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Participatory Diagramming for Engaging Youth in a Gender Equity and Community Development Dialogue: An African Exemplar

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Issue Dedication:
This issue of the JRCD is dedicated to Cheryl Williams who passed away suddenly in 2010. She was in the first semester of her PhD program in Nursing at the University of Saskatchewan at the time of her death. Her co-authored paper in this issue is based on her master's thesis research. Pammla Petrucka was Cheryl's advisor. It was Pammla's wish to publish this peer-reviewed article in honour of Cheryl's work and her family.

Participatory Diagramming for Engaging Youth in a Gender Equity and Community Development Dialogue: An African Exemplar

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Abstract

It is recognized that community development efforts are often impacted and subjected to the realities of a range of inequities. In the slums of Kibera, Kenya, the challenges of gender inequities amongst young men and women were considered using a participatory diagramming approach. Such a critical technique rigorously delayers the contexts and issues which create, embed, and sustain the inequities. This research used four diagrams in an effort to fully explore and reveal the issues, increase awareness of the social injustices, and probe for desired actions towards the preferred futures for the 49 youth participants involved in the study. The key learnings from the participants included their understanding that social status and roles were highly influenced by age, gender, marital status, and ethnicity. These participants felt that, with the exception of marital status, these factors were outside of their control, which limited their ability to change the structures and situations in which they lived. Further, the participants acknowledged the differential for risks for poverty, health, employment, and social status across genders. They clearly articulated systemic barriers such as resource ownership, inheritance, and entitlements which clearly disempowered women. A clear distinction across genders was in the perception of political will, in which women felt that the government was bringing people together whereas their male counterparts felt the government was ineffectual and perpetuated the inequalities. The participants strongly articulate the need for visibility and voice in the political context in order to affect social change. It is through education and training that these individuals felt they could overcome

the inequities they experience and contribute fully to their families, communities, and nation.

Keywords: youth empowerment, global community development; participatory diagramming; Kenya, critical social theory

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1.0 Introduction

This paper focuses on a research project, guided by a critical social theory (CST) approach, which explored and sought to challenge gender inequities amongst young men and women living in the slum of Kibera, Kenya. It recognized that community development efforts are often impacted and subjected to the realities of such inequity. To achieve this goal, 49 youth participants, recruited through convenience sampling techniques, engaged in a participatory diagramming (PD) technique of data collection and reflexive analysis. This target group was seen as appropriate and critical as there is increasing evidence that youth can be a significant part of the solutions if they are involved in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their efforts (Camino, 2005; Horsch et al., 2002; Zimmerman & London, 2003).

This paper will not only describe the context of these participants, but will also present participatory diagramming as a potential tool for engagement of youth in exploring issues and perspectives related to gender equity and community development.

2.0 Philosophical Underpinnings

Community development builds upon existing strengths, capacities, and resources to achieve gains towards a community's preferred futures. The process of community development is as vital as its outcomes. Successful community development may not only result in change and action, but also in skill development, increased knowledge, power, and capacity (Johnson et al., 2001). Community development shares the philosophical foundations of CST and is, at times, described as the practice (or operationalization) of CST (Lindsey et al., 1999).

The research discussed within this paper was rooted in CST which advances inter-subjectivity where knowledge and "truth" could not be separated from the social, political, economic, and historical contexts within which it was created. Grounded in CST's socio-political change agenda (Browne, 2000; Maggs-Rapport, 2001) this research embraces the emphasis on "issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideology, education, religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 281). Most importantly, through the use of PD this research embraces and operationalizes CST's strengths in creation of situation-specific theories, focusing on a specific phenomenon, and reinforcing the strong link between research and practice, while embracing diversity (Im & Meleis, 1999). The PD approach is thereby seen as the tool via which the goals of CST are revealed and pursued in this study.

Research participants in a study guided by CST are perceived to be "agents", who are capable of self-critiquing, as well as planning and implementing emancipatory action and change (Campbell & Bunting, 1991). By analyzing competing power interests, they come to understand how societal structures privilege some, while oppressing others. Agents chosen to participate in this research typically belong to an oppressed, underprivileged, or marginalized population (Kuokkanen & Leino-

Kilpi, 2000; Maggs-Rapport, 2001). As previously indicated, the multiple spheres of power and oppression are difficult to separate and all individuals experience both, depending on the context (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). In the research process, the agents must be recognized as experts, capable of creating knowledge and change that is relevant and meaningful (Burns & Grove, 2005; Kuokkanen & Leino-Kilpi, 2000; Lindsey et al., 1999).

A major critique of CST has been its potential to stereotype, by looking at the general and failing to account for individual and multiple realities (Boutain, 1999; Browne, 2000). Concerns also exist related to the ethnocentric assumptions of empowerment, which may disregard the values of communalism, hierarchical decision-making, and strict codes of conduct held by certain cultural groups (Brunt et al., 1997). Despite these concerns, CST research is often perceived to be transformative and to promote political action (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000) and it is this strength that informed this research study (Williams, 2009).

A brief consideration of the theoretical roots of PD reflects the philosophical and theoretical grounding in action research, as highlighted by its embedding of fieldwork, representativeness, and activism (Longhurst, 1996). Young and Barratt (2001) emphasize the emancipatory potential of PD and other visual techniques; which resonates with Freire's conscientization which reflects the imperative of developing a consciousness which has the power to transform the reality of the participants (Freire, 1972). So through PD one uncovers reality and identifies actionable needs – essentially uncovering knowledge for action (Chambers, 1998). The range of research participants such as disabled persons (Kitchen, 2001), hard to reach groups (Guijt & Shah, 1998), youth (McLaughlin & Muncie, 2000), children (Bagnoli, 2009), gender relations (Kesby, 2000b), and development (Mayoux, 2003) highlights the potentials and diversities of PD.

