When the Body is the Oppressed, or The Ma Project, Dancing a New Collective Story

(Participatory Research on Communication for Social Change)

A thesis presented to
the faculty of
the Center for International Studies of Ohio University

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Master of Arts

Carolina Novella Centellas

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This thesis titled
When the Bod is the Oppressed, or The Ma project, Dancing a New collective Story
(Participatory Research on Communication for Social Change)

by

CAROLINA NOVELLA CENTELLAS

has been approved for the Center for International Studies by

________________________________________________________________________

Rafael Obregon
Associate Professor of Media Arts and Studies

________________________________________________________________________

Rafael Obregon
Director, Communication and Development Studies

________________________________________________________________________

Daniel Weiner
Executive Director, Center for International Studies
ABSTRACT

NOVELLA CENTELLAS, CAROLINA, M.A., June 2011,

Communication and Development Studies

When the Body is the Oppressed or The Ma Project, Dancing a New Collective Story

(Participatory Research on Communication for Social Change)

Director of Thesis: Rafael Obregon

In Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, El Colegio del Cuerpo (the School of the Body), through the Ma Project, an education-through-dance intervention funded by the World Bank, aims to restore the individual and the social body of a community affected by violence and high levels of social inequity. This research, a collaborative, interpretive, and participatory research aims to understand what are the elements of the Ma Project as an intervention for social change, the perceived changes in the children and the community, and the challenges of the project. Most Significant Change, participatory video, and ethnographic techniques (participant observation, interviews, and focus group) were used to explore these questions. Silence and the Present Body were found to be essential communicative elements of the project and community members identified respect to be at the roots of many individual and social transformations. The community also identified organizational weaknesses as well as limited access and “elitization” as some of the challenges that might hinder the continuity of the project.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Rafael Obregon

Associate Professor of Media Arts and Studies
To my family, for their love
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cartagena de Indias, Colombia</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance in Cartagena, African-Caribbean Colombia</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Colegio del Cuerpo</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ma Project</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pedagogy of the Body within the Ma Project, My body My House</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance and Individual, Community, and Social Change</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication for Social Change, a Theoretical Approach</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER 3 METHODS</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Paradigm and Approach</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inductive Approach and Grounded Theory</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applied Communication Research</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Research Techniques</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Sources</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants and the Community</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling Method</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork Procedures: A Collaborative Process</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploration Phase</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Research Plan</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance as a Field Entry Point</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Limited Access to the Project and ‘Elitization’ .................................................. 154

CHAPTER FIVE WHEN THE BODY IS THE OPPRESSED .................................. 160

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .......................... 174

Institutionalization and Scaling Up ..................................................................... 174

Qualitative and Participatory Methods Require Time and Commitment ........... 175

Body, Silence, and Liberating Performance: Alternatives to Current Discursive Media-Based Interventions for Social Change ................................................................. 178

REFERENCE LIST ............................................................................................... 181

APPENDIXES ....................................................................................................... 193

Appendix 1 Consent Form (English version) ....................................................... 193

Appendix 2 IRB Determination (English version) ............................................... 195

Appendix 3 Minor Assent Form (English version) ............................................. 196

Appendix 4 IRB Determination for Involvement of Children (English version) ..... 198

Appendix 5 Most Significant Change Protocol. (English version) ..................... 199

Appendix 6 Guide with Questions for Focus Group .......................................... 200

Appendix 7 Guided interview protocol ............................................................... 201

Appendix 8 Invitation Note for Families ........................................................... 202

Appendix 9 Invitation Note for Teachers ........................................................... 203

Appendix 10 Example of Most Significant Change Story ................................... 204

Appendix 11 Example of Topological Sort of Network View on Atlas.ti .......... 205

Appendix 12 Example of Visual Chart on Atlas.ti for Category ‘More than Dance’ 206
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 The Ma Project. Workshop Contents............................................................. 33
Table 2 Research Final Design.................................................................................. 68
Table 3 List of Participants....................................................................................... 91
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Partial view of the fortress of the Castle San Felipe de Barajas. ...................... 17

Figure 2. Paseo de los dulces (the passage of the sweets) in the walled city. ............... 18

Figure 3. Organization of the territory in the district of Cartagena (UCG) Neighborhoods.
Source: Mayorality of Cartagena de Indias (as cited by Perez and Salazar, 2007). ....... 21

Figure 4. Organization of the territory in the district of Cartagena (UCG). Unidades
Comuneras de Gobierno (UCG). Neighborhoods. Source: Mayorality of Cartagena de
Indias (as cited by Perez and Salazar, 2007). ........................................... 22

Figure 5. Percentage of people with low income in Cartagena per neighborhoods. ....... 24

Figure 6. Years of education of inhabitants per neighborhood. Source: Poverty in
Cartagena, an analyses per neighborhood (Perez & Salazar, 2007). .......................... 25

Figure 7. Percentage of population of black race per neighborhood in Cartagena. ....... 26

Figure 8. Main elements of CFSC and Freire and Boal methods.................................... 45

Figure 9. Map of snowball sampling ............................................................................. 59

Figure 10. Going to visit a house in the Liceo de Bolivar Neighborhood.................... 74

Figure 11. A house in the Nelson Mandela neighborhood............................................ 75

Figure 12. Santa Rita neighborhood............................................................................... 83

Figure 13. Crossing to Isla de Baru.................................................................................. 84

Figure 14. Final categories and themes ......................................................................... 95

Figure 15. Silence and the Present Body......................................................................... 101

Figure 16. Image of the children in the relaxation practices. Observation in Baru........ 105
Figure 17. A girl reflecting in her diary ............................................................. 108

Figure 18. A group of children reflecting in their diaries........................................ 109

Figure 19. A group presentation moment............................................................. 111

Figure 20. A collective creation moment ............................................................ 111

Figure 21. Body into nature .................................................................................. 116

Figure 22. A snapshot of the point origin-point destiny exercise in the body practices workshop ........................................................................................................ 119

Figure 23. The silent mirror exercise. ................................................................. 123

Figure 24. The Ma Project within the CFSC model, Freire & Boal......................... 164
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Two personal beliefs inspired this research: first, understanding that the crafts of dialogue, engagement, and participation are key communication elements to transform social structures and to foster sustainable, high impact, and long-lasting social change. Second, the certainty that dance and other forms of particularly performative art engage individuals and communities in the creation and re-creation of their realities providing spaces of participation, revision and transformation. These personal beliefs draw my attention towards the use of dance as a communication strategy for social change and, ultimately, focused my interest in the examination of an education-through-dance program in Colombia, the Ma Project from the organization el Colegio del Cuerpo.

El Colegio del Cuerpo (The College of the Body) is an artistic and social project based in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia. In a society affected by strong socio-economic inequalities and a long story of violence, this project, a contemporary center for modern dance and the arts, aims to restore respect for the body at the individual and collective level. Founded in 1998, El Colegio del Cuerpo started offering a distinct educational path through dance to children and youth from the most impoverished neighbourhoods in Cartagena in order to rebuild self-esteem, provide an alternative to violence and create a community of citizens devoted to peace building. In 2006, el Colegio del Cuerpo launched the dance and arts program Proyecto Ma, mi cuerpo mi casa (The Ma Project, my body, my house) with funding support from the Government of Japan through the World Bank. Since then, more than 1,200 children and their communities have participated in the project.
There is a rich body of literature from various fields that supports the idea of dance as a powerful tool for change at the individual, community and society level (Broulliete, 2010; Lobo & Winsler, 2006; Matarasso, 1997; Harlap, 2006; Putnam, 2002; Morris, 1999, Parsitau, 2008; Askew, 2003; Ravelin, Kylma & Korhonen, 2006). In the field of Communication and Development, and particularly in the dominant modernization paradigm, dance and the arts, however, which are included in the range of formats of folk media (Melkote & Steeves, 2001), were almost non-existent. This paradigm promoted the use of mass media as a tool to disseminate messages to larger populations and neglected the use of traditional media. Over the years, with an increased recognition of participatory approaches to communication, the value of art and ‘traditional media’ is being appreciated as local products rich in cultural symbols and with more possibilities to engage the audience to participate (Beltrao, 1980; Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Okwu, 1985; Inagaki, 2007). Some literature is found that recognizes the value of (performative) art to promote alternative types of knowledge, dialogue and social change (Boal, 1985; Conquergood, 2002; Gumucio-Dragon & Tufte, 2006; Rattine-Flaherty & Singhal, 2009). Even though art was recognized by Gumucio-Dragon and Tufte (2006) “as a discipline that contributed to communication for social change theory” (xxiii), very little research is found that addresses the use of performative art in the field of Communication for Social Change (Gumucio, 2001). In relation to dance, there is a clear need for research to be done on the use dance in the Communication for Social Change approach. This study, examines a particular initiative that uses dance for individual and social transformation, the Ma Project, in order to gain a deeper
understanding of how dance is used as a communicative strategy and what are the
perceived outcomes for individuals and the community.

The purpose of this study is three-fold. First, it seeks to gain a more in-depth understanding of how \textit{el Colegio del Cuerpo} uses dance as a communication strategy for social change. Second, it aims to understand the perceived influence of this project in the individuals and the community. Third, it aims to collaborate with the staff of \textit{el Colegio del Cuerpo} in the examination of the main challenges for the continuity of the \textit{Ma Project}, to be able to propose some recommendations.

Following an interpretive tradition, this research uses a qualitative approach and qualitative techniques to answer the following research questions:

RQ. 1 What are the main elements of the Ma Project as a strategy for social change?

R.Q. 2. What are the community’s perceptions about the influence of the Ma Project on individuals and the community?

R.Q.3. What are the perceived challenges of the project for participants?

Significance

In a society where the value of the human body has been diminished, and where trust and respect are severely damaged by a long history of violence and socio-economic inequalities, it is essential to develop communication strategies that can help restore these lost values. Trust and respect are fundamental to recover the individual and the civic body (or social fabrics). \textit{El Colegio del Cuerpo} has developed its own strategy for social change through the use of arts and modern dance. Understanding how this communication process works (how dance is used as a communication tool for social
change), and the perceived outcomes of this process, is crucial to evaluate alternatives for social change and to advance our knowledge of the field.

Of equal or more relevance will be, however, to use this knowledge as a means to make progress in the practices of communication and social change: to replicate models, to promote policies, and to apply new approaches in which art, particularly dance, can be used as a tool for social change.

Background

This section offers a brief introduction to Cartagena de Indias, the neighborhoods were the project is developed and the main dance traditions in the region, with the hope to offer a better understanding of the cultural background of the area. Then, a detailed description of the essential elements of the College of the body and the Ma Project follows in order to provide a helpful context to articulate my further analysis.

Cartagena de Indias, Colombia

Cartagena de Indias is the capital of the Departamento del Bolivar, a Caribbean coastal area in the Northern part of the country. Founded on June 1st, 1533 by Pedro de Heredia, a Spanish commander in the former location of a Caribbean Calamari village (former indigenous residents), Cartagena was seen by the Spaniards as one of the “jewels” of the Caribbean. It was one of the main entrance ports to the region, as well as a trading port in the Colony especially for precious metals and slaves of African origin. Cartagena grew economically and its richness and strategic location made the city a target of many pirate attacks as well as occupations by Spain’s rivals. To prevent the city from being occupied, the Spanish built a defense wall that surrounded the city and that
until today remains one of its major touristic treasures. In 1984, Cartagena’s colonial walled city and fortress were designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. (See figures 1 and 2)

*Figure 1. Partial view of the fortress of the Castle San Felipe de Barajas.*
In the XX century, the population of the city increased significantly, mainly because of internal displacement caused by economic decentralization, and then due to the escalation of Colombia’s civil conflict in the 1990s. Cartagena is, proportional to its population, the city that has received the most displaced people from the countryside due to conflict in the Andean region. Nowadays, the city has a population estimated at one million inhabitants, which makes it the fifth largest urban area in Colombia. It is an economic development hub in Colombia’s Caribbean region, and an extremely popular national and international tourist destination. Cartagena, however, is a city of contrasts, where tourists and displaced people, expansive economic growth and extreme poverty, and white and black racial differences, make it one of the most socially unequal cities in Latin America in relationship to the number of inhabitants (Puyana, 2003). Puyana (2003) identified that in 2002, a 78% of the population of the city was classified by the
SISBEN\(^1\) to be in the strata 1, 2 or 3, which, in a range of 1 to 6 strata, indicates high levels of poverty. According to Puyana, a high fertility rate in lower classes, a very unstable labor market, together with an increasing number of people living in poverty and extreme poverty are structural tendencies that will determine an increased poverty among all strata in later years (following data from the Sisben 2002). Rueda and Espinosa (2010), while analyzing inequalities in income in Cartagena, reveal that the Gini Coefficient\(^2\) in Cartagena, between 1995 and 2005, increased seven points, from 0.38 to 0.45.

In the study, *Poverty in Cartagena, an analyses per neighborhoods*, (Perez & Salazar, 2007) Cartagena is stated to be the second city (among the principal ones in Colombia) with higher rates of poverty, with a 20.29% of its population living below the line of poverty (living daily with less than two dollars) while the national average is 13.77%. This same study examined poverty per neighborhoods and found that specific sectors in the city such as the slopes of the *Cerro de la Popa* and the neighborhoods surrounding the *Cienaga de la Virgen* (Swamp of the Virgin). These areas, following the study, concentrate not only the poorest population but also the less educated.

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\(^1\) The SISBEN (Sistema de Identificacion de potenciales beneficiarios de programas sociales. Departamento Nacional de Planeacion) is the System that identifies potential beneficiaries of social programs in Colombia. This system classifies Colombian population in strata 1 to 6, according to the economical conditions of the population. It is mostly based in household conditions. To illustrate the distribution in relation to strata, in Cartagena, in 2002, high and medium class (4th, 5th and 6th strata) households were 20829 whereas 92598 where lower class households.

\(^2\) Gini-coefficient of inequality: This is a commonly used measure of inequality, and as explained in the World Bank website, “the coefficient varies between 0, which reflects complete equality and 1, which indicates complete inequality (one person has all the income or consumption, all others have none)”.

higher proportion of population self-recognized as being of Afro descendent origins. At the neighborhood level, the UCG (Unidades Comuneras de Gobierno – communal unities of government) that are facing major socioeconomic challenges are UCG numbers 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 y 14. See figure 3 and 4 to recognize where these neighborhoods are located (Perez & Salazar, 2007).
Figure 3. Organization of the territory in the district of Cartagena (UCG) Neighborhoods. Source: Mayoralty of Cartagena de Indias (as cited by Perez and Salazar, 2007).
Figure 4. Organization of the territory in the district of Cartagena (UCG). Unidades Comuneras de Gobierno (UCG). Neighborhoods. Source: Mayorality of Cartagena de Indias (as cited by Perez and Salazar, 2007).
As Perez and Salazar (2007) indicated, in relation to race, due to colonial and slavery history, Cartagena has a great ethnical diversity. However, the Afro descendents have suffered an historical disadvantage that has excluded them from accessing public services such as education. The authors found a high correlation between poverty, education and belonging to a specific race, particularly Afro descendents, indicating that people who are black live in the poorest neighborhoods and are also the ones with lower levels of education. Figures 5, 6, and 7 portray the concentration of people with low income, the average years of education, and the percentage of black people living in the neighborhoods of Cartagena, which clearly overlap.
Figure 5. Percentage of people with low income in Cartagena per neighborhoods. Source: Poverty in Cartagena, an analyses per neighborhoods, (Perez & Slazar, 2007).
Figure 6. Years of education of inhabitants per neighborhood. Source: Poverty in Cartagena, an analyses per neighborhood (Perez & Salazar, 2007).
The Ma Project is implemented in schools located in these most disadvantaged areas, particularly in the neighborhoods of Olaya, el Bosque, el Cerro la Popa, Nelson Mandela, Santa Rita, Isla de Baru y Pontezuela-Bayunda, all of them located in the second, third, fourth, sixth, tenth and fourteenth UCG, the areas identified as most deprived by the study of poverty per neighborhood.

*Figure 7.* Percentage of population of black race per neighborhood in Cartagena. Source: Poverty in Cartagena, an analysis per neighborhoods, (2007).
Colombia is a country where music and dance play a very relevant role in cultural and identity formation (Wade, 2002). Salsa, Cumbia and Vallenato are among the most popular musical rhythms in the country. Those rhythms either resulted from the combination of indigenous musical traditions with music brought into the city by the African slaves during colonial times (such as Cumbia and Vallenato), or evolved from music created by Latin American immigrants in the US in recent years, such as Salsa (Wade, 2002; Aldana, 2008). Wade (2002) examined the influence of music styles in the creation of racial identity and asserted that Afro-Colombians have traditionally identified themselves with non-mainstream styles of music which had a “particular regional identity” (p. 26): however, some of these styles, such as salsa or vallenato ended up becoming mainstream rhythms.

In the Departamento de Bolivar, in the North-Caribbean region of the country, some music and dance styles have a strong Afro-Colombian identity. An example of that is San Basilio de Palenque, a town founded by slaves who fled to nearby hills and –by keeping themselves closed to external influences- preserved traditions and language mostly intact. In this region, music and dance traditions very much related to West African rhythms are found (such as the mapale), or have been created, such as the most recent popular rhythm champeta. Whereas Mapale is a traditional type of drumming and dancing with a clear origin in African dance and drumming, Champeta is a recently created popular music and dance style, originated in the late 70’s from African music imported into the region that became more popular in the nineties. Champeta music is
based on percussion solos of African rhythms with bass and guitars, played over huge sound systems (called “picos” from the English “pick ups”); the lyrics combine Spanish with the Palenque dialect; and its dance moves, based on energetic hip movement, are overtly erotic. Champeta is becoming a controversial and popular manifestation in the region. Some voices against it say that it is a vulgar dance. The defendants argue that it is their way of expressing their needs and feelings. “When we want to say something, in Cartagena, because they do not listen to us, we must sing it” says one of the champeta musicians interviewed in the documentary The Creole kings of Champeta (Silva & Arria, 1997). Despite Champeta being criticized for vulgar, it has strong links with black identity, and it is becoming a strong identity symbol in the area, particularly in the popular neighborhoods where the Ma Project is implemented.

In this context, defined and contested by race, inequalities, poverty and limited access to education, and where dance already plays a key role in racial and cultural identity creation, el Colegio del Cuerpo implements The Ma Project, Mi cuerpo, Mi casa.

*El Colegio del Cuerpo*

An organization created in 1997 by the choreographers Alvaro Restrepo and Marie France Delleuvin, is an artistic and social project that uses dance as an element to transform individuals and society. The project started training children in modern dance techniques. Over the years, however, the organization has developed two strategies: *Educate to Dance* and *Educate through Dance*. Nowadays, the organization has a renamed modern dance company called *La Compañía del Colegio del Cuerpo,* several
dance training programs for children and youth, research and publication services in the field of dance, and social programs that aim to educate through dance.

With the experience gained through fifteen years of teaching modern dance to children and youth of impoverished and deprived communities, the educators from el Colegio del Cuerpo have developed an integral body education methodology that is the essence of their general pedagogical approach as well as the basis of the Ma Project. After applying this integral body knowledge approach on various occasions with small groups of children from the most deprived areas of Cartagena, the organization integrated this methodology within a wider-reaching project: Proyecto Ma, mi cuerpo, mi casa (Ma Project, my body, my house).

The Ma Project

The Ma Project is integrated in el Colegio del Cuerpo’s Education-through-dance strategy. The Ma Project, a three-year program funded by the Japanese government through the World Bank, will, by the end of 2010, have reached one thousand two hundred children from seven of the most deprived neighborhoods of Cartagena. The goal of the project is to use the education about and of the body as an instrument to foster peaceful citizenship. As the organization describes it, the project is an educational intervention that aims to create an ethics of the body, an intent to restore the value of the individual body, with the hope that it will also help restore the social body (the psychosocial fabric of the children and their communities, that in these neighborhoods in Cartagena is extremely damaged by abuse, sexual exploitation, and other risk factors).
The Pedagogy of the Body within the Ma Project, My body My House.

“More than talking about dance I always talk about the pedagogy of the body. I think that dance is one more of the many languages that the body can talk. To me, it is much more important to talk about the education of the body, understanding the body as that real universal and holistic dimension that bridges all the other dimensions in our lives, from the spiritual, the affective, and the intellectual. In the body happens everything.” (Alvaro Restrepo, personal communication, 2009)

The director of el Colegio del Cuerpo states that the organization aims to contribute to the education of the society with a new perception of the body, not only from a physical or artistic perspective, but in a transversal dimension, and in relation with all human activity, hoping that this new “ethics of the body” will be a great contribution in a country where so much violence has been executed against the body. As the director commented, “one of the values of the project is that, in a society that has the social fabric so damaged by violence, this project establishes a common territory for everyone, a common ground that is nothing more than the body” (personal communication, 2009).

This pedagogy places the body as a central piece of the intervention and constructs an elaborated model to offer preventive tools for the care of the individual and the collective. One of these tools is “ma,” or “silence” in Japanese. Definitions of "Ma" from various Japanese sources offer a sense of ma being an empty space/time with potential to be filled that puts the other elements in perspective. Treib and Herman (2003) described
ma as “the Japanese sense of place; usually regarded as having both a time and space component” (p.195). However, this notion of place is switched by a much versatile use of the notion of space in Keane’s (1996) definition, for whom the meaning of ma varies depending on its use, i.e. "Space; depending on its use, ma can represent linear, planar, volumetric, temporal, or social spaces." (175).

As described by the director of *el Colegio del Cuerpo*,

Ma is this space, this pause or interval. It has to do with the right to silence, to my own space, to concentration and intimacy that in this city is very difficult. These kids generally live in very tiny houses, cramped, with whole families sleeping in just one room. These kids live in great promiscuity also with their neighbors, and the music also invading their intimacy. We want to transmit them the notion that they have right to ask for silence, for pause, for a space. They have right for their space to be respected and must respect the others’ space.

The pedagogical model of the project is structured around three core themes: *Body practices, Languages of art, and Education for the care of the body*. These focal points are put into practice monthly through three workshops organized in a thematic multidisciplinary module. That is, during three years, a series of seven thematic modules are offered every year, once per month. These modules are: *Internal Body/External Body, Individual Body/Social Body, Family Body/Peace Body, Origin Body/Destination Body, Balanced Body/Healthy Body, Immune Body/Free Body, Habitat Body/Ecology of the Body*. Each of these thematic modules is integrated into three workshops that relate its content to the leading theme: *Body practices, Languages of art, and Education for the*
care of the body. In this way, three different environments/approaches are created to stimulate dialogue about the topics.

Very briefly, the Body practices workshop offers training in modern dance techniques and other body-based disciplines, the Languages of art workshop offers training in theatre, cinema, visual arts, music, literature, photography, and traditional dance, and the workshops in Education for the care of the body are organized around discussion and exercises that cover topics such as anatomy and physiology, rights, identity and values, civic education, violence, sexuality, nutrition, addictions and ecology. To see a concrete example; the thematic module called Immune Body/Free Body is related to addictions and the workshops will be, therefore, articulated around addictions. The Body practices workshop will be related with repetition, trance and rhythm, the Languages of art workshop will use theatre to perform/reflect about addictions and the workshop on Education for the care of the body will organize discussions around issues related with addictions, as well. For a planning of the second year topics and workshop contents see table 1.
### Table 1.
The Ma project. Workshop Contents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORK FOCAL POINTS</th>
<th>THEMATIC MODULES</th>
<th>LANGUAGES OF BODY</th>
<th>BODY PRACTICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTERNAL BODY</strong></td>
<td>Anatomy and</td>
<td>Visual arts I</td>
<td>Awakening and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXTERNA BODY</td>
<td>Physiology</td>
<td>Sculpture</td>
<td>body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL BODY</td>
<td>Rights, Identity</td>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>The Space</td>
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Over three academic years, 1200 children from several schools located in seven neighborhoods will have participated in the project. These sectors, the most impoverished neighborhoods in Cartagena, are Inem, Olaya, Nelson Mandela, Santa Rita, Liceo de Bolivar, Isla de Barú y Pontezuela-Bayunca. The children participate voluntarily in the workshops that take place in the half-day before or after school. The children, most of whom are students of 6th grade, will reach 8th grade by the time they have completed their participation in the project.

The workshops take place in a dance studio that was purposely built for the project. There is one studio per neighborhood, which is generally located in a local primary school. Therefore, some children attend the workshops in their own school whereas many others, to participate in the program, go to a different school from theirs. In many cases, the project provides transportation for the children from their original school to the school that hosts the studio. The project also provides snacks that in many cases are the only breakfast or meal that the children would take.

**Conclusion**

In a society that is extremely damaged by a long history of violence, the Ma Project, *My body My house*, a social and artistic intervention, aims to bring a new ethics that will restore the individual and the social body in the Cartagena society. This research examines the Ma Project through the lenses of Communication and Social Change to better understand the main elements of its strategy for social change and the perceived influence of the project in individuals and the community.
Chapter two reviews the literature on dance and social change and provides a brief introduction to the theoretical approaches in communication for Social change that have fostered my interest in the project and offer a theoretical frame for my analysis.
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

This chapter provides, first, an overview of the literature about dance and social change that will place the study in the existing literature and second, a brief introduction to some essential theoretical referents in the Communication for Social Change approach within the field of communication and development, that better fit the results of this research and that I have used as referents in chapters five and six of this study.

Dance and Individual, Community, and Social Change

“If dance really does express and speak to the universal soul inherent in humanity, it follows that dance is a powerful communication medium that can break down barriers, unite diverse groups and promote social change” (Morris, 1999)

Discussions and research about the individual and social effects of dance are found in a range of scholarly work in the fields of psychology, anthropology, mental health, sociology, philosophy, education, dance studies, performance studies and leisure studies, politics, community development, and communication for development. Following is a review of an array of scholarly voices that support the notion that dance is a powerful tool to promote change at the individual, community and social level.

At the individual level, dance has been reported to have a variety of effects by authors in the fields of psychology, psycho-sociology, nursing, and mental health. For instance, Broulliete (2010) reported that art integrated education, particularly the one based on performance, fostered emotional and social development among children, helping them discover, understand, and manage their emotional reactions. Lobo and
Winsler (2006) found, through an experimental research, that creative dance enhanced the social competence and behavior of at risk preschoolers. Among adults, dance is found to enhance mood (Netz & Lidor, 2003) and improve balance (Alpert, Miller, Wallman, Havey, Cross, Chevali et. Al., 2009). Research in mental health nursing describes the outcomes of dance to be related with physical and emotional well-being, self-reflection and the ability to communicate and relate with others (Ravelin, Kylma and Korhonen, 2006).

At the community level, authors in the art community such as Goldbard (2006) and Knight (2006) defend the essential role of community-based art interventions as powerful agents of personal, institutional and community change. For instance, Harlap (2006) reported, in his survey of community based art initiatives that work towards social change, that some of the outcomes of dance in promoting social change include raising educational and cultural consciousness and awareness; fostering individual empowerment and participation; bringing people together and building relationships among individuals and groups; creating spaces for communication and dialogue; uncovering social issues and offering solutions; promoting reflection and enhancing communities in hard times.

Literature is also found in the field of leisure studies that relate dance with social cohesion and community enhancement (Arai & Pedlar, 2003; Putnam, 2002). Although there are quite a few studies in the field of community art, most of them consist of surveys of projects in specific areas, as in the case of Matarasso (1997) in UK or Harlap (2006) in Canada. The findings are also based on the responses of art practitioners
themselves, excluding the vision of community members and participants in these programs.

At the social and cultural level, anthropology, philosophy, history and sociology scholars conceptualize body-based performance as sites of cultural/social representation/enactment and inscription. For instance, Foucault (1977) and Bordieu (1990) examined the body as a result of the culture in which we live, and research is found that describes how the practice and admiration of a specific form of dance fosters ethical and moral values according to the cultural norms (Throop, 2009) or how certain dances have influenced socio-political change in specific regions such as Gospel dance and music in Kenya (Parsitau, 2008), Ngoma and Dansi dances in East Africa (Askew, 2003), or rumba in Cuba, merengue in the Dominican Republic, samba in Brazil, tango in Argentina, and the Aztec dance in contemporary Mexico and Southern US (Morris, 1999).

Despite the great amount of literature about dance available in a diversity of academic fields, the literature on dance in the communication and development field is quite limited. Before presenting the existing literature, I will offer a brief historical introduction to the field of communication and development with an emphasis on the definition and essentials of the Communication for Social Change approach. Next, I will introduce two influential authors in the field and the essential elements of their theories and methodologies, which are essential guiding points for this research.

Communication for Social Change, a Theoretical Approach

Two main communication approaches have existed in the field of communication for development since the end of the Second World War: an approach originating from
the modernization paradigm, based on strategies of diffusion of information and persuasion that focus on the individual behavior change, and an approach following a participatory paradigm where the communication strategies are built on dialogue and seek for collective transformation (Parks, Gray-Felder, Hunt & Byrne, 2005).

Communication for Social Change (CFSC) fits in the second paradigm.

Even though the founding premises of CFSC had been present for some time, originating mostly in Latin America in the context of post-colonialist struggles, the CFSC approach started to be conceptualized in 1997, with the initiative of the Rockefeller Foundation (Parks, Gray-Felder, Hunt & Byrne, 2005; Gumucio-Dragon & Tufte, 2006). The approach is becoming influential in many specialization areas of development communication such as health communication (Obregon & Mosquera, 2005) or entertainment education (Tufte, 2005).

As Gumucio-Dragon and Tufte defined it (2006), “based on dialogue and collective action, CFSC is a process of public and private dialogue through which people themselves define who they are, what they need, and how to get what they need in order to improve their lives” (p.xix). The essentials of CFSC, as collected in the definition and expanded by scholars and practitioners (Parks, Gray-Felder, Hunt & Byrne, 2005; Gumucio-Dragon & Tufte, 2006) include the focus on a collective dialogical process; the participation and ownership of the community members in this process; a communication intervention that is horizontal and empowering, builds upon local knowledge, and aims to establish network and convergence; and the goal for change that goes beyond the
individual and into the collective, looking for transformation of social norms, values, policies, and culture.

Some considerations in relation to these essentials that have an impact on this particular study are that, first, as the focus is placed not on a particular final communication or development product, but on a process and the individual and collective transformations achieved during and at the end of the process, qualitative research methods (particularly through participatory means) that collect and monitor the evolution and the perceptions of the participants in the process is recommended (Gray-Felder, 2002). Second, the aim of CFSC is to reinforce the communication competences of the community, so that spaces of dialogue, debate and negotiation can lead to collective action. As Parks, Gray-Felder, Hunt and Byrne (2005) explained, “the process helps individuals and communities build a stronger capacity to communicate in person, through the arts or using media and other communication technologies” (p. 4). Communication technology is put in the hands of the community and should respond to their needs. Participation of the community members in the communication process and the ownership of the means of production and the contents of communication are key elements in this process, therefore, one of the elements in CFSC is to strengthen the communication skills within the community, either by creating spaces, facilitating the access to information and to the means of communication. In relation to this point, the essentials of the communication intervention is that it will empower the individuals by fostering their communication skills so they can express themselves and will strengthen the community by establishing spaces of horizontal communication and ensuring that all
them are present in the dialogical scene. Last, the expected outcomes of Communication for Social Change processes go beyond the individual transformation (even though there might be, too), and include collective change such as change in social norms, policies, cultural aspects. This final transformation originates through a process of community dialogue that leads to collective awareness, reflection and action upon the realities that the community itself decides need to be transformed. As Gray-Felder (2002) reflected, it is important to note that this process itself is already a positive outcome for populations that are normally poor and excluded, meaning that transformation initiates with the implementation of this approach, which empowers communities, fostering their participation and enhancing their communication skills during the process.

Two of the most influential authors recognized in the field of Communication for Social Change for their conceptual and practical contributions to the field are the educator Paulo Freire and the artist-educator Augusto Boal (Gumucio-Dragon & Tufte, 2006), who, with their influential works, Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1970), and Theatre of the Oppressed (1985), respectively, contributed to the field and set some antecedents that I found extremely useful to frame the Ma Project as a Communication for Social Change intervention.

Their main contributions to CFSC, as Gumucio-Dragon and Tufte (2006) noted, were, in the case of the Freire, the introduction of a new pedagogy, based in respectful dialogue, that would lead to ‘conscientizao’ or the process of raising collective consciousness to transform reality by actively naming the world. In the case of Boal, with
his *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1985) clearly followed a Freirean tradition and introduced theatre as an innovative way to establish dialogue and bring innovation for social change.

Both authors’ work is extensive, complex and includes many interesting nuances, however, for the sake of this study I want to expand in four key concepts that are present in both authors’ conceptualization and methodological work and that I will use to make sense of the Ma Project. These are the introduction of a new discipline, the concept of ‘praxis,’ the process of ‘conscientizao,’ and the notion of liberation/transformation.

The first concept, the introduction of a discipline, refers to the notion of making available a new technology to understand the world, a new way to know, a new language. Both authors, Freire with his innovative approach to adult literacy based on words and dialogue and Boal with his innovative use of theatre, made accessible new disciplines, or ways to understand the world, through the exposure to new languages, to the oppressed. In Boal’s words,

> There are many languages besides those that are written or spoken. By learning a new language, a person acquires a new way of knowing reality and of passing that knowledge on to others (p. 121)

These new ways of “knowing reality and on passing that knowledge on to others” (p. 121) that were present in Freire and Boal’s work is what I refer to as the introduction of a new epistemology.

The second concept is the notion of ‘praxis’ that Freire introduced as the essence of dialogue. To Freire, the minimum unity of dialogue was the word, but the word (necessary to understand reality) was composed of action and reflection. To Freire,
speaking the word (engaging in dialogue) meant to transform reality (through raising awareness), but the only way to speak a true word was through engaging in the work of action and reflection. This means that, to be conscious, to understand reality, it is necessary to balance action and reflection. He claimed that words without action became verbalism and words without reflection became activism, but that, to truly transform the world, a combination of the two (action and reflection) is necessary. He said that either dichotomy (unbalanced action—reflection), “by creating unauthentic forms of existence, creates also unauthentic forms of thought, which reinforces the original dichotomy” (p.88). That is, either verbalism or activism generate more verbalism or activism and make dialogue and transformation impossible. Boal also adopted this notion of praxis, but in his methods, he implemented ‘praxis’ through the language of theatre. In Boal’s work, through questioning, action and reflection are activated in theatre workshops, stimulating transformative dialogue.

The third notion, “conscientizao” refers to the process that allows participants in either epistemological methodology (Freire’s Pedagogy of the Oppressed or Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed) to become aware of their reality and to understand the world they are living in. This process of enlightenment would trigger them to act. As Freire mentioned “a deepened consciousness of their situation leads people to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation” (p. 85)

The forth concept is transformation itself. To both authors, the final goal is transformation, a liberating transformation of the world that will be acquired through consciousness. Therefore, there is an individual change, in the sense that means the
process of awakening, from “spectators to actors” but also the transformation of reality, to change the (social) conditions that are causing the oppression. In Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, the “spectator” frees himself of the condition of audience and transforms into an “actor,” a protagonist of her change. In this transformation into actor, there are four stages: “knowing the body, making the body expressive, the theatre as language and the theatre as discourse” (p.126). Without going into much more detail, I wanted to point out the fact that a necessary step in Boal’s methodology for transformation is to make each person aware of his own body, of his bodily possibilities and deformations . . . the goal is to undo the muscular structure of the participants, to raise them to the level of consciousness . . . if one is able to disjoint one’s own muscular structures, one will surely be able to assemble structures characteristic from other professions and social classes; that is, one will be able to physically ‘interpret’ characters different from one self. (p.129)

One of the key elements of Boal’s work for this research is the inclusion of the body. He did not only use body based performance in a very innovative way that allowed for spaces of dialogue, but also fostered the idea that knowledge can be generated through alternative ways to the dominant western textual/discursive mode. It is also key that he addresses the fact that the body is constructed in relation to social class and type of work and that each person can modify her body with practice. In this excerpt, Boal’s notion of the body reminds us of Bordieau’s notion of habitus (Bordieau, 1990), those “structured structures” (p. 53) imposed on the body, learned by practice and assimilated
through history, that make each body embody characteristic essentials related to each individual’s culture.

These four constructs, introduction of a new discipline, praxis, ‘conscientizao’ and transformation, together with essentials in CFSC that derive/evolve from them such as participation, ownership and empowerment, are key concepts through which I will make sense of the Ma Project as a Communication for Social Change intervention. See beyond figure 8, representing the relationship of these four constructs with the essentials of the Communication for Social Change approach.

Figure 8. Main elements of CFSC and Freire and Boal methods.
A final note on existing literature that covers dance within the Communication for Social Change approach will situate this study and enable future conversations. The majority of the literature found in the field of communication and development includes dance as one more among the range of formats of folk media: folk theatre, puppetry, storytelling, folk songs, mime, dance and more (Melkote & Steeves, 2001).

Yet, for many years, mostly due to the dominant modernization paradigm, neither art nor traditional forms of entertainment were considered in the development field. With the shift of paradigm towards a more participatory approach, folk media, local products rich in cultural symbols and with more possibilities to encourage the audience to participate and engage in social mobilization efforts (Beltrao, 1980; Okwu, 1985) started to be included in communication for development interventions (Melkote & Steeves, 2001; Inagaki, 2007; Theuri, 2004).

In the last two decades, some initiatives have been documented to use folk media for Development and Social Change. Some illustrative cases would be the work done by the Maratholi Traveling Theatre in Lesotho to mobilize rural communities for social change or popular theatre in Nigeria to raise awareness on health issues (Gumucio, 2001). Although not as often as in traditional societies, some initiatives using theatre to address health and social issues can be found in urban societies, as the New Image Teen Theatre in San Diego or the Star Theatre Program in New York City (Glick, Nowak, Valente, Sapsis & Martin, 2002). These initiatives, highly participatory and community-oriented, are practical interventions that would fit in the recently conceptualized Communication for Social Change approach.
In communication for social change, some research is found that evaluates community theatre based interventions with the lenses of Communication for social Change, using participatory research, as the cases presented by Gumucio-Dragon (2001) or the qualitative evaluation of the Theatre for Life program in Sudan by Mavrocordatos (2004). One case is found in relation to a modern dance intervention; Putnam (2002) described the case of the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange as a community dance based project that brings communities into dialogical participatory dances, creating collective performances as spaces of reflection. The research, however, was not based on the community-participants’ perceptions but in some artists’ responses. No research is found in the Communication for Social Change literature that examines an intervention based on dance from the perspective of the community.

This study aims to bridge this gap in the literature and examines a particular initiative that uses dance for individual and social transformation, The Ma Project. Even though no research has been found that examines a dance intervention, either with CFSC parameters or from the perspective of the community, it is relevant to note that a previous study exists on the Ma Project. In order to monitor and evaluate the project, a baseline study and a mid-term evaluation were conducted by a consultancy firm, hired by the main donor, the World Bank. During the research process, I had partial access to the baseline study, as well as complete access to the mid-term evaluation, which reinforced the need for research like the one I am presenting. Basically, the approach of the evaluation is positivistic and prioritizes
quantitative research over qualitative research which, as some authors support (Byrne, 2009; Gray-Felder, 2002; Parks, Gray-Felder, Hunt & Byrne, 2005), tends to be inadequate to monitor interventions that look for social change, especially in the CFSC approach, where, as previously exposed, the process is already an outcome and qualitative methods aimed at collecting the participants’ perceptions of the process are recommended.

The research conducted by the consulting firm uses some qualitative techniques. Its main goal, however, is to offer a picture that monitors the project based on fixed/numerical data. Therefore, this research follows a naturalistic approach. For instance, base-line research was conducted to establish indicators to evaluate the impact of the Ma Project. Categories and indicators were defined and a questionnaire was distributed to 2,548 children to gather data for the base line study. The data collected was related to aspects such as dropout rates and academic achievement (as cited in the working paper Levantamiento de línea de Base, evaluacion y seguimiento del Proyecto Tf057249). To evaluate the impact of the project, besides indicators, