out earlier, Campos struggled with the issue of control. Eventually, she began her dissertation study without any research question in order

to make a deliberate attempt at relinquishing control and promoting a sense of collaboration. She found that "taking this risk proved to be the cornerstone of making the inquiry authentically participatory" (Campos, 1990, p. 121). Moreover, she concluded that "if participatory evaluation is rooted in peoples' problems then any tentative agenda [of the researcher] must risk being changed or abandoned in the face of peoples' immediate needs and the limiting factors of the field" (p. 103).

Similarly, according to Gerber's (1991) explanation of the radical humanist paradigm of community development:

The community developer must be willing to give up the control of the process, in order for the participants to discover their own power-from-within. . . . Most community developers are afraid to give up control . . . it's safer for them . . . In the end, if the community developers do give up control . . . their chances are immensely improved that the community members will carry out a successful community development program (p. 42).

Green and Isley (1988) found that previous positive experience with participatory development was a precondition for subsequent favorable participatory efforts: "People who have had unpleasant experiences, especially those involving locally-contributed funds that have been lost or misused, will be quite resistant to new efforts to induce their participation. However, those with successful previous experiences are usually more receptive to new efforts" (p. 164).

Another interesting possible precondition for PE is suggested by Sen (1987) in his work with NGOs: "Usually a critical self-evaluation exercise is undertaken when an organization faces a crisis. The possibility of triggering a crisis which

would force an NGO to critically look at itself is one mechanism for initiating a process of self-evaluation" (p. 163).

Finally, Bugnicourt (1982) states that there are traditional forms of participation in the African cultures with which he has had contact; he suggests that often these traditional forms of participation have eroded in modern life, but that perhaps their resurrection could be a useful tool for participatory development (p. 76).

### The Role of the Evaluator

The role of the evaluator in PE is multi-faceted. Reflecting on her role as she worked with Guatemalan community development workers, Campos (1990) states, "The image I hold when I think about a participatory evaluator as researcher is a composite of educator, social change agent, partner, catalyst, and confidant. This image is in contrast to the more popular one of the evaluator as interrogator or judge" (pp. 185-186). In addition to this list, many others have underscored the prominent role of the evaluator as facilitator (Acevedo, 1992; Chand & Soni, 1981; Dinan, 1980; D'Abreo, 1981; Feuerstein, 1988; Kurien, 1991; Mukkath & de Magry, 1981; Srinivasan, 1981; Tilakartna, 1991; Zacharakis-Jutz & Gajenayake, 1991).

According to Feuerstein (1988), "The 'teacher' in a participatory evaluation process is both a 'learner' and a 'researcher'. In such a process the task of the researcher becomes not to produce knowledge but to facilitate the construction of knowledge by the community itself" (p. 23). This requires that the researcher enter

the community, not as an expert with all the answers, but rather as a learner (Campos, 1990, p. 94). Again, others have also accentuated the role of the evaluator as a learner (Mukkath & de Magry, 1981) or as a co-learner (Brown, 1985; Zacharakis-Jutz & Gajenayake, 1991).

This combination of roles points to the importance of being in a horizontal relationship with the other evaluation participants. In this way the evaluator can act "as a facilitator and supporter of processes like collective learning, recovery of popular history and culture, and transformation of reality, undertaken by the [communities]" (Acevedo, 1992, p. 36). In order for this to take place, several authors have stressed the importance of identifying with the people by participating in their lives, as discussed previously (Campos, 1990; Pagaduan & Ferrer, 1983). By making a subjective commitment to the local people, the external evaluator rejects the notion of value-neutrality and, consequently, his/her presence as a mere tool or technician (Bryceson et al., 1982; Galjart, 1981).

As Solomon (1992) reflects upon her research experience in Cape Verde working among marginally urban women, her role as "researcher-helper" did not happen over night through any decision of her own, rather it emerged slowly as she became a solid, trusted part of the community.

According to Pagaduan and Ferrer (1983), one of the difficulties they experienced when trying to do PE was not so much with the community as with themselves and their initial inability to let go of the evaluation process and allow it to become a tool for the community. In this respect, instead of seeking to arrive at

a greater understanding of the community themselves, they began to see their role as:

Provok[ing] the people into asking more questions and obtaining a better understanding of their own socio-economic conditions. Such a method would thereby raise their collective level of consciousness and unleash the impetus towards more massive and organized developmental activities (p. 149).

Tilakartna (1991) has also found in his review of various grassroots experiences in developing countries, that a spirit of self-reliance has often been found lying dormant in the people, and only needed appropriate stimulation in order to move the community to action.

Feuerstein (1988) points out that the role of the evaluator can be more than just encouraging the local people to look critically at their own reality; the evaluator can also bring in other perspectives, experiences, and perceptions into the discussion (Charyulu & Seetharam, 1990; Kurien, 1993). Perhaps this is the outside evaluator's greatest contribution to the activity of PE in the community. Feuerstein (1988) adds, "There can be areas which local people either forget to look at, or do not want to look at. An outsider can play an important role by asking the right kind of questions and providing useful insights into dealing with dilemmas and uncertainties" (p. 23). The "outsider" is able to see things from a different angle, and identify and illuminate problems that the people wouldn't bring up themselves.

In the case where development projects already exist in a community and the project staff or the funding agency wants to employ PE, Srinivasan (1981) points out that once the change process (ie., consciousness-raising) has begun, the people will

want to or can be encouraged to want to evaluate the development project for themselves.

In addition to facilitating the evaluation process and supporting collective learning which leads to the production of knowledge useful to the community, Tilakartna (1981) stresses that there must also be an effort to facilitate "the emergence of a group of internal (community) cadres who possess the skills to animate their fellow men and women . . . and to progressively reduce the dependence on external cadres" (p. 142). Thus, only by taking a back seat and allowing the local people to make their own decisions, will they be enabled and allowed to become the change-agents of their own communities, a role which they alone can properly fulfill (Chand & Soni, 1981).

Finally, I would propose that there are three possible reactions by the community to PE and/or the presence of an outside evaluator/researcher/facilitator:

- 1) either the community will view the outsider as being attuned to and being in solidarity with the community, such that they are encouraged to examine their own reality, resulting in a raised collective consciousness which leads to *collective community action*, or
- 2) the community will view the outsider as an alternative source of funding for solving the problems of local community (or personal) development projects, thus leading to *dependency*, or
- 3) the community views the presence of the outsider with *ambivalence* because of their inability to act as a result of the consciousness raising which has taken place in the course of the PE process.



## Some Cautionary Notes

What some people have called PE is *not* always the real thing. We will be looking at participation as mere cooperation, participation as an ends or as a means, the question of representation of the poor in participation, and the cost of participation.

It is necessary to examine what is meant by "participation". The concept of participation has often been distorted and reduced to mere "cooperation". Uphoff (1988) states, "participation in evaluation, if planned and controlled by outsiders and intended basically to meet outsiders' requirements, does not qualify as meaningful 'participatory evaluation'" [emphasis in original] (p. 2). Several other authors also recognize the pitfall of being satisfied with mere cooperation (Comings, 1979; Walker, 1991) and remind us that participation in PE/PR must go beyond participation (Corcega, 1992).

As a further example of cooperation versus participation, Acevedo (1988) quotes a Pan-American Health Association paper of 1984 reporting on some case studies in primary health care of eight Latin American and Caribbean countries which states, "'Community Participation is almost always considered by health system planners and administrators as a means of resolving problems of service delivery by the system to the community, rather than as a process for enabling the community to resolve its own problems in its own way, with support and assistance from the health system'" (p. 10).

Acevedo (1988) further contends that one must look into the power relationships between and within institutions and communities, reassess the role of

popular culture and indigenous knowledge in these institutions and communities, and finally recognize any socio-economic and political constraints that might limit participation in any given project.

In addition to the use of participation as a convenience to the existing power structure or to its benefit, Srinivasan (1981) points out that often it is only the leaders of communities which participate in evaluation as opposed to the weaker segments of the population which need to be explicitly included. She also points out that the evaluator needs to be aware of this possible scenario and further warns that "If evaluation does not question this leadership role, then it can become instrumental in strengthening the existing exploitative order by providing the external leaders or internal leaders with better ways of continuing their domination" (p. 68).

The idea of the relationship between power and cooperation was also expressed by Bugnicourt (1982):

If one wishes to limit the participation of the population only to the execution of tasks, there is very little chance of obtaining real adhesion and longevity. If one accepts that participation expresses itself from the level of conception and manifests itself again at the level of control, then one should accept to share certain elements of power (p. 81).

Several evaluation researchers have warned that PE involves a considerable amount of time and effort (Vella, 1979; Galjart, 1981; Singh, 1981; Rifkin, 1985; Cooper & Hewitt, 1989; Davis-Case, 1989; Walker, 1991; Solomon, 1992). However, it not only involves the time and effort of the facilitator, but also considerable time and effort by the participants themselves (Feuerstein, 1986; Maclure & Bassey, 1991). Maclure and Bassey (1991) noted that in the evaluation

of development projects with which they were associated, that participation often carries with it a cost which must be born by the local people which often disallows the participation of the poorer segment of the local population: "Time is not a luxury and, for many of them, the days consigned to the participatory research exercise meant a calculated relinquishment of some personal and more profitable concern. . . . It was notable that those who did participate generally had larger landholdings than most of their neighbors" (pp. 198-199).

The financial cost of an evaluation is only one of its costs. Evaluation should also be costed in terms of the amount of effort and labour put in by the people involved.

In many development programmes people often work long hours, either as voluntary workers or for minimal pay. No financial cost is usually estimated for this kind of labour.

In order to estimate correctly the costs of participatory evaluation this kind of time and effort should also be included (Feuerstein, 1986, p. 18).

Another danger to which evaluators should be made alert is that just because a project is locally based does not mean that it represents the majority (Acevedo, 1988, 1992). Acevedo (1992) states, "it is essential to recognize that communities are not homogeneous entities, they are composed of disparate groups with different interests and problems. Awareness of internal contradictions creates the need to identify how local power structures affect participation" (p. 168).<sup>8</sup> Moreover, evaluators need to try to identify and change factors that prevent participation (Acevedo, 1988). One of the major goals of PE is to find ways to encourage the participation of the poorer, weaker segments of the local population in the evaluation process (Srinivasan, 1981; Tandon, 1981a).

Unfortunately, as Midgley (1986a) notes, "Although the poorest groups are in the majority, they are the least influential and seldom able to express their views. Their powerlessness is often conveniently interpreted as passivity and indifference but the real problem is the lack of opportunity for their direct involvement" (p. 9).

How one looks at participation—as merely an ends or as a means—affects the evaluation process (Cohen & Uphoff, 1977). Later, Uphoff et al. (1979), concludes that participation is not just an ends, but is also more than a means and has a value in and of itself. Hapgood (1969) warns that "small amounts of local participation may not provide meaningful participation either as a means or an ends. . . . [and] can be looked upon by the power structure as a means of diverting pressures into low priority areas" (p. 105). In other words, participation may be seen merely as a way of placating the local population, thereby diverting attention from the injustices being carried out by the existing power structure.

If the local socio-economic and political power structure is supportive of local empowerment and self-determination, PR and PE have much to offer the local community. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. In many Third World countries, repressive regimes block much of the development work which focuses on the empowerment of the local people. "Commitment to the interests of local participants often requires challenging oppressive political and social arrangements, so outside researchers often take political positions beside their local colleagues" (Brown, 1985, p. 70).

There are risks for the development worker who is committed to the ideal of community empowerment. Campos (1990) cautions that the promotion of PE and

participatory community development work should not be done without taking into account the prevailing socio-cultural and political conditions of the locale. There may be a resultant danger—sometimes life-threatening—for both the evaluation facilitator and the local people. "In some cases, even when people have been enlightened about their domination the conditions surrounding their lives may counter their efforts and they may be forced to ignore these possibilities and, thus, fail to risk doing anything about them to change them" (Campos, 1990, p. 198).

In addition to these socio-political factors which need to be taken into account, the issue of possible dependency on an outside evaluator may also be an unanticipated result in spite of the people-centered, participatory methodology. Campos (1990) experienced this in Guatemala and reported the following incident during her research:

My intention as a researcher in a cultural setting other than my own was a simple one: to promote a sense of self-determination through reflective thinking. However, my presence there as a foreigner with the obvious means and leisure time to travel to Guatemala to "study" sometimes subverted the original intention by putting me in a special and undesired category. For example, a first major disappointment came early in the field phase when one of the participants with whom I had established a friendship during stateside training asked me how much I was prepared to pay him for his participation--a legitimate, yet, surprising question. Even after I pleaded "poverty" he continued to rely on what he perceived as my easy access to U.S. funding sources as an alternative solution to his community related problems (p. 186).

Having been involved in development work for 10 years, I have seen this scenario repeat itself often. Campos (1990) warns, "the well-intentioned outsider must be wary of inadvertently promot[ing] a sense of temporary or long-term

dependency for individuals accustomed to living on the brink of desperation" (p. 188).

In the end, the community may do nothing in response to their PE experience or the outside evaluator/researcher's efforts at encouraging the consciousness raising of the community. There may be too high a "price" to pay for collective change.

Finally, Rahman (1993) points out that:

Development, meaning development of peoples and societies, is an organic process of healthy growth and application of the creative faculties. This process may be stimulated and facilitated by external elements, but any attempt to force it towards external standards can only result in maiming it. *Development is endogenous*—there are no "front runners" to be followed. One can be impressed, inspired by others' achievements, but any attempt to emulate could at best produce a carbon copy in which the originality of a creative social life and evolution would be lost [emphasis in original] (p.217).

### A Brief Typology of Participatory Evaluation

There are several different methodological approaches for doing PE. Some of these methods have been presented as "how to" lists, others have been presented as exact recipes in order to standardize the practice of PE. Still other methodologies have been presented with various options as to the nature of participation that can be asked for or expected from local participants. I have proposed three categories of methodologies: 1) No Preconceived Research Question, 2) Participation-in-Evaluation, and 3) Standardized Methodologies.

## Standardized Methodologies

Norman Uphoff, a well known academician and practitioner in both rural development and communication, worked with the People's Participation Programme (in Sri Lanka) of the Food and Agriculture Organization. With initial work beginning in Sri Lanka in 1988, and culminating with more recent evaluation experiences, Uphoff (1991) proposes a new participatory evaluation methodology which has the "advantage" of being standardized (p. 272).

His methodology consists of a flexible list of about 80 different base questions. From this list of questions, the evaluation team—comprised of village members—chooses a dozen to two dozen questions for group discussion. The community, or various sub-groups of the community, is organized to meet and discuss the questions. They are requested to respond by indicating that they agree with one of four standard multiple choice answers. Agreement takes the form of consensus. The questions and their four given responses are like the following example:

Which of the following statements best describes member's participation in the group?

- (a) *All* members participate in meetings . . .
- (b) *Most* members . . .
- (c) *Some* members . . .
- (d) *Few* members . . .

This pattern of having four alternatives is repeated in all of the self-evaluation questions (Uphoff, 1991, p. 273).

According to Uphoff (1991), the advantages include the standardization of methodology, as well as being self-educative, self-improving, and providing a method whereby the progress of programs can be monitored more easily. He states that the answers aren't as important as the discussion and the process of reaching consensus on which answer is most correct for them as a community. Other advantages include the necessity of only one literate member on the evaluation team, and the additional information that can be gained by numerically scoring the results of each question as an aid in the analysis of the community.

Unfortunately, standardization is a two-edged sword. The major disadvantage of the method proposed by Uphoff is the risk that people will use the method as a recipe and focus on the numerical results of the process rather than the interactive community discussion that is more important to growth in the community as a result of the evaluation process. Another disadvantage is his underestimation of the amount of time involved in carrying out such a questionnaire-discussion process.<sup>9</sup>

Another possible risk in the consensus process is brought up by Acevedo (1992) in his work in *Popular Education*:

It is not enough to adopt a permissive attitude towards opinions expressed by the group, nor to apply certain techniques which encourage everyone to speak up in classes or workshops. It is also necessary to promote the critical confrontation of different opinions expressed by participants and trainers, and not to simply try to achieve consensus as soon as possible. Consensus too often represents the opinion of the more daring and the a-critical retreat of the more retiring members of the group (pp. 73-74).



Without a certain watchfulness by the group or the facilitator during the consensus process, Acevedo maintains that there is a risk of domination by the more vocal members of the community. Therefore, he raises the following question: "To what extent, using participatory techniques, are we recreating practices of domination and indoctrination" (Acevedo, 1992, p. 74)? This is an important question which those in the various participatory development fields have to ask about their programs.

### Participation-in-Evaluation

The category Participation-in-Evaluation (PiE) is really a catch-all for all the methodologies which encourage varying degrees of participation of the local people in the evaluation process. These range from those methodologies which are minimally participatory to those which lack some essential element to really make it PE. First, we will look at the various purposes of evaluation and their implications on participation, as described by Kinsey (1981). Then we will look at the work of Feuerstein (1986) and Taylor (1991).

Kinsey (1981) describes the evaluation process as having six different purposes which he further groups into "soft" methodologies and "hard" methodologies: 1) descriptive analysis, 2) reactions and opinions, 3) problem identification and assessment, 4) KAS change assessment, 5) behavioral change assessment, 6) social impact assessment. According to Kinsey (1981), only the first three levels really allow the use of more participatory methods ("soft" methodologies), thus, the "hard" methodologies are left to the professional evaluator

by default. The methodologies used in the first three levels are often "generally focused on learners-as-informants and characteristically do not provide for roles in planning and identifying what is to be assessed, or in contributing to the analysis of evaluation results" (Kinsey, 1981, p. 165). As such, this type of participation tends to be merely cooperation.

Feuerstein (1986) has allowed for participation in all the various tasks of evaluation (she lists 10 steps), from planning the evaluation, to carrying out the data analysis, to preparing the presentation of the final report—oral, pictorial, dramatization, and/or written (pp. x-xi). She contends that in traditional evaluation, even though local people may have helped to collect data, they played no part in analyzing it and often did not know why it was being collected (Feuerstein, 1986, p. 8). She further states that, in PE, "by taking part in analysing and reporting the results of evaluation, participants gain a deeper understanding of programme progress, strengths and weaknesses. They can see where and why changes are needed, and can plan how to put them into practice" (Feuerstein, 1986, p. 15). Even if the data is eventually destined for further analysis by computer, Feuerstein (1986) maintains the importance of at least the initial analysis taking place in the field (p. 21).

The evaluation process begins with the participants' involvement in planning the proposed evaluation process. Feuerstein (1986) stresses the importance of knowing the programme objectives before beginning the evaluation; "Sufficient time should be taken for this important exercise as it can reveal differences of opinion, help to clear confused thinking, develop a common purpose between those who will

be involved in the evaluation, and provide a better pattern for the future development of the programme" (p. 23).

Although Feuerstein (1988) tends to look at evaluation from a more traditional approach, such as the use of questionnaires, she also allows for the use of qualitative research methods (p. 21). However, since she is still interested in some of the more quantitative approaches *and* maintaining a participatory approach to evaluation, she insists that quantitative approaches should be adapted to the traditional numeracy skills of the community (Feuerstein, 1988, p. 22).

I place Feuerstein in the category of PiE because she appears to maintain control of the evaluation process. Although she includes the local people in the planning of the evaluation process, and although she encourages participation in every evaluation task, I still get the impression that she (or the funding agency) decides the question to be evaluated. This key element keeps me from assigning it to PE in the true sense.

Finally, Taylor's (1991) report on the "participatory evaluation" in which he took part among NGO's in Ethiopia, also falls within the category of PiE. The evaluation which he describes was done by program staff of the development program being evaluated, facilitated by Taylor. They reviewed the strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as the options available for future development work. The final product of the evaluation—an evaluation which had been requested by the external donor agency—was a report which "proved an effective tool for promoting continued reflection as well as detailed forward planning on a whole range of development activities in the area" (Taylor, 1991, p. 11). Although the

methodology used was very participatory, encouraging and facilitating the participation of all levels of the local program staff, because the evaluation concerned development work, I believe that there was a crucial element missing: the beneficiaries of the development program—the local people—were not included in the evaluation process.

### No Preconceived Research Question

Campos (1990) presented the most liberal of the PE approaches studied. She entered the field with no specific question and began her dissertation research work in Guatemala by contacting former trainees of workshops she had led in the United States. She hoped to use PE as a method of post-training evaluation. These contacts were informal in nature to begin with and the evaluation questions emerged as a result of the collaborative effort of a stationary group of former trainees in the area in which she settled for the four month research time and by the joint exploration of the informal contacts made with other former trainees in the outlying areas of Guatemala.

As Campos (1990) reports, entering the field without a question seemed almost suicidal at the time, but:

Taking that risk was a deliberate attempt to relinquish control in order to promote a sense of collaboration and to ensure the conditions by which the Guatemalans could steer the course of our interaction in a direction that addressed their immediate needs. Taking this risk proved to be the cornerstone of making the inquiry authentically participatory (p. 121).

The emergent design of her PE study makes it the one model which most nearly resembles the ideal methodology proposed in PE literature.

### Further Benefits of Participatory Evaluation

Many attributes of PE have been presented thus far in this chapter. It has been mentioned that PE encourages inquiry based on local problems, that it is learning process for both the evaluation facilitator and the local participants, and as such, PE is a people-centered process. As a result of this process, the local participants are encouraged to take control of the evaluation, resulting in increased self-confidence and self-reliance. However, I would like to add several other additional benefits which result from the process of PE.

Taylor (1991) notes from his evaluation experience in Ethiopia, that the field staff of the development projects under the Norwegian Lutheran Church, became more aware of what they already knew. This helped to increase their competence and build their confidence in the use of the PE process for future evaluation exercises. According to Taylor (1991), an unforeseen result of the PE was that it initiated an on-going reflection and dialogue about development work with other NGO's working in the area (pp. 11-12). Any process which brings people together for dialogue, especially among various NGO's with their differing development philosophies, is a welcome result.

The local field staff of a development project are sort of at an intermediary level between evaluation experts and the local grassroots people. More important than the development of skills and confidence of the field staff in PE is the

promotion of self-reliance and self-determination among the local people (Feuerstein, 1988). Brown (1985) concludes that, "Although it provides no panacea, participatory research can offer a promising tool for promoting people-centered development in political and economic systems that encourage local empowerment" (p. 75). Campos (1990) echoes this sentiment in the following reflection about PE:

The need for this type of evaluation was based on the predominance of traditional evaluation procedures which are often so broad in scope that they fail to acknowledge the complexity and problematic concerns of the lives of the people being evaluated. While this study does not purport to offer PE as a panacea it has shown that PE as a research method can be used as a valuable tool for providing post-training reinforcement while generating critical insights of particular educational activities in development (pp. 195-196).

As stated previously, another benefit of PE is that although the results may be less than perfect, they will be more useable because they are people-centered (Feuerstein, 1986, 1988). Additionally, Feuerstein (1986) has noted that the local people, with limited literacy skills, have been able to produce the kind of papers which are required by certain government, development, and funding agencies, even a 60 page paper.

Furthermore, the PE process results in an increase in the interest and ability of the local people to jointly examine the results of their own development work and plan future actions based on those results (Feuerstein, 1986).

In order to identify strengths in the community and capitalize on them, to identify weaknesses and avoid them in the future, and to improve community development work in general, evaluation is necessary. Hellinger et al. (1987) point out that,

Since development is a human process, new knowledge and understanding of its dynamics must be based upon the experience of those most directly involved. Thus, the meaningful participation of intended beneficiaries in self-learning and evaluative processes is of crucial importance both to their own development process and to external attempts to understand that process and more effectively support it (p. 35).

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The models listed are the ones most closely associated with or influential in the development of PE. For a more complete list of alternative paradigm research models, see Rowan, J. (1981). A dialectical paradigm for research. In P. Reason & J. Rowan (Eds.), *Human inquiry: A sourcebook of new paradigm research*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of this confusion can be illustrated by Levin's (1980) following question: "Is there any real difference between research called action research and participative research?" (p.106). Also, Tandon and Brown (1985) were co-researchers in a small farmer study in rural India; Tandon reports on their activity as *participatory evaluation*, while Brown refers to it as *participatory research*.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of use in educational settings, see Hodgkinson (1957), Kemis & McTaggart (1988), Moulton & Kinsey (1980).

<sup>4</sup> For examples of use in development settings, see Kemis & McTaggart (1988), Moulton & Kinsey (1980). During the 1970s and 1980s, there is much overlap in the usage of the terms *action research*, *participatory action research*, and *participatory research*, especially in the field of community development. In my opinion, much of what was being called action research in community development literature would now be called participatory action research.

<sup>5</sup> This is a synthesis of Brown, 1985; Brown & Tandon, 1983; Fernandes & Tandon, 1981; Freire, 1970; Hall, 1978, 1981; Lather, 1986, 1991; Mulkath & Magry, 1981; Park, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Almost all authors in community development concur on the aspect of decision-making as part of the participatory process (Rifkin, 1985, 1990; Rifkin, Muller, & Bichmann, 1988; Stone, 1989; Bugnicourt, 1982; de Negri, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> For more discussion on the political nature of participatory processes, see Acevedo, 1990, 1992; Bugnicourt, 1982; Brown, 1985; Hall, 1978; Hellinger et al., 1987; Kassam, 1980; Park, 1993; Shiva & Bandyopadhyay, 1981; Simkins, 1977; Srinivasan, 1981; Tandon, 1981; Uphoff et al., 1979; Walker, 1991; Whitmore, 1988; Vella, 1979.

<sup>8</sup> This is corroborated by Cohen and Uphoff (1977).

<sup>9</sup> Uphoff (1991) predicts that the process of discussion of each question to arrive at a consensus of the best possible answer for the community is about 15 minutes. If there are typically from 12 - 24 questions, the process will then take from three to six hours. In my experience, it would take much longer than this; people don't have the time to give unless it is divided into more than one meeting.



## CHAPTER III

### CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND FOR THE STUDY

In order to better appreciate the findings from this study, it is necessary to have an understanding of the contexts in which they took place. Therefore, this chapter will attempt to give some background information about the Central African Republic and about the Gbaya people.

#### The Central African Republic

The Central African Republic is one of more than 50 sovereign countries on the continent of Africa. Like its surrounding neighbors, it is a former French colony whose name has gone through several changes. Currently known as the Central African Republic (CAR), the area was formerly known to Westerners at the turn of the century as the Ubangui-Shari Territory. After World War I and before independence in 1960, the area became known as *L'Afrique Équatoriale Française* [French Equatorial Africa], an area which included Tchad, Gabon, CAR, and Congo-Brazza (Zocizoum, 1984). During a brief period of time in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the country was known as the Central African Empire. This landlocked country with a population of about 2,500,000 people<sup>1</sup>, is ranked as one of the 20 poorest countries in the world (UNDP, 1991).

## Geographic Information

Lying on the Trans-African Highway, CAR covers an area of 617,000 square kilometers (380,865 square miles), comparable to the size of the state of Texas in the U.S.A. (see map in Figure 3.1 on page 89). It is situated in the heart of the continent just a few degrees north of the equator (Zoctizoum, 1984).

As in many formerly colonized areas of the world, its boundaries were arbitrarily drawn using natural landmarks such as major rivers and streams. Separated from Congo and Zaire on the south by the great Oubangui River, it also shares boundaries with Cameroun on the west, Chad on the northwest, and Sudan on the northeast.

There are three major climatic zones in the country. The ruggedly beautiful northern third of the country, bordering with Chad and Sudan, is a rocky, sandy, semi-desert area which is arable during the four month rainy season extending from mid-May through early October. A large savannah extends the whole east-west mid-section of the country at about 5 to 8 degrees north latitude. This area is richly fertile, receiving rains during about seven months of the year, from mid-April through mid-November. The remaining lower third of the country, which lies closer to the equator and in proximity to the major rivers which form its borders with Zaire and Congo, is a lush tropical rain forest.

## Socio-Economic Environment

The Central African Republic's 2.5 million people are widely scattered throughout the country; the population density is about four inhabitants per square

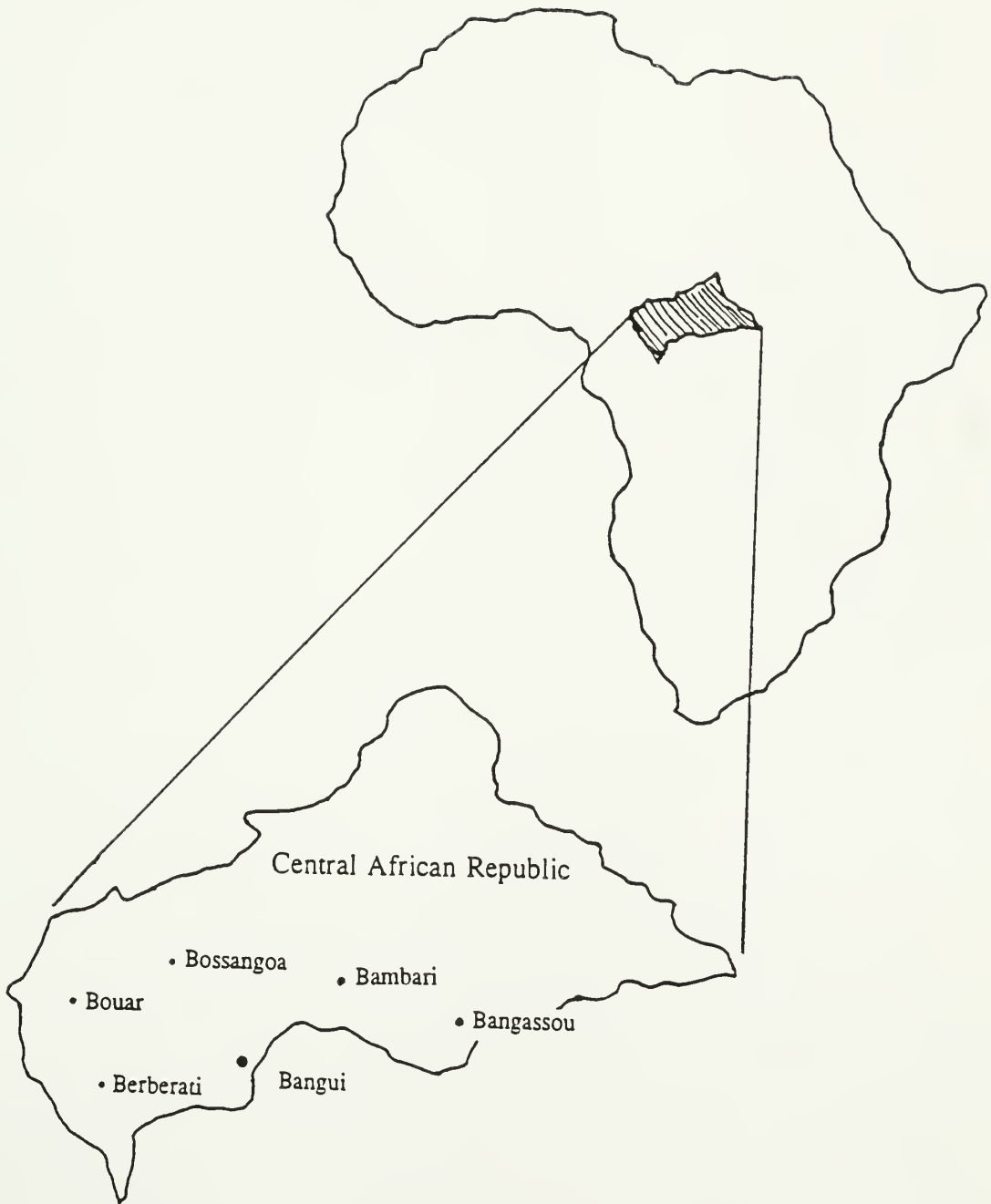


Figure 3.1 Map of Africa and the Central African Republic.

kilometer. Approximately 600,000 people live in the capital city, Bangui, which is situated on the Oubangui River, on the border with Zaire. Only five other towns have populations of more than 20,000 inhabitants: Berberati, Bangassou, Bouar, Bossangoa, and Bambari. There are no towns in the eastern third of the country with more than 5,000 inhabitants.

The People. According to Zoctizoum (1983), there are two major people groups in the country which account for about 74% of the total population of CAR. The Banda—including the M'gbougou, the Yacpa, the Langbassi, the Linda, and the Yanguéré—represent about 36% of the population; the Gbaya-Mandja represent another 38% of the population (p. 31).

Until the mid-1980's French was the official language of the country and is still used to a large extent in many government offices and for official functions. However, in 1963, in an effort to distance themselves from their former colonial ties and in order to unify the country under one African language, Sango became the official language (Kalck, 1974, p. 17). Currently, French and Sango are both used officially, however, it is my impression that Sango is quickly displacing the use of French at many official functions and in many government offices.

The unification of the population under one language has been a difficult task. There are approximately 80 distinct indigenous languages currently spoken in the country. French and Sango are considered as second and third languages for much of the population. According to Bouquiaux et al. (1978), people in large urban areas with an 800 word Sango vocabulary would be considered proficient in

Sango, whereas people in the rural areas with a 300 word Sango vocabulary would be considered proficient.

Education. At the beginning of the Second World War, after 50 years of colonial presence, only 1.5% of the population had attended school (Zoctizoum, 1984, p. 311). Despite efforts by the colonial government, including the creation of a government organization whose only concern was education, only nine people had received their *baccalauréat* [secondary school diploma] by 1954 (Zoctizoum, 1984, pp. 311-312).

According to the national census of 1988, only 54.2% of 6-14 year olds were attending school. This shows a very small increase from the 50% reported for school attendance in 1969 (Zoctizoum, 1984, p. 311). The 1988 statistics vary from prefecture to prefecture (there are 17 prefectures in the country). Bangui boasted that 90,5% of its 6-14 year olds are in school, the Nana-Mambéré—where the study takes place—reports only 37.5% of its 6-14 year olds were in school. Only one other prefecture reported lower than the Nana-Mambéré: Vakaga, in the extreme eastern area of the country, reported only 33.2% (Central African Republic, 1988).

According to Zoctizoum (1984),

The national education has known the same sort as the other social sectors. If the number of school-aged children has been multiplied by 15 in the last 20 years, the number of classes has diminished. Almost the entire entry-level class counts more than 100 children per teacher. The number of places made available to sit the entrance exam for the sixth grade has remained the same: 3,250 for more than 50,000 candidates (p. 353).

Since the mid-1980's, when the use of Sango as the national language was more vigorously advocated, Sango has been used as the language of instruction in primary school; prior to that time, French was the medium of instruction. Currently, French is introduced during the third year of primary school and is the medium of instruction for all classes in the secondary school curriculum.

An illiteracy rate of 63% was reported in 1988, for those aged 10 years or older (CAR, 1988). This is an improvement from the national average of 77% officially reported in 1975 (CAR, 1975). However, the Nana-Mambéré's illiteracy rate of 74.6% in 1988 was higher than the national average. Only two other prefectures reported higher illiteracy rates in 1988: Vakaga reported 82.6%, and Ouham-Pendé (Nana-Mambéré's northern neighbor) reported 79.0% illiteracy (CAR, 1988).

Health. The United Nations Development Programme (1991), gathered the following health related statistics which reflect the general quality of life in CAR:

- life expectancy at birth: 49.5 years
- population with access to health services: 45 %
- population with access to safe water: 12 %
- infant mortality rate: 129/1,000 live births
- under-5 mortality rate: 219/1,000 live births
- maternal mortality rate: 600/100,000 live births
- population per doctor: 23,530 (pp. 120-147)

Furthermore, the HIV infection and AIDS are playing an increasingly negative role in the health of the population and the development of the country. HIV infection rates continue to increase in all sectors of the population. Recent

statistics show the following HIV infection rates for adults 15-44 years of age in CAR:

- Bangui (the capital): 15%
  - other urban centers: 8%
  - rural population: 4%
- (*Projet National de Lutte Contre le SIDA*, 1994)
- secondary school students: 18%
  - military personnel: 30%
- (personal conversation with director of the National Project for the Fight Against AIDS, 1995)

A dependency ratio<sup>2</sup> in CAR of 89 was reported by the United Nations Development Programme in 1991 (p. 161). However, the increasing incidence of HIV infection and death due to AIDS can only cause this ratio to increase. Certain health experts have forecast that there could be as many as 64,000 orphans in CAR by the year 1999, due to the increase of AIDS-related deaths of parents (*Projet National de Lutte Contre le SIDA*, 1994). This can only contribute negatively to the dire socio-economic situation in the country.

The Economy. The Central African Republic is fortunate that much of its land is arable. There is no historical record—written or recollected by oral tradition—of severe drought or famine. The majority of the adult active population, 83.7%, is involved in agriculture, mostly subsistence-level farming (UNDP, 1991).

Although many of the colonists which arrived between the turn of the century and the early 1950's had dreams of making their fortunes with plantations of coffee, cotton, palm oil, rubber, or citrus and exotic fruits, very few of these plantations ever realized economic viability and very few exist on a commercial scale today.

The major exports for the country today are tropical and exotic woods, and diamonds; however, the government receives very little revenue on these commodities. First, it has been estimated that upwards of 70% of the diamonds found on the international diamond market which have come from CAR have found their way there illicitly. Secondly, the logging industry—operated by foreign companies—receives huge concessions from the government in the form of duty-free entry of equipment, other tax-free or low-tax incentives, and liberal quotas on the amount of raw timber and cut lumber that can be exported. These advantages are granted in order to allow the logging companies ample time to set up economically viable businesses which will employ Central Africans and hopefully pay taxes and bring other revenue into the government coffers in the future. The progress of these companies is reviewed periodically, but often the incentives are renewed, the result being that timber continues to be exported, but little money enters the government treasury.

Zoetizoum (1984) reports that in 1967, 70% of all enterprises were found in Bangui. According to the United Nations Development Programme (1991), only 2.8% of the population is involved in industry, 13.5% is involved in the service sector, leaving the overwhelming majority of 83.7% involved in agriculture.

The Central African currency is tied to the French franc, and as a result, their economy is very dependent upon the French. Zoetizoum (1984) reports that in 1969, 69% of the internally generated portion of the national budget was from indirect taxes and customs (p. 273). Currently, about three-quarters of the nation's



fiscal budget is supported by foreign donors through aid, grants, bilateral agreements, and loans.

### Political Environment

As stated earlier, the Ubangui-Shari Territory was administered by the French until World War I. Although the French continued to administer the area after World War I, it became known as "French Equatorial Africa". At the end of the 1950's, most of the countries on the continent of Africa were in the midst of the transition from colonial rule to the establishment of self-rule as independent countries.

One of the major voices in this struggle in French Equatorial Africa was Barthélemy Boganda, the first Ubanguian priest. Elected in November 1946, "Deputy for the Ubangui-Shari" in the French National Assembly, Boganda battled for "equal rights in the heart of an 'Equatorial Africa'" (Kalck, 1992, p. 4). A referendum was held on September 28, 1958, which called for the establishment of the Central African Republic as an independent country, limited to the territory of the former Ubangui-Shari. Independence was officially announced on December 1, 1958.

While touring to inform and educate the population concerning the establishment of their country and seeking to fill all sixty seats in the National Assembly with people from his party, Boganda was killed in a tragic plane crash on March 29, 1959. Boganda was the most likely candidate for the first president of the country and is still honored as the country's "Founding Father".

David Dacko, Boganda's nephew, became CAR's first president on August 13, 1960. During his presidency of almost six years, Dacko consolidated power by having the National Assembly pass a law in 1963 making his political party the only officially recognized party, and by obliging all citizens to become members. Later in 1964, he orchestrated constitutional changes which created a presidential regime and a single party political system.

Colonel Jean Bedel Bokassa came to power through a bloodless *coup d'Etat* on January 1, 1966. A few days later he abolished the 1964 constitution and passed other constitutional acts which established his dictatorship. He was made "President for life" in 1972, later nominated "Marshal" in 1974, and finally "Emperor", in December 1976.

After French parachutists seized and secured the Bangui airport and the city, the night of September 20, 1979, during Bokassa's trip to Libya, Dacko was reinstated as President on September 21, 1979. A new constitution was prepared allowing for multi-party democracy in early 1981, followed by presidential elections in which Dacko was elected with a narrow majority. Violence erupted when the results were announced. In the middle of August 1981, he again prohibited opposition parties.

On September 1, 1981, Dacko handed power over to General André Kolingba. In May 1986, Kolingba created a new single-party state based on his newly created political party, and was elected to a six year presidential term in November 1986.

In April 1991, Kolingba announced the return to a multi-party democratic system of government. In September 1992, a presidential decree announced October 25, 1992, as the date for the first round of presidential and legislative elections. The results of the election were annulled by the Supreme Court a few days after the election and Kolingba continued his presidency despite the fact that the mandate of his presidential term had expired.

A few months later in December 1992, new dates for the elections were proposed for February 1993. The elections were postponed until April and then again until September 1993. In September, Kolingba did not receive enough votes to advance to the second round of elections and Ange Félix Patasse was elected president in the second round of elections in October. To their credit, the transition was smooth.<sup>3</sup>

It has been my observation that the changes in government which have occurred during my presence in CAR since 1986, have, at the time, had very little effect on the day-to-day life of the rural population. Although some violence may occur in the capital at these times of transition, people in the rural areas only hear about it from the radio. Although people in the rural areas are enthusiastic about voting, they have little hope that much will actually change for them.

### The Gbaya

Earlier estimates of the size of the Gbaya population range from 500,000 (Van Bulck, 1951, cited in Samarin, 1966) to close to one million (Noss, 1981, cited in Christensen, 1990; Kalck, 1974)). Today, according to Moseley and Asher

(1994), the total is now closer to about 1.5 million, one million in CAR and 500,000 in Cameroon.

### Geographical Situation

During the early 1900's, the former African colonial powers arbitrarily drew up the borders between countries based on natural land formations and watersheds, giving little thought to the people groups found in these border areas. "Today, the Gbaya people inhabit over 190,000 square kilometers (an area roughly the size of the state of Nevada) on a lightly populated central savanna area of Cameroon and the Central African Republic" (Christensen, 1990, p. 6).

Although the border between Cameroon and CAR divides several Gbaya clans, this appears to make little difference to the people in the area. A sort of "no-man's-land" exists in the border area where the only check points are those which are found on the major roads between the two countries. At these checkpoints, Cameroonians and Central Africans are usually allowed to cross the border freely.

Principally an agrarian society (Zoctizoum, 1983, p. 31), the Gbaya reside on the vast savannah which varies in elevation from "900 to 1,000 meters above sea level" (Christensen, 1990, p. 6). The area is situated between 5 and 9 degrees north of the equator and between 12 and 17 degrees east longitude. Traversed by several major rivers and their tributaries, including the Nana, the Mambéré, the Lobaye, the Ouham, the Kadeï, the Lom, and the Sanaga, and given the six to seven month rainy season, the area is fertile and adequately supports its population.

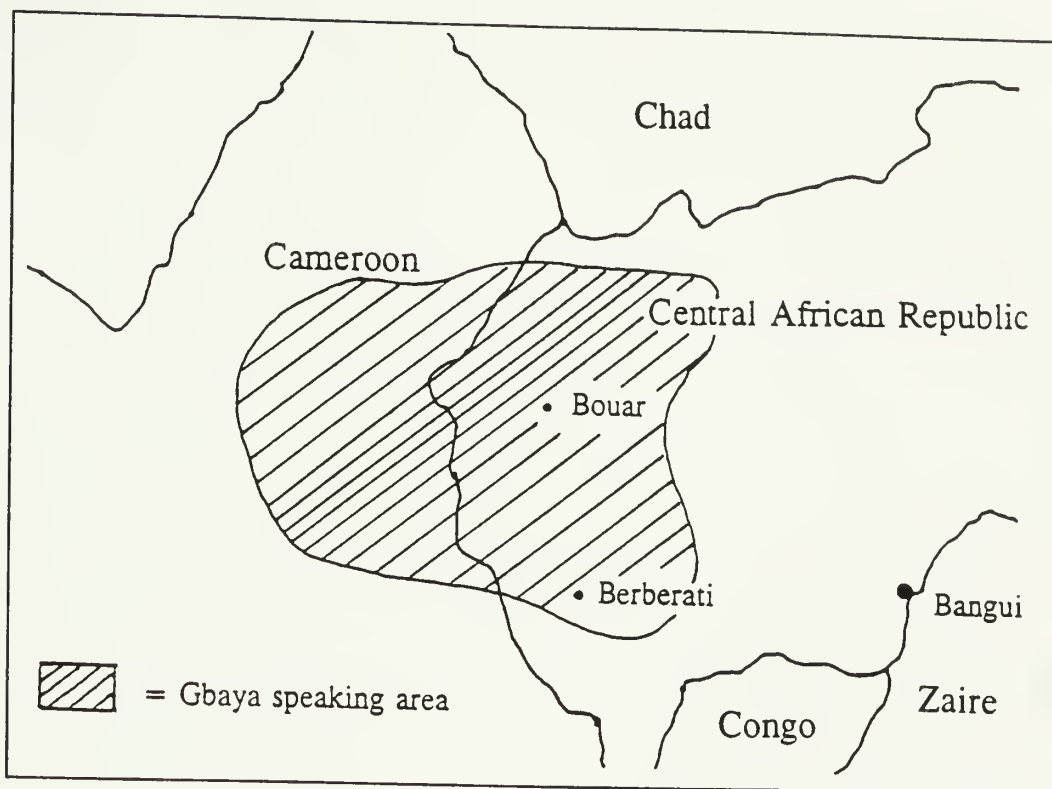
## Language

"The Gbaya language clearly manifests the influence of this vast territory. One finds there words borrowed from the Ffuldé and Haussa to the west, from Sango to the east, from Arab and Knouri to the north, and from the Bantu languages in the south" (Blanchard & Noss, 1982).

The Gbaya language is considered part of the Adamawa-Ubanguian branch of languages which began spreading from northern Cameroon in the Adamawa Massif and into the southern savannah of CAR, and is comprised of the Ubangui languages of Banda, Manja, and Gbaya (O'Toole, 1986, p.81).<sup>4</sup>

Because of the mobility of the Gbaya people, many dialects can be heard, among them: Yaayuwée, Lai, Kala, Bokoto, Dooka, Mbodomo, Boupané, Toonga, and Mbodoé. Although Gbaya-speakers from the extreme western boundary of the Gbaya area in Cameroon may not be able to understand the Gbaya from the extreme eastern area in CAR, they usually have little problem understanding the neighboring Gbaya clans who speak other similar dialects. The evaluation research of this study was carried out in an area where the Mbodoé and Toonga-speaking Gbaya areas overlap (see map in Figure 3.2 on page 100).

The Gbaya language is very difficult to learn for most Westerners. Consisting of three tones, high, medium, and low, words with otherwise similar pronunciation can have several different meanings based on the variations in tone. The word "ko", for example, has 14 different meanings depending on various combinations of pronunciation and tone. There are also several consonant combinations—such as gb, mb, mgb, and b (implosive)—which are found at the



**Figure 3.2** Map of Gbaya Area of Cameroun and Central African Republic.

beginning of many words, and which to the novice listener are very difficult to differentiate from the normal "b" sound in English. Of course the nuances in the pronunciation of words which are otherwise similar, vastly changes the meaning of the word. Fortunately, one can often catch the meaning of a word from its context, but for most Westerners, speaking and making oneself understood can be especially challenging.

Arriving in Cameroon as a new medical missionary in 1982, I found the Gbaya language more than a little difficult to learn. Several months after my arrival, I was lamenting to one of my medical colleagues, another American missionary, about my self-perceived lack of progress in learning Gbaya. At that

time, she had been in Cameroon for almost 25 years. "Don't worry," she chuckled, "the other day, my cook said that we were out of firewood, so I told him to go out in the field behind the house and collect some sticks. Later in the morning when I returned for a cup of coffee, I found him chopping down the tree in the front yard."

I have since lived and worked among the Gbaya, from 1982 until the present, as a medical missionary working in health care for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic, doing village health worker training, traditional birth attendant retraining, and village pharmacy work in Gbaya.

### Historical Background

Originally, it was thought that CAR had been virtually uninhabited until the relatively recent population migrations of the 19th century. However, it is now generally accepted that "hunting and gathering populations have been present throughout most of the country for at least the past 8,000 years" (O'Toole, 1986, p. 10). Additionally, several hundred groups of megaliths have been found in the Bouar area and in the area west and northwest of Bouar indicating the presence of an advanced agricultural society dating back to about 2500 years ago (O'Toole, 1986, p. 11).

Slave trading was not unknown in CAR, however, it was not a prominent activity until the late 18th century. O'Toole (1986) reports:

The major wealth that Central Africa had to offer the world economy was its human population. Though some Central Africans had probably been taken north as slaves along the Nile trade routes before the Christian era and

certainly many were transported in the trans-Saharan trade before 1700, it was not until the late eighteenth century that the export of human beings from Central Africa became an important element in world trade. Beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, the trans-Saharan slave trade, which had for centuries been a trickle, became a human flood pouring across the desert. At the same time an increasing flow of this living cargo began to be transported by rivers to the southeast, where they became part of the Atlantic slave trade. By the nineteenth century enslaved people from the area were also being traded to the east coast of Africa as part of the Indian Ocean trade (p. 15).

Although the Atlantic slave trade declined in the mid-1800's after the outlawing of slave commerce in Brazil (O'Toole, 1986, p. 16), slave trading still continued in the Gbaya region in northwestern CAR.

Adama, a Fulbé political leader, carrying on the jihad tradition launched by Usuman dan Fodio, set up his capital at Yola on the Benue River in present-day Nigeria, and in 1835 one of his lieutenants, Zody, settled at Ngaoundéré [northern Cameroon], an ancient Mbum center. Adama levied an annual tax on Ngaoundéré to be paid in slaves. Zody obtained these captives by raiding the Mbum and the Gbaya. These campaigns continued for half a century . . . In 1890 the Gbaya and Mbum finally began to organize themselves to resist the Fulbé. . . . Internal quarrels among the Fulbé had also weakened their power, and by 1890 they could barely control the trade route joining Ngaoundéré with Koude (O'Toole, 1986, p. 20).

Some of the captives taken on these raids were traded to the exterior, but others were kept as slaves for the *lamido* [king or sultan] in Ngaoundéré and in Rey Bouba, Cameroon. According to my local contacts, this practice of domestic slavery continued well into the present century, even after the official abolition of slavery and independence of the country from colonial rule.

Local chiefs, especially those whose villages were in close proximity to the *lamido*, and therefore fell under their so-called "protection", were required to send a certain number of "volunteers" annually, or at other specified special occasions to



provide life-long, faithful service to the *lamido*. Since our area is farther away from these powerful Fulbé leaders and their realm of influence, this practice was not able to be enforced in our area. There are, however, a few older persons in our area who still remember brothers or sisters or extended family members being delivered into slavery in order to placate these Fulbé powers and avoid the threat of raids that used to be carried out at the end of the last century, or for payment of the required tribute.

Another important item of historical note for the Gbaya of our area is the peasant revolt from 1928-1930, called the *Guerre Kongo Wara* translated "war of the hoe handle". The revolt centered around Karnu, an indigenous Gbaya prophet, and in response to the excessive demands of the land-granted colonialists in the rubber industry and the forced conscription of young men to work on the construction of the Congo-Ocean railroad.

Karnu, a resident of Nahi, claimed to have received a sign, a star falling into the Lobaye region, which announced the leaving of the whites from the land. He preached non-violence and civil disobedience, such as refusing to pay the French tax, refusing to work for the French, and refusing to buy anything from the French.

However, not all of his followers adhered to his doctrine of non-violence, and an armed uprising took place in Bouar, forcing the French to abandon their post in June 1928. In addition to the problems listed previously, the Gbaya accused the French of wanting to deliver them into the hands of the Fulbé of Ngaoundéré, Cameroon, which they had successfully repulsed in 1896. A veritable state of war ensued leading to the recapture of Bouar by the French on December 15, 1928.

Karnu, who had never left Nahi and refused to bear arms, was surrounded and allowed himself to be massacred, as he had prophesied would happen, on December 11, 1928. Minor skirmishes between the French and the Gbaya continued until 1930 (O'Toole, 1986; Nzabakomada-Yakoma, 1986; Zoctizoum, 1983; Kalck, 1974).

Karnu and the surrounding events are still recounted with pride and a certain reverence.

### Social Organization

There are perhaps three significant things that can be said about the Gbaya concerning their social organization. First, they are a social people who live in community and seldom live alone. Secondly, the relationships within these communities are of utmost importance and take precedence over all other considerations. Finally, the Gbaya are extremely mobile.

One of the problems I encountered while working on evaluation research among the Gbaya, was trying to find Gbaya words or phrases that I could use to express certain terms or concepts, such as "evaluation", that I would need while doing my research. Another similar challenge was trying to define what I meant by "community"; there are multiple levels of "community" within Gbaya society. Although a family could be considered a community, most efforts within community development try to reach beyond individual family units and work within the larger community or village.

The Family. The most important social unit among the Gbaya is the *nam* or extended family. The concept of *nam* extends beyond the confines of the village.

For example, an individual upon seeing someone else from another village might exclaim that they are "*pér-nam*" [from the same family line].

Within the *nam* or extended family, there are subunits or nuclear families which exist. In the area in which the study took place, these family sub-units are called *weé-gara*, literally "the fire that one makes in the evening in the courtyard" (Blanchard & Noss, 1982). However, it has also come to describe the family subunit in terms of the relationship of "those who sit around my hearth."

Within the *nam* usually the eldest male, the patriarch of the family, is the ultimate authority on matters of social and financial importance. Most major decisions such as, marriages of family members, whether a sick family member goes to the distant hospital for expensive treatment, or whether a child who has completed primary school is sent away to secondary school or not, require the participation of the patriarch of the family. As can be seen, these types of decision-making events involve money or goods in amounts which most individuals or family subunits do not have available, and therefore, demands the participation of other family members in order to be realized.

In the *weé-gara*, the husband is the head of that particular family subunit, and as such, makes most of the decisions of financial or social consequence. However, both husband and wife have their own sources of income which come from their fields and gardens, and which are often kept separate. As long as the expense does not exceed the individuals' means, they are free to act as they choose, without discussing it with the others. Interestingly enough, a man who knows that

he has problems saving money, will often have his wife hold his money for him. Although she holds his money, she does not control it.

Marriages are most often arranged by the parents. Either the young man 16-18 years of age will indicate to his parents a girl whom he finds pleasing, or his parents will suggest a girl whom they find appropriate. Usually the girl is 14-18 years of age and from another neighboring village with family ties. The parents then approach the girl's parents with gifts to ask about the girl's qualities, availability, and price.

In order to marry, a man must have his own house to which he will eventually bring his bride and setup housekeeping, usually he builds near his parents. The suitor must then accomplish the arranged upon tasks, such as giving a certain number of gifts to the parents of the girl (often pots or yardage of cloth), a certain amount of labor in the in-laws fields, and often a cash payment. These arrangements are often rearranged, much to the chagrin of the suitor and his family, but the bride's family must be shrewd because they are, after all, losing a family member who has been productive. Often the bride's family withholds the girl, even after the arranged tasks are completed, hoping to get the groom and the groom's family to give a little bit more. Finally, the girl is brought to the man's house for several days of feasting and the marriage is consummated.

It is hard to know what was traditional concerning premarital sexual relations. Although they were not forbidden, neither were they fully condoned. Presently, there is discontent among the older generation concerning the increased sexual promiscuity of today's younger generation.

It didn't use to be this way. There used to be *lábi* (initiation rites) at about the onset of puberty for both sexes. During *lábi* young people were taught about what it meant to be a man or a woman in Gbaya society. For young men, *lábi* lasted two to three years. Initiation rites for young women were of much shorter duration and coincided with the time of menarche. Shortly after these rites, young women usually found themselves married, thus limiting their availability for premarital sexual relations.

Today, however, these initiation rites are no longer held. As a result, the younger generation no longer receives formal instruction about such things as traditional Gbaya family values, life in the larger Gbaya society, and sex. Parents feel unable to talk to their children about these things because traditional Gbaya culture has not prepared them for this task. Their generation was the last to go through the initiation rites which were led by specially designated and prepared older people, many of whom are no longer alive.

As a result, there has been a significant erosion of traditional family values in the last 25 years, in part due to the loss of *lábi*, in part due to sending children away to secondary school. Now, young men and women sent away to secondary school not only lack the initiation experience, but are also away from their parent's guidance.

Because a woman's worth is partially measured by her ability to bear children, her inability to bear children, after as little as a year of marriage, is often sufficient cause for divorce. When a divorce takes place, the families of the man and woman meet and negotiate how much of the bride price must be returned by the

woman's family. Often the chief is involved in the negotiation process, especially if a dispute arises.

The Quartier. Phil Burnham (1980), an anthropologist who studied the Gbaya-Yaayuwee around Meiganga, Cameroun, describes in great detail the complex relationships within an *ndók-fúú*. The term "*ndók-fúú*", a word borrowed from the neighboring Mbum (literally "*quartier*" or "quarter"), refers not only to the place within a village where a family or clan resides, but also the patriclan relationship of its members. According to Burnham (1980), most Gbaya *ndók-fúú* have an average population of 23 persons (p.84). "In pre-colonial days, the Gbaya exhibited a highly dispersed settlement pattern concentrations seldom larger than a single *ndók-fúú* in each of the scattered hamlets" (Burnham, 1980, p. 84).

Noss, an Africanist and linguist who grew up among the Gbaya in the Meiganga area, pointed out the preferred use of the French word "*quartier*", as opposed to "*ndók-fúú*", which is no longer in current usage among the Gbaya (personal interview, 1994). The Gbaya usage of the term "*quartier*" has come to mean, "the family unit or clan that resides in a certain area of a village." However, it must be remembered that the *nam*, or extended family, is not limited to one *quartier* in one village, but may also have family members in other *quartiers* within the same village, and for that matter, even in other villages. This usage of the term "*quartier*" is current in our area as well.

The Village. Although important in Gbaya social organization, neither the *nam*, nor the *weé-gara*, nor the *quartier*, individually fulfilled my criteria for the

definition of the term "community", as used in my definition of community development work.

In our discussions concerning the nature of Gbaya community, Noss shared the following:

Guinea fowl are very sociable, can't live alone. This is true of the Gbaya; they cannot live alone. People cannot, you know, you and I can't, nobody can. And certainly the Gbaya were aware of this way back. We've gotta have a unit that stays together, because the very smallest is going to be the family, and then at some point you need some kind of community, and you call that "*saayé*". "*Saayé*" is sort of an abstract term, but "*saayé-ε*", that belongs to somebody, that's the place or village you call home (personal interview, 1994)

A *saayé* (village) can be comprised of a single clan alone; more often, it is comprised of several clans which are then referred to as *quartiers*, as described above. It is the proximity and interaction of these *quartiers* as a *saayé* that I define as community for the purpose of community development work.

According to Noss,

In Gbaya tradition, the chief is a *wan-yé*. What is a *yé*? A *yé* is a *ville* [city], it's where people live. So in that respect, someplace out in the bush I create my compound. I'm *wan-yé*, I'm chief. I'm also the *tête de famille* [head of the family]. I'm also the father, the patriarch, depending on how large the family is. But, in terms of that *habitation* [house], I'm the chief and that's how informal the Gbaya was. . . . The *wan-yé* was basically the father of the clan, the patriarch of the clan, even if it's me, myself, and my kids, I'm still the *wan-yé*, and that's how you have to treat me (personal interview, 1994).

Burnham (1980) notes that, "In pre-colonial times, leadership at the hamlet level was in the hands of an elder, an essentially informal position with no power or prerogatives beyond those prescribed by kinship or created by the incumbent's own

personal qualities" (p. 108). Still true today, each *quartier* or clan in the village setting has its *wan-yé*. Often this *wan-yé* is also recognized by the government for his traditional influence and authority, and given the title of "*Chef de quartier*" [chief].

This is especially true in larger villages with a population of more than 500 inhabitants, comprised of several larger family *quartiers*. In this way, one village may have several chiefs. For example, Gallo-Boya, a village of about 1,200 people, has seven "*chefs de quartier*". Although, in villages with less than 500 people, there may be two to four recognized family *quartiers* with their own recognized elder heads-of-family, the government will often only recognize one elder and grant him the title "*chef de quartier*".

When a "*chef de quartier*" dies, it is the family members of the clan in the *quartier* who gather and select the next *wan-yé*, who in turn is recognized by the government as the new "*chef de quartier*".

Relationships. In the Gbaya social institutions described above, relationships are of paramount importance. Relationships between individuals, within the community, and with various spirits, need to be maintained in a positive balance.

[Gbaya] life has not been tied to any piece of land, not tied to anything. That is a put on, for what is important is those relationships. So if you help me in my garden here this year, I can help you in your garden there next year. It didn't matter where it is, what's important is that relationship that exists, family relationship, clan relationship (Noss, personal interview, 1994).



The overt expression of anger and accusations of distrust, dishonesty, and deceitfulness, are held in check by the fear of retribution from the person in question, if not overtly, then through sorcery. The Gbaya say, "*Am kɔ̄ wen zu kɔ̄'m ná,*" [I don't want words on my head]. Thus, to external appearances there is peace between individuals or families, but often, beneath surface, smoldering anger and hurt exist.

Certain events can also occur in the family or in the village which indicate that relationships with the spirits are not right. Death by lightning strike, a number of deaths within the village over a short period of time, or repeated bad luck, all indicate that something is not right in the life of the individual or the village. At these times, divination is relied upon to reveal the source of these events and to prescribe the rituals necessary to right the relationships involved.

Mobility. One of the keys to Gbaya survival has been their mobility. "Without a doubt, Gbaya positively value their capacity to move residence frequently, seeing it . . . as an important means of reducing tensions and giving scope for more individualistic economic action" (Burnham, 1980, p. 122).

In cases where people are not able to get along, or in which divination reveals that the present place of residence is unlucky, the Gbaya just pick up and move.

The Gbaya tradition moves, they get up and go. The house, to the Gbaya, until this last generation was never very important. You can build a new one, that house doesn't matter. . . . So, even the village is temporary, it always has been temporary in the past. . . . They move their villages. The village doesn't matter. They often abandon them, and not just at the drop of a hat, because they have built it, it's not like the Fulani that are nomadic, in

that sense they will build a village, they will build a *tua* [house] that has walls. But on the other hand, what they put into that is effort, and they can expend that effort at another place tomorrow, if it's more important to be there than to be here (Noss, personal interview, 1994).

Mobility has always been used to solve disputes and avoid confrontation.

The move may involve the smallest social unit, the *weé-gara*, the *nam*, the *quartier*, or the entire village, depending on the nature of the reason for moving. Moreover, in this sparsely populated area, there is plenty of space available, and often the move only involves short distances. For example, a *weé-gara* may move one hundred yards to the other side of the village. In the case of frequent unexplainable death, the whole village may pick up and move only one or two miles down the road (in this way they can often continue working the same fields and gardens).

### Economic Status

The Eastern Province of Cameroon, where most of the Gbaya population of Cameroon resides, has been derogatorily referred to as the "orphan of Cameroon". Its distance from the port, its lack of exploitable natural resources, and the fact that no one of national importance has come from the area, have all contributed to its apparent neglect by both the former colonial administration, as well as by the current government. The lack of infrastructure and services, such as, navigable roads, health, and education, has resulted in the delayed economic development of the region.

If this is true of the Gbaya area of Cameroon, it is equally, if not more true, of the Gbaya area of western CAR. Not only is it farther from the port, but the

government of CAR is less able to provide adequate infrastructure and services to this region.

Because the Gbaya areas of Cameroon and CAR were not heavily colonized, there are virtually no industries in the area today. Also, very few large-scale agricultural ventures were undertaken because of the distance involved in accessing the ports of export, the exceptions being the establishment of cotton in the northern area of CAR and of coffee in the south, both on the fringes of Gbaya territory. Neither of these products are found in the area where my evaluation research took place in west-central CAR.

Like most of the Central African population, the Gbaya are subsistence-level farmers. Although both men and women maintain fields and gardens and participate in other small income-generating activities (e.g. mat and basket weaving, making peanut butter and honey-beer), it is the woman who uses the greatest part of her fields and income to take care of the day-to-day food, clothing, and health needs of the family. Her crops consist mostly of manioc (a starchy tubercle rich in carbohydrates), the staple food of the Gbaya, and other foods which will be consumed by her family, such as groundnuts, sesame, okra, squash, tomatoes, and red peppers. Her spendable income comes from the sale of her surplus harvest of these crops.

In addition to the cultivation of some manioc for the needs of the family, men often plant various cash crops such as sesame, citrus fruits, and tobacco. Income from the sale of these products is often used for the purchase of prestige items such as watches, radios, or bicycles; however, their savings are also relied on

for emergency or catastrophic needs. Men also hunt and fish and often sell portions of their kill or catch for quick cash.

Prospecting for gold and diamonds is another economic activity of questionable importance for the Central African Gbaya. Not wanting to farm as their families before them have always done, this activity is often engaged in by young men who have received some formal education, but have not been able to find employment in the government civil service or the limited private sector. These young men abandon their wives for months at a time in order to seek their fortunes in gold and diamonds. Unable to provide adequately for her children, and often ill herself (due to venereal diseases brought home during her husband's brief visits), she and the children often become malnourished and more prone to illness; some children die. Unfortunately, prospecting precludes farming at the dig site, where any finds are used to purchase food and replace equipment (both at exorbitant prices). Alas, few fortunes are found, and many families suffer.

### Education

Traditionally, much of Gbaya education has been practical in nature with children being taught from a very early age to help with various household activities and in the gardens and fields (on-the-job-training) of their parents. Girls five years of age are already helping their mothers by toting younger siblings on their backs and are already carrying water from the local stream or spring to the house for the domestic needs of the family. Boys help in the fields and gardens and carry firewood, but are more free to play "hunt", set traps for field mice, and go fishing.

As mentioned earlier, *lábi* is another intensive period of instruction during which young men and women are prepared to assume the roles of adulthood. Over a period of about three years, 12-15 year old boys were taught the finer arts of hunting and woodlore, as well as such practical matters as how to identify good omens, stay away from bad spirits, and how to appease the spirits of the ancestors and use them for your good. Manhood, sexuality, and male responsibility and privilege, in the village and in family life, were also taught.

The initiation rites of young women were of shorter duration and were concerned mostly with issues of sexuality, eventual motherhood, and the mystery of life possessed by women by virtue of menstruation and their ability to bear children.

The early missionaries tried to ban the initiation rites because of their animistic overtones. Moreover, in a July 1967 decree, the CAR government, in an effort to unite the country, banned mention of any reference to ethnicity, race, or tribe in any official government documents and privately sworn documents (Kalck, 1974, p. 17). As a consequence, these initiation rites are no longer practiced and nothing has fully replaced that void.

The Gbaya have a rich oral tradition. Lessons in Gbaya social, philosophical, and religious thought have been handed down from generation to generation through storytelling in the evening around the *weé-gara*.

Most of these stories and proverbs are centered around animal characters involved in typical Gbaya daily life situations. Wanto the Spider, the central character in many of these stories, is a conceited, deceitful trickster who is always trying to get rich, get fat, or get the best and biggest whatever-it-is without working

and by otherwise dubious shortcuts. Wanto's main adversary is Tana the Turtle who, as his name suggest, does things slowly, deliberately, and in a well thought out manner. It is often hard to tell which of these two characters is the hero of the story, especially when Wanto often gets what he's after, in spite of the bad relationships that it often causes between himself and the other animal characters. It is in many of these stories, that one finds the Gbaya proverbs which pass on Gbaya wisdom from one generation to the next.

Formal school is not well attended by Gbaya children in our area of CAR. As reported earlier, only 37.5% of its 6-14 year olds in the Nana-Mambéré region attend primary school, well below the national average (CAR, 1988). As a result, the Nana-Mambéré also has one of the highest rates of illiteracy in the country, 74.6% for those aged 10 years or older (CAR, 1988).

In part, this is due to how the Gbaya have come to view formal education. Many Gbaya families believe that they can not afford to lose the labor of their children in their homes or fields. Others see little benefit from school attendance because, although its "free", there are many "hidden costs". Still others say that they see so few students successfully finish school and find employment, that its not worth the investment.

In part, this is due to the lack of infrastructure and lack of teachers. Those primary schools which do exist in our area, are overcrowded with 50-75 students per class. Additionally, classes are only offered for half-days so that the same teacher can also teach the upper primary grades separately.

Those children who have completed primary school and have left their home village to attend several years of secondary school, often have difficulty carrying on any in depth conversations in Gbaya, their mother tongue, because they have been immersed in French and Sango in the big city for so long.

Finally, because of the poor infrastructure and the distance from any major city (with city amenities, such as electricity and piped water), teachers often look upon their placement in our area as a punishment. The teachers placed in our area often leave their families in the major cities so that their older children can attend better schools, or because their spouse can not leave their employment. Therefore, they are often absent from their post to visit their families. Furthermore, they are often absent traveling to the capital to look for their pay checks, and check on their applications for transfer to another school.

The loss of the traditional initiation rites, the apparent ineffectiveness of many parents to fill this void by teaching and guiding their own children in the deeper, traditional Gbaya ways of life, and the inadequate and often absent formal schooling in the area, has resulted in a generation of youth who are neither fully Gbaya nor fully Western. Raised away from home, speaking French and Sango, in the excitement of a big city, exposed to the outside world and its ideas, yet unable to find wage-paying employment in the city, they return to their home villages and no longer feel that they fit in.

## Examples of Joint Community Activities

The western model of community development most often consists of pulling oneself up by one's own bootstraps and working together as a community to pull up the community's bootstraps. Most often this has been done by giving short term technical aid, the introduction of new technological innovations, combined with financial aid. Although these activities are of short duration, it is hoped that they will have long term effects on the improvement of the quality of life of both individuals and communities.

One of the methods of working with a community is to identify past joint community activities which have resulted in benefits for the entire village. In our work among the Gbaya, we found this exercise difficult to do. There are very few community-wide joint work activities.

As seen previously in our discussion of family income, even husbands and wives often keep their incomes separate. The Gbaya stories of Wanto glorify individual gain, by any means, including chicanery and deceitfulness.

There are, however, several Gbaya proverbs which show the need for working together. "*Dindiki ha dendeke, dendeke ha dindiki*", "the right hand gives to the left hand and the left hand gives to the right hand." As with many proverbs in the Gbaya culture, it is sufficient to recite only a portion of the proverb to elicit the whole concept for the listeners. In this case, reciting "*Dindiki ha dendeke*" elicits the concept of working together for the common good. Another similar proverb says, "A single straw can not sweep the house."



Although the concept of working together for the common good exists in Gbaya culture, none of these activities demand the long term, on-going cooperation of the community envisioned in Western development work. The community activities described below, last for only one or two days at most, and the participation of every member of the community is not obligatory.

The *gía* [hunt] is an example of a community activity which involves primarily the men in the village. This dry season activity takes place when an individual decides to burn the brush and grass off his traditional hunting area. The men and boys who choose to participate, assist the *wan-gía* [the chief of the hunt] by setting fire to the grass, making noise to scare the game, and standing down wind from the fire to kill the fleeing animals. Those who participate get a portion of the game.

Another traditional community activity which involves the entire community, men and women, young and old, is the *do* or *áá do* [fishing by poison]. Once again, the person who has responsibility over a certain stream or body of water, announces their intent to do a *do* and invites the village to attend. On the day of the *do*, everybody who comes to help dam the stream and gather the stunned fish which rise to the surface after the poison is administered upstream, receives a portion of the catch.

One final example of an activity that involves some community cooperation is that of field preparation, the *hii* [communal labor party]. Any individual can call a field work day to have help preparing a new field for planting. Those who come to work are well fed and large amounts of honey beer are provided. "No one is

obliged to help with a communal labor bee, but if a man's closest family members (agnates) do not attend, their relationships will suffer" (Christensen, 1990, p. 24). This is an event which invites reciprocation since several community members may be preparing new fields, if not this season, then the next.

These community events will be described in greater detail, as they pertain to evaluation and decision making, in Chapter V.

### Summary

In this chapter I have tried to provide some information which will help the reader to better understand the context in which this evaluation research has taken place. These include the historical and cultural factors which have an impact on today's Gbaya society, and thus on current evaluation practices in community development.

The Central African Republic has known a difficult past including slave raiding and trading, exploitation by the French, and abuse and neglect by its own government leaders. Perhaps most important at this time is the neglect. The level of formal education is almost the lowest in the country, with an illiteracy rate of almost 75% for those 10 years of age or older. Primary school classrooms are overcrowded with 50-75 students in the classroom with a teacher who is often absent, with less than 38% of 6-14 year olds attending primary school anyway.

Gbaya economic activity, still dependent on subsistence level farming, with little opportunity for other outside employment because of the lack of agri-business or industry in the area, has also restricted their interaction with the global economy.

This decreased interaction with the global economy has also meant a decrease in exposure to other cultures and other ideas and ways of doing things. These have an effect on how the Gbaya view and participate in their own community development.

The Gbaya socio-cultural background also plays a role in their participation in community development work, and, as we will see, in their evaluation practices. The importance of relationships at the multiple levels in Gbaya society (*weé-gara*, *nam*, *quartier*, and *saayé*), influence how decisions are made and how these decision-making models could possibly be used for increasingly participatory evaluation of community development work among the Gbaya.

The cumulative effect of all of these factors influences Gbaya culture today and Gbaya evaluation practice. Many aspects of Gbaya culture are in the midst of transition. Nevertheless, the way Gbaya people have faced adversity and change in the past affects how they interact in today's changing world.

Finally, I conclude this chapter with an appropriate observation from Phil Burnham (1980):

Standing back from the Gbaya canvas and using the century-and-a-half of available data for perspective, my impression of the Gbaya social change experience is one of a core of stability surrounded by a welter of change. Gbaya history has been eventful by any rural African standard, spanning intensive Fulani contact, warfare and revolt, and the varying colonial experiences. But through all the turmoil, a fundamentally conservative core of the Gbaya system has endured (p. 264)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This total is based on the general population census done by the Central African Republic shortly before national elections in 1988. The UNESCO estimates the total in 1994 to be 3,173,000 inhabitants, I think that this number is artificially high since no other census has been done in the country since 1988.

<sup>2</sup> The dependency ration is defined as, "the ratio of the population defined as dependent, under 15 and over 64 years, to the working-age population, aged 15-64 (UNDP, 1991)."

<sup>3</sup> The information for this brief time-line of significant political events comes from the following sources and a more complete and in-depth coverage of the political events can be found therein: Kalck, 1993; Kalck, 1992; Kalck, 1974; O'Toole, 1986; Baccard, 1987; and Péan, 1977.

<sup>4</sup> Blanchard & Noss (1982) group them similarly with the Gbaya-Mandja-Ngbaka linguistic group that extends from the Nigerian border of Cameroon, through Cameroon and CAR, to Sudan, the Congo River as its southern-most border.

## CHAPTER IV

### DESIGN AND METHODS OF THE STUDY

#### Choosing a Methodology

As reviewed in Chapter II, participatory evaluation (PE) evolved from a dissatisfaction among participatory research proponents and community development workers over the lack of peoples' participation in the evaluation process of community development work. Although increased participation was being promoted in other phases of community development work, evaluation remained the domain of outside experts. Participatory evaluation has brought participatory research (PR) and community development work full-circle by promoting peoples' participation in evaluation.

However, PE is a concept with multiple interpretations. These different interpretations vary on two key points: 1) the amount of peoples' participation in the different phases of evaluation, and 2) the question of who controls or has power over the evaluation process itself.

Participatory evaluations which are considered highly participatory, are those in which the participants (members of the community or group which is to be evaluated) are involved in all phases of the evaluation process. In PE which is highly participatory, people not only participate in all aspects of the evaluation process, but they own or control the entire process. The conception of the implementing questions, the design of the evaluation, the collection of data and its

analysis, and the method of reporting, are all under the control of the participants and carried out by the participants themselves.

My interest in this type of highly participatory evaluation stems from a 13 year involvement in primary health care and community development work under the auspices of the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Cameroon and CAR. The aim of this involvement has been to facilitate the community's exploration of its own self-defined problems or needs. This is accomplished by engaging the villagers in a discourse of critical reflection. I also facilitate their joint exploration of possible solutions to their problems using local resources—financial, human, and technological.

The dilemma I faced in designing this study and choosing the methods I would use, cannot be separated from my involvement in the aforementioned community development work and my commitment to its participatory processes. All of my activities among the Gbaya have been aimed towards helping them come to the self-realization that they possess the ability and most of the necessary resources for solving their own problems. How could I do dissertation research, with research questions that were conceived by me, and which would benefit me personally, while still ascribing to the principle that the community should participate in and have control over any research that concerns it?

Moreover, the study actually deals with two levels of research: 1) the investigation of indigenous forms of evaluation among the Gbaya, and 2) the use of these indigenous forms of evaluation in a PE event.

Ideally, I had hoped that a Gbaya community would express the need for an evaluation, such as the functioning of their village pharmacy, the lack of potable water, or the possibility of group marketing their citrus fruit crop. In the process of facilitating their participatory evaluation, I would have tried to lead them to also propose participatory research to investigate possible local resources for evaluation (ie. their indigenous forms of evaluation).

However, in order to be congruent with my past practice of participatory community development, I could not name ahead of time the community or group that would present with a self-expressed need for evaluation and the desire to investigate their indigenous forms of evaluation. I also had to allow for the possibility that no community would present itself.

Therefore, I decided upon an "emergent field research design", compatible with participatory research and drawing upon the methods of qualitative and ethnographic research. These methods included: participant observation, interviewing, ethnographic interviewing, and copious amounts of field note taking. Careful consideration was also given to the cross-cultural aspects of the research.

### Review of Research Methods

The following is a review of the qualitative and participatory research paradigms and the corresponding methods that I have drawn upon during the study. For comparative purposes, I begin with a very brief résumé of the traditional positivist (or scientific) research paradigm.

## Traditional Scientific Research

The traditional scientific research paradigm is guided by the principle that there exists an objective reality that can be observed, measured, and manipulated. It has its roots in the "hard" sciences, such as physics and chemistry, which use scientific methods to collect "hard data", data which is measurable and quantifiable.

The researcher from the traditional scientific paradigm is guided by hypotheses which must either be confirmed or rejected based on the measurable outcome of their experimentation. Furthermore, experimentation to test the hypotheses is an activity which normally takes place in a carefully controlled laboratory situation.

## Qualitative Research

Qualitative research can trace its beginnings to the late 1800's. Social scientists, such as Frenchman Frederick LePlay and journalists such as Lincoln Steffens, observed and reported on the deplorable social conditions at the turn of the century. The intent of their reporting was to bring about social reform and alleviate social suffering (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 3-4).

Qualitative research techniques quickly developed in sociology and anthropology as an alternative to the traditional scientific research paradigm which dominated the physical sciences. Sociology, most notably the "Chicago School", diverged from the traditional scientific model of research as early as the 1890's, and began using qualitative techniques (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).<sup>1</sup> Education, however,



continued to be dominated by the traditional paradigm until the late 1960's (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) globally label the methods of qualitative research as "constructivist methodology" and offer the following description:

Ontologically, it denies the existence of an objective reality, asserting that realities are social constructions of the mind, and that there exist as many such constructions as there are individuals (although clearly many constructions will be shared) . . . epistemologically, . . . [it] denies the possibility of subject-object dualism, suggesting instead that the findings of a study exist precisely because there is an *interaction* between observer and observed that literally creates what emerges from that inquiry. . . *Methodologically*, . . . the naturalist paradigm rejects the controlling, manipulative (experimental) approach that characterizes science and substitutes for it a *hermeneutic/dialectic process* that takes full advantage, and account, of the observer/observed interaction to create a constructed reality that is as informed and as sophisticated as it can be made at a particular point in time [emphasis in original] (pp. 43-44).

One of the major characteristics of qualitative research is its insistence on a flexible design that allows for change in direction while the research is in progress (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 27). "While people conducting qualitative research may develop a focus as they collect data, they do not approach the research with specific questions to answer or hypotheses to test" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 2). This open design allows the researcher the flexibility to pursue any interesting finding until he or she is satisfied that adequate information on that topic or side-topic has been gathered. Often the researcher enters the field without any research question, just a desire to know more about the site, its environment, and the people involved.

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) describe five major features of qualitative research:

1. *Qualitative research has the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. . . .*
2. *Qualitative research is descriptive. . . .*
3. *Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products. . . .*
4. *Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively. . . .*
5. *"Meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach [emphasis in original] (pp. 29-32).*

Concerning the research setting, the researcher tries to understand, "How people . . . think and how they came to develop the perspectives they hold. . . .

This goal often leads the researcher to spend considerable time with subjects in their own environs, asking open-ended questions" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 2).

Furthermore, "Qualitative studies are not impressionistic essays made after a quick visit to a setting or after some conversations with a few subjects" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 46). Rather, they are the result of a sustained presence in the field and of a careful methodology of observation and interviewing.

As stated above, the main tool for collecting data in qualitative research is the researcher himself. The researcher gathers data in the form of words or pictures through observational field notes, interview transcripts, and photos or videos (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 30). The researcher's observations and his or her reactions to the acts and actions of others in the field, become the lens through which others are able to see the people, the environment, and the interactions which take place in the research site. As such, there are two things which polish the lens: 1) the length of time spent in the field, and 2) the richness or "thickness" of the data.

The "thickness" of the data refers to the amount of detail that is included in the descriptions recorded by the researcher. "The qualitative research approach demands that the world be approached with the assumption that nothing is trivial, that everything has the potential of being a clue that might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 30-31). The researcher strives to come to a "comprehensive understanding" through an inductive process, the result of her or his sustained presence in the field.

In contrast to the "hard" data (data which is measurable and quantifiable) required by researchers using the traditional scientific research paradigm, qualitative research is more concerned with "*soft* [data], that is rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures" [emphasis in original] (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 2).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) point out feminist researchers and those involved in participatory research as examples of those who are likely to use qualitative research methods. Patti Lather (1991) and Pat Maguire (1987) best exemplify the process orientation of qualitative research which seeks to study with marginalized people in order to help empower their research informants. "They engage in dialogue with their informants about their analysis of observed and reported events and activities. They encourage informants to gain control over their experiences in their analyses of them" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 49).

Regarding analysis of the data, analysis is done concurrently with the data collection. Analysis begins in the field. After each interview or observation session, the researcher makes fieldnotes which describe the people, places, activities,

events, and conversations of that research time. "In addition, as part of such notes, the researcher will record ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches, as well as note patterns that emerge" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 107). Furthermore, fieldnotes contain the researcher's reflections on analysis, reflections on method, reflections on ethical dilemmas and conflicts, and reflections on the researcher's frame of mind; the researcher also keeps a record of points that need clarification (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

Finally, qualitative researchers are concerned with meaning, but meaning from the perspective of the participants' point of view. Marshall and Rossman (1989) assert that one of the fundamental assumptions of qualitative research is that "The participant's perspective on the social phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (p. 82). The process of understanding the perspective of the participant requires that the researcher maintains an open dialogue between herself and the subject in order to verify and communicate the participants' perspective (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 32-33).

Having briefly described interviewing and field note taking in the above discussions, the following two subsections will examine in more detail, participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, and cross-cultural considerations.

Participant Observation. Participant observation is one method by which the qualitative researcher can "study processes, relationships among people and events, continuities over time, and patterns, as well as the immediate sociocultural contexts in which human existence unfolds" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 12). Furthermore,

"Participant observation requires that the researcher become directly involved as a participant in peoples' daily lives" (p. 20).

The researcher's involvement in the research setting may either take the form of overt or covert observation, in other words, with or without the knowledge of the insiders. Although, it is possible for the researcher to limit himself to observation without participation, the researcher's involvement can range from being a complete observer to "going native" (becoming a member of the group that is being researched), from performing nominal or marginal roles to performing native, insider, or membership roles (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Jorgensen, 1989).

Jorgensen (1989) points out that "Direct participant involvement has a humanizing potential . . . generally lacking in studies conducted from a greater distance from the people whose lives are affected" (p. 72). Of course, "The character of field relations heavily influences the researcher's ability to collect accurate, truthful information" (p. 21). Therefore, "Perhaps the most important initial task of the overt participant observer in seeking to establish field relations is to overcome people's prejudices about [the observer] and the research" (p. 74).

Once access has been negotiated, direct observation begins. In addition to direct observation, "Participant observers commonly gather data through casual conversations, in-depth, informal, unstructured interviews, as well as formally structured interviews and questionnaires" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 22). Observations of activities, conversations, and unique experiences, as well as hunches, strategies, and reflections, are recorded in a field note journal which becomes the basis of the researchers' future analysis.

One of the keys of participant observation is that "Rather than denying personal interests and values, the methodology of participant observation requires an awareness of how these thoughts and feelings influence research. By reporting personal interests and values, other people are able to evaluate further the influence of values on your findings" (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 27).

Jean Searle (1993), while advocating the use of participant observation as a tool for studying classroom teaching, notes the following disadvantages:

- participant observation could be seen as intervention as it may cause a change in student behaviour
- this method needs TIME
  - observations should be conducted over a period of time
  - data analysis is very time consuming
- observations and inferences need to be verified by more than one source (triangulation)
- this method results in vast quantities of data - you need to know where to stop and how best to analyse the data
- human error:
  - observer bias
  - you record what you think happened or make assumptions
  - accuracy and limit of human memory [emphasis in original] (p. 8).

Finally, "It may be useful to emphasize that their cooperation is *voluntary*, their identity will remain *anonymous*, and any information they provide will be *confidential*" [emphasis in original] (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 75).

Ethnographic Interviewing. Ethnography is an attempt to describe culture or various aspects of culture (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 38).

Ethnographic research has traditionally been undertaken in fields that, by virtue of the contrast between them and the researcher's own culture, could be described as "exotic." The researcher's goal is to describe the symbols

and values of such a culture without passing judgement based upon his personal cultural context (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 72).

Interviewing is an important method in qualitative research (Brislin, Lonner, & Thorndike 1973; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Jorgensen, 1989). It not only helps uncover possible areas of research interest, but it also helps the researcher to verify observations and to negotiate their interpretation. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that the researcher "treat every word as having the potential of unlocking the mystery of the subject's way of viewing the world" (p. 98).

Ethnographic interviewing differs from other types of interviewing in several respects. Ethnographic interviewing is characterized by its explicit purpose (Spradley, 1979, cited in Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The researcher is explicit about the purpose of the interview—the gathering of information about a cultural phenomenon—in order to better understand the culture. The researcher encourages the use of native language, and emphasizes the importance of the in-depth questioning to uncover the culturally specific meaning of the phenomenon for the researcher.

The value of the ethnographic interview lies in its focus on the culture through a native perspective and through a firsthand encounter. It highlights the nuances of the culture. This strategy provides for flexibility in the formulation of hypothesis and avoids oversimplification in description and analysis because of the rich descriptions (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 93).

Cross-cultural Considerations. At the risk of sounding obvious, Brislin et al. (1973) point out that cross-cultural research cannot be done unless one gains access to the culture (p. 4). Cuthbert (1985) further adds that in order to do this, the

researcher should live in the culture which is being studied (p. 33). Despite my previous experiences in Gbaya culture, I became increasingly aware of the fact that I was not an "insider" on all aspects of Gbaya culture. I was especially concerned about how I might "gain access" to certain evaluation events that occur in families or in the chief's court that might give me insight into Gbaya methods of evaluation.

Language is also a significant cross-cultural factor which is related to the idea of "gaining access" to the culture. As such, "Cross-cultural investigators should be concerned with the communication of many aspects of their research, including the introduction of the research to potential subjects, instruction, questionnaires, and subject responses" (Brislin et al., 1973, p. 32). Although the preceding reference to "subjects" is not politically correct for participatory researchers, the underlying point is that the research facilitator working in a cross-cultural setting must be prepared to communicate in the language of the participants. Furthermore, cultural sensitivity comes through understanding the local language as well as possible (Cuthbert, 1985, p. 32).

Brislin et al. (1973) also suggests the use of bilinguals and the pretesting of any techniques and tools that might be used in the field. For example, the word "evaluation" does not have a single-word equivalent in Gbaya. Therefore, in addition to my own ruminations on this vocabulary problem, I decided that it would be helpful to prepare for the future evaluation event that would hopefully present, by interviewing key informants in order to uncover a way to talk about evaluation in Gbaya.



Concerning interviewing in the cross-cultural setting, several authors underline the importance of being aware of cultural perceptions towards questioning by outsiders (Brislin et al., 1973; Merryfield, 1985).

In some cultures, people say whatever they think the questioner wants to hear. In others, they say as little as possible, out of fear. In still others, they answer in their customary indirect way, which is perceived to be either unintelligent or hostile. The chief may insist on answering questions for the villagers. Men may not allow their wives to be questioned. Communication norms may vary by culture (Merryfield, 1985, p. 11).

Cuthbert's (1985) experience with interviewing in cross-cultural settings, especially in the Third World, has led him to make the following observations concerning the collection of qualitative versus quantitative data:

Third World people generally do not share the Western fascination with numerical precision. Numbers provided in interviews or reports are best regarded as estimates, not as precise indicators. Qualitative data are more understandable and often more meaningful in Third World cultures, because qualitative approaches are close to the strong oral and narrative traditions of such cultures (p. 30).

Finally, Brislin et al. (1973) reminds the researcher to be concerned with all aspects of the research process, for example:

While researchers may know the meaning (e.g., being asked questions and filling out interest blanks) of research procedures in their own country, they may not know how members of other cultures will react to such practices. Such information has to be learned either through participant observation, by working closely with members of all cultures under study, or through extensive pretesting (p. 30).

## Participatory Research

As discussed in Chapter II, participatory research is a process of collective investigation, collective analysis, and collective action in which the community owns both the research question and the inquiry process (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Comstock & Fox, 1982; Gaventa, 1988; Hall, 1975; Park, 1989; Tandon, 1988).

Furthermore, all research energy is geared toward the production of useful knowledge for the transformation of society (Brown, 1985; Brown & Tandon, 1983; Fernandes & Tandon, 1981; Freire, 1970; Hall, 1981; Lather, 1986, 1991).

Participatory research is not limited to a particular set of methods. Since the process is of primary importance, participatory research is free to use any method(s) which will accomplish the task of increasing local knowledge for the transformation of society—quantitative or qualitative.

Finally, during an address to the members of the Center for International Education, Rajesh Tandon urged potential participatory researchers to:

not belabor the issue of whether or not to try participatory research. . . . resist waiting for the perfect time before trying it. Just take a stab at it! If you wait for the perfect conditions you may never do it. All you can do is try. . . . learn how to do it better by failing. Think small; find a problem that may serve five people in the world [Tandon, taped lecture CIE Conference on Participatory Research, April 29, 1985, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA] (cited in Campos, 1990, pp. 78-79).

### The Researcher as Research Tool

Prior to entering the field, Marshall and Rossman (1989) point out that one of the first things to be done in a proposed qualitative research project is to make a

careful review of any literature related to the topic of investigation (p. 30).

Therefore, prior to beginning the research in CAR, available literature on participatory evaluation, Gbaya culture and language, and qualitative research and cross-cultural techniques were reviewed.

In order to be able to communicate the perceptions of one culture to another, one must be able to act as a bridge between the two cultures. One must come to understand the other culture as well as one's own. It is this kind of communicating, bridging, and understanding that becomes the central concern of the qualitative research working in the cross-cultural setting.

My initial contact with the Gbaya occurred in early 1976, during a three month stay working with youth in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon and the Evangelical Lutheran Church of CAR. My nine month stay in West Africa was an eye-opening experience which introduced me to many different foreign cultures. Incidents like the following recollection, kindled my interest in trying to understand other cultures from their perspective.

One evening, expecting a visit from the president of the church, we decided to make pizza, the arch-typical American meal, and we invited him to stay and eat with us. At the end of the meal we asked him what he thought of American food. He replied that he liked it fine, but it was like "playing with your mouth." He explained further that unless one eats manioc—the staple food of the Gbaya—one cannot feel satisfied.

What was significant about this event? Although I had been told by others that manioc was the staple food of the Gbaya people, this experience gave it a

meaning that I could not have understood in any other way—a Gbaya perspective of manioc.

I travelled again to West Africa during 1980 to 1981, but only for eight months. I returned to Cameroon in 1982, to work in the medical work of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Cameroon. Since my wife had already worked in Cameroon for two years, and had learned Ffuldédé, I chose to learn Gbaya so that between the two of us, we could communicate with more people. In addition to trying to learn the Gbaya language in the classroom, I also spent about four months in a small Gbaya village, immersed in Gbaya culture and language learning. My medical responsibilities at the Protestant Hospital in Garoua Boulai, Cameroon, required that I speak both French and Gbaya. However, since I was already proficient in French, I preferred to carry on in Gbaya.

In 1986, we were asked to begin a primary health care program with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of CAR. Before beginning our new responsibilities, and seeking to deepen our understanding of Gbaya culture and language, we again spent four months in a small, rural, Gbaya village. We have continued to direct and work for the health care program of the Lutheran Church in CAR until present. Our primary health care work in the rural villages continues to be carried out in Gbaya, however, more recently, we have also been learning Sango.

I work primarily among the Gbaya, and I have both Gbaya colleagues and employees. My work has required me to spend many days per month in small Gbaya villages working with traditional midwives, village health care workers, and village development committees. In addition to these health related activities, I have

been involved in the corporate worship life of the church, and have served on many councils, committees, task forces, and commissions in the hierarchy of the church administration, which until recently has been carried out in Gbaya.<sup>2</sup>

The above paragraphs are only meant to show that I have lived and worked among the Gbaya for the past thirteen years, sufficient time to have gained an appreciation for many aspects Gbaya culture in a variety of settings. I have also developed a cultural sensitivity that one can only obtain after such an extended time in the field. Finally, I have a proficient working knowledge of the Gbaya language.<sup>3</sup> All of these factors have facilitated my study of indigenous forms of evaluation among the Gbaya people and their possible use in the participatory evaluation of community development work among the Gbaya.

#### Methods Used

I returned to the Central African Republic July 1993, to resume my health and development work among the Gbaya of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic, and to begin my research. During casual conversation with friends and development work colleagues (both Gbaya and expatriate), during the first few months after our return to CAR, if asked about my two year study leave in the USA, I would explain my interest in participatory evaluation for community development and indigenous forms of evaluation. I also began to make informal observations during meetings, watching for how decisions were made (one form of evaluation).

I also made plans to interview a few key informants about indigenous forms of evaluation. I had hoped to interview several of my Gbaya colleagues and Philip Noss, a linguist/Africanist who grew up among the Gbaya. I also made plans to interview some older Gbaya people (60-70 years old), but I was unable to make the necessary arrangements. The first interview I was able to arrange was with Noss, in April 1994. The 90 minute interview with Noss was conducted mainly in English.

Because the nature of my research was two-fold—the investigation of indigenous forms of the Gbaya, and its possible use in the participatory evaluation of community development—I was also trying to find PE events in which I could continue to investigate and use indigenous evaluation. Unfortunately, I had to wait until January 1995, before a PE event presented itself. Then during a flurry of activity from early April through mid-May 1995, I did two other interviews with three Gbaya development colleagues and was involved as a participant/observer of a participatory evaluation event for six all-day meetings.

Prior to conducting the interviews, I explained orally and presented a written "Informed Consent" that was subsequently signed by the interviewees (see Appendices A and B for example of the forms used). Similarly, I also obtained signed "Informed Consent" forms from the participants in the participatory evaluation event.

All of the interviews were conducted using a list of guiding questions (see Appendices C and D). I conducted a 90 minute joint-interview with two of my Gbaya development colleagues, in French and Gbaya. The third 90 minute interview, also in French and Gbaya, was with another Gbaya development

colleague. All three of the interviews were taped and later transcribed in their original languages.

The six participant/observation sessions were held at two different locations. The first session was held in a meeting hall, while all of the other sessions were held in large dining/living room of two different unoccupied houses. Because these meetings replaced the normal work of the group who was the subject of its own participatory evaluation, the sessions lasted from six to eight hours each. I made brief written notes during the sessions. During the evenings I used these notes to recall the day's significant events, conversations, and my reflections and recorded them on my computer for future use. All of the sessions were conducted in French and Gbaya.

The results of the interviews and the participant/observation sessions are reported in detail in Chapters V and VI. A chronology of events is presented in Appendix E.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> During the 1930's through the 1950's there was a hiatus in the qualitative approach. See Bogdan & Biklen (1992) for more detail.

<sup>2</sup> Since the country has recently been promoting the use of Sango as the national language, the Church has decided that it must also switch to Sango.

<sup>3</sup> I stop short of saying that I'm fluent, much of Gbaya humor still is over my head.



## CHAPTER V

### INDIGENOUS EVALUATION PRACTICES OF THE GBAYA

#### Introduction

During the years that I have lived and worked among the Gbaya, there have been many incidents or events which have urged me to seek a deeper understanding of Gbaya culture. The events, which I have observed, often seem to have a deeper meaning for the Gbaya that I as an outsider am often unable to understand at first glance.

One of the areas of Gbaya culture which has intrigued me, has been the whole idea of evaluation. How do the Gbaya make decisions? How do they make judgements? How do they give value to things, events, circumstances, and situations? In this chapter I examine the decision-making aspect of evaluation among the Gbaya. I begin with two vignettes which relate personal experiences which oriented my interest toward Gbaya indigenous evaluation. This is followed by an examination of Gbaya evaluation vocabulary. The rest of the chapter investigates various aspects of Gbaya indigenous evaluation as it concerns community decision-making, such as: who participates, how and when are decisions made, and various community events in which community decision-making occurs. The chapter ends with a discussion of how the Gbaya view Western evaluation.

The information for this chapter was garnered from interviews conducted with friends and colleagues involved in development work among the Gbaya, and

those with a special understanding of the Gbaya, either because they are themselves Gbaya, or because of their special relationship with the Gbaya.

I have chosen to share the following two vignettes because they have been formative in my journey of understanding the Gbaya, and their evaluation practices. I share the first because it initiated my journey of inquiry among the Gbaya, and the second because of the insight it gave me into one aspect of Gbaya culture and the encouragement that it gave me to continue my inquiry.

The first vignette occurred in 1986, shortly after moving from Cameroon to CAR. In order to deepen our appreciation of Gbaya culture and language prior to developing a new primary health care program for the area, my wife and I decided to move with our two small children out to a small, very rural, Gbaya village where we lived for four months in a small, sun-baked brick house with a thatched roof.

The second vignette occurred in 1990, during the bi-annual church synod meeting. As director of the health care program of the church, I was required to attend the meetings in order to present reports on the health care program and its various projects. As director, I was also a member of the church council.

#### Vignette 1: Houma Returns Home

While living in Daré, the married daughter of our next-door neighbors, came home one day and moved back in with her parents. Houma<sup>1</sup>, a young woman of about 18 years of age, had been married for over a year to a young man in a neighboring village; however, she had been unable to conceive and bear a child for him during that time. The husband, therefore, returned her to her parents and

demanded repayment of the brideprice that he had paid. Houma's parents vowed that they would never pay anything back, hadn't she worked for him during the past year cooking and working in his fields? A message was dispatched to the neighboring village to inform the ungrateful young man that he would receive nothing back from them.

Some days later, a young man (Houma's husband), came to the village, accompanied by his parents, to try and collect some reimbursement on the brideprice. Houma's parents stiffly greeted the guests and brought out stools for them to sit on, while Houma's mother prepared coffee for them. This being a small village of only about 150 people, others soon gathered at Houma's parents' house. The young man addressed Houma's father demanding reimbursement of the brideprice that he had paid for Houma. At first, discussion was limited to the young man and Houma's father, later as the discussion became more heated, volleys of words were exchanged between both sets of parents, Houma, and the young man. Eventually, it was agreed between them that they should go and see the chief of the village and have him mediate their discussion.

They sent a messenger to the chief that they needed to see him. Within a few minutes the messenger returned saying that the chief would receive them and hear their dispute (the chief only lived some fifty yards away and undoubtedly overheard the previous, loud discussions). The two sets of parents, the separated couple, and most of the rest of the local village population, gathered at the chief's *weé-gara* where the chief had already set out his chair (a large wooden arm chair, resembling a *chaise-lounge*).

When the chief came out of his house, he was dressed in his finest—albeit threadbare—long tunic (like an oxford business shirt which reaches to the ground). He was also wearing his hat and his *médaille de Chef de Village* [Village Chief's medal]—indicating the government's recognition of his authority as village chief). Ordinarily he dressed as all the other villagers, in old clothes fit for working in the gardens and fields, often with no shirt during the heat of the day.

The chief sat in his chair and listened to the arguments, first of the young man, and then in random order, Houma's parents, the young man's parents, and also Houma herself. The chief remained silent during over an hour of arguments, which had now taken on the form of negotiations involving the give-and-take of both sides.

Finally, the chief announced what the bride's family had to repay to the young man and what the young man had to accept as reasonable in the light of the fact that he had benefitted from Houma's work for over a year. Houma's father went home and came back with something less than what was agreed upon (coincidentally, it was close to what he had voiced would be fair reimbursement), paid the young man, and promised to pay more later.<sup>2</sup>

This incident, which happened in 1986, started me thinking about evaluation among the Gbaya. Was the process described above typical of how judgements are made in the community? Who decided that the families should go and see the chief? What authority did the chief have in the whole affair? How did the chief arrive at his decision of how much should be reimbursed? What information was used? How

was it gathered? How much of the negotiating that went on between the families was proscribed by tradition?

### Vignette 2: The *Mobylette*

The harsh light from the gas pressure lamp provided the only light in the darkened church building during the evening church council meeting which took place every evening during the five days of financial reports, Bible studies, and year-end activity reports. The hot, dusty days were filled with an endless stream of monologues delivered in Gbaya, French, or Sango, some eloquently, most in a halting manner, as the various directors and leaders unaccustomed to reading from notes, read their reports to the assembled delegates representing the 25,000 Central African Lutherans from over 200 congregations from this mostly rural church.

By contrast, the meetings in the evening—open only to the church council members—were filled with the official business of the church. Church program budgets and personnel salaries were decided at this time. Decisions concerning the discipline, location, and relocation of the clergy and other church workers were also made at these meetings. The minutes of these council meetings were recorded in and represented the official work of the synod meeting.

Several months prior to this particular week-long synod meeting, a worker in the church who had a church-provided *mobylette* [motorized bicycle] for his work, sold the *mobylette* without prior church approval and kept the money. Moreover, he sold the *mobylette* to two separate buyers, collecting money from both of them. The

buyer who did not receive the *mobylette* threatened to sue not only the church-worker, but also the church.

Rumors about this incident were circulating before the synod meetings began. It was also the topic of conversation during the breaks of the daytime meetings. I found it curious that many people were coming up to me during these breaks to tell me about the situation and how something needed to be done in order to discipline this dishonest church-worker.

My training in development led me to reflect the problem back to the speakers. I remember telling them that they should tell their church council representatives about how they felt about the situation, asking them to bring the matter up at the evening church council meetings where the problem could be addressed.

By the end of third evening of church council meetings, no member had yet raised the issue. The next day would be the last day of meetings and the scheduled agenda of business for the church council was almost exhausted. I was experiencing an inner turmoil concerning the apparent importance of the *mobylette* incident as evidenced by the number of people who came to talk to me, and the total lack of official discussion in the church council meetings.

Finally, it dawned on me that they couldn't talk about it, officially, for fear of bring down "words upon their heads". The act of officially bringing it up would have endangered the individual and his family because his "words" could have eventually been traced back to him, thus exposing him and his family to possible acts of retribution (physical or spiritual).

As the third evening progressed, the church president announced that the council probably would only meet briefly the following evening in case anything needed to be treated following the reports of the day, but otherwise, the agenda was nearly exhausted. At this point, I indicated that I had an observation that I would like to share with the church council members. I simply stated that many people had been coming to me during the past few days to tell me about an incident involving a certain church-worker and a *mobylette*, and I wondered what any of them had heard or knew about the incident?

That was all it took to unleash several hours of animated discussion among the church council members which lasted until nearly midnight. Further discussion continued at the following evening's council meeting, concluding with a recommendation for disciplinary action of the church-worker, and calling for him to make apologies and amends to the second buyer, as well as reimbursing the church.

For me, the significance of this incident confirmed that even I, as an outsider, could understand Gbaya culture at a deeper level, and even begin to function as a knowledgeable insider. However, this understanding has come through immersion in the culture over a long period of time. Furthermore, it brought into question my role as an outsider in the decision-making processes of the Gbaya. My training in development work had emphasized my role as facilitator in the development process, but in this cultural context, to what extent should that facilitation go? In this particular incident, I had the feeling that people wanted me to know about the situation and how angry they were about it, hoping that my cultural sensitivity would bring into perspective why they couldn't bring it up, and

hoping, therefore, that I would, since as an outsider I would be less susceptible to possible retribution.

### Finding Gbaya Words for "Evaluation"

As mentioned briefly in Chapter IV, there is no single-word Gbaya equivalent for the term "evaluation". Pierre even said that when he attended a training course on community development prior to beginning to work for the agricultural program of the church, that he didn't know the word "evaluation". Moreover, Pierre asserts that using the French word "*évaluation*" is often misunderstood by the Gbaya because of its negative connotation as "*contrôle*" [audit or accounting for], which I will discuss later.

Sylvain suggested that in order to talk about evaluation one would have to try and paraphrase by taking words to explain the phenomena of evaluation in terms of what they know from experience. Sylvain offered the following paraphrase for the term "evaluation": "*zok tom éé déa hó te nma ngimbi éé te ya nu hée me zók tom me dé ne te ne duk hee gé nde?*" which translated means, "look at the work we've done so that at another time, sitting down together, we can look at the work and ask how the work sits."

Furthermore, according to Sylvain:

Once one has explained the phenomena, the people will quickly understand, they will well understand evaluation, and they will see that what we want to do, that this isn't anything new, this is something that we already have a habit of doing (interview, 1995).



One way of further explaining the concept of evaluation, as mentioned earlier, is through the use of proverbs and traditional stories. Again Sylvain remembered a recent incident in which I had used a Gbaya proverb at a village meeting and how it had quickly brought home the point that I was trying to make:

*"Dindiki ha dendeke"* [the right hand gives to the left hand] . . . from the moment you said it that day, there was murmuring. Why? Because . . . as soon as the term left your mouth, you saw from the chief's side there were people who started glancing at each other and suddenly a small piece of paper was produced. . . . That's because the chief well understood, and his elders well understood [what you meant].

I was aware of another phrase that I thought could be used for the purpose of explaining "evaluation". However, Noss pointed out that my pronunciation (or mispronunciation) had two meanings: *báá kita* (without implosive "b") means "to take counsel" or "discuss", whereas *ḅáá kita* (with an implosive "b") means "the process of hearing a case". Later, I also asked Sylvain what he thought of the terms *báá kita* (without implosive "b") and *ḅáá kita* (with an implosive "b"), he gave the following remarks:

*"Báá kita"* always requires that it's not only one, but it regroups the idea that everybody seated tries to search. *"Báá kita"* is that everyone gives information to make the situation better. . . . The answer isn't in one individual . . . it requires the assistance of everyone.

Two other terms were mentioned by Pierre and Timothée as possible candidates to explain "evaluation", *"zóká dóng mɔ"* [look after things] or *"zóká dóng tom ee déa"* [look after work we did], and *"dáfá mɔ"* [fix things] or *"dáfá mgará mɔ"* [fix between things]. *"Dáfá mɔ"* carries with it the connotation of formative

evaluation, looking at things and making necessary changes in the course of an event. "Zóká dǒng mǒ", because of the interpretation "after" has more the connotation of summative evaluation—looking at an event after it has happened—however, the intent of looking at an event after it has happened is so that changes can be made which will affect how it works in the future.

### Traditional/Current Patterns of Indigenous Evaluation

I had the occasion to interview Philip Noss, on April 4, 1994, while he was in Bangui, CAR, on business. As mentioned earlier, Noss grew up among the Gbaya as the child of American Lutheran missionary parents and later went on to become a linguist and an Africanist, specializing in the Gbaya language. He is currently Director of the African Regional Office of the International Bible Society based in Nairobi, Kenya.

Two other interviews were carried out with three fellow development workers who work with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of CAR, and are Gbaya themselves. I interviewed Mr. Dangkalé Pierre and Mr. Ko Timothée jointly on March 31, 1995. The third colleague, Mr. Mboré Sylvain, was interviewed separately on April 8, 1995. These two interviews were conducted in French and Gbaya, while the interview with Noss was conducted in English.<sup>3</sup>

I found it very difficult, if not impossible, to separate traditional evaluation practices from current evaluation practices. Noss had the following to say about tradition:

Anthropologists like to look at what's traditional, but what is traditional? Traditional is sort of a cliché that says, "we'd like to see these people as they were once." But, we never were that way once, we've always been, we've always been evolving.

It is difficult to know what Gbaya evaluation practices can be attributed to unchanged traditional activities, and what evaluation practices have already been influenced by Western presence. According to Noss, foreign influence is not restricted to direct contact with Westerners. Rather, school teachers, *gendarmes* [police], government officials, and youth going to school, are all acting wittingly or unwittingly as change agents by carrying Western influence to every corner of the country and affecting almost every aspect of "traditional" daily life.

My interest has been in group or community evaluation practices. The church uses a modified, imported, democratic process in its meetings. Others have been to school or have had dealings with various government offices and have seen how the French operate in meetings. There are, however, some tendencies in Gbaya evaluation practice which appear to have their roots in earlier Gbaya history—before Western influence—which I will relate here. Furthermore, the use of the word "traditional" in this chapter refers to those activities which appear to have escaped Western influence.

On the individual level, when asked how decisions or judgements are made, Noss stated, "Gbaya, I think, are a lot more . . . practical, what works and what doesn't work." When asked how does an individual farmer, for example, decide that it's time to plant his corn crop, Pierre answered, "That depends on experience." Timothée further explained:

One also counts on experience in nature. If he sees that in the area surrounding his field that the bushes are budding, then that's an announcement that the rainy season has already had a good start. And I think that in light of these criteria, the man decides to do it, even if people don't wait on the calendar. Because among us and according to our customs—it's not like for whites where one counts from the first of January to December—we are attached to our experiences. If the sky is already cloudy, in other words, the cool, dampness of the morning and evening, even if the sun hits hard during the afternoon, the young plants will take up the humidity and grow.

This kind of decision-making is based on collective experience. Pierre adds, "From when people start to make bush fires, one knows that in such and such a month that the brush will not catch fire, and if the brush burns totally, one is already in the period approaching the rainy season." Timothée further elaborated on this by adding, "The whites have a well established calendar, but in Gbaya culture, all is based on customs. In Gbaya culture, one bases one's self on experience."

Bordering between individual and group, there exists a gray area in which the group may decide to do a community activity, however, the individual may opt to not participate. How does an individual decide not to participate in a community function? During my interview with Noss, we discussed this aspect of community decision-making with individual dissent, and the presence of "signs" in the process:

CS: Then are there propitious signs that take place, the observance of nature, you were saying, you know, in terms of judgements?<sup>4</sup>

Noss: Some might think those are the big guidelines. For example, you know if you fought with your wife today, you shouldn't go hunting tomorrow. Now if everybody else in the village is going to be there, you better not go hunting. You know, is that propitious, you know, or what is it? There are certainly signs of that kind. . . . Are there propitious signs? I would think so. But I think that they're rough guidelines.

When asked if there is a recognizable, step-by-step, process which could describe Gbaya indigenous evaluation practices, Timothée responded by saying that it probably exists, but its not something they really think about. Timothée gave the following example in support of his statement:

If you take for example the farmer who is making his corn field. He decides that he wants good ears of corn. He fixes an objective to have good ears of corn and then as a sub-objective he will say: one has to cultivate the field, one has to find good seed, one has to plant according to the calendar. Everything that he is in the process of doing is a kind of evaluation, but he doesn't know it, he just does it in ignorance. . . . he burns the field . . . he plants . . . he hoes out the weeds . . . When he harvests he'll discover whether or not he has good ears of corn. . . . All in all, in Gbaya culture, one could say that it [an evaluation process] exists, but one can't discover it, one just does it in ignorance.

In another vein, Gbaya seldom make decisions alone, you have to talk to somebody. Noss points out:

If you talk about evaluation, you can't come to evaluation without talking. Who do you talk to? You can talk to your mother, you can talk to your brother, your wife, you can talk to your grandma, you can talk to all of these potential people and the potential people I think in the community have their own areas of expertise.

But who you talk to depends on the nature of the problem. According to Noss, there are different levels of decision-making when a problem exists:

If the problem is a family problem, then I probably won't go outside my home. So that like, decisions that have to do with illness, if it has to do with marriage, if it has to do with things that are directly related, ok, I might go outside that family, I'm going to the dispensary, since that's in fact "outside". But, otherwise I would pretty much for many of those things, I would stay within that family group. But then, as I was saying, where problems affect the entire community—and you do have a larger community

than the family—then you go to that higher level, and that's where a chief plays an important role.

However, problems that go beyond your family unit must follow a proper hierarchical ladder. According to Pierre, if there is a catastrophic event that particularly strikes one member of the community, a series of unexplainable deaths in the family, "perhaps at the level of the member of a village, he would first announce himself to a respected member of the community, and the respected member of the community would transmit it to the chief, and at this moment the chief could call a meeting." Noss also talked about taking problems beyond the family to the chief by going through respected members of the community:

The first person that I would go to because I'm a church person, I would go to the catechist, and I would ask the catechist to take me to the chief. They'd probably go to the pastor or whatever, but see, that particular is *croyant* [a believer]. And now if I were not a church person—and this has happened in Africa in other contexts outside Gbaya territory for example—if I'm not a church person and I'm not identified with a church, then I would go to the school teacher. This is outside Gbaya community, but I can see the same thing happening in the Gbaya community, where again I would go and say, "look I'm a teacher, my profession is teaching, this is who I am, and you are my peer in this community and through you, I know that I have to go, that is I have to know that I should go to the chief." . . . Who is the one who will take me to that authority? It's going to be my *homologue*, my peer. . . . And through that person, that intermediary, it is that person that would take me to the proper authority.

I have also experienced this in my own life and work among the Gbaya.

One does not go directly to the chief with a problem, one finds someone to take you and your problem to the chief in a round-about way. As Noss stated in our discussions, "In the area where I've worked, the *wan-yé* [chief] is somebody that is

respected; he may abuse his position, and not be worthy of it and so on, that all happens, but still, that position deserves respect."

Finally, concerning oral tradition, the Gbaya have not, until recently, been able to disseminate information via literary methods. In addition to basing their indigenous evaluation practices on trial and error, or experience, they have also passed on these experiences through talking together. One form of talking in Gbaya culture has been the recounting of funny stories, fables, and proverbs. Sylvain brought up this subject during our interview and said that, "There have always been cases where after the activity of a character in a story, one would ask, 'How was this result achieved?'" Noss shared a proverb with me about the unfortunate man who does not adequately heed nature's signs when deciding about when to go hunting:

Like burning the grass, sometimes you make mistakes, this is very unfortunate, "when thunder comes while one is still dancing around the trees" [my emphasis] . This is certainly reflective of an African society when somebody blew it, somebody blew it, somebody waited too long. The point is there is sort of an optimal time. The optimal time is: the further into the dry season you go, the less grass there is for the animals to hide in. And the closer you get to the rainy season, the better the time.

### Who Participates

Within the larger community, the village, there are many players in group decision-making. The chief and the elders carry more weight in this context, but everybody has a say in certain types of decisions.

According to Noss, many community concerns are focused on the chief; he's the key person, especially when there are problems bigger than the family. It's the

chief who decides who gets what farming land. It's the chief who decides who can build where in the village. The chief has a traditional authority that has to be respected. "The chief has . . . the right and the authority to make decisions that do not involve blood. If there's blood that has been spilt, it is not within the chief's domain, that is in the domain of the modern legal state."

However, the chief also has his elders or advisors. According to Noss, these advisors are important people in the community who are there to remind the chief about certain community issues and to say "Here, you need to look at this."

The chief has what you call his advisors, his *gásá-wí*, the *gásá-wí* are the heads of clans, *gásá-wí* and *dítá-bíí*—"heavy people"—and mostly those are people who have earned it by who they are. Now you can also enter if you've earned it through education. The Gbaya is not tightly hierarchical and tightly closed, . . . so a lot of voices are included.

In order to have an influence on the chief, these advisors have to meet with him. If there is a catastrophic event in the community, Timothée says that "the elders of the village will meet, and with the chief they will look at their way of living." These "elders" are the family clan heads in the village.

The chief's wife (wives) also play an important role in decision making. As Noss describes, "When things get bad, people are going to talk, when people are talking, she hears them talk, she knows that the people are unhappy, she knows that there's too much bad things happening, she knows this well." The chief's wife is in a position to influence him.

Sylvain brought up one final example concerning the evening after a hunt. The father of the family that organized the hunt will ask everybody who participated



in the hunt if they got the amount of game that they thought they would, and if not, why not? They then carry out a review of the materials and methods they used. Sylvain explains that the father, the men hunting with spears, and the boys who placed the nets, all participate in the discussion. It doesn't do any good for the father to tell the boy that they lost the game caught in the net because the boy approached the net in an imprudent manner. Rather, through discussion, the boy will come to this conclusion himself as the father solicits the boy's response to the question, "What could we have done differently?" In this way, everybody who participated in the hunt also participates in the evaluation of the hunt.

### How Information is Gathered

As noted above, the chief is the dominant player in community evaluation situations. He is assisted principally by his advisors, but also by others, such as his wife. But how does he get the information he needs in order to make informed decisions and judgements?

In an example given by Noss concerning the Chamba of northern Cameroon, he describes what he observed while staying in the chief's concession for several days. What he shares also seems applicable to the Gbaya.

Now those elders will sit around and talk. . . . There I was staying in a chief's compound, and he just sat there. He had his group of people around him, and he sat sometimes 'til 10 or 11 o'clock [at night] and talked; that was the exchange of information. Now is that formal or informal? Well, it's informal and yet, it was part of the structure of how he used his pass-time to listen. Now I'm not saying that that was how decisions were made, that certainly's where the information was exchanged about what's happened and what was going on, and so forth and so on. I think that this is where it happens, these, these get-togethers where you sit around and talk, and the

chief is more heard and less heard as the conversation goes around, that's where he's going to get his information.

Timothée also says that people get together and talk, especially if there is a serious problem in the village. In the case of a serious problem, Timothée explains that chief "will call a meeting, and with his elders, they will reflect on the situation."

Sylvain points out that before the advent of community development work decision-making within and for the community used to be the domain of the chief and his elders. The elders were the mouthpiece of the people, they let the chief know what everybody in there area thought about matters. Now, however, everybody shares in the decision-making process. This is done by asking everybody to sit down together and ask each one about their point of view and what information they have to share with the community. Once this is done, and all the information is accepted by everybody, then it is decision time. This information gathering time was done collaboratively, all share their point of view, until a decision by consensus is achieved.

The chief is not the master of a vast territory with minions at his beck and call, and vast wealth; in most villages, the chief is much like everybody else and must cultivate his own fields and gardens in order to provide for himself and his family. According to Noss:

There is another community event, in the past there were farming events which were held, and part of this is structured through the chief. People helped the chief in his gardens, but you could also arrange to have the community come and help you in your garden. This was again a community

event the whole town [participates in], it still happens in the chiefs context, but I don't know if it very often happens.

The *hii* [community labor bee], then, was perhaps another occasion for the exchange of information. Even if it does not happen very often now, the chief is still out there in his fields with his wife and family, and perhaps information is also exchanged that way.

### How and When Decisions are Made

Within traditional Gbaya culture, there are many events which are cyclical. These events always happen at about the same time of year. The community hunts take place during the rainy season, but how does one decide that one day is better than another day? Another cyclical event is the traditional sacrifice for the well-being of the village. Noss explains:

By tradition it has to take place annually. It takes place during a certain time of year, and at that certain time of the year the chief has the latitude to say that "it's going to take place now." But, is his wife going to tell him that she thinks that probably tomorrow he should do it? Or is it going to be in one month? She's a woman, probably a very important role . . . But is it people around him who are going to say "chief, you know, we think it's about time for that again?" When things get bad, people are going to talk, when people are talking, she hears them talk, she knows that the people are unhappy, she knows that there's too much bad things happening, she knows this well. Then at some point somebody has to make a decision, and that person is the chief.

This then is an example in which the chief makes the decision, albeit an informed (influenced?) decision. Yet by and large, the *modus operandi* of decision-making among the Gbaya is by consensus.

Several times Noss, Sylvain, and Timothée talked about the importance of consensus in the Gbaya decision-making process. Noss described the process involved in rendering judgement in a Gbaya court case as follows:

[The elders] are analyzing it, they've collected information, but they're simply processing an awful lot of information which is the information of what's going on in the community. . . . But as I understand it, it's very much a consensus that takes place among the counselors. . . . You could probably use the term "the chief is a spokesman" who pronounces the judgement. . . . So in a sense you have trial-by-jury, in a certain way, but the jury isn't selected like the British or the American system, the jury is basically the community, but still the larger community too, because the trial is public. And the chief will not very often go against the consensus. And so very often the evaluation that takes place, if you want to use your terminology, is going to be evaluation of the community, which is the consensus of the community, and the community will judge on the basis of what it sees as good for us.

This consensus is arrived at by talking. It's similar to the data-gathering addressed earlier. People just talk around and around, until everybody who has something to say has shared it with the rest of the community. Noss shared with me an event the day of our interview that for him exemplified this idea of community consensus in the decision-making process:

I think that consensus is extremely important. Somebody just said today in a meeting . . . that "people must talk", and it struck me right away when he said it, they all knew what it meant. And as I was walking home thinking about that, . . . in English, if you say that "people will talk", "people should talk", "people must talk", it's going to have very negative connotations; it's going to be a totally different thing than what was said here. Yet, in this context "people must talk", it means that we've got to come to agreement. And the only way that you could come to agreement is by talking. So that this whole notion of consensus, this whole notion of talking together is vitally important.

Again, in the context of the *do* (the community fishing event), Noss points out the importance of talking and of consensus, but also of individual decision within community events like the *do*:

Noss: Obviously, if you have a *do*, everybody comes expecting that they're going to get something to eat, and if they don't, you may have the *do* again next year and not have everybody come. So for the people who do come, are there enough fish for them? Or, are we too few to be successful? Certainly, there are things like that that play, and are practical things, and apparently again this would come about through talking—if you use that cliché. There has to be talking. The women are the fishermen; if there aren't fish for them to eat, it's plain enough they'll have to find another solution. There's a possibility to eat something else, you go fishing twice, you go fishing in a different place.

CS: But in those activities, the community . . . they make a decision as a group then, that we should, "yes, we should go on a second *do*?"

Noss: I don't think they do. I don't think they do. I think they make decisions as individuals as to whether they're going to participate or not.

CS: So, someone else announces a *do* and then they decide based on "the last time it didn't work, I'm not going to go this time?"

Noss: Now that person is also going to know what people are thinking, and isn't going to make a fool of himself and say, "I'm going out on a *do*." That's not how things are done. So there is going to have to be consensus.

Our conversation shifted to hunting and continues as follows:

Noss: So, if somebody says "we're going to go hunting tomorrow", I say "Can I go along?" I think that a lot of Gbaya decisions are that kind of decision, there is initiative, somebody has the responsibility, somebody has the, that's why I'm saying that there is a *wan-gía*, there is a *wan-do*, it is that person that decides that we're going to do it tomorrow, but he has to have a consensus, he has to have the agreement of the group.

CS: So, the *wan-gía* or the *wan-do* can be one person this time, but next time it could be somebody else? It's not like where there's one person that's *wan-gía* for the whole year.

Noss: Oh no, no, no, no. It's *wan-do* for a certain pool of water, or a for a certain area, you see a *wan-gía* is for one hunt, for a particular hunt. That particular hunt . . .

CS: So there's an individual initiative first of this person, that says, "we're going to hunt my area now" [interrupted by Noss]

Noss: Right, he's going to make the decision [interrupted by me]

CS: And other people talk and decide as a group, "we're going to go," or "we're not going to go" or, "I'm not going . . ." as individuals it's for us to decide if I'm going to go along this time?

Noss: To repeat, you're not individuals, because you're part of a family, because you're part of a community. You are part of a community, but yet there is kind of a community will, too. You can't go counter to your community, you can't go counter to your family.

CS: Anyway, what I'm seeing now is that there's an individual initiative that takes place and then people jump on the band-wagon.

Noss: You see, this is always the way I've seen it. But that individual initiative is sort of what I'm saying, well there is maybe a little bit to your idea of "mouthpiece". In a sense, I don't like the idea, that you know, everybody knows what the weather is and people start talking and saying, "gee, you know, it looks like it's going to rain one of these days." And pretty soon the general consensus is it's going to rain. You think "I better burn that grass soon." "My grass is dry, this time would be good tomorrow, we'll burn in three days". The *do*, the *do* is the same thing, of course the damming of the streams and so on, that's not as critical, because the streams are small, and we do them periodically.

I think, there too, a lot of it is kind of traditional. You know that roughly, this time of the year, pretty much this time each year, you have to adjust it this way or adjust it that way. With the Gbaya there's always tradition, practice. You have a lot of good questions, but I think that what I'm getting at, you could with questions you can go and

CS: Well you're not the only person I'll talk to.

Noss: That's what I'm saying, these are questions you can go and pin down on someone, and say, "if you're given this kind of situation, . . ." For instance the house is a community thing. Who takes the initiative? The wife takes the initiative. Usually she goes in the kitchen, she starts roaming around the kitchen. There's a lot of individual initiative among the Gbaya. But again, it won't be done, it won't be done "*fait ça*" ["do that"], it won't be done in opposition to anyone. So, there's a general feeling that women

who will do this in spite of them . . . And so, you have very much consensus. But I don't think that you'll get everybody together and say, "well, we're going to have a vote now." This is not the way it's done.

This long discussion concerning decision-making in the context of the *do* and the *gía*, shows the subtleness between the concept of individual decision-making and consensus or group decision-making, and between what is practical and what is traditional.

### Community Events

In Chapter III, I briefly introduced some of the more traditional community activities that require the participation and cooperation of more than just a few individuals in order to be successful. As noted earlier, there are actually very few community-wide activities in Gbaya culture, which require the collaboration of the entire community.

Previously, I presented the *gía* [community hunt], the *do* [fishing by damming the stream and poisoning the water to stun the fish], and the *híí* [labor bee]. In this chapter we will examine the *gía* and the *do* in greater detail to elucidate the community decision-making process which is involved in these activities. Also, because my interviewees brought up the topic of catastrophic events as another place where the community makes decisions, I am including a section for their discussion as well.

The *Gía* and the *Do*. Although mentioned briefly in previous sections of this chapter, I will try to give a more complete picture of these activities as I have come to understand them through the interviews and through my personal experience.

Hunting is a fairly frequent activity among the Gbaya, Sylvain ventures to say that it is a "daily activity," however, I have not observed that myself. Obviously then, not all hunts are community events. Many smaller hunting parties go out with dogs and homemade guns, at almost any time of the year, but most frequently during the dry season when game have less brush for hiding. These smaller hunting parties may consist of only two or three men, most often of the same *weé-gara* [hearth] or at least the same *nam* [family clan]. This type of hunting is different from the community wide hunt that I want to present here.

The *gía* [community wide hunt] is a special event that requires the participation of most of the community. It occurs only in the dry season when the brush and grass is sufficiently dry. This type of hunt involves setting a bush fire in order to scare the game to flee into the waiting ambush of the village hunters who stand in lee of the fire. In addition to the fire, the women and children also attend in order to make noise (once the fires have been set) and to prepare the game that is killed.

As mentioned earlier, there is a *wan-gía* [chief of the hunt] who organizes the affair. The hunt takes place on the land of the *wan-gía*. This is land that has been entrusted to the *wan-gía* and his family, by the chief, it is his hunting area, therefore he is responsible for calling and organizing the hunt, for that particular hunt.



Similarly, the *do* is a community activity which is organized by a *wan-do* [chief of the fishing event]. The *do* is primarily an activity directed by the women in the community and the *wan-do* is usually a woman. The *wan-do* is the one who is responsible for a given body of water or portion of a stream. This area has been assigned to her by the chief and belongs to her family. She is the one who organizes and calls the *do*.

Several occasions for evaluation (decision-making) occur in these events. First, how does the *wan-gíá* or the *wan-do* decide when to call the hunt? Secondly, how do people decide to join or abstain from the event (this aspect was already examined in the previous section on "how decisions are made")? Finally, how do the people decide the event was worthwhile, or whether the event was successful or not?

Concerning how the *wan-gíá* or the *wan-do* decides when to call the hunt or the *do*, this often depends on nature, the optimal time, and the flexibility that exists in the culture. Noss and I discussed this in some detail:

CS: Some of the activities you were talking about, hunting, fishing, community fields, it might be working to help some one with their fields, how are these activities initiated or undertaken? . . . How are those kinds of decisions taking place? We're going to do this on that day. Again, we're still talking about consensus, and they feel that, it's there, in their information network, or whatever?

Noss: Well, at certain times you have certain things there, they are tied to nature actually, to a great extent, tied to the seasons. So, wherever you are, there is a certain variability. The range from one day to the next, whether you do it today or you do it tomorrow, there isn't a whole big difference, whether you do it the 14th or the 15th. What you have to do is do it with your friends. Like burning the grass, sometimes you make mistakes, this is very unfortunate, "when thunder comes while one is still dancing around the trees" [Gbaya proverb about timeliness]. This is certainly reflective of an

African society when somebody blew it, somebody blew it, somebody waited too long. The point is there is sort of an optimal time. The optimal time is: the further into the dry season you go the less grass there is for the animals to hide in. And the closer you get to the rainy season, the better time. And the same thing with water and the rivers, the closer you can get . . .

CS: When the river's the lowest.

Noss: Right, that's the optimal time. So, if you have to make a judgement, sometimes you make a mistake.

Another aspect in the community hunt concerns the results of the hunt or the *do*. What happens if there isn't much game or fish? How does that affect participation at the next event? Can an individual decide not to participate?

CS: Then at the end, is it worth it? Is what we've done the effort we expended, the time that we did it, were there things that obscured our way, or made it not work? There's a thing at the end, too, "Yes this is worth it, let's keep doing it?" Or, "No it isn't worth it," and, like in some places, they just close it down. I don't know, "the treasurer ran off with [the money] and we decided not to start again." There was a decision, somehow, that came about. "It was too much work, we don't want to do it."

Noss: That's because nobody is benefitting, there wasn't enough in it. And this is what I'm saying, that if in the hunt there's nothing brought in for me, then you'll have people dropping out.

Knowing how real the spiritual aspect of life is to the Gbaya, how close to the surface and in their everyday thoughts it is, I also asked about the place of ritual in the decision-making process:

CS: Is ritual a part of . . . ?

Noss: Oh yeah! . . .

CS: Is ritual involved in terms of making the decision or adopting the decision after it's been made?

Noss: You have a *wan-gía*, in other words, you have to have a ritual of your chosen *wan-gía*; you have to open the way to the hunt. But I think this is more done once the decision is made that it's going to take place. It's habit, you know, you sacrifice a chicken on your gun, as it's my gun that is going to be used in the hunt because I am going hunting the next day. There's no point to abstractly sacrifice, to just say "I'm going to hunt sometime and you gotta be in good shape." No, it's more precise than that, within my understanding, in my own experience. The *do*, when you're going to have a *do*, then there are things that have to be handled to get it right, there are certain people to do it.

As I understand it, in traditional Gbaya culture, you can't decide not to do the ritual. Once the decision has been made to do the hunt, and in order to ensure it's success, the next step in the process is to do the ritual, to *húi-yúwár* [open the way] to the hunt. For the hunt, this means sacrificing a chicken over the gun, the spears, the bow and arrows. Here I would stress the word "traditional," these ritual acts things often appear to be forgotten or neglected in present day activities. This can be the result of either deliberate or conscious omission, or simply because one has not learned the ritual because it is less practiced. However, not to be naive, some of these rituals continued to be practiced, secretly, out of the sight of missionary eyes.

For the *do*, it is important "handle" things right because the process involves making an herbal extract which when added to the water will stun the fish so that they float to the surface and can be easily collected. It is a woman who prepares this extract by hand, and she must be extremely careful because the poison can be absorbed through the skin. There is a ritual involved in making the extract, both to protect the woman, and to ask the spirits to make it potent enough to call the fish to the surface so that they can be caught.

Although an individual might forget to do the ritual for his own personal hunt, eventually, if there is no success in the hunt, it would be traced back to this disrespect for the spirits and for tradition.

The question of how to ascertain whether the activity was successful or not, is an essential question of formative evaluation. Formative evaluation of the community hunt is carried out in the *weé-gara* setting, similar to the evaluation of the frequent hunting expeditions of families, as described by Sylvain:

The objective, if we go hunting, naturally, is to search for game. Now, we should find the means and the methods that one will use. But, after the hunt, in the evening once one has returned, everybody will now sit down together, and the father of the family, most often, will ask everyone who participated in the hunt—especially those of his family—that we review our objective that we established: did we get the number of game that we wanted? How were the means that we used in the hunt? And the methods that we used, were they good methods?

Perhaps they had opted for using dogs, or nets, or spears, or arrows, there are many elements that come into play now. Maybe with the nets, as they stretched the net and beat the game towards the net, they found that three animals came towards the net, but only one was trapped and the other two fled.

In the evening, the father will ask the one who was behind the net what happened. What had he done so that he didn't kill those three animals, and that only one was killed? And now the one who was behind the net, this gives him a chance to say that perhaps it was the way in which the net was stretched, that it was too tight so that when the animals came, they saw the net which was too tight, evaded it, and quickly ran off. Or perhaps when the animals came towards the net, he lifted his spear and the animals saw it and ran.

Perhaps with the dogs, early in the morning while preparing to leave for the hunt, they allowed the dogs to get too full, they gave them too much food and so they weren't hungry enough and this didn't permit them to hunt normally.

You see, there are many elements which enter into play here, and now at the meeting each one will have his say. Regarding the net, either the animal escaped from the net, or the net wasn't in good shape to start with, it had a hole and the animal ran through the hole to get away. . . . This permits everyone to take what's at his disposal to see what the means and

methods and the objective that was fixed. And this is what frequently happens in the village in the evening.

This permits the redefinition of another procedure. This is to say that for him, the boy, he who was behind the net, he will say probably "next time I'm going to stay a little farther away. And as soon as the animal arrives, I won't lift up my spear and this will allow the animal to advance. As soon as it goes, it will be trapped in the net, then I'll run up to bludgeon it." This is that which is foreseen. It has to be the boy himself who says this in full sincerity because it is he who will now go and do this activity. It's not worth it for the boy's father to tell him this, otherwise he will take it as a badgering.

See, this is the kind of evaluation, this is the kind of activity that one is in the midst of doing daily to see if the activity works or not.

Granted, this probably doesn't always happen in the ideal way that Sylvain describes, but the process does exist. People sit around and talk (gather data), and talk (analyze), and talk (make decisions), and talk some more until a consensus is achieved. The consensus expresses that all the data is in, that all avenues have been explored, that everybody that wanted to say something did, and that this decision is what we have agreed upon together.

Malevolent Events. Unexpectedly, all of the interviewees volunteered information about catastrophic events in family or village life as examples of activities that required the cooperation of the whole community. Death, like no other event, is something which draws the whole village together:

CS: What activities exist among the Gbaya that involve the cooperation of the whole community?

Noss: A few years ago things were not going very well in Meiganga. There was a brick that fell off the theater building, the cinema building, and it killed a kid. Nothing much was overheard, but enough bad had happened at that time that they said, "things are not going well in our village." So the chief, and certainly his elders—having seen it, and having heard about it—went up on top of Mount Meiganga and performed traditional sacrifices

to *só-kao*, the god of the land and the territory, hoping somehow to bring peace to the village, . . . to straighten out the situation in the village which was a bad one. Certainly that was a very traditional concern. The village—had things evolved—no village could have endured. Not only could it be a small village, but it could be even a sort of modern village as Meiganga, which was at that time a *Sous-préfecture* [county seat]. But, it was not done before everybody, it was done in a very, very unobtrusive way because the village is so diverse and so large. Admitting its fault just had to be done to bring peace. . . . Traditionally—and this seems to go back quite a ways—traditionally, anytime you have a village moving, anytime you have a village setting up in a new place, anytime you've got a new year (it's annual), anytime—at least at certain times when you have a particular trauma—sacrifices were performed to bring peace to the village. This is done through the chief. . . . That certainly is one community concern, and it's focused on the chief. He's the key person, he's not necessarily the one who performs the sacrifice.

CS: But how does it come about, I mean like in this example: the child was hit by a brick, it sort of culminated the atmosphere at the time?

Noss: Well, I wouldn't say culminated, I've given that as one example, a concrete event which happened.

CS: But it made some people think and decide that something needed to be done to bring peace, *gáá-mo*.

Noss: Well anybody, the chief has his advisors [I interrupted him]

CS: That's sort of where I'm looking at: how did the chief—if it's the chief, if it focuses on the chief, even if he doesn't do it himself—he's the one that says we have to do it?

Noss: Right, he's the one [I interrupted him]

CS: He's the mouthpiece, then that finally says that [he interrupted me]

Noss: No he's not the mouthpiece, he's the one who decides.

CS: But, how does he get to the point of making that decision.

Noss: Well, this is community consensus I would say. Community consensus. I think that consensus is extremely important. . . .

Noss continued from this point to describe the activity of arriving at consensus in community affairs which comes through talking together (this idea was already presented above in Noss' description of the "people must talk" segment in the "How Decisions are Made" section). The Meiganga village example underlines the importance of the chief in catastrophic events, and the importance of "talk" which helps the chief to read the consensus of the village in such an affair.

Another aspect of individual, familial, or village catastrophic events is that they are invariably thought to be caused by someone or by some spiritual force, often invoked by someone. In cases like these, the village must meet together and talk, as Sylvain describes in the following incident:

If at any time, in the bosom of the family, there is a death, then a second, then a third—now it has become successive—the people, at a certain moment, the father of the family, should meet. When you lose someone, as is frequently the case, you see, it's shocking. And during this time the people gathered should meet together to see at the family level, what was the cause. But not only the cause itself, but also their lifestyle that may have played a role there. This permits everybody around to see if they really want to continue to lose people like this from the bosom of the family. And then, you begin to re-look at the family structure to guarantee the well-being of everybody in the family.

Frequently in these cases, in the heart of our society, when there is a death, many questions raise themselves. But these questions which bring themselves up are just to stop the deaths so there won't be so many deaths. This helps everybody assembled to see what are the means which we can now put to work in order to permit the people who are still there to protect themselves.

In cases like these, Timothée has said that the chief and the elders get together to reflect on the recent catastrophe in order to discover:

What was the root cause of this catastrophe? And afterwards, they find a consensus about whether should continue to live in the same place or better yet, should they move away from this place?

This is especially true in cases where people have been struck by lightning, which occurs frequently in this part of Africa. Because of the predominant belief that lightning is able to be directed through spiritual means, no one is struck by lightning by accident; the common interpretation is that someone threw the lightning. According to traditional thought, it is also possible, through spiritual means, to discover who did it. Timothée gives a hypothetical account of such an incident:

At the village level, if there isn't a *voyant* [someone capable of seeing spiritual things], for example, one will bring in a *voyant* from the outside. That is to say, someone who can play the system of *voyant* to discover or detect the author of who caused the lightning. When he comes to the village, he is sort of like a facilitator. It's with the help of the villagers and the chief that they will choose the people who will have medicine placed in the eyes of some of the villagers themselves. These villagers who have had the medicine put in their eyes will lead you to go and to detect the author who did the fault. After that, its participatory at this point because everybody—that is, the villagers, and the *voyant* that they invited, and the chief of the village who called the *voyant*, all who participated—helped to detect who was the author of the lightning. After that, everybody decides that the author who did it should be condemned<sup>5</sup>. . . . Therefore, all of this is part of evaluation, a *báá kita*.

### Gbaya View Toward Western Evaluation

Much of the Gbaya view toward Western evaluation has been influenced by the country's colonial history. Pierre stated that villagers regard evaluation with suspicion because "The people confuse 'evaluation' with '*contrôle*' [inspection or



supervision] and they are afraid." Sylvain explains that it this fear of evaluation has really become a part of their subconscious.

This is easy to understand, there are many people who were alive during the colonial period of the country. It was not uncommon for people to be beaten under colonial rule. In 1954, there was an uprising of the Gbaya in Berberati because a European driver for the Public Works Department in Berberati, announced the death of his Gbaya cook and the cook's wife, by gunshot wounds (Kalck, 1974, p. 285). Berberati is a large Gbaya-Kara area about 150 miles south of our area.

People today remember these kinds of incidents. Sylvain states that the Gbaya think of the whip when they hear the word "evaluation" because the whip was the most common means of discipline for those who did not work as expected, who did not produce the quota expected.

If you had a field, and today the foreman from the base camp came and said that he wanted to go and see your field to see what you had done, that meant that you should expect the whip, you should expect prison, you should expect the back of his hand. Because the field which was there, if it was maintained, you should answer to your acts. And that has a bearing on our activities today.

Pierre and Sylvain explained that people also see evaluation as an interruption to their activities. Often, the people have had contact with outside development groups who carry out projects which are followed by evaluations. Since the local people view these projects as belonging to the outside development group, they also see project evaluation as an interruption in their daily activities. Therefore, in terms of community development, Sylvain stated that their mentality will only change through an intensive period of explaining evaluation, through the use of proverbs,

stories, and ensuing community discussion. He also expressed the opinion that community development workers have a role to play in influencing the mentality of the people towards evaluation and towards participatory community development.

The people were not agriculturalists, they were the workers of the agriculturalist. . . . They saw economic returns at their expense. It wasn't for the profit of the population. The population was ignorant of this situation because it was decided without her, in some office somewhere. . . . The problem that we have now, is to re-instill in the population, a confidence in herself and her ability to do things for herself again.

### Summary

In this chapter, I have presented the various thoughts and experiences of several of my Gbaya colleagues in community development work, concerning traditional and indigenous evaluation among the Gbaya. I have also shared some of the thoughts, experiences, and perspectives of my other informant, Philip Noss.

Having looked at different aspects of indigenous evaluation, such as who participates, how information is gathered to inform indigenous evaluation, and how decisions are made, it is important to remember that it is difficult to differentiate between traditional and indigenous evaluation practices because Gbaya culture is continually evolving. However, it is possible to note several trends in Gbaya decision-making:

- 1) Gbaya decision-making is practical; they tend to go with what works.
- 2) They tend to depend on experience, rather than a Western calendar.
- 3) Decision-making takes place at multiple levels in Gbaya society; *weé-gara*, *nam*, *quartier*, and village.

- 4) Individuals tend not to make decisions of importance on their own; most decisions are made through a group process.
- 5) In the community setting, the chief makes the decision after much talk which leads to a community consensus.
- 6) The Spiritual side of life and associated ritual continues to play an important role in decision-making in certain circumstances.
- 7) Past oppressive colonial experience has caused the Gbaya to assign negative connotations to the term "evaluation". They see Western "evaluation" as a another form of supervision.

In the next chapter, we will be looking at a participatory evaluation event in which I was able to observe and participate. A local church-based development program proposed to do a self-evaluation using a mixture of Western and indigenous methods of evaluation.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Names have been changed to protect their privacy.

<sup>2</sup> Knowing the parties involved, I am sure that this was all that Houma's father intended to repay. Knowing the Gbaya, it was sufficiently more than the amount that Houma's father had voiced as being fair during the discussions—even if it wasn't what was agreed upon—that the other party probably expected no subsequent payments.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all material in this chapter attributed to Noss, was obtained by his gracious consent to be interviewed on April 4, 1994, during a visit to Bangui, CAR. Similarly, all material in this chapter attributed to Sylvain, Pierre, and Timothée, was obtained through personal interviews which they graciously granted on March 31, 1995, and April 8, 1995. The names of my Gbaya colleagues have been changed to protect their privacy.

<sup>4</sup> "CS" refers to the researcher's spoken words during the interviewing.

<sup>5</sup> Frequently, the perpetrator is roughly handled and severely beaten by many of those present, but especially by the grieving family of whoever died from the lightning strike. This treatment often results in the death of the supposed perpetrator.

## CHAPTER VI

### FACILITATION OF A PARTICIPATORY EVALUATION

#### Entry to the Field

While finishing my comprehensive final papers and preparing my dissertation proposal in Spring 1993, I started contemplating about how I was going to explain to my Gbaya colleagues and friends in the Central African Republic (CAR) what I had studied and learned during my two year study-leave in the United States? It wasn't so much that I thought it would be difficult to describe and explain my further studies in adult nonformal education, community development, and evaluation research; I was more worried about how to explain my studies in participatory evaluation (PE) in such a way so as to pique their interest in PE and plant the seeds for an eventual participatory evaluation of some community development work among the Gbaya. I also knew from past personal experience that I would have a very small window of opportunity to do this.

Having travelled often for extended periods of time, I have found that most people have a limited capacity for new information. Whether out of genuine interest, or simply out of politeness, people will often ask about someone's recent travels or experiences, but often, especially if the information that the traveller relays does not fall into a context familiar to the listener (out of their realm of experience), the listener will change the subject to something more familiar to them.

My first encounter with this phenomenon happened upon my return to college after having taken a year off, to travel and work in West Africa with the Lutheran

Church, in 1975. I remember standing in the cafeteria line and happening upon an acquaintance I hadn't seen yet since my return to campus. His initial remark was something to the effect, "Hi Carl. Say weren't you gone last year?" As I began to relay something of my experience, I was surprised at his next response, "Sounds interesting, what are you taking this semester?" I found very few people who really wanted to hear about my experience and were willing to help me sort it through and explain myself. My experience in Africa was so foreign to them, that they were unable to relate, felt uncomfortable, and changed the conversation.

While preparing to return to CAR in June 1993, I was afraid that I might have a similar experience upon our return the following month. Would I be able to explain in a few short minutes my excitement for PE, with enough about it to open the door for follow-up discussion? Would I find at least a few people who would be able to take the time to allow me to really explain in depth about PE? How would I explain it to my unschooled Gbaya friends out in the rural villages in our project area?

I hoped that while in CAR during the next 24 months, a village or group would present itself with a self-expressed need for evaluation, an opportunity which would afford me the possibility of facilitating a participatory evaluation event and of observing the indigenous evaluation methods of the Gbaya.

I returned to CAR with my family for another two year term of service as a medical missionary with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in July 1993. Not only was I still director of the health care program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of CAR (ELC-CAR), but, prior to our return to CAR, I had also been

elected, by my fellow American missionary colleagues, to be the Mission Representative. This further increased my responsibilities in church administration, drawing me further away from our primary health care and community development work, and thus, possibilities for the participatory evaluation of community development work.

We also returned to a new location, Bouar, the second largest city in CAR with a population of approximately 48,000 people, but also an hour's drive from our village health care work in the rural area around Gallo-Boya. Again, this added to my fear of possibly not being around when opportunities for evaluation in the villages presented themselves.

As expected, as I encountered friends, colleagues, and acquaintances during the first few months after our return to CAR, they would ask their initial questions about our two year absence for studies in the United States, and then . . . they stopped asking; the months started to slip by without evaluation events presenting themselves.

By January 1994, I decided that I would have to find a different way in which to gather information about indigenous evaluation practices among the Gbaya. Even if I might not be able to facilitate or participate in a participatory evaluation which would include the participatory investigation of indigenous methods of evaluation, I should at least begin to explore alternative ways of finding out about it.

Therefore, in addition to maintaining a heightened awareness in decision-making situations, such as church council meetings, I also decided to look for opportunities to interview various people concerning indigenous evaluation practices

among the Gbaya. I then contacted Dr. Philip Noss, and found that he would be travelling to Bangui, the capital of CAR, in April 1994, and so arranged to interview him at that time, about possible indigenous evaluation practices of the Gbaya. I found the interview very helpful in thinking about Gbaya indigenous evaluation or decision-making. I also began looking for other opportunities for possible participatory evaluation situations, even outside of community development.

The problem with doing research while holding more than a full-time job, is that all too often the research becomes relegated to second or third priority. It was no different in my case. I was on the verge of despair when, in January 1995, I still had not been able to do participant observation in a participatory evaluation event using indigenous evaluation methods, because no community or group had presented for evaluation.

#### *Comité Général de Développement*

On January 11, 1995, the *Comité Général de Développement (CGD)* [General Development Committee] of the church met. This committee is comprised of five Central Africans who represent the five regions of the ELC-CAR, plus the directors of the three development programs, the directors of the projects within these programs, an employee representative from each of the development programs, and the president and vice-president of the ELC-CAR. The committee meets regularly, at least three times per year, and at any other time that a meeting is needed, often to present a new project request requiring timely approval. Two of the program directors are caucasian Americans, myself and the director of the agricultural



program. In addition, there are two other non-Central African caucasian project directors, a Danish woman, and another American (my wife, who was not able to be present at the meeting). There were nine Central African members, all Gbaya, present at this meeting.

This particular meeting was hosted by the *Programme de Développement Villageois (PDV)* [Village Development Program]. They had requested the meeting because they had several agenda items that needed the committee's approval. The first item for the agenda concerned their Toyota Land Cruiser which for various reasons, was not in operating condition. They wanted to ask the committee to endorse their request to their primary donor agency to have the vehicle replaced. They said that they had tried to repair it themselves, but without success. When asked how much it would cost to replace it, they had no idea. Upon further questioning, they admitted that the body and frame were in good condition, but that the transmission was irreparable. Not having the appropriate information, such as cost of replacing the transmission versus cost of purchasing a new vehicle, placed them at a disadvantage in arriving at their conclusion to buy a new truck.

One of the other items on the meeting agenda was PDV's proposal to hire two new employees, a chauffeur and an animator [someone who facilitates participatory community problem solving]. When asked how they would pay the new employees, PDV said that they had applied for an extension of funding for the current project from their primary donor. Furthermore, when asked what the new employees would do, since the vehicle didn't work and since they didn't currently

have an approved project which needed an animator, they could only talk in generalities of what they hoped to do if they got funding.

At this point, Sylvain, the Central African director of one of the projects in the *Programme de Développement Rural (PDR)* [Rural Development Program], an intelligent young man in his mid-thirties, experienced in community development and animation, pointed out that PDV really needed to do an "auto-evaluation"<sup>1</sup> [self-evaluation] in order to find out where they were and where they wanted to go with their program, before adding new personnel and making requests for additional funding. The director of the PDV readily agreed. Sylvain offered his project personnel and their expertise in self-evaluation, to help facilitate PDV's self-evaluation. The committee asked that the self-evaluation be completed by June 1995. I quickly expressed my interest in the self-evaluation process, and volunteered my services, as well. Therefore, I was also included by the committee to assist in PDV's self-evaluation process.

PDR and I already had other commitments that hindered us from starting right away. I remarked in my field notes on February 24, that I needed time to think about and plan interviewing some people before the evaluation, perhaps a couple of the guys from PDV and from PDR. I also thought about interviewing some older Gbaya that I know, but I never was able to carve out enough time to do that. Informally, it was decided between PDV, PDR, and myself, that the "auto-evaluation" would have to wait until sometime in April. I used this waiting period to develop an "interview guide" (see Appendix C and D) of proposed questions about indigenous evaluation to use when interviewing Sylvain, Pierre, and Timothée.

I interviewed Pierre and Timothée on March 31, and Sylvain on April 8. I was unable to find time to interview anybody else. The bulk of the results of these interviews are reported in Chapter V; however, a few excerpts are also included in this chapter.

### *Programme de Développement Villageois*

Before reporting on the process of PDV's self-evaluation, the following paragraphs are presented in order to help the reader better understand the historical context in which the evaluation event takes place.

PDV was created in 1983 as a social ministry of the ELC-CAR. The program's overall goals were three-fold: 1) to find better building methods and materials for local home construction using local materials supplemented with minimal amounts of imported materials, using appropriate technology, 2) to help villages to find potable water and exploit it for the use of the entire village, and 3) to encourage small village industry and experiment in appropriate technology for small village industry.

From 1983-1993, the director was an American missionary who trained an African staff, currently consisting of seven men (all local Gbaya). All of them have had some formal education, several have been to secondary school. For a period of time, from 1990-1993, the administrative responsibilities of the program, Public Relations, Personnel, and Finance, were divided between three of the employees. In 1993, the same three employees were named as co-directors of the program maintaining their respective responsibilities. This allowed the American missionary

to change jobs (officially leaving PDV), yet remain available on a limited basis as a technical advisor. In 1994, in order to solve some of the problems created by having three co-directors, the CGD eliminated the co-director leadership model of the program and named the then director of Finance as director of the entire program.

From a financial point of view, the program began in 1983 with limited funding and only three Central African employees who were part-time and whose salaries were dependent on receipts from the sale of services and production generated by the program. From 1985 until present, the seven Central African employees' salaries have been dependent on the program budget granted by external donor, supplemented by receipts from production and services.

During the past 12 years, the group of employees which was primarily responsible for the potable water project, was able to assist villagers in the captivation of 21 springs in a number of surrounding villages (there were five years scattered throughout the period during which no springs were captivated). They also helped to dig 10 wells (however, no wells have been dug since 1988). In principle, this branch of the program was to be self-financed by receipts from the villages which requested their services, with some outside funding available to help underwrite the cost of imported materials, like cement and iron.

Combining the housing and small village industry work, the program experimented with several appropriate technology ventures such as: a sugarcane press, an oil press (for palm nuts, groundnuts, and sesame seed), a coffee bean roaster, soap-making, leather tanning, pottery, and a motorized manioc flour mill.

They also experimented with sisal-reinforced cement roofing sheets, wooden shake-shingle making, earth-crete brick making, molds for uniform brick making, and more efficient wood-burning cookstoves. All of the post-harvest processing implement experiments were more or less successful. Unfortunately, it was cheaper (and less work) to buy processed sugar, oil, soap, and coffee in the local markets.

The motorized manioc flour mill which they produce in their local workshop, however, was widely appreciated around the entire country, and resulted in the manufacture and sale of almost 800 mills between 1988 and 1995. The cost of an imported manioc mill cost approximately \$2,400 - \$3,000. The cost of PDV's mill, locally produced, cost approximately \$850 - \$1,000. The price tag, although much cheaper than the imported model, was still outside of the economic means of most of the local Gbaya population; therefore, most of the mills were purchased by government officials, civil servants, business men, and the like. Even though local people couldn't afford to buy the mill themselves, it was still a major labor-saving device for women (whose job it was to pound manioc into flour before meal preparation), and affordable on a per use basis.

Unfortunately, the 100% devaluation of the national currency against the French franc in January 1994, resulted in a decreased demand for the mills. Decreased production has meant decreased revenue for the program. This is what precipitated the program's request for additional funding from their external donor in January 1995, and also led to their recognized need for evaluation.

Description of the Participants. All seven members of the PDV team assisted throughout the entire evaluation. Three of the members had been with the program

since its creation in 1983, and the other members had been with the program since 1985. One of the major philosophies of the program is that all members must be capable of doing all tasks, in order to ensure that all members know every aspect of the work, even if it is not their major responsibility or expertise. Therefore, all of them have been involved in the production of the manioc mill. All of the team members are from the local area, are Gbaya, and speak Gbaya as their primary language.

René is the director of the program and is responsible for finances. Previously, he was one the three co-directors of the program, 1993-1994, responsible for finances. He has attended secondary school. He is comfortable conversing in both French and Sango.

Boné was one the three co-directors of the program, 1993-1994, in charge of "external relations". He has attended secondary school. He is also very talkative, smooth in both French and Sango.

Gazol was one the three co-directors of the program, 1993-1994, in charge of personnel. A big, muscular fellow, he has been principally in charge of the potable water work. He prefers to use Gbaya or Sango.

Gbawé is a good welder and trained to run the large metal lathe in the workshop. At one time he served as foreman of the workshop and was charged with the inventory of materials and tools. He has attended secondary school. He converses well in French and Sango.

Toui works in the workshop as a welder. He has also attended some secondary school. He converses well in French and Sango.

Daniel works in the workshop, but has been more active in the potable water work. He has attended some secondary school and converses well in French and Sango.

Marc also works in the workshop, but has been principally involved in the potable water work. He converses well in French and Sango.

### *Programme de Développement Rural*

The *Programme de Développement Rural (PDR)* is the agricultural arm of the development work in the ELC-CAR. The current director of the program is an American missionary who has been able to find several intelligent young men (all Gbaya) who have been through secondary school. Having first been trained as animators, most of these men have been sent on for further studies in community development, animation, administration, and finance.

Their work has been based at the Bible School of the ELC-CAR in Baboua, where they train the Bible School students in better, low appropriate, farming and gardening methods, nutrition, and community development. They also do follow-up work with the students when they graduate. As catechists, most of them are considered leaders in their respective villages, giving them an excellent opportunity to demonstrate better farming and gardening methods. This often leads them to facilitate further community development work in the villages in which they serve.

Sylvain, Pierre, and Timothée have all been able to do further studies in community development, including studies in evaluation for community development. Additionally, PDR has assisted several groups to do "auto-evaluation"

of their work, both formative and summative evaluations. These groups include the Lutheran Church's urban development project in Bangui and the Baptist agricultural program.

Having also participated in part of the urban development project's self-evaluation in Bangui as a health resource person, I was able to observe their methods of facilitation. Their methods were very animated and participatory, reaching out to include the insights and remarks of all participants. However, the different phases of the evaluation process followed a semi-rigid list of steps which they had learned during their formal community development studies, and to which they closely adhered.

Knowing these men well as capable animators and community development workers dedicated to participatory methodologies, I was glad for the opportunity to be able to work together with them at this occasion. I hoped to be able to help PDR facilitate an even more participatory evaluation process, while exploring indigenous evaluation methods and their possible use in this evaluation setting.

Description of the Participants. Sylvain is the most formally educated of the group, having obtained his secondary school diploma. He is director of the Bible School training program in agriculture. He is responsible for classroom instruction of agricultural innovation and community development theory at the Bible School. He has travelled abroad, and in addition to excellent French and Sango, he also speaks some English. He is very articulate in community development. He is the chief animator/facilitator of this evaluation event.



Pierre is also well educated and works for PDR as their accountant. He is a gifted animator, very conversant in community development, and also speaks French and Sango well.

Timothée, a recent addition to the team, just returned from a workshop on community development and evaluation in Cameroun a few days before our interview session. He is very comfortable in French and Sango. He was also assigned the job of secretary for the evaluation process.

Oumarou has worked with the Bible School program in the more practical aspect of training in the fields and gardens with the students. He is more comfortable in Sango than French.

### The Participatory Evaluation Event

I feel that I've been doing the right thing. It's unlikely that I'll get the chance [to observe a participatory evaluation] unless something comes up quickly in the pharmacy work. I need to quickly concentrate on the PDV evaluation. I need to interview Sylvain before he gets too ready to help PDV. I'm sure that we can work on this together, that he'll understand what I'm looking for and be able to help facilitate the PDV evaluation in this direction (excerpt from my field diary, February 24, 1995).

I was able to talk to Sylvain a few days later while passing through. We talked about possible dates to block on our calendars for PDV's evaluation and I left it to Sylvain to make arrangements with PDV and get back to me during the next two weeks. We also talked about the urban development evaluation event which PDR had recently facilitated in Bangui. We talked about the basic tenets of PE and I felt that we came to an understanding about how to negotiate PDV's evaluation. We agreed that PDR would facilitate the PDV's "auto-evaluation" and that I would

play the role of participant observer, assisting in the facilitation as necessary to help keep us on track for a more participatory PE event.

The PE event, PDV's self-evaluation, stretched over a period of approximately five weeks of intensive work by the group. In spite of other conflicts, I was able to participate during the first seven scheduled working days, missing only four other group work days during the following two weeks. I was again able to be present for the final review of the findings on May 17, 1995. The final written report was presented June 7, 1995.

As mentioned previously, PDR had suggested that the main purpose of the evaluation was to be summative in nature, but with formative elements. PDR wanted to help PDV look back on their twelve plus years of existence as one of the development ministries of the ELC-CAR, by reviewing PDV's original goals and objectives of the program in order to determine whether or not they had been met as intended. However, PDV also hoped that the formative elements of the evaluation would serve as an aid to their possible project restructuring, reorientation, and redefinition in order to better serve the church and in order to seek continued outside funding.

### Forming a Working Group

Forming a working group for this evaluation event was actually a two stage process: 1) negotiation with PDR on our relationship and how we would facilitate PDV's self-evaluation, and 2) negotiation with PDV and PDR on my role as participant observer.

Before beginning the evaluation on April 11, I met with Pierre and Timothée on March 31, in order to interview them about their ideas concerning Gbaya indigenous evaluation methods. Later, on April 8, I also interviewed Sylvain separately because he was unable to be present at the first interview with Pierre and Timothée.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the first interview, I asked Pierre and Timothée what they knew about how it was that PDV came to the CGD meeting so readily agreeable to the idea of an "auto-evaluation":

Pierre: I think that many times the PDV presented themselves to PDR to ask them to help renew their funding request. We weren't very hot on the idea, but we'll do it there [at the evaluation]. . . . As it's not a project which just began, it's an operational project, they hurt themselves on some problems. So, this is good, we made a recommendation that they could do an evaluation to see where things are stuck, where they work, in any case to help them to redefine, and they accepted to evaluate themselves.

CS: But, did you conduct an awakening—even if it wasn't completely planned to go there and conduct an awakening on evaluation—so that they would begin to feel the need? Or, was it only in passing through on your way to Bouar any number of times, that you stopped and had casual conversations which occasionally led them to an awakening? Or did you plan it to conduct an awakening?<sup>3</sup>

Pierre: No, we didn't plan this awakening phase, it was from our occasional conversations. First of all, the idea didn't come from us, it was they who solicited us and then were confronted by their own problems, which caused them to explain themselves and wanted that someone help them.

CS: So, it was an awakening which took a long time and not really something planned in order to awaken them. Only in passing, when you saw them, did you suggest things, and then they began to know the necessity of evaluation. They took it to heart and they warmed-up to the idea. Then they announced that they were ready. It was like that? So really, one could say that they decided to make an evaluation.

Pierre: In light of the responses that we gave to their questions, they decided now to have an evaluation for their project.

Since it was now the end of March, and the decision to assist in PDV's self-evaluation had been made in mid-January, and since we had arranged only a few weeks earlier to begin on April 11, I asked them what had been done by PDR to prepare for the evaluation. I remember being very alarmed, almost angry, at their response:

Pierre: Well, we haven't prepared anything, yet. But on last Tuesday the program director [PDV] brought all of the files that we had not yet seen concerning the history of the project. And now, one can, with the personnel, they first need to know the basic concepts of "auto-evaluation".

Timothée: If there is going to probably be a self-evaluation of the PDV, I think that this was first felt, the need was felt by the PDV itself and brought up during the CGD meeting. They presented their need and it was the PDV which recommended to PDR to come and help them in the self-evaluation. . . . We have a burden for the community whether its Kwatisoazo [my health program], or PDR, or PDV, we all have a burden for the well-being of the community. And if there is a case where one among us is hurting because of certain situations, because of certain obstacles, we, all of us come to help them. This is the reason for which the CGD saw, took the problem in hand, and then asked—solicited—PDR to respond to the call of the CGD to help PDV do their self-evaluation. This is not to say that it was an imposition . . . . But we responded concretely to the felt needs of PDV which gave up the problem to the CGD which studied it and which called us to go help them.

The reason I was shocked, was that I thought that we had previously agreed, PDR and I, that we would meet together first, at their earliest convenience, in order to talk about how conducting this self-evaluation could be different, more participatory than what I had observed them facilitate in the past. Until the day of our interview, PDR had yet to contact me for such a meeting. As explained previously, in Chapter IV, highly participatory evaluation cannot take place if the evaluand doesn't first initiate the idea of evaluation and negotiate all phases of the evaluation; as in participatory research, the guiding questions for a highly

participatory evaluation can be emergent. And here, it seemed as if PDR had already solicited PDV's files before we had been able to meet together, or with PDV, to find out if in fact PDV wanted to jointly go through their file archives, or not.

Timothée further continued by stating that, "If the records are in our hands, it's just to orient ourselves. We just want to know what PDV is about before we help them with their self-evaluation." I read this to mean that PDR wanted to be ready to present a better evaluation plan, already knowing what needed to be evaluated, instead of negotiating with PDV what their felt evaluation needs might be.

Unsettled by this closing note in our interview, I immediately contacted Sylvain, that same day, in order to ask him the status of the PDV's archives and PDR's intentions for them. I re-explained to him about highly participatory evaluation and he agreed to wait on reading the files until we could negotiate this with PDV. We also confirmed our interview date for April 8, just three days prior to our scheduled meeting of PDR and I, in order to review together our course of action as facilitators.

Surprise! PDR contacted me by radio at 6:45 am on April 11, to tell me to pick up PDV on my way through their location and bring them along, so that we could start working with them after our meeting. I was anticipating my meeting with PDR only to really work out our relationship and the facilitation procedures that we would use. The following is an excerpt from my field diary:

I was sort of miffed about it because I wasn't informed until that morning on the radio that they had already invited the PDV to come to Baboua to get started, and I was supposed to pick them up on my way through. I was thinking, "There goes my chance to interview PDV pre-evaluation." PDR proposed that we meet right away after our initial planning meeting later the same morning. Seeing that time is getting short, I didn't argue with them, but decide to opt for "Plan B", which would be to ask a few questions at the beginning of the joint session and take notes.

The meeting started at 10:20 am at the Naabaasaa building in Baboua. I explained to the group again, why I wanted to be included in PDV's self-evaluation process. I also re-emphasized that I was to be a participant observer—hopefully more observer than participant. I was also leaving the door open for me to help facilitate and redirect as necessary. I was thinking about this being my only chance to get the information I needed for my dissertation, and I wanted it to go well and be as participatory as possible.

Knowing how well PDR usually prepared for their community development facilitations, I asked them how they proposed to facilitate PDV's "auto-evaluation", and what phases they anticipated in the evaluation process? They responded, paper in hand, by explaining the following phases:

- 1) The negotiation phase: This was to include discussion with the group on the following:
  - why they wanted an evaluation,
  - explanation of the phases in the evaluation process,
  - what calendar of events they could expect during the process,
  - what it means to be "partners" in the evaluation process, and what implications being "partners" might have on the process
  - is there a geographic zone limitation,

- what means are available for the study (money, human resources, time) of both facilitators and PDV,
  - description of the role of the facilitators with a clear delineation of duties for all participants, facilitators and PDV,
  - discussion on how to "give back" the information, reporting method, (reflecting and checking out if what the facilitators see is what the project is trying to show).
- 2) The "constat" [data-gathering and analysis] phase: stating what was found
  - 3) The "jugement par l'évalué" [judgment] phase: what conclusions can we draw from what was discovered, analysis, and synthesis
  - 4) The "redéfinition d'activités" [recommendations] phase: what action, if any, can be taken in light of this information.

I took the opportunity to reinforce the steps in the evaluation process that they had identified, and explained that I followed much the same guidelines. I also explained that I found it easy to remember these fundamental steps by using the acronym "WWP", "Who wants to know What for what Purpose?" However, I translated the acronym into French as "*les 4-Q*", "*Qui veut savoir Quoi for Quel raison, et Qui va le faire?*", adding a fourth "Q" ["W"], "Who will do it?"

I also asked about what they thought about using a Gbaya story or proverb to start out the session with the PDV (Sylvain and I had discussed this possibility during our interview) in order to orient or re-awaken the group's need for self-evaluation. Sylvain said that the PDR team had talked about this together and thought that, in an effort to start out on a more participatory note, we should involve PDV in trying to think what stories or proverbs might work best for them. I thought that this was a good idea! One of the other PDR team members, Oumarou,

already had a proverb in mind, to the effect, "If you want something done right, do it yourself."

We decided to meet with the PDV right away after this organizational meeting, and that I would start out by explaining my presence (doctoral dissertation work, technical advisor to PDR), my possible role in PDV's self-evaluation process, and then let PDR take over with the one change we proposed about asking them to look for stories, narratives, or proverbs which could be used to illustrate the need for evaluation or help in the evaluation process. We concluded our discussions and everybody went off to prepare for our first group meeting to begin PDV's self-evaluation which would start in 15 minutes.

During this pause, I realized that I wouldn't get a chance to interview any of the PDV team before we actually started, so I decided that after I introduced my reason for wanting to be a part of the group, that I would ask one question to at least get PDV's initial pre-evaluation reaction: "What do you think of when you think of evaluation?"

### The Opening Session: Defining the Process

Our first working session with PDV got started at 11:50 am. Sylvain started the meeting by greeting everyone and then turned it over to me to explain my presence and ask permission to be a participant observer of the evaluation process, looking for Gbaya ways of evaluation that we might be able to use in the evaluation process. After their agreement that I be present as a participant observer, I



concluded my brief introduction by asking what they thought of when they thought of "evaluation".

Boné responded in French that evaluation is like a rear view mirror in a car that helps you to look back at what has been done. It helps to look at the things that you've done in the recent past and to see what happened, in order to help do better in the near future.

René responded that it is a process by which you analyze the project see what has been done and what has not been done, and (then added in Gbaya), "*mieux dáfa mo ee déa, zok mo ee déa et mo ee nyem me dé sáámo léng* [to better fix things that we've done, see things we've done and things that we might do in the future]."

Gazol answered similarly in Gbaya, "*Ee fúdí depuis 1983, ee ko zok mo ee déa. A te gbák ee dans l'avenir* [We started since 1983, we want to see the things we have done]."

Sylvain picked on the concept of mirror and wove it back into the conversation by asking, "Who do you see when you look in the mirror (not rear-view mirror as in Boné's example)?" Several in the group answered right away, "ourselves". At this point Sylvain stated, "We're not evaluating the person, but the program."

The phrase about "not evaluating the person" was used several times during this first session, and it also cropped up again during other sessions. Although it was meant to liberate the participants to talk freely and honestly about the program throughout the evaluation process, I also had the feeling that this was a Gbaya way of exonerating everyone of any responsibility. If the evaluation showed that certain

things hadn't gone well, then it would be no one's fault, since fault-finding wasn't the purpose of the evaluation.

Sylvain continued with a 20 minute monologue supposedly introducing the "steps" which PDR intended to follow in the evaluation process. He stressed how important it was to know what the "*finalité*" [stated intended final outcomes] of the program were. He also pointed out that these "intended final outcomes" were probably to be found in the archives of correspondence with their donor, and in their project proposals. He explained that we would examine together, why PDV wanted these end results. He also pointed out that the project request would also contain the objectives that the program had wanted to achieve. He ended his monologue with the following question: "What are we going to do? How? With what means? For what purpose?"

I interrupted him at this point, because it appeared as if he was getting on with the substance of what he planned to introduce to PDV without asking about what Gbaya stories and/or proverbs could possibly be used to help in explaining the need for evaluation. I explained to the group that I was looking for a story about Wanto and Tana in which both had planned to do something, one prepared and the other didn't, one had good results and the other didn't. "What stories like this exist?" I asked.

Gazol spoke right up without taking more than 30 seconds to reflect. He recounted how their potable water team had prepared a skit for their work in Fôh based on a Gbaya folktale, but they changed it for their particular purpose. The

story about Wanto and Tana which they adapted was something about, "If you plan well, you will get what you want."

### Negotiating the Intended Goals and Outcomes of the Evaluation

Sylvain then asked the question, "Why should we do evaluation? *Ing mgará mo ne saa, kó déa, kó déa ná?*" He shifted from French to Gbaya in this question, using the Gbaya phrase "*ing mgará mo ne saa, kó déa, kó déa ná*" [to know the difference between things clearly, whether we did it or didn't do it].

In response to this question, they started listing the things that they wanted to know about the program. I made a note in my field diary concerning this point, "I think that it was the things that they thought should be evaluated, like stuff [the donor] would like to know." The following is a list of the things that they started calling out:

- "Why did some of our objectives work?"
- "We're supposed to be an auto-financed project, but devaluation of the CFA during these past two years has made it difficult for us, what can we do?"
- "The mills and the brick presses were our money-makers, but they're not selling well, what do we do now?"
- "In our water work project, we were doing captivation of springs and wells, but we've abandoned well work."
- "The mills are already all over, there's no more market."
- "We thought of making a field trip to see what other things are being made by hand and copy them here to diversify our production and what we have available to sell."

Based on these comments and wanting to try and regroup their questions, I suggested the following two reasons for why they wanted to do an evaluation: 1) How can we continue to be self-sufficient? and 2) How can we continue to pay our salaries?

Their comments indicated that that was part of it, but that there were other things that they wanted to know. I was close, but that wasn't quite it.

Sylvain suggested that they make a list of all of the activities that they had done as a project since the beginning. For example, list all the projects, their objectives, their activities, where their finances came from, the results, etc. My immediate internal response to this suggestion was that this was PDR's way of getting the information that they felt was necessary for the evaluation of a program. I was concerned that although this was certainly participatory, that it would cause PDV's self-evaluation to end up as another example of participation-in-evaluation (PiE) and not really answer PDV's questions—their self-described evaluation needs.

PDV's response to Sylvain's suggestion was continued vignettes by PDV's members about how a project or activity hadn't worked well, or how the money was not clear, especially since it comes from different sources for different project activities. PDV described how they saw manioc mill profits underwriting the potable water work and that this resulted in smaller bonuses on their salaries. They described that when the project truck breaks down, and since there isn't a budget for upkeep, the money is taken from manioc mill profits meaning less salary bonus on production, and now the vehicle is up on blocks because there's no money to fix it and mill sales are doing poorly.

At this point I started to get the picture that most of what they wanted an evaluation for was to clarify their finances. As I look back in my field notes, I noted at the time that they could get some information about their finances, from their archives; additionally, they could gather more vignettes by interviewing each other and writing them up. Their donors would probably be able to appreciate these vignettes if they were included in their self-evaluation final report.

However, at the time, I was so concerned about how to keep the evaluation participatory—meeting the self-expressed evaluation needs of PDV—and using alternative methods of evaluation, that I was forgetting to observe for indigenous evaluation.

I realized later that evening, as I was typing up my field notes, that they were doing it in a Gbaya way, oral vignettes, griping, exhaustive comments, were like what you would do when you "*báá kita*". In a "*kita*", the case would be presented from all of its many angles, from anybody that had anything that they wanted to say about the matter, then judgments and decisions would be made through consensus. At the time, I refrained from trying to help them get to the point—telling us concisely their evaluation needs 1,2,3—not because I was realizing that this was a Gbaya way of doing evaluation, but because PDR was supposed to be facilitating the process and I didn't want to step on their toes.

PDV's griping about the program and how certain things hadn't gone well, went on for about an hour. I started itching for a blackboard because I was having a hard time keeping my ideas straight about what it was that they wanted to know. I thought that it would be helpful to group the comments that they had been making,

in order to see it all together in front of us. I leaned over and asked Sylvain what he thought about using the blackboard at this point. He had brought a box full of chalk and he thought that it would be good. So, while they kept talking, we set up the blackboard.

I stood up and started writing on the blackboard and explained that after what I had heard them saying, I wondered if the following statements/questions, correctly regrouped the kinds of things that they had been discussing? Was this on target? Were these the kinds of reasons why they wanted to have an evaluation?

I continued by reflecting out loud that what I heard them discussing thus far, centered around their perception that they had at times abused the finances of the project through ignorance about the origin and intended use of their budgeted funds. Secondly, they were expressing how it was unclear to them about the where funds were coming from, since apparently they had multiple sources of funding, some of which they felt they didn't know about. Furthermore, it sounded like their not being clear about where their funding comes from, caused them to have concern about their salaries and future job security.

During the next half hour, before we took a break for lunch at 2:30 pm, I continued to write on the black board as they directed. Gradually we created a table which re-grouped the self-expressed goals for the evaluation (Table 6.1 on page 206, is presented exactly as it evolved during our meeting). I presented the headings and tried with great difficulty to get the group to see where we were going with this. In my mind's eye, I could see the next two vertical columns that we didn't get to, but talked about. The third column: "who will do it by when?" and the fourth column:

"what product do we want at the end of our evaluation (a written report, a project proposal, revised budget etc.)?" The process was well received and PDV seemed to agree by their attentiveness and nodding heads, that these were indeed some of the things that they wanted urgently to know.

When we broke for lunch, it was becoming very clear to me, and I think to PDV, that these issues were why they, PDV, wanted an evaluation. It was also clear that this was not all they wanted to know and that we would have to continue to expand this list together later.

I talked with each of the members of PDR during the lunch break to make sure that I wasn't stepping on their toes. They said that they were glad for my intervention and that they saw this as a learning time for them as well, to better assist with evaluations in the future.

We disbanded at 4:00 pm after deciding that we would meet again on Thursday, April 13, in order to continue and hopefully move into the information gathering stage by the end of the that session.

I felt pretty good about how this first session went, wished that I hadn't intervened so heavily, but I felt that PDV needed to have a good participatory evaluation experience that would help them to figure out what they can do to improve their program in the future, and I knew that PE could do it! Also, given the increasing role that PDR is playing in facilitating things in the church, I felt that they could benefit from some more guidance in their participatory evaluation skills and not just rest on the recipe that they had learned and applied up to this point, albeit more or less successfully.

**Table 6.1** PDV's Self-expressed Goals for Evaluation

<b>I. Goals:</b> <b>(reasons for doing the evaluation)</b>	<b>II. What information do we need?</b> <b>Where to get the information?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How do the finances work in the projects? (especially grants and their use).</li> <li>- What are the different rubrics in the budget?</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will the finances run in the future?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where does our money come from?</li> <li>- production activities?</li> <li>- donors?</li> <li>- other sources of funds?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How will we pay salaries in the future?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Where have our salaries come from in the past?</li> <li>- How is the market for our manioc mill?</li> <li>- Identify the activities which can create income for the project.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can we better plan the financing of a vehicle in the project?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- look at how it was done in the past.</li> <li>- look the line item for transportation in budget.</li> <li>- look at depreciation rate.</li> <li>- look at use of vehicle.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How can we better plan the financing for the potable water work so that it does not cause a drain on the rest of the projects?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How was this done in the past? (look in the document archives of the project and interview the personnel.</li> <li>- look at the budget, how it was divided, and used in the past.</li> <li>- What part was underwritten? or Community participation?</li> </ul>



Timothée began our second day of meetings with a brief résumé of our last meeting, listing what had been decided as goals for the evaluation. He stated that we were still in the negotiation phase. Nobody said anything for a couple of minutes, so I re-stated what Timothée had said, but stated it in such a way so as to ask for reconfirmation of each of the identified goals that we had stated them during our meeting two days ago. I also stated that perhaps during the past 48 hours, they had had time to reflect upon what we had listed then. Several of the PDV members, Gazol, Boné, and René, shook their heads in the affirmative.

This got the discussion going and soon several of the PDV members were contributing new areas of concern for them, including the following:

- people coming to work late,
- taking long breaks from work during the day,
- going home early,
- not respecting work hours,
- It was pointed out that this affects business because they can't keep up on their production, which in turn affects revenue and hence the future of the project.

PDV summed up this goal for their evaluation as follows: "How can we arrange our usage of time in the project so that it works better in the future?" The other PDV members agreed with this definition.

Timothée asked where and how we could get information about this subject (in order to fill in column two of our table). All of the PDV members had something to say, all of them giving reasons which would justify themselves concerning their non-compliance with work hour schedule. This activity of self-justification is a Gbaya characteristic (not to say that it is uniquely Gbaya).

Another remark I should make here is that during our discussion of work hour schedules, Timothée stated that "we're going to see this with the whites of our eyes." He was thereby suggesting that we would be looking further into this problem of work-hour schedules through the examination of the program archives, thus getting to the root of the problem.

Only one other goal was brought up and discussed at this time, "What are the things that we could make in our workshop that will help the local population in their daily lives, at an affordable price?" Here again, this touched upon one of their previously mentioned concerns, "What activities can we do to increase our income?"

At noon on the second day, we decided to move on to the third column of table. At this point, I had thought that we would decide how to split up and gather the information that was needed to inform our evaluation questions, and then it would take less time to do. However, it also occurred to me that perhaps even asking the question "Who's going to do it," was counter to the Gbaya way of doing evaluation. I remember Noss saying that the important thing about an activity is that you do it with your friends.

In order to confirm this idea, I asked them what they thought of this idea of the Gbaya doing things together and not alone? They said that those who are interested get together at the "*kita*" to "*báá kita*". For example, in the specific case of adultery, the man and the woman are present in front of the chief, and the man's father. If they need additional information (evidence) the chief calls in other people and then they talk, talk, talk until everything is out on the table; then the chief makes his judgment. As stated earlier, very few decisions are made alone, most

decisions of importance, and even those of seemingly less importance, are made by discussion and consensus with others.

Somehow, after this confirmation, PDR suggested again that we would probably find a lot of this information in the archives of the program and that these papers should be examined. The group decided that in order to get information concerning finances, that past correspondence be examined. PDR suggested that a few people look at the documents and report back to the others at our next meeting. PDR was pushing this idea when, as I looked around the table, I noticed from PDV's subtle facial expressions that they were not in total agreement with this idea. I don't know if I was just becoming more sensitive or what, but it came to me that this was just like the situation we had been talking about in the "*báá kita*", the feeling that everybody who was concerned should be present. So, I voiced this to the group. PDV responded that, in fact, they all wanted/needed to be present when the documents were to going be reviewed. It wouldn't be enough that some of them understood what was going on, and then have them report back to the main group later. They all wanted to hear it for themselves.

It was then suggested by the group that I come to the next work day, the following day, and that we begin reading the documents together. Many of the letters were in English and they especially wanted me to be present to translate for them. I also suggested that we have a facilitator from PDR present in order to take notes during the readings and discussions so that we could later put together a clearer picture of their past finances.

The next day, I was pretty sure that something was up, because all four members of PDV showed up for the meeting. We had agreed the day before that just one of them would come. Why had they all come?

The meeting started at about 1:45 pm with Sylvain recapping what we had decided to do the day before, that we had agreed to look at all the old correspondence in PDV's files *"in order to find out what the goals, the objectives, and the activities of the project were, so that we could see whether the project had done what it said it would do since the beginning or not! And that all the other reasons for the evaluation that we had listed the day before, would be looked at later."*

This really made me angry! That was not what we agreed to do the day before! It seemed to me that PDR was trying to impose what they were used to doing in evaluation and not taking into account PDV's self-expressed goals for the evaluation. It also seemed to me that they were discrediting all of PDV's goals by putting them on hold until the "real" evaluation took place—PDR's view of looking at the project in light of its objectives, met or unmet. I confronted them, stating that I thought that they were imposing their recipe on PDV's self-evaluation.

A 45 minute discussion followed in which PDR explained that they were not imposing their recipe, but that "it [was] absolutely essential to look at the project in light of its objectives, every good evaluation does this." I expressed that I thought that PDV would want to look at the program objectives, eventually, but what they wanted to know now were the things that we had negotiated as goals during the past two days of work together. I also suggested that PDV knew what activities they had

done during the past 12 years, they just didn't know exactly how they related to any objectives that may have been stated, especially since they hadn't help in the formulation in any of those objectives. Furthermore, PDV had expressed that they didn't understand how these objectives related to the program finances.

Timothée, in a frustrated tone of voice, stated that the more participatory process that I was trying to get them to use, wasn't clear. He said that we had never really finished the negotiation phase because we had not yet established a calendar of activities for this evaluation. "It's like we're already starting with the redefinition phase of the evaluation, we've already begun discussing what the end result will be without doing the evaluation," he exclaimed.

I explained that he was right, that we hadn't really finished the negotiation phase, and that we were already discussing the end result—the presentation form of the end product of our evaluation—but that this is what happens in highly participatory evaluation; you have to be flexible.

This discussion took place around a table in PDV's presence, however, they didn't participate in the discussion. The final result was both a standoff and a compromise. A standoff, because PDR was still unconvinced about the process of doing highly participatory evaluation. A compromise, because I agreed that we should go ahead and read all of the letters anyway.

### Data Gathering and Analysis

In addition to the little vignettes describing the conditions and situations in the program which were expressed during the first three days of meetings, we were

now ready to add further data by reading the documents in the programs archives. Most of the documents were in English because the first director was an American missionary and the donor felt more comfortable writing to an English-speaking director in English, rather than French.

Since we didn't get started until close to 2:00 pm, we only accomplished a little more than two hours of reading (translating out loud) documents which dated back to 1979, four years before the program began. The documents were contained in one over-filled manilla file folder about two inches thick. Being late afternoon by that time, we decided to break (I was traveling one and a half hours each way in order to assist at the meetings, because I needed to be home each evening for other reasons). I think that PDR was happy that we were finally doing "real" evaluation because Sylvain gave a 10 minute monologue on all the interesting and important things that he thought that we had discovered together in these archival documents. He gave many "for example . . ."s of how this information would help PDV see better what they should do in the future. I didn't doubt it, but I also felt that he was not convinced that if PDV were left more on its own, that they would have been capable of seeing the same things that they as experienced facilitators could lead them to see.

I joked with Sylvain that he was doing all the analysis for PDV before we had all the information, and that with all his examples, that PDV wouldn't have anything left to uncover and analyze for themselves, if he didn't stop. They all laughed.

It was decided that we need a more concentrated time together in order to get through all the documents and to negotiate the next steps. So, we decided that we would meet everyday during the next week, until we got to a point that we all felt that either we had finished, or until PDV felt that they could go on with certain other evaluation tasks without our help. We proposed to meet again sometime after May 7, in order to do the analysis and come up with the desired (negotiated) end products of our evaluation together.

After the long weekend, we met again on Tuesday, April 18, to continue reading through PDV's archives. As usual, before getting started, a good facilitator recaps the previous work and asks for feedback and confirmation. We agreed that we should continue to look at all of the documents, beginning to end, and then review all of the goals that PDV had established for the evaluation, and then go from there. We really had no idea how long it would take to read all of the documents, so we reaffirmed that we would continue to meet, as necessary, for the next five days.

Sylvain then asked if anybody had any comments or ideas and produced a micro-cassette recorder and explained that he would like to tape the session to help PDV catch all the important things being said. Only two of PDV's team made short comments. Marc stated, "People accuse of us being apart from the rest of the villagers and not responsive to their needs. We hope that this (evaluation) will bring us together, so that what we do will be what they want and need."

René added that "we need a facilitator to help us to see what can be done, and to help us to see what means we have and/or need in order to accomplish these new goals." René's comment took us off on a tangent for the better part of an hour.

Sylvain then suggested that it would be helpful to make a list of all their resources in the project, human, financial, information regarding what villagers want, etc. Again, I felt that this was one of those things that PDR thought was essential in an evaluation, but it made sense to collect the information now when it was brought up. They made a very detailed list which include the personnel followed by all their equipment, even down to the paint brushes on hand.

On the fourth day of work, only Sylvain and Oumarou were present from the PDR team, while PDV was represented by it's full complement. Again, we read for approximately two and a half hours before breaking for lunch at 2:15 pm. This reading brought us through the first five year phase of the program, 1983 to 1988. Sylvain asked how we wanted to proceed at this point, since we had finished reading about the first phase of the program? I got the impression that he really wanted to dig into the analysis at this point, but René only asked that he make note of several important points and made a list of questions to ask the former American director for clarification, especially about hidden/gift monies to which he may have had access (the former director was still living in the area, but doing different work).

During the lunch break the members of PDV were talking:

"We haven't done with other things (sugarcane) like what we did with the manioc mills, where we went out all over the place to show it to people. We didn't do marketing with the coffee roaster either. We tried to work with recycling iron scraps from the project to do other things with, but we couldn't get the oven hot enough to melt it all the way."



"We should try and visit other projects and organisations like APICA in Douala or the technical school we've heard about in Tchad to see what else we can do with sugar cane and if we can copy or adapt their machines here."

"What we need is a depot in which we could stock things like caustic soda for soap making and hand tools and farm implements. Then, like the village committees come and buy drugs from Kwatisoazo, why not have other things that they can buy that will help them?"

"We did experiments with soap making, but all we got was a liquid soap, it wouldn't harden. It was a good soap that made lots of suds, but it wasn't what the people were used to, so we suspended that activity."

"We intended to teach the village youth [leather tanning] and then stock the lye for tanning the hides to be available for sale to the villagers."

I asked Boné, "Why did you suspend these activities?" To which Boné responded, "Because manioc mills took all of our time, now we are more free because there are less mill orders."

Regarding the evaluation process at this point, all of the talk, talk, talk, appeared to be the Gbaya way of making decisions. Talk until everyone has had their say, if you need more information, like getting information from the former director, you send for someone to get it. I'd noticed Gazol staring out of the window a lot that day. Boné has been doing most of the talking, but I know that Gazol also has opinions about these things, but only if you ask him. I wonder if this is also Gbaya, act disinterested until someone wants your opinion, or if this is just because Gazol doesn't especially like Boné monopolizing the conversation?

We continued the document reading for the next three days, before finally finishing all of them. Sylvain and Oumarou came faithfully each day, Pierre assisted on the last day of reading. All of the PDV team were there every day. After about two hours of reading, we would take a break and end up discussing

different aspects of the program's activities, use of materials, personnel difficulties, and how they had proposed to do more village outreach and would like to do more in the future. They also called in the former director several times for clarification on certain issues.

On April 21, we finished reading the final documents. The most recent letter, dated February 1995, was from their principal donor agency which has supported them from the beginning of the program until now. They shared their perceptions of PDV's recent operation as, "lacking rigor and without precise objectives." PDV was also informed that when their current funds were exhausted, that they would not receive continued funding in the future. This prompted PDV to add another goal for the evaluation: to explain their situation to the donor as sincerely and as honestly as possible. This would be done with a well written report of the present self-evaluation showing that they are trying to get a handle on their situation, that they have definite goals and objectives for the future, and that they should be reconsidered for future funding.

Although I was unable to participate in the on-going data-gathering phase because of other urgent business, the group met five more times during the following two and half weeks. During these times, they continued with "round table" type discussions among themselves, and interviewed people in their village and other surrounding villages. On the morning of May 10, they reviewed all of their data (in written format) and in the afternoon they began their analysis together.

## Final Report

I assisted again on their second day of the two day analysis phase of the evaluation on May 17. I was disappointed to find that PDR appeared to have fallen back on their own internal set of guidelines for facilitating a self-evaluation, as they were preparing a written report of the evaluation with PDV. The report appeared to address the issues which PDR had expressed as important and necessary in any evaluation. These were the same issues that they had outlined for PDV during our first session with PDV, before we had even begun to facilitate PDV's self-evaluation. I also had the feeling that PDV's participation in this report writing phase of the evaluation was only a perfunctory process of helping PDR to "fill-in" the predetermined blanks in PDR's standard report format. Admittedly, PDR was very good at reflecting back what it had heard PDV say during our discussions, thereby seeking confirmation that their (PDR's) analysis correctly reflected what had transpired in the meetings, but it was still PDR that was controlling the information to be included in the report, and the final format of the report.

I was disappointed to find that the report neglected to address PDV's self-expressed evaluation needs, as they stated them during the first four days of the evaluation process, the ones that PDR said that we would get to later. Instead, PDR had relied entirely on the intended goals and objectives found in PDV's archives.

Despite the amount of time spent identifying PDV's self-expressed evaluation needs during the first days of our work together, the following excerpt from the final report is all the analysis that was written concerning PDV's finances:

The non-application and the disrespect of the Program for the objectives and the activities originally accorded by the request to the donors, has brought about some difficulties and confusion in the financial administration of the Program. That is to say, the original Project was granted at every three-year period with precise goals and objectives.

The current phase should have ended in 1991, but here we are in 1995, and it is only now that the Project has arrived at its end. They had neither a redefinition of their objectives, nor a revision of the budget, nor an execution of activities which respected the objectives of the Project.

The PDV has seen financial self-sufficiency as the principal goal of their program which has caused a concentration of activities at the level of the production of marketable products by the small industry project, while neglecting the potable water project. The sudden devaluation of the Central African franc poses serious problems in attaining this goal of financial self-sufficiency (PDV, 1995, p. 18).

Although PDV probably found information that would inform their specific self-expressed evaluation needs concerning their financial questions, I believe that more time would need to be spent together (with or without facilitators) to make the information understandable and useable for them. I believe that they have also benefitted from the participatory process of the evaluation.

I was not present when they negotiated the form that the final report would take; however, a well outlined written draft was already well underway when we met on May 17. The final report was distributed by the PDR on the final meeting on June 7. The report was well written, in eloquent French, in an eye-pleasing computer generated format, by members of the PDR team. It will be a wonderful appendix to any future funding requests, it's exactly the kind of thing that donors look for. Members of the PDR team went over various forms of the draft with members of PDV before printing and making multiple copies of it. Other than that, I'm not sure how much the PDV team participated in the actual writing of the final

report. I'm also not sure if they discussed any other possible forms of reporting, such as: oral, vignettes, photos, or video.

### Summary

In this chapter concerning the participatory evaluation event of the PDV and its facilitation by the PDR, I was able to uncover several insights into the Gbaya way of doing evaluation. I also presented several factors which have an impact on PE and the use of indigenous forms of evaluation in PE events.

I found that it is important for the Gbaya to do things together, including evaluation. PDV was unwilling to select one or two people to review the archives of the program, they all wanted (needed?) to be present. Perhaps assigning an evaluation task to someone is not the Gbaya way, "the important thing is that you do it with your friends," as Noss said (interview, 1994). I think that the importance of "talking" cannot be over-stated; it appears as though everybody must have their say and the talking continues until the group is satisfied that there's nothing more to be said.

One of the ways of "talking" seems to be in the form of vignettes, the recounting of personal incidents (often in great detail). The Gbaya exhibit great patience and seem to allow the recounting of as many vignettes as people want to share. Again, this continues until everybody present has said what they want to say.

Although I have been unable to present many Gbaya proverbs or folktales, it seems that there are probably some which would be specifically appropriate for underlining the need for community development work among the Gbaya. Several

times during the course of the evaluation, one of the participants would use a proverb (or part of the proverb) in order to make a valutive statement about something: "*Bé-boré ho boré*" [The little fox resembles his father].

Of special interest for outside evaluation facilitators, I found that language, interpretation, and translation, presented problems several times. Co-facilitating with colleagues of another culture also presents other challenges. Neither of these problems are insurmountable, but they require patience, a willingness to work together, and a process of continual negotiation.

Finally, the question of how to do highly participatory evaluation in a setting where the potential participants know little about PE, raises itself. Perhaps it is necessary to add an "awakening" phase to the different steps in the PE process.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> PDR has had experience facilitating "auto-evaluation" [self-evaluation] for themselves and several other groups in the area. For PDR, "auto-evaluation" is a process by which an organization can look at itself and its activities, as measured against its stated and intended goals and objectives, as well as how it used the means at its disposal to accomplish these. In this case, the "auto-evaluation" is meant to fulfill both summative and formative roles for PDV.

<sup>2</sup> All material in this chapter attributed to Sylvain, Pierre, and Timothée, was obtained through personal interviews which they graciously granted on March 31, 1995, and April 8, 1995. The names of my Gbaya colleagues have been changed to protect their privacy.

<sup>3</sup> "CS" refers to the researcher's spoken words during the interviewing.

## CHAPTER VII

### ANALYSIS

The purpose of the study was three-fold: 1) to examine the emergence and evolution of Participatory Evaluation, 2) to investigate the indigenous forms of evaluation of the Gbaya people of western Central African Republic, 3) to explore how these indigenous forms of evaluation could potentially inform or influence the current practice of Participatory Evaluation in community development.

It was also hoped that by investigating the indigenous evaluation practices of the Gbaya, that the study would add to the body of knowledge concerning PE, and be able to demonstrate a new model for PE in cross-cultural settings. Moreover, it was hoped that the participatory research process which was used would help the Gbaya people to rediscover and validate their own indigenous forms of evaluation.

#### A Framework for Understanding Participatory Evaluation

Concerning the study of the emergence and evolution of PE, Chapter II provides a review of the available literature. I also proposed a model for better understanding the position of PE within the research cycle. I also offered a framework for better understanding the differences between various research evaluation perspectives which emphasized the use of participatory methods. Of special interest were the differences between PE and PiE (Participation-in-Evaluation).



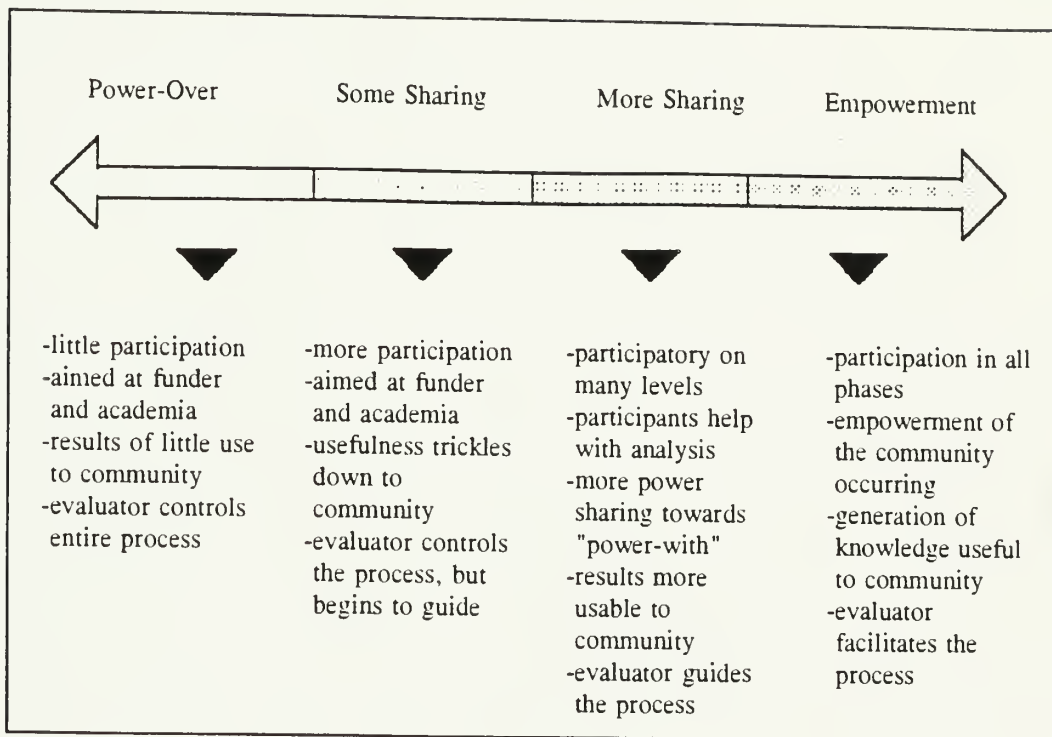
Therefore, I would propose that, ideally, PE begins with a self-expressed need for evaluation; this would come from the people who would be directly effected by the evaluation (in community development, this would be the community itself). If the evaluation is to be facilitated by an outside evaluation facilitator, this would then be accompanied by the negotiation of the guiding questions for the evaluation/research and the procedure to be followed during the rest of the evaluation process. Depending on where in the research cycle the evaluation/research questions occur, dictates whether the evaluation would be formative, summative, or exploratory in nature. Finally, the presentation form of the results would be negotiated.

#### The Implications of Various Continuums on Participatory Evaluation

Of the many factors which influence PE, I have chosen to illustrate and describe the effect that each of the following factors has on the process of PE, especially when an outside evaluation facilitator is involved in the participatory evaluation process: 1) power, 2) facilitation method, and 3) education, training background, and experience.

Power Continuum. Referring to Figure 7.1 on page 224, the Power Continuum which I developed illustrates the varying degrees of power possible in the evaluation process. By power, I mean who's in control of the evaluation process-the community or the evaluation facilitator. The extreme left indicates the monopolizing of power by the evaluator, whereas the extreme right shows that the community controls the evaluation process. In between are varying degrees of

power-sharing which translate into a lesser or greater degree of participation by the local people—both in quantity and quality.



**Figure 7.1** Power Continuum: Implications of power on the evaluation process.

On the left end of the continuum, the evaluator maintains a greater degree of "power-over" the community and the process of evaluation.<sup>1</sup> If the evaluator is really possessive, there is very little room for the participation of local people in the evaluation process, and what little participation is allowed tends to be pragmatic—the answering of questionnaires might be considered "participatory". It would be unlikely that the evaluator would request the help of the local people in the analysis of the data. The final results would be aimed at the funder and academia, with little regard for their usefulness at the community level.

As one moves toward the right end of the continuum, the shaded area marked as "some sharing" would allow for more participation, however, the evaluator would still maintain a great degree of "power-over" the process. In this case, the community may be approached to help define the inquiry question of the evaluation and help in the data collection. The analysis of the results would again be the domain of the evaluator, but he or she would probably ask members of the community to confirm their conclusions. Although there is some attempt at allowing for local participation, the results are still directed toward a different audience: the funder and academia. It is hoped that some benefit will trickle down to the community as a result of their community participation. This type of evaluation I would consider "Participation-in-Evaluation" (PiE).

As we move farther towards the right end of the continuum, "more sharing" of power takes place and it becomes more of a "power-with" situation. Participation is encouraged not only in the development of the guiding questions of the evaluation, but also in more of the other evaluation tasks—usually under the guidance of the outside evaluator. Participatory analysis may also help in the community problem-solving process and lead to results which may be more useable by the community. The results may, however, be less useable to the funder and academia.

Finally, as we look at the shaded area at the extreme right end of the continuum, empowerment of the community occurs. This area is characterized by increased involvement at all levels of the evaluation process with the evaluator facilitating the process as invited by the community. There is increased "power-with" to the point that the community is in control of the evaluation process. The

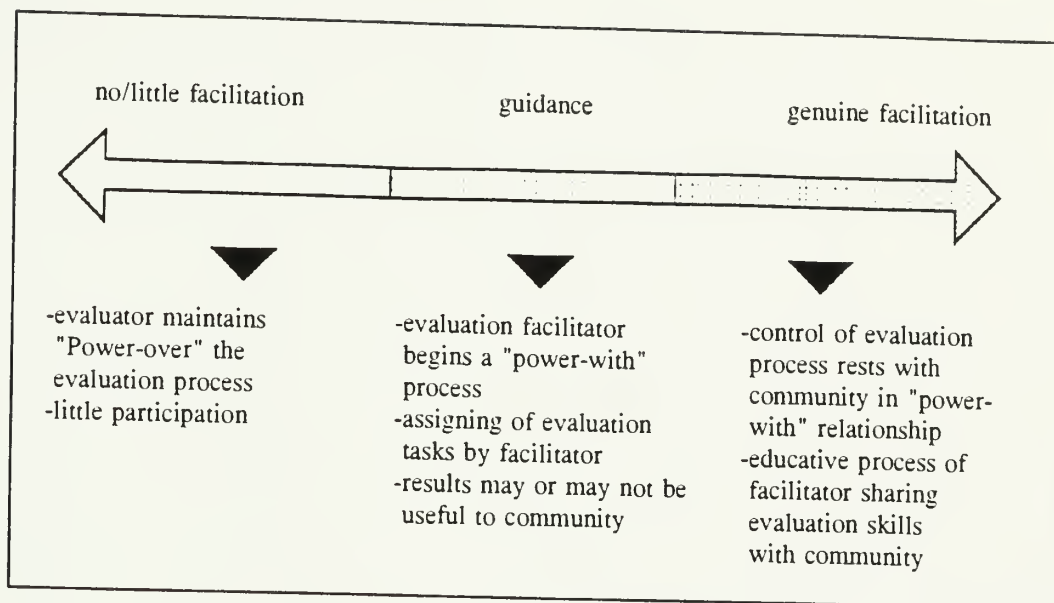
evaluator identifies with the community and is in solidarity with them. Concerning the technical issues of the evaluation process, the evaluator acts merely as a consultant on the evaluation team. The knowledge generated through critical reflection, and leading to critical consciousness, is of direct interest to the community and can be used to inform social action aimed at transforming their social reality. The results may be of little interest to the funder—if there is one—and may in fact be opposed to the funder or other existing power structures in the community.

Facilitation Method Continuum. The second continuum which I developed concerns the issue of the facilitation of participation in the PE process. Facilitation of participation is intimately linked with issue of power and has implications on the participatory evaluation process.

Figure 7.2 (on page 227) illustrates and describes the effect of facilitation on PE. The shaded area to the left indicates that "no/little facilitation" of the local people's participation in the evaluation process is occurring. Evaluation of this type correlates to the "power-over" portion of the power continuum. The implications of this on the evaluation process can be divided into three possible responses by the community.

- 1) By not taking time to understand the Gbaya way, the evaluator may get answers on questionnaires that are an effort by the community to "please" the evaluator, telling the evaluator what they think she or he wants to hear.
- 2) If participation by the community in the evaluation agenda of the evaluator is encouraged by the evaluator, the community may only do so to please the evaluator and not indicate significant participation on the part of the community.

3) The community may rebel by outwardly participating, but by sabotaging the evaluation with false information if they see this as being to their advantage.



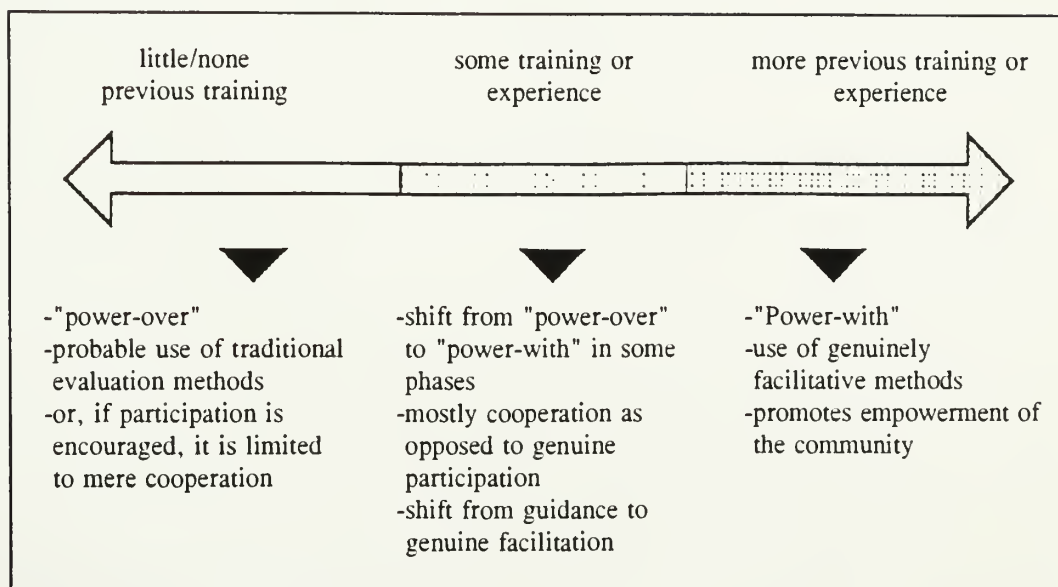
**Figure 7.2** Facilitation Continuum: Implications of facilitation methodologies on evaluation.

The second shaded area in the middle of the continuum indicates where facilitation takes the form of "guidance" by the evaluator. In such cases, the evaluator maintains control of the process, but guides the community through evaluation tasks assigned by the evaluation facilitator. There may be a lot of activity which may appear to be participatory, but for what purpose? The evaluation still focuses on the questions of the evaluator or the funder, and hence, risks being the wrong question when considering the potential focus of the community. The results may or may not be useful to the community.

The shaded area to the right end of the continuum illustrates "genuine facilitation". Associated with the power continuum, the control of the evaluation

process rests in the hands of the community. The evaluator does not merely assign evaluation tasks to the community participants, rather, at the invitation of the community he or she assists or counsels the community by bringing in a different perspective and expertise. As an educative process, the evaluator is also interested in sharing evaluation skills with the community to help the community with future PE.

Previous Training and Experience Continuum. The third continuum is concerned with the effect that previous training background and/or previous experience of the facilitator may have on the evaluation process. Figure 7.3 illustrates this continuum.



**Figure 7.3** Educational background, training, and experience continuum: Implications for evaluation.

The shaded area to the left end of the continuum exhibits "little or no" previous training or experience in PE. This will probably result in both, 1) the use of traditional, "power-over" evaluation methodologies, and 2) even if there is interest in PE, the participation will be limited to mere cooperation.

The middle shaded area represents the area of "some" previous training or experience with PE. The issue of power will vary from "power-over" to "power-with" as one moves from left to right on the continuum. However, there is a shift from guidance to genuine facilitation as one moves from left to right. Overall, the results will probably be mixed and would more properly be called PiE.

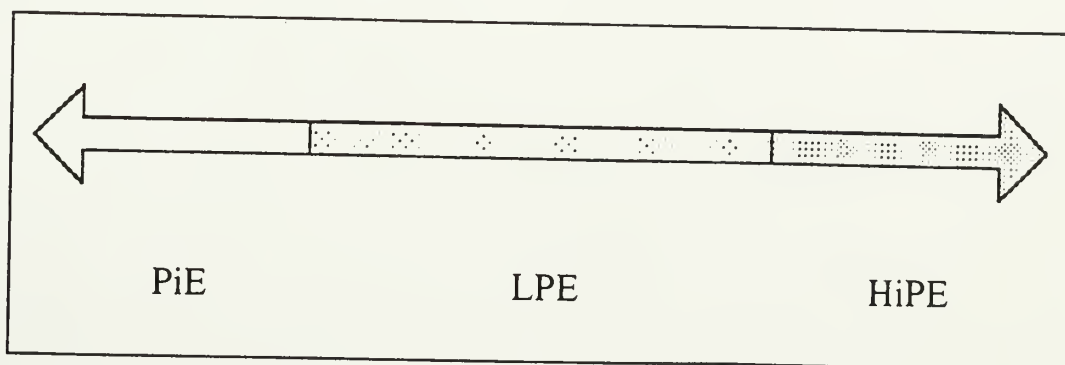
The shaded area to the right indicates the area in which the evaluator chooses to operate in a "power-with" mode and uses genuinely facilitative methodologies in order to promote the empowerment of the community in the evaluation process.

Finally, it could be argued that the personality and culture of the facilitator also influences the facilitation continuum. In my experience with the PDV evaluation event, I think that my personal upbringing may have had an influence on my facilitation style. While I was growing up, I was taught to seek out the good in all people, whether from my culture or another cultures foreign to me, and to try and bring out the best in people. As such, my facilitation style tends towards sharing power with other people. This was reinforced in my studies, training and further experiences in community development.

## Participatory Evaluation Continuum

As has been illustrated, all three continuums—power, facilitation methodologies, and previous training or experience—have implications on the process of PE. I would hypothesize that those who operate under the belief of "power-with", use genuinely facilitative methodologies, and have had some previous training and/or experience in PE, are more likely to facilitate a more highly participatory evaluation.

As stated earlier, the literature contains many examples of "participatory" evaluation; however, there appears to be many different interpretations of what qualifies as PE. Through the above illustrations, I have proposed some criteria which could enable us to differentiate between different levels of PE. Figure 7.4 illustrates that the practice of Participatory Evaluation itself lies on a continuum ranging from evaluations which are minimally participatory, to those which are highly participatory.



**Figure 7.4** Participatory evaluation continuum.



I would propose the term "HiPE" (highly-participatory-evaluation) to indicate those evaluations which are characterized by the following:

- "more sharing" of power which leads towards the "empowerment" of the community,
- "genuine facilitation" which exhibits commitment towards "power-with",
- commitment to encouraging the community to take control of all phases of the evaluation process,
- commitment to the educative process inherent in evaluation to further empower and enable the community to better meet their future evaluation needs.

Similarly, I would propose the term "PiE" (participation-in-evaluation) for any evaluation which does not include sharing power which could eventually lead to the empowerment of the community or group, and which is limited to mere cooperation in the evaluation.

There remains, however, a large gray area of PE which lies between these two extremes. For those evaluations which encourage participation in several of the evaluation phases, which lean more towards the sharing of power and control over the evaluation process, and which are committed to the educative process, I propose the label of "LPE" (less-participatory-evaluation).

Finally, Participatory Evaluation is an evolutionary process. As those facilitating participatory evaluation gain experience and confidence in the group or community using the PE process, the more the outside facilitator is willing to share power, and the more the group or community wants to use participatory methods and control the evaluation for their purposes.

## Investigation of Indigenous Forms of Evaluation

Considering the participatory nature of the community development work that I had been involved in during the past nine years in CAR, it seemed more congruent with my previous work to propose to investigate indigenous forms of evaluation in a participatory manner as well. I wanted to find out about possible indigenous forms of evaluation among the Gbaya, that was my agenda, but would my proposition also be the agenda of the Gbaya people that I worked with? I was felt myself in the same dilemma as Marla Solomon (1992) when she embarked on her participatory research among women in Cape Verde; she stated, "In spite of my best intentions, I was leary [*sic*] of calling my research 'empowering' or 'participatory research'. Somehow, in the context of doctoral research this label felt to me like a contradiction, only in disguised form" (pp. 51-51). My feeling was that I would learn as much, if not more than, the people I was working with. I could only hope that they would get as much out of the process as I felt I would—and did.

With this in mind, I proposed to investigate indigenous forms of evaluation through the ethnographic interviewing of key informants and through the participant observation of a PE event.

The first thing that I would like to note about indigenous forms of evaluation among the Gbaya is that it is illusive to look for strictly "traditional" forms. The Gbaya society is in a state of rapid transition due to their relatively recent exposure to the changing world around them. Often, "traditional" methods of doing things change because the culture encounters a different way of doing something and either adapts or adopts it for their own use. Unfortunately, in oral societies, the old way

of doing something is often lost when those who knew the old way die. This may very well be the case with some of the indigenous evaluation practices of the Gbaya—we may never know. The indigenous evaluation practices which I observed and reported in Chapters V and VI, are their current indigenous evaluation practices. Undoubtedly their past (traditional?) practices have influenced these current practices. Evaluation through discussion, analysis through "talking", and decision-making through consensus, would perhaps be examples of "traditional" indigenous evaluation practices.

Secondly, there are multiple levels of decision-making which parallel the social hierarchy of Gbaya culture. If a problem exists in the *weé-gara* [those who sit around my hearth], then the discussion and decision usually remain within that confine. However, some issues from the *weé-gara*, such as marriage and divorce, extend to the *nam* [family, clan] level. Clan-level problems and decisions stay within the clan, unless they involve several clans, such as in a *quartier* or a village situation. Each level usually "talks" and makes decisions at their respective level.

One of the most important things about Gbaya indigenous evaluation is that decisions are almost never made alone. People talk. People talk until there is a consensus. Furthermore, seeking consensus through talking is one Gbaya way of doing evaluation; however, consensus has its limitations.

This is where mobility, one Gbaya way of problem-solving, becomes important. When part of a village cannot come to a consensus on something, they feel the freedom to split off and start their own village. When a family has problems and is unable to arrive at a consensus, part of the family may move, even

if only to another part of the village. In community activities such as hunting and fishing, although there is consensus that this is about the time to hold such an event, the individual is free to choose not to attend. When unexplainable catastrophic events occur in a village or a *quartier*, divination may reveal that it would be better not to continue living in that location, the whole village may move one or two miles down the road.

Another general observation: in the Gbaya context, people think of evaluation as something you do when there is a problem. PDV's self-evaluation was precipitated by the threat of cessation of funding. An unsuccessful hunt gathers the family around the hearth to discuss what happened and what to do next time. Catastrophic events, such as a series of deaths in a family or a village, or death due to lightning strike, causes the family or village to talk and make decisions to remedy the undesirable situation. At least in the Gbaya context, I would hypothesize that PE, resulting from the recognized need for evaluation (decision-making), is often precipitated by a problem.

Experience was another major factor in the decision-making aspect of Gbaya indigenous evaluation. The Gbaya know by experience, often collective experience. For evaluations concerning outdoor activities such as farming, hunting, or fishing, they know because of signs in nature and from collective experience. Since they didn't have calendars until recently, whether they hunted on one day or another was not as important as some of the other signs which indicated that it was "approximately" time for a hunt and that others also agreed (consensus) that it was about time for a hunt. The important thing in community type events such as

hunting and fishing, is that they are done together, and that there is consensus about this being the time to do it.

### A Gbaya Way of Decision-making: A Model of Indigenous Evaluation

Synthesizing the above observations, I would like to present the following as a model of indigenous evaluation. Remembering that evaluation includes, but is not limited to decision-making, the following steps illustrate only one method of indigenous evaluation among the Gbaya—decision-making:

- 1) The Problem: People state what they see happening; "I wonder how the water team calculates cement and iron costs, because often they run out and have to send for more during the middle of their project? This costs more money because of the increased use of the vehicle to return to the program workshop to get more."
- 2) People Talk: If the implicated people are present, they can then try to explain, defend, and justify themselves. Talk, talk, talk.
- 3) Sharing Vignettes: If anybody else has anything that they want to say to the subject, they are free to do so. This sharing of experiences often take the form of little vignettes apropos to the topic. Sharing of proverbs and folk stories may occur here as well. More talk, talk, talk.
- 4) Analysis of the Situation: "Talking" is interspersed with generalizations and often includes suggestions of what to do, if anything.
- 5) The Decision: When there is no more discussion, the person in-charge (the chief, the group leader, the clan-head) announces pronounces the decision of what is to done. This represents a consensus of the discussion and analysis which took place in the previous steps.

### Critique of PDV's Participatory Evaluation Event

Concerning PDV's self-evaluation event, as described in Chapter VI, PDR's experience and training for evaluation led them to use a facilitation style which falls

between "guidance" and "genuine facilitation". In their rhetoric pertaining to power issues, PDR definitely leans strongly towards "empowerment". In practice, PDR seemed tied to a more "goal-based evaluation", concerned more with the stated goals and objectives of the program—a product of their education, training, and experience—which inhibited them from going with a more "goal-free", participatory evaluation. Thus, although the evaluation got off to a good participatory start in the negotiation phase of identifying PDV's self-expressed evaluation needs, PDR's training and prior facilitation experience with "auto-evaluation", lead to a more guided, less participatory evaluation (in terms of who controlled the power over the process). This leads me to place this particular evaluation event within the category of LPE. If the facilitation of PDV's self-evaluation had continued to follow their self-expressed evaluation needs, and if the analysis phase had encouraged a more critical reflection on PDV's part, I think that we could have seen an even more participatory evaluation that could have then qualified as HiPE.

#### Misunderstandings Because of Terminology and Language

One of the incidents which comes to mind that helps explain why PDV's self-evaluation wasn't able to become HiPE, was because of a misunderstanding that took place between myself and the PDR team. As described in Chapter VI, prior to our first working meeting with PDV, PDR and I met briefly the same morning to discuss how we would facilitate the self-evaluation. I asked PDR to describe the steps that they used to guide them during the evaluation process. These steps included: 1) negotiation, 2) identification of activities, 3) data gathering, 4) analysis,

and 5) recommendations. I remember complimenting them on their understanding of self-evaluation. However, on the third day of the evaluation, after negotiating PDV's self-expressed evaluation needs during the two previous days, PDR began the meeting by announcing that we would read all the archive documents in order to find all the goals and objectives for the program, so that we could see if PDV had accomplished their objectives or not, abandoning PDV's self-expressed evaluation goals that we had elaborated.

Unfortunately, although we shared the same terminology to describe the steps involved in PE, we each had a different understanding of the meaning ascribed to the terms, especially the first two, "negotiation" and "identification of activities".

By "negotiation", PDR had meant that a calendar of events and some basic ground rules for the evaluation process would have been agreed upon. PDR would facilitate the evaluation by asking the "right" questions and insuring that all steps of the evaluation process were accomplished and they would write-up the evaluation report at the end. PDV would help by answering the questions asked and by showing PDR where to get the data needed to inform the evaluation. PDV would also verify that the analyses and conclusions reached by PDR were on target and help formulate the redefinition of the project.

By "identification of activities", PDR meant that the goals and the objectives of the program should be identified by looking into the archives, in order to see whether or not PDV had accomplished what they said they would do.

Because the terminology that we had used to talk about PE was the same, I assumed that we had been talking about the same thing. However, my idea of

"negotiation" was that we would discuss and list PDV's goals and objectives for the evaluation, and establish where to look for the needed information to answer these questions. My idea of the "identification of activities" was that we would again negotiate who would do what, by when, and for what end product, regarding PDV's previously identified goals and objectives for the participatory evaluation. In other words, deciding what activities of evaluation we would do, such as interviewing, reviewing of documents, or administering questionnaires. Hence the confusion.

So, even though PDR had agreed to do a more participatory evaluation, I don't think they understood what I meant by the PE process in the first place. Since I had confused them, they decided to follow the five steps of self-evaluation which they had been taught and had become accustomed to using. I couldn't get them to see that PDV had already clearly expressed what they wanted from their self-evaluation (information surrounding financial issues), and that although PDV had agreed to look over the past documents, it wasn't necessarily because they wanted to know if they had achieved the stated goals and objectives. I think that PDV agreed to look through their document archives in order to be submissive to PDR, the recognized leader of this *ad hoc* group. Deference and respect of the leader is a part of Gbaya culture.

I think that PDR had learned in their training, that reviewing the documents of a project was an obligatory element of any evaluation. However, I also think that if we had continued the negotiation phase, as I understood it, that we probably would have agreed that the reading of the archives would have been a good place to get information about the finances, etc.



## Biases Which Influenced PDV's Participatory Evaluation

I think that evaluation, including the participatory evaluation of community development work among the Gbaya in CAR, continues to follow a Western model of practice. Although evaluation for community development is beginning to take place locally with local facilitators, like the PDR team, I observed three biases which inhibited PDV's self-evaluation event from being more participatory and from being ranked in the HiPE category. Both PDR and PDV were influenced by their experience in the French formal educational system and by cultural mores which dictate deference to authority. These biases are described below:

1. *End-Product Bias*. Although I think that PDR sees the process of self-evaluation as integral to the overall growth of the group, there appears to be an "end-product bias". In other words, in addition to the learning process and the community-building process inherent in the self-evaluation event, there appears to be a vested interest in producing an attractive well-written report which can also serve donor interests. PDR was concerned throughout the evaluation that the five steps in their "auto-evaluation" model be followed in order to arrive at the end of the evaluation event with something that the donors would recognize, understand, and value.

I remember being surprised on the fourth day of the evaluation, having just begun the reading of PDV's archives, that Timothée already had a draft of several pages of detailed observations in final report form. These observations, which he read out loud at the beginning of the meeting, corresponded to the previous days' listing and discussion of PDV's available resources. I also remember being

surprised May 17, the second day of analysis work, that PDR already had a draft, in final report form, of all of the data gathered from reading PDV's archives, including the observations made during the discussion on the days that I had missed.

2. *Expert Bias*. The second bias I observed was an "expert bias". By this I mean that they are seen as "experts", partly because they received further training in evaluation, outside of the country, partly because of the expertise the PDR team had acquired during the past year in facilitating self-evaluation with other groups.

However, this bias works in two directions. Not only are they perceived by others as "experts" which need to be respected, but they also see themselves as "experts". By this I mean that they see themselves as experts because of their education and training, and as a result must remain faithful to the guidelines that they learned.

For example, although PDR and I had negotiated to try a more participatory model of self-evaluation, including the negotiation of PDV's self-expressed evaluation needs, at several points during the evaluation process, PDR repeatedly suggested that we look at the PDV's archives because this is where they had been taught to find important information.

3. *Practical Bias*. Finally, as explained earlier, the Gbaya are practical, they go with what works. I would therefore propose that there was also a "practical bias" which influenced the PDV's self-evaluation. PDR has been recognized as a team of good facilitators; they have assisted with several other self-evaluations in the recent past and glowing reports from those groups have been received at the national church office, thanking PDR for their help. The professional way in which the PDR

team facilitates evaluation, their genuine sincerity in encouraging participation during the evaluation, and their belief that the group requesting the evaluation has the ability to do the various tasks of evaluation required to turn out a good evaluation, all led PDV to seek out PDR's help. Because of the "practical bias", PDR was unable to be flexible in the negotiation process. Recognizing and working with PDV's self-expressed evaluation needs would have required them to adapt their previously proven methods and try something new.

### Impact of the Researcher

Although I had negotiated to be a participant observer in PDV's self-evaluation event, I participated more than I had intended. As a result, it was difficult to observe for indigenous evaluation and keep field notes during the sessions which lasted six to eight hours in length. However, I felt that it was necessary to be able to participate in order to help PDR facilitate a more participatory evaluation event.

One must point out that my presence as a white person probably influenced the facilitation process in several ways. First, because of the Gbaya history of slavery and exploitation, because of their poor economic status, and because of their low level of attained formal education and literacy, white people in general are treated with deference. Many times Gbayas will halfheartedly follow the suggestion of a white person just because he or she is white, even if they have good reason or prior experience that would contradict that suggestion.

Secondly, people in positions of authority lose their personal identity. For example, I am not known as Carl or Mr. Stecker, even to my Gbaya peers and colleagues, rather, I am referred to by my various titles: "*Docta*" [a term used for anybody in health work], "*Directeur*" [Director] because I'm the director of the health work of the church, or "*Président*" because I'm the president of the Christian Health Association of CAR. However, this also happens among themselves if they become titled. The title itself also gives authority and weight to whatever is said by the person with the title. Therefore, as "*Directeur*", I was entitled to even more respect in addition to the automatic deference I was shown as a white person.

These factors made my role as a participant observer in PDV's self-evaluation difficult. Awareness of the potential influence of my skin color and position led me to try and limit my interventions. Fortunately, I already knew the people involved in the evaluation fairly well because of my long presence in the health and community development work of the church, and my experience in facilitation techniques.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The concept of "power-over" is related to the Functional and Interpretative Paradigms of community development as explained by Gerber (1991). This in opposition to the concept of "power-with" from the Radical Humanist and Structuralist Paradigms. For further commentary on this concept, see Gerber (1991).

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Conclusions Concerning Participatory Evaluation

The literature review in Chapter II is intended to be a "state-of-the-art" review of the emergence and evolution of participatory evaluation (PE) over the past thirty years. Beginning in the United States in late 1960's, the U.S. Congress mandated that U.S. government sponsored development work had to be participatory; in other words, it had to involve the proposed beneficiaries in the various stages of the development process. Although "participation" was not well defined at that point, by the early 1970's one finds development workers and evaluation researchers working to make evaluation participatory. Involving the program participants in their own evaluation process led to coining the phrase "participatory evaluation"; however, "participation" has been subject to multiple interpretations ranging from mere cooperation in various phases of the evaluation process, to relinquishing the control and management of the entire evaluation process, to the program participants.

Evaluations which most closely resemble the later description, I would label as HiPE (highly-participatory-evaluation). Evaluations which only require the participants cooperation I would label as PiE (participation-in-evaluation). A large number of participatory evaluations cited in evaluation and development literature, which are more participatory than mere cooperation and are more interested in

"sharing power" or relinquishing their "power-over" the evaluation process, I would consider as LPE (less-participatory-evaluations).

Although difficult, I think that it is possible to facilitate HiPE. There are however, certain necessary, but not sufficient, preconditions, which can set the stage for HiPE:

1. *The evaluation facilitator must be flexible.* When working with groups who have had very little prior experience with evaluation, it requires that the evaluator or development worker be prepared whenever the a expresses an evaluation need, to facilitate by orienting the group towards more participatory processes in meeting their evaluation need. During the course of other development work or participatory research in the community, the development worker/facilitator would look for opportunities to include education and training on participatory evaluation, describing it as a normal part of the cycle of any activity, including the activities the community development. Since the process is evolutionary, one should expect that first attempts at PE will perhaps be less participatory than desired, but with increased experience and confidence (of both the facilitator and of the group), HiPE can be an attainable outcome of the participatory process.

2. *There needs to be an awakening phase in the participatory process.* In areas where groups have not had experience with participatory evaluation, the facilitator may need to present information about PE as part of the educative process in community development. The empowerment that comes to the beneficiaries of the participatory processes of community development and PE is not something that

can be taught, however, I believe that it can be awakened within the spirit of the group and nurtured by the facilitator.

3. *Prior experience or training in the participatory processes of community development, or PE.* As stated earlier, initial attempts at PE may be less participatory than desired, but it can help set the stage for a more participatory experience at subsequent occasions.

4. *Time.* Sufficient time to work through the necessary participatory processes involved in PE may be difficult to obtain, but it is absolutely essential., especially with groups who have had little or no prior experience with PE.

5. *The joint investigation and use of indigenous methods of evaluation can only aid in the process.* The use or adaptation of indigenous methods of evaluation for PE would encourage people to use skills with which they are already familiar. Use of indigenous evaluation practices may not replace the need to introduce new skills, but rather than dominating current evaluation practice, Western methods of evaluation could be used to supplement indigenous evaluation practices.

The primary purpose of the PE is to meet the expressed evaluation needs of the group or community, if it can also meet the needs of some other interested outside group, then that's an added benefit. If necessary, the facilitator may need to help the group better understand the needs of other interested outside group (eg. donor agencies) and jointly plan an evaluation to meet those needs. This may necessitate a separate evaluation which specifically addresses the needs of the donor; however, I believe that the PE results of the group should also be included in any report to the donor, as well.



## Conclusions Concerning Indigenous Evaluation

Is it possible for evaluation facilitators to become aware of indigenous evaluation practices? Yes! Is it important to community development work and participatory evaluation? Yes!

In order for an outside evaluation facilitator to "discover" indigenous forms of evaluation, he or she must be a good observer. It is not sufficient to be immersed in the culture, one has to be consciously looking for and observing events in the culture in which decisions, judgements, and assigning of value are taking place. In addition to these casual observations, it is helpful to be able to investigate those events through ethnographic interviewing of key informants, keeping in mind the pitfalls of doing cross-cultural research.

Generally, the Gbaya make evaluations at multiple levels: nuclear family, extended family, *quartier*, and village. However, they seldom evaluate alone, most evaluation is done through the five steps proposed in Chapter VII: 1) Voicing the Problem, 2) People Talk, 3) Sharing Vignettes, 4) Analysis of the Situation, 5) The Decision. It is also important to note that there is tolerance for individual dissent; as in the cases of the *do*, *gia*, and the *hii*, one can choose not to participate.

Although immersion in the culture may not be necessary in order to gain this kind of insight into the indigenous evaluation practices of a culture, I have the feeling that I know what I know about the Gbaya because I have worked and lived with them for the past 13 years. Without this kind of immersion experience, one would not be able to perceive the finer nuances of meaning inherent in certain events, activities, rituals, or even simple conversations, which would allow the

outsider to gain insight into these otherwise hidden aspects of Gbaya life. For example, when the Gbaya nod their heads up and down in response to the question of whether or not they understood what the speaker was talking about, it doesn't necessarily mean that they understood. Although someone could tell you this, it doesn't sink in the same way as if you have experienced this for yourself.

Another example of the need for immersion is the example of the dishonest church worker in the Vignette 2 in Chapter V. Here I was able to understand that the absence of the subject in the official meeting, the amount of talk going on outside the meeting, and the talk directed towards me, brought me to finally realize that the church council couldn't talk about it officially because they couldn't bring up the subject for fear of retribution, of which I was exempt. These are the kinds of things that one cannot be told, they are insights gained through a longevity of interaction with the culture.

This has implications for evaluation facilitators working in cross-cultural situations who travel frequently and only spend a short amount of time in the foreign culture. At least being aware that indigenous evaluation practices exist in every culture is already key. Knowing the questions to ask and where to observe for evaluation events could help the evaluation facilitator to identify the major indigenous evaluation practices (such as the Gbaya consensus model of decision-making) and perhaps be able to facilitate their use in local PE events. I could also envision the use of folktales and proverbs as another possibility as a starter for training in participatory evaluation.

Can these indigenous evaluation practices be used in community development work? The evaluation facilitator who recognizes that indigenous evaluation practices probably exist in the new cross-cultural setting, and who has been able to investigate those indigenous evaluation practices, should be able to try and facilitate their use in the participatory evaluation of community development work in that setting. In my situation, I was able to identify and use the consensus model of evaluation to help in PDV's self-evaluation. It should be noted, however, that consensus takes much more time than many evaluation facilitators may normally have the luxury of spending.

#### Recommendations for Practitioners of Participatory Evaluation

In order to facilitate PE to the level of HiPE, more time would need to be spent training PE facilitators in the theory of HiPE. This would be especially true if the evaluation practitioner would be collaborating with other facilitators, as might be the case in some cross-cultural evaluation situations.

I think that perhaps cultures which are predominantly rural and agrarian probably also use the consensus model of evaluation which is used by the Gbaya. The participatory evaluation facilitator working in a cross-cultural setting and interested in the possible use of indigenous evaluation practices in their local PE events, would first want to confirm this in their local cultural situation, through observation and coding in that setting.

## Recommendations for Further Research on Indigenous Evaluation Practices

Indigenous evaluation practices must be viewed as culture specific, however, it may be possible after further research to make some generalizations about the process that could help evaluation practitioners in cross-cultural settings.

1) The Gbaya use a consensus model of decision-making an indigenous method of evaluation. Do other subsistence-level agrarian societies which place heavy emphasis on the importance of familial relationships, both in the family sub-unit and in the extended family, use this model in their indigenous evaluation practice?

2) Proverbs and vignettes are used by the Gbaya to explain, describe, and analyze specific activities and problems, and proposed solutions. How are local proverbs and folktales used in other cultures of oral tradition, as tools for indigenous evaluation practice? Therefore, an additional source of information on indigenous evaluation practices would be through the joint exploration of the folklore and proverbs of the culture. It is important that this type of study be a joint exploration with the local culture: first, they have an inside perspective on the culture that the would-be researcher cannot get even with immersion experience in the culture. Second, it affords an opportunity, through participatory research, for the local culture to uncover, validate, and reclaim an area of indigenous knowledge and practice.

3) The Gbaya have only a few community-wide events which require or encourage the participation of a large majority of the population. What community events could be used as examples of participation that can help the evaluation

facilitator or community development work to illustrate the importance of participation in evaluation? Of special interest to community development workers would be the further investigation of collaborative community events, such as the hunting parties, the fishing days, and the labor bees that are part of Gbaya culture. These may give further insight into indigenous evaluation as practiced by groups.

APPENDIX A

FRENCH INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Contrat entre Mr. Carl C. STECKER et Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

Ce contrat est entre Mr. Carl C. STECKER, missionnaire de l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne en RCA et candidate de doctorat en éducation à l'Univeristy of Massachusetts, Amherst, aux Etats-Unis, d'un part, et Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, comptable du Programme de Développement Rural de l'Eglise Evangélique Luthérienne de la RCA située à Baboua, d'autre part.

Mr. STECKER propose de faire quelques interviews avec Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ concernant l'évaluation, développement communautaire, et comment les deux choses se concertent dans le milieu Gbaya. Il propose d'enregistrer ces interviews pour informer sa thèse. L'information cueillie sera gardé confidentielle en changeant les nommes et lieu.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ accorde sa permission d'enregistrer les interviews, et il est d'accord que les informations cueillies soient utilisées dans une manière confidentielle dans la thèse de Mr. STECKER.

faites à Bouar le \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Carl C. STECKER

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B

ENGLISH INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Contract between Mr. Carl C. STECKER and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

This contract is between Mr. Carl C. STECKER, missionary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic and doctoral candidate in education at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in the United States, on one part, et Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, worker for the Rural Development Program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Central African Republic located in Baboua, on the other part.

Mr. STECKER proposes to make several interviews with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ concerning evaluation, community development, and how the two things work together in the Gbaya area. He proposes to record these interviews to inform his dissertation. The information gathered will be guarding the names and places confidential.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ gives his permission to record the interviews, and he agrees that the information gathered be used in a confidential manner in the dissertation of Mr. STECKER.

made in Bouar, \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Carl C. STECKER

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW GUIDE IN FRENCH

- 1) Qu'est-ce que c'est votre expérience avec l'évaluation? Avez-vous assisté aux études, ateliers, ou formations pour apprendre l'évaluation?
- 2) Qu'est-ce qu'on entend sur l'évaluation (ou le mot "évaluation")? Jugements? Décisions? Valeur?
- 3) Vous avez entendu d'évaluation participative ou auto-évaluation, ça veut dire quoi pour vous?
- 4) Que sont les point majeur à retenir quand on pense à faciliter une évaluation du'un programme/projet de développement?
- 5) Maintenant, après que nous avons parlé sur l'évaluation (un terme occidental), étant d'une culture non-occidentale (Gbaya), comment est-ce que vous expliquez "évaluation" aux Gbaya, surtout en langue Gbaya?
- 6) Les contes/histoires Gbaya, est-ce qu'ils ont quelque chose à nous donner sur l'évaluation?
- 7) Comment (quel processus) est-ce que les Gbaya ont utilisé dans le passé pour faire les jugements, décider a donner un valeur à quelque chose, prendre les décision quelconques? Comment est-ce qu'ils font ça maintenant?
- 8) Est-ce qu'on voit comment ça peut aider nos évaluations de développement communautaire? Quel rôle est-ce que ça peut jouer?
- 9) Qu'est-ce qu'on a déjà fait avec le PDV pour préparer leur évaluation? Comment est-ce que c'est arrivé que le PDV ont exprimé son besoin d'évaluation?



## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW GUIDE ENGLISH

- 1) What has been your experience with evaluation? Have you had any studies, workshops, or trainings to learn about evaluation?
- 2) What do you hear when you hear "evaluation"? (or the word "evaluation"?)  
Judgement? Decision? Value?
- 3) You have heard of participatory evaluation or self-evaluation, what does this mean to you?
- 4) What are the major points that should be retained when one thinks to facilitate an evaluation of a development program/project?
- 5) Now, after having talked about evaluation (a western term), and being from a non-westerner culture, how do you explain "evaluation" to the Gbaya, especially in the Gbaya language?
- 6) The Gbaya stories and folktales, do they have something to tell us about evaluation?
- 7) How (with what process) did the Gbaya, in the past, make judgements, decide to give value to something, or make decisions? How do they do so currently?
- 8) Have you seen how this could help in our evaluations of community development? What role could it play?
- 9) What have you done with the *Programme de Développement Villageois (PDV)* [Village Development Program] to get ready? How did it happen that PDV expressed the need for evaluation?

## APPENDIX E

### CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS

- September 1982: Begin cultural/language orientation and work among Gbaya of Cameroun, followed by full-time work among the Gbaya until August 1991.
- September 1991: Begin course work for Ed.D. at University of Massachusetts-Amherst.
- July 1993: Return to Central African Republic for work and begin research for dissertation.
- 04 April 1994: Interview with Dr. Philip Noss.
- 11 January 1995: *Comité Général de Développement (CGD)* [General Development Committee meeting in which PDV announced its need for evaluation and PDR and I where invited to assist PDV do a self-evaluation.
- 31 March 1995: Interview with Dangkalé Pierre and Ko Timothée of PDR, co-facilitators of the PDV self-evaluation.
- 08 April 1995: Interview with Mboré Sylvain, director PDR project with Bible School and principal facilitator of the PDV self-evaluation.
- 11 April 1995: Brief meeting in morning of PDR facilitation team and researcher, followed by a six hour first session with the PDV group.
- 13 April 1995: All day meeting with PDV, PDR, and researcher.
- 14 April 1995: All day meeting with PDV, PDR, and researcher.
- 18 April 1995: All day meeting with PDV, PDR, and researcher.
- 19 April 1995: All day meeting with PDV, PDR, and researcher.
- 20 April 1995: All day meeting with PDV, PDR, and researcher.
- 21 April 1995: All day meeting with PDV, PDR, and researcher.
- 26 April 1995: PDV and PDR work day on data gathering.
- 3 May 1995: PDV and PDR work day on data gathering.
- 9 May 1995: PDV and PDR work day on data gathering and analysis.
- 10 May 1995: PDV and PDR work day on data analysis.
- 17 May 1995: All day meeting with PDV, PDR, and researcher for completing data analysis.
- 7 June 1995: Presentation of the final written report by PDR to PDV.

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