Strengths of PD lie primarily in the level of involvement of participants (especially hard to reach groups) and their 'delayering' of issues to define and outline possible solutions (Guijt & Shah, 1998). Pain (2004) highlights the adaptability of PD especially in light of its unique ability to reach beyond cultural and linguistic structures. A major limitation of PD, specifically, and critical methodologies, generally, is the potential failure to "go beyond the production of bottom-up known…(and) to have real impacts for those we study" (Pain & Francis, 2003, p. 47). Another limitation is that PD does not focus on the hierarchical power-relations within the academic research process but focuses on the politics of representation across marginalized groups (Punch, 2001; Smith, 2001). Further, often research considers the image and the participants, but lacks a sound theoretical framework for the selection and interpretation of the visual method (Jackson, 2012).For a comprehensive consideration of the strengths and limitations of PD approaches, the reader is referred to Jackson (2012) and Pain & Francis (2003).

3.0 Method

3.1 Setting

This research occurred in Kibera an "informal settlement", more commonly known as a slum area, on the south-east outskirts of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. Originally housing a group of Nubian soldiers from Sudan who fought for Britain in World War II, Kibera's population has increased and changed dramatically over the years. Kibera spans an approximate area of one square mile, with population

estimates ranging from 500,000 to 1,000,000. In addition to those who are born there, Kibera is a common point of entry for migrants from rural areas, who are searching for education and employment opportunities within Nairobi (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007). According to some locals, Kibera's status as being the world's oldest and second largest slum is infamous.

There are roughly 10 to 15 sub-districts or villages within Kibera. Each village tends to be dominated by a particular tribe, although all 42 existing tribes of Kenya, in addition to the Nubians, are represented within this setting. A railway runs through the center of Kibera, separating the poorest and most dangerous villages south of the tracks from the relatively richer and safer ones to the north.

Infrastructure and services necessary to promote the well-being and support development of Kibera residents are lacking. Rooms, sized at approximately 10 square feet, and made of materials such as mud, wooden planks, or sheets of metal, often house entire families. Overcrowding exists within and between individual homes. There are few sanitation measures, including toilets, garbage disposal, and collection. Litter, including "flying toilets" (i.e., plastic bags containing human feces), accumulates along the unpaved roads, where goats wander freely, children play, and open air markets exist. For a price, law enforcement and security services may be provided by gang members, although being in the streets after dark remains unadvisable, even for residents themselves. Costs are also incurred for those individuals who wish to tap into illegal sources of electricity, which is otherwise unavailable, or obtain a portion of the limited supply of clean water in the area. Although signage, advertising a wide variety of community development projects, health services, and self-help or support groups, exists throughout Kibera, these services are fragmented and limited in scope. Further, the challenge of accessing limited resources often fosters a spirit of competition, rather than collaboration, between individuals and organizations. Poverty is prevalent within Kibera. Most residents earn meager livings, sustaining themselves through informal sector activities, such as petty trade or casual labor.

3.2 Sampling

In this CST informed research, convenience sampling techniques were used to recruit 49 participants from a youth group– a significantly oppressed population- from Kibera, Kenya (Kuokkanen & Leino-Kilpi, 2000; Maggs-Rapport, 2001). Essentially this technique accesses participants based on their availability to participate which is was seen as highly appropriate in this context of marginalization, poverty, and exercising of personal choice.

In this setting, youth face multiple vulnerabilities, hence, they were a key group upon which to focus this work. The definition of "youth", referring to "every person between the ages of 15 and 35 years" (African Union Commission, 2006, p. 3), was adopted from the African Youth Charter. In addition, the need for inclusivity prompted the decision for both men (21) and women (28) as participants in this study.

All participants were required to speak English, as most of the youth in the youth group spoke English, whereas the researcher did not speak Swahili. This allowed achievement of dialogue, which is the central tenet of the CST research process (Stevens, 1989) and enabled the data to be analyzed in the language of interaction between the researcher and participants to avoid compromising its integrity (Twinn, 1998).

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Within the empirical literature, CST informed research has been used to explore and challenge social injustice (Brown, 2006; Giddings, 2005). Critical social theory research methodology has been used in conjunction with participatory action research (Choudhry et al., 2002), feminist theory (Giddings, 2005), as well as theories of adult education and transformative learning (Brown, 2006). Quantitative surveys (Brown, 2006; Kulwicki & Miller, 1999) as well as qualitative focus group discussions (Choudhry et al., 2002), reflective analysis journals (Brown, 2006), and interviews (Giddings, 2005; Kulwicki & Miller, 1999) have been used as data collection techniques within CST informed research.

Vissandjee, Abdool and Dupere (2002) suggest this type of research must occur within the naturalistic environment, of greatest familiarity to participants, as opposed to the researcher. So the research sessions were held in Kibera's Makina village community hall. An initial information session was held to provide the group with both written and verbal information regarding the proposed study. For those members of the group who were unable to attend this session, they were individually given detailed debriefings prior to the commencement of the first research session they attended. Demographic surveys recorded via paper and pencil instruments were given to participants at the time that informed consent (in accordance with the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board Beh #08-16) was obtained.

We choose to use *Participatory Diagramming (PD)*, a qualitative, community driven method of data collection and analysis. (The reader is cautioned that this is different from participatory action research, which is a research epistemology). This PD method is best done with peer groups (classified according to age, gender, marital status, etc.) having members known to each other in order to facilitate post-research action.

In this study, Venn, Tree, Diamond, and Journey PD were used (describe herein). Participatory diagrams may be created on the ground, using locally available materials, such as rocks or sticks (Kesby, 2000a), but for the purpose of this research, paper and pencil/blackboard and chalk instruments were used. Following the explanation of PD, participants worked collaboratively to create the specific diagram in "response" to the guiding research probes (See Table 1). As participants created the diagrams, the researcher was attentive to and recorded group dynamics, intervening in the process only when questions arose. Upon completion, each diagram was "interviewed" with the participants, allowing the researcher to acquire a detailed explanation of it from the responsible agents. Where possible, the researcher explored the conflict and consensus that emerged during the process. Participants were prompted to analyze their responses to the researcher's question prompts and, where necessary, to clarify or refine the diagram accordingly. Completed diagrams were photocopied, photographed, sketched, and/or scanned as appropriate. Diagramming techniques were used sequentially over a three month period which, according to Kesby (2000a), facilitates a natural flow of discussion. The information presented in each diagram was compared to previously created diagrams and other sources of information at subsequent meetings.

Methods of data analysis within CST approach have included reflexive critique (Choudhry et al., 2002), as well as thematic (Giddings, 2005) and template (Brown, 2006) analysis. As described, data collection and analysis occurred simultaneously and with continuous involvement of the youth to derive meaning from data, uncover patterns, themes, and trends within, thereby assisting them to develop a sense of

critical consciousness (Finlay, 2002). Each diagram had 'built in' data collection and analysis probes (Mayoux, 2003) which were used to guide the discussions, which are exemplified in Table 1.

Table 1. *Exemplars of Participatory Diagramming Probes by Type of Diagram*

Diagram	Exemplar Probes
Venn	•Are there differences between men and women; boys and girls? If so, what are they? . •Are there any other differences, according to ethnic group, income level, etc.? If so, what are they? •Are there criteria to entry? How easy is entry to each group?
Tree	•Why do certain causes and effects occur? •Why do certain causes and effects affect more men than women (or the other way around)?
Diamond	What conclusions can be made about the differences between the levels? What conclusions can be made about the common features that characterize each level?
Journey	What are the main implications for the future? Are the group's goals too ambitious (big)? Are they too limited (small)? What changes might be needed to increase gender balance or social inclusion? Why did these things not happen before?

Source: Adadpted from Mayoux (2003).

We chose to use reflexive analysis, which is commonly used in feminist and action research (Burns & Grove, 2005) and can assist in identification of biases and assumptions. This reflexivity is achievable through an examination of the data, group dynamics (including researcher-participant relationships), and the research process itself. It was seen as an appropriate strategy to assist youth in the critique of dominant ideologies and expressions of gender inequity and development. According to Finlay (2002), reflexive analysis can assist those who are typically silenced to gain voice; empowering them to escape oppressive restraints by jointly analyzing group interactions, exploring the individual and collective structures that influence identity, and revealing shared meaning in the experience,. Hence, this approach fits and supports achievement of the goals of CST.

3.3.1 Venn Diagrams

Venn diagrams are useful in gaining a visual representation of power relations and patterns of discrimination (Mayoux, 2003). In this research, they depicted traditional spheres of influence in decision making, including where these spheres overlapped. To create the diagram, participants were divided into two groups, according to gender. Discussion regarding the relative size of the circles, as well as what happened within each circle or overlapping circle was encouraged.

Both groups independently formed a closed circle, with the researcher on the outside. In both groups, a leader, who reviewed the written instructions, was

informally selected. Within the men's group, discussion primarily began among three men, but participation from the rest of the men increased with time. The women divided themselves into three sub-groups, were obviously more engaged than the men and, subsequently, took more time to decide on content to place on the diagram. Each group produced a Venn diagram (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Men's Venn Diagram.
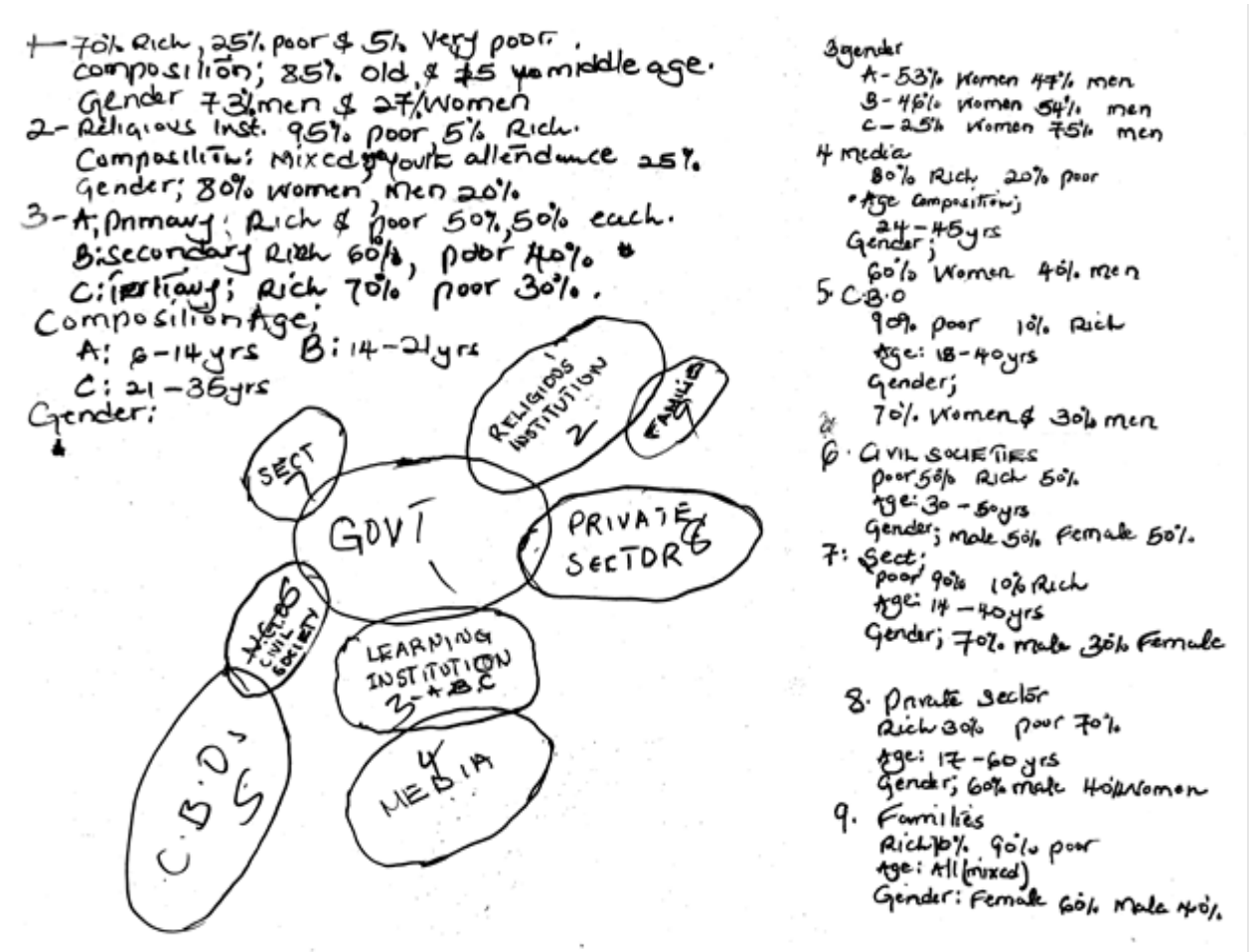
At the following session, "interviewing" the diagrams and initial analysis was conducted. First, a representative from both groups presented their respective diagrams followed by the researcher asking questions with open opportunities for everyone's participation. These results were recorded and were incorporated into the analysis.

3.3.2 Tree Diagrams

A tree diagram was used to determine the root causes and effects of gender inequity. Although tree diagrams are not only easy to use and understand, they are most beneficial in raising awareness and in the synthesis of complex information (Mayoux, 2003). The group decided to create one tree diagram (see Figure 2) and the unanimous decision was made to place "gender inequity" at the trunk of the tree, which represented the central concept of their diagram. Participants were then encouraged to discuss the rational for the presentation of the roots, trunk, and

branches of the tree; fairly balanced participation was observed across the genders. A male participant volunteered to create the pictorial representation of participants' discussion on a chalkboard at the front of the meeting hall. Towards the end of the session, the youth group's chairperson took a lead role in clarifying some of the researcher's questions for the rest of the group, likely prompting more discussion than the researcher could have facilitated on her own.

The diagram was concurrently interviewed by the researcher. A member check was conducted at the following session with nothing changing on the original diagram.

Figure 2. Tree Diagram.
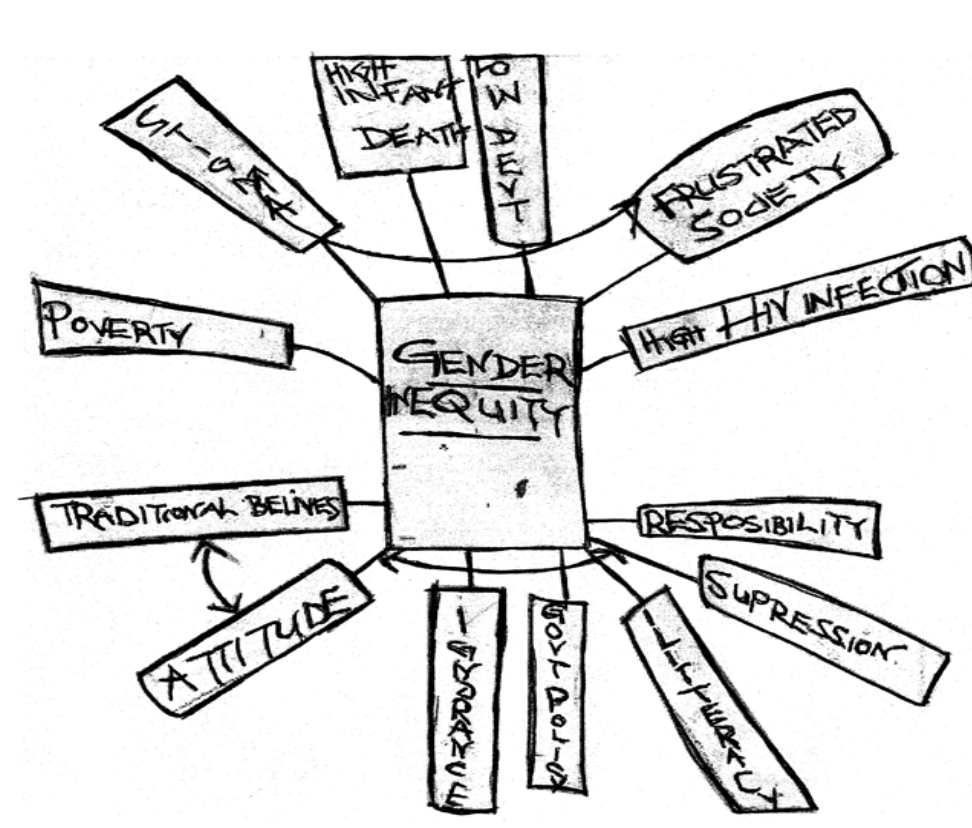
3.3.3 Diamond Diagrams

Diamond diagrams were used to explore social differentiation within the community (Mayoux, 2003). Participants were prompted to discuss categories of social differentiation and their defining criteria, the relative ease or difficulty of moving between categories, and patterns of constraints to social inclusion. The identification of the main issues or phenomenon of differentiation was derived through discussion with the participants yielding 3 specific topics – gender inequity, poverty and empowerment.

Participants were randomly assigned into one of three groups, which included both men and women. A different phenomenon (i.e., gender inequity, poverty, or empowerment) was assigned to each group. All groups were given both written and verbal instructions about how to create the diagram. They were also provided with an example of the diagram, created by the researcher. This example was unrelated to any of the concepts explored in this research. In two of the three groups, members

informally nominated men to pictorially document the group's discussion. On observation by the researcher, all group members were active participants.

Figure 3. Gender Equity Diamond.
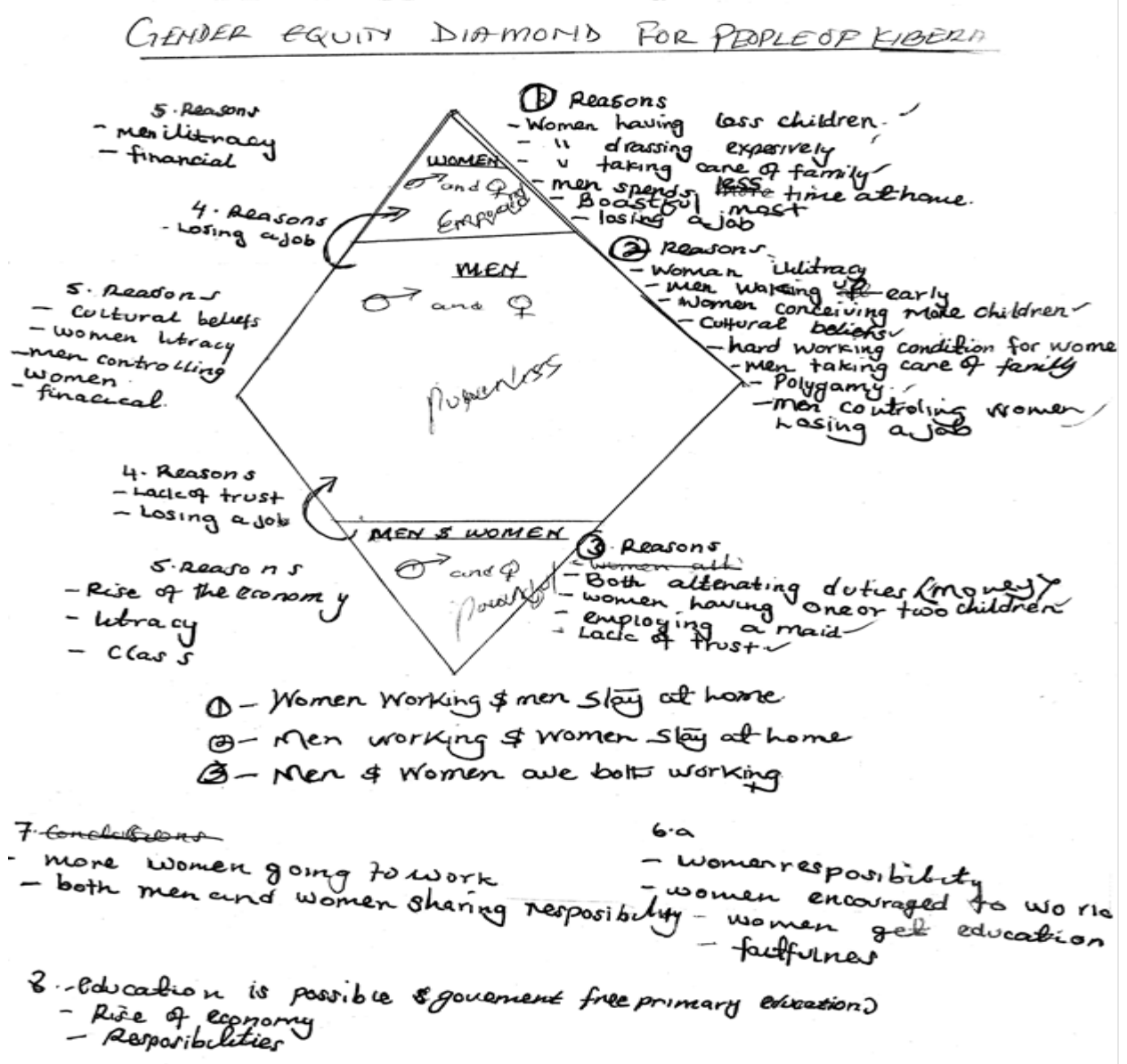
The process of interviewing the diagrams, member checking, and initial analysis was conducted at the following research session. A representative from each of the groups presented the diagram that was created. Despite having group representatives lead their particular group's diagram discussion, all participants were active in interviewing of these particular outputs.

3.3.4 Journey Diagrams

A journey diagram explores and documents the ultimate future goal(s) of the group (Mayoux, 2003). Participants were given verbal instructions regarding the creation of the diagram. They were prompted to discuss the steps required to achieve this goal, including anticipated barriers and facilitators.

A female participant volunteered to create the pictorial representation of participants' discussion on the chalkboard at the front of the meeting hall. A diagram was not created at this session, but rather it was decided, by the participants, that the researcher should use the written notes to create the diagram and to bring this depiction back to the group.

The diagram was interviewed and member checks were conducted at the following two research sessions with changes made to the diagram as necessary. This diagram never reached consensus as the men indicated they felt that the women in the group were making decisions for them. Although specific plans were altered several times, the basic premises of the diagram remained the same and it was mutually agreed to use this diagram as a tentative depiction.

4.0 Findings

In presenting the findings, it is important to highlight the key learnings from each diagram approach followed by a synthesis.

4.1 Venn Diagrams

During the discussions and 'interviewing' of the Venn diagrams, there were significant differences by gender group. For example, men identified the criteria for entry to influence groups was in accordance with gender, income, and age; whereas, women added ethnic, academic, and family backgrounds. This diagram set emphasized traditional gender roles, such as men portrayed as controlling government, secondary and tertiary learning institutions, sects, and private sector. With respect to the women's diagram, the narrative described women as submissive, minimally educated, caretakers within the home, and role models for their children. Male was described as the preferred gender, and, as such, men were the heads of households and chief decision makers. Their role was described in financial terms, as the breadwinners and sole inheritors of family property. Women were considered to be secondary men with reproductive (emphasized by women) and domestic roles (emphasized by men). These beliefs were attributed to religious teachings, where "man is head." Religious authority was seen by the participants to reinforce inequitable gender relationships, which, in turn, negatively impacts development.

Within this diagram set, traditional and socially constructed gender roles were shown as deeply engrained in both genders. These roles appeared to create challenges for both men and women, particularly when coupled with poverty, but clearly the male gender remained dominant.

Dialogue surrounding the Venn diagrams was related to decision-making power and, as such, was fundamentally intertwined with empowerment and development capacities, or the lack thereof. Participants concluded that inclusive, non-discriminatory approaches were necessary for forward progress. In addition they cautioned that the adverse psychosocial impacts of poverty, including decreased decision making power, as well as the physical effects of material deprivation, should not be underestimated. The participants stressed that the risk is increased in neighbourhoods or communities of concentrated disadvantage, such as the Kibera slum, where basic human rights are often denied. Overall however, participants identified how poverty decreased the quality and quantity of options available to individuals, families, groups, and communities, thereby limiting their ability to control their own lives and destiny.

Figure 4. Journey Diagram.
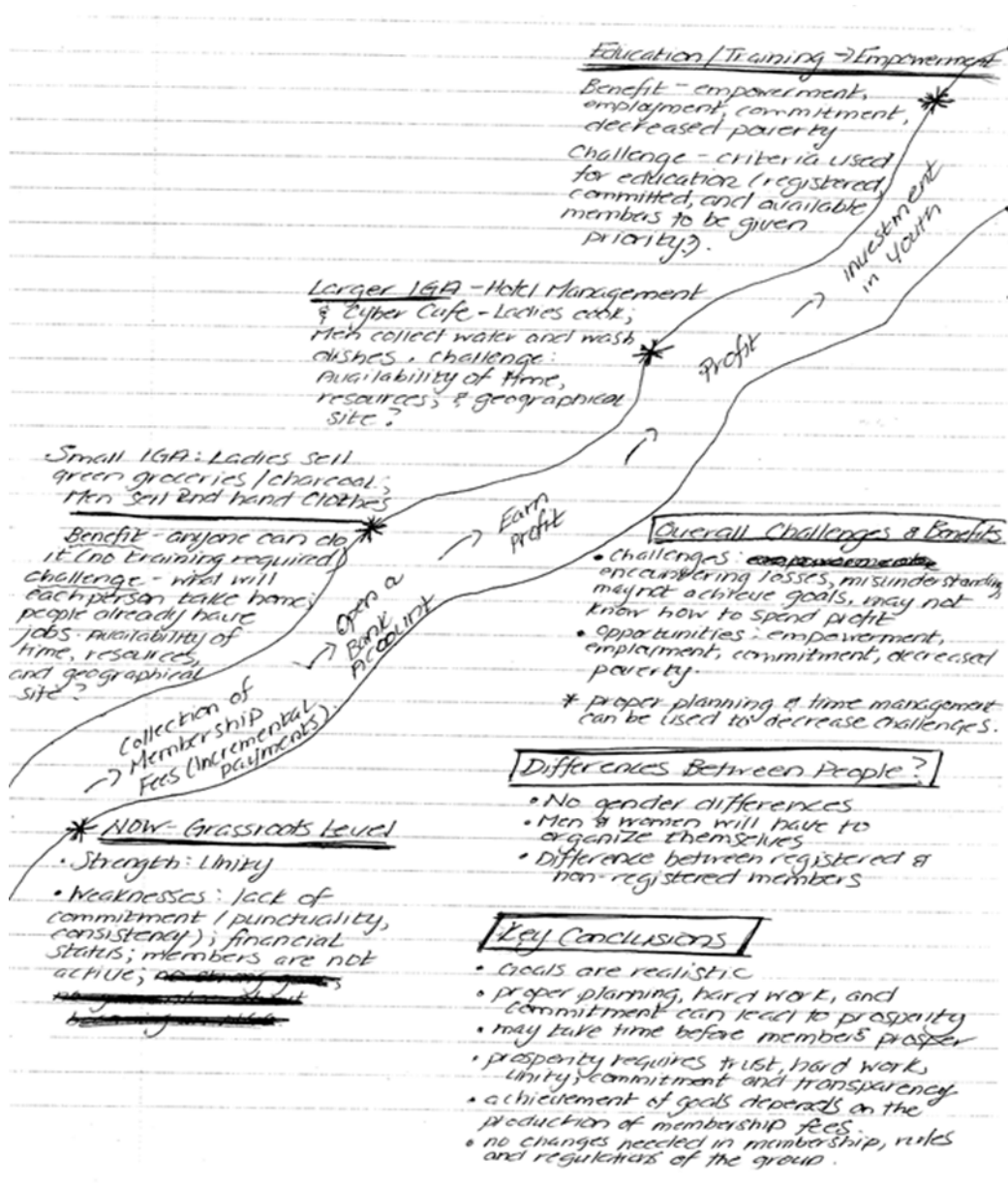
4.2 Tree Diagram

As previously indicated, "gender inequity" was placed on the trunk as the prevailing challenge. The roots of the tree represented what participants believed to be the causes of gender inequity. Those roots identified by the women included ignorance, illiteracy, and traditional culture. Those identified by the men included attitudes, the lack of government support, responsibility, and suppression. The most important roots of the tree were considered to be traditional culture, ignorance, lack of government support, illiteracy, and suppression. Relationships were said to exist between traditional beliefs and attitudes; as well as attitudes and suppression.

The branches of the tree represented what participants believed to be the outcomes of gender inequity. Women identified poverty, stigma, high infant mortality rates,

and HIV infection rates as branches. Men identified a low level of development in the nation and frustrated men as branches, although the latter was changed to a frustrated society, after women indicated they were frustrated as well. Poverty, stigma, high HIV infection rates, and a low level of development in the nation were thought to be the most important branches on the tree, with everything being first of all related to poverty and secondly, to a low level of development.

Although interrelationships and some overlap existed between the roots and branches identified in the tree diagram, the roots primarily reflected the significance of acknowledging the socio-cultural, political, and economic context of gender inequity, whereas dialogue surrounding the branches had specific implications for women's and children's well-being and development in general.

Participants identified the need for support at the national political level to address inequities of all types. Similar suggestions have been made within the literature. For example, a retrospective ecological study across 88 countries, which aimed to explore the social and political context of poverty eradication suggests that out of nine contextual variables studied, the factor most significantly associated with non-attainment of this goal was decreased government consumption per capita, followed by losses in balance between imports and exports, and greater inequality between family income distribution within a nation (Palma-Solis et al., 2008).

Beyond the political and economic spheres, agents also highlighted the importance of the social context, noting how attitudinal and cultural norms could contribute to the creation, reproduction, and maintenance of inequities. Within the literature, several authors propose that solutions must not occur in isolation from or disregard for the contextual factors that are often deeply engrained within societal structures and the social norms that shape citizens' lives and experiences (Chibber et al., 2008; Dodoo & Frost, 2008; Franklin, 2008; Nordtveit, 2008).

4.3 Diamond Diagrams

As indicated, three diamonds resulted based on three participant identified priorities - empowerment, gender inequity, and poverty. Categories in the empowerment diamond included "empowered", "powerless", and "powerful"; those in the gender inequity diamond included "only women working", "only men working", and "both men and women working"; and finally, those in the poverty diamond included "very rich", "rich", "poor", and "very poor".

The empowerment and poverty diamonds were similar in that the criteria used in both revolved around affordability, whether for housing, education, or health care within their community. Although the use of financial criteria was expected in the poverty diamond, its presence and prevalence within the empowerment diamond was unanticipated and yielded significant interest during the follow up discussions. In both diagrams, inconsistencies appeared regarding movement between differing levels or categories on the diagram. For example, within the empowerment diamond, although the 'powerless' were said to have no hope of improving their situation without motivation or support from the powerful, it was also said that upwards movement could exist if individuals had ambition and self-esteem. Similarly, within the poverty diamond, it was concluded that people could succeed by working hard, but most of the described strategies to alleviate poverty required government support.

In addition, financial criteria of differentiation were used in the gender inequity diamond. Gender inequity was associated with employment status as well as

structural factors, such as cultural beliefs and education (e.g., literacy), and individual factors, such as the amount of time spent at home or the level of trust within a relationship.

It was felt by the participants that primarily economic definitions of gender equity, empowerment, and prosperity were congruent with information presented in previous diagrams. For women, considering that their traditional roles were not economically oriented, achieving these "ideals" would be a considerable challenge. For men, although it was socially acceptable for them to strive toward prosperity and empowerment, it was also an expectation and potentially a significant source of stress, as they would face numerous structural barriers in the process. Deconstructing the extent to which prosperity, empowerment, and gender equity were ideals and for whom, was complex and the participants struggled with articulating these issues.

According to the participants, current societal structures did not appear to have significant benefits for either men or women. As previously indicated, the majority of the population in Kibera was poor and powerless. Nevertheless, some men indicated that even if they were poor and powerless, they always had hope of improving their situations and would, at the very least, always be superior to women. They stated that "when women were not employed, they were considered to be like children" because they were controlled by and dependent on men. Female participants indicated that they would prefer to be rich and powerful because, in the absence of a man, they could provide for themselves and their children. Further, they indicated that in instances of men's unemployment, women were said to have a difficult existence.

Within the Diamond Diagrams, participants once again identified the necessity of a broad, multi-level approach to address the challenges facing them. Strategies which required government support included job creation, loans to support small businesses, bursaries for education, tax exemptions for the poor, and enforcement of laws surrounding anti-corruption and children's attendance in school. Education and technical training were deemed to be important so individuals could contribute to the labour force, either through paid employment or volunteerism where they could use and develop their skills if unable to obtain paid employment. Participants indicated small scale businesses were an important strategy for community empowerment, so that everyone could work, earn a living, and share responsibilities.

4.4 Journey Diagram

The ultimate goal of the group articulated within the Journey Diagram was to achieve empowerment through education and training. The agents described and proposed a micro-finance scheme, where membership fees would be collected, saved in a bank account, and when sufficient funds were available, re-distributed into a small income generating activity (IGA). It was anticipated that a small IGA would generate profit that would enable the group to expand or create a larger IGA. Ultimately, participants envisioned that the profits would be used for the education and training of members. Although the diagram reflects an ideal journey, participants identified potential barriers and challenges that could threaten upward and forward movement. It was recognized that losses and misunderstandings may be encountered and some discussion ensued regarding whether male or female members would be prioritized for education or training opportunities in the early phases of the initiative. They also identified current strengths and facilitators that

would help them overcome challenges. Participants, when probed, expressed their beliefs that the journey diagram was inclusive, realistic, and gender sensitive.

Although seemingly simple, the strategy presented in the journey diagram addressed, and sometimes clarified, the complexity of numerous concerns that were discussed in previous research sessions. At the time the research was conducted participants identified themselves as being at the grassroots level, which they equated with being "nowhere." [Author's note: on further probing this was taken to be disempowerment]. It is perhaps significant that the plan to move "up" was to create a CBO (i.e., IGA), which was one of several types of organizations that they had indicated perpetuated a sense of powerlessness. The participants indicated that the IGA was simply a means to the end of education, training, and, ultimately, empowerment. An interesting application of ownership was noted, as participants identified that training and education was something that could never be stolen from an individual, whereas money from a business or IGA could, so the goal was empowerment through education and training of youth!

4.5 Synthesis

CST informed research outcomes have included community programming (Choudhry et al., 2002; Kulwicki & Miller, 1999), increased awareness of social injustices, and the desire or actualization of the desire to take actions that promote social justice and equity (Brown, 2006; Giddings, 2005).

In this study, there were a number of general learnings. For example, age, gender, marital status, and ethnicity were described as factors that could influence societal respect, status, and decision making abilities. With the exception of marital status, it is significant to note that these factors were beyond participants' control and changing the structures that promote such values and ideologies is challenging. Such beliefs are not only evidenced on a local scale, but the literature also suggests they may be national, continental, and international in nature. For example, internationally, women and youth are often identified as vulnerable populations (Wallerstein, 2006); continentally, a literature review regarding gender in the African population suggests that non-marriage and childlessness is associated with considerable social stigma (Dodoo & Frost, 2008); and finally, locally, amongst youth living in Kibera, the majority of respondents reported obtaining their employment either through friends or family (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007), potentially indicating the importance of ethnicity. Study participants indicated, those who do not conform to or fit social norms may be subject to social discrimination and exclusion, denying them the opportunity to participate in the activities related to poverty alleviation and development (CNA, 2005, Wallerstein, 2002).

Although the previously mentioned factors created consequences for both men and women who participated in the current research, differential gendered treatment was said to enhance risk for women, as their status generally appeared to be lower than men's. However, differentiating the effects of gender from those of poverty is difficult. The most significant area of exclusion for women that was independent of financial status appeared to be land ownership or inheritance. Further, gender is not only recognized to influence the health conditions that men and women differentially suffer from, but can also influence equity in development opportunities through systematic discrimination, biases in entitlements, resources, and power, and the inequitable ways in which society, organizations, and programs are structured and function. In turn, such structures can lead to violence against women, fewer

options for employment, lesser income for equivalent work, and decreased decision-making power (Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2008).

Participants identified the significance of political will, matched with the allocation of financial resources to successfully affect and implement changes to current social structures. They also alluded to the importance of social programming, noting that discrimination was decreased or eliminated when social services were provided free of charge. An interesting divergence occurred around the issue of government support for development. Men framed the lack of government support within the context of unequal employment opportunities. Women did not believe that government was relevant in discussions of gender inequity, as the government was "encouraging people to work together".   Men agreed that this message had been endorsed by government, but reported that it did not translate into action on the ground. They maintained that as long as a man was head of state, it would be difficult to achieve equity. This statement was one of men's few acknowledgements of the potential contributions that women could make to the future direction and that a man's dominance was currently ineffective.

Finally, participants suggested the importance of gaining political empowerment, inclusion, and voice. However, as previously discussed, they identified numerous factors that could threaten this ability. Further, within the literature, it is suggested that basic actions to ensure visibility and acknowledgement of existence are not consistently met in Africa. For example, it has been estimated that 55% of births in sub-Saharan Africa are unregistered (Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2008) and a study of adolescents from Kibera reveals that the majority of eligible adolescents did not have a national identity card that indicates their citizenship (Erulkar & Matheka, 2007). With invisibility that begins at birth and transpires into adulthood, it is difficult for individuals to effectively represent their needs and interests, which would empower them to challenge social hierarchy and the inequitable distribution of social resources for development. Participants' final recommendation was a societal change approach. Government support and the existence of bodies which advocated for the rights of both women and men were deemed to be necessary. Participants also stated that they could take an interest in the policies that affected them and influence government, through groups like their own, for inclusion on the development agenda.

5.0 Discussion

Throughout the course of the research, participants consistently cited their lack of opportunity in education and employment sectors, noting the resulting negative impact on well-being and development. Their continued focus on these sectors indicates their awareness of the problem, the severity of its outcomes, and their motivation to create change. In contrast to several other structural barriers that participants encountered, such as age and ethnicity, employment and education were areas where participants could collectively and immediately exert some decision-making power and control. Participants noted that achieving broader community impact and societal change was a longer term goal.

In this study, the PD facilitated a "bottom-up" approach to community awareness and development. Power and control rested with and the agenda was set by participants themselves (Ewles & Simnett, 1999). They were involved in all stages of the development process, from problem identification to the determination of intervention activities. Although meaningful community participation and

involvement is necessary, agents noted that the creation of sustainable change requires backing by sufficient power and, at the least, by local administration (Hancock & Minkler, 1997). Throughout the research, participants made similar statements, indicating the necessity of political will, but this element of collaboration was notably absent from participants' plans in the journey diagram. This likely reflects their continued awareness and understanding of social inequity within their environment. Specifically, the participants' inability to access existing opportunities did not appear to hinder their desire to alleviate poverty. However, they acknowledged that challenges could be encountered in the implementation of their plans, as it would occur within the context of social and economic inequity. It was obvious to them and the researcher that participants' plans could have been facilitated if external support was available to them. However, participants' plans to rely on their social support network to collect their own resources through the payment of membership fees may have also been a judicious strategy. As participants indicated, they believed it would enhance commitment to the group and community development only occurs when people invest themselves and their resources into a process (Shuster et al., 2001). It has further been suggested within the literature that the capital available at lending institutions is often insufficient to create an IGA that is large enough in scope to repay the loan (Haque & Yamao, 2008). Debt is created and the cycle of poverty is perpetuated.

Nevertheless, empirical indicators of outcomes are not the only measures of success in community development. Process related changes, that often go undocumented, such as changes in relationships, structures, and social conditions, can also be considered as accomplishments (Boutilier et al., 2001). Throughout the course of the current research, participants consistently identified various forms of oppression and inequity. Although the majority of these forms of inequity remained evident at the end of the research, one notable change was related to gender. Beginning with the Venn Diagrams, the superiority of men over women was noted. In the research sessions related to the Tree Diagram, participants argued over which gender held the greater or more valued responsibility. In dialogue related to the Diamond Diagrams, attitudinal shifts appeared to emerge. Uncertainty existed regarding whether gender roles needed to change to break the cycle of poverty or whether the maintenance of the status quo would prevent a sense of loss. Finally, after lengthy debate surrounding the Journey diagram, participants were able to generate plans that were inclusive of and would generate opportunities for both men and women. Although gender did appear to be somewhat of a secondary focus within the journey diagram, an equitable approach was also evident. For example, although it is acknowledged the actualization of plans would impact participants differently, depending on their personal circumstances, for some men, it could decrease their burden of providing. For some women, it could decrease some of the risks associated with their independence from men.

Throughout the research, the participants worked together, regardless of existing and external forms of discrimination, such as gender, age, marital status, and ethnicity. Future successful actualization of their plans could address some of the root causes of inequity, particularly the negative development outcomes that are associated with poverty. In creating opportunities for themselves, participants exerted some decision making power over their lives and futures. Although the broader social, cultural, political, and economic context of inequity remain, participants indicated that they could be leaders of change, at the household and community level.

6.0 Conclusions

Franklin (2008) stated communities need "safe spaces", where sensitive topics can be discussed, people are comfortable expressing their views, differing opinions are heard and respected, and despite differences, people can agree on action strategies and ultimately, direct the changes in their own lives. The "safe space" created existed in the PD activities. This experience enabled individuals to identify their needs, as well as develop, plan, implement, and evaluate solutions to their concerns. Through using this approach, Shuster et al (2001) suggested that there is not only respect for diversity, but an acknowledgement of community strengths, knowledge, and capacities). The use of PD techniques was seen as a powerful tool by this marginalized group to share information with dominant groups, which aligns with Kesby's findings (2000a; 2000b). Throughout the process of "interviewing the diagram", it became apparent that a range of topics, including sensitive issues such as HIV/AIDS and family violence, could readily be 'visualized' and acknowledged without judging. Finally, through PD, participants became active partners in the collection and analysis of the research data, enabling them to reflect upon their own lives, increasing ownership, and developing solutions to their own problems, which again was supported within the literature (Hopkins, 2006; Kesby, 2000a; 2000b).

The use of PD with marginalized groups, such as experienced in this study, also brings with it potential risks. These risks may include further individual and/or collective disempowerment. Although the intent of 'conscientization' of the participants to the circumstances and inequities is potentially empowering, it may lead to unrealistic expectations and disenfranchisement as they may be unable to achieve the desired level of control over their lives. Essentially, the step of transformation of their critical reflection to action (i.e., praxis) remains unexplored within this study.

Within the context of the current research, the principles of and strategies for community development were reinforced and re-explored, particularly as these relate to gender equity, resulting in evidence by the participants of their willingness to take action. Ultimately, the PD facilitated dialogue related to several critical issues and prompted the youth participants to begin taking action on issues that were of importance to them.

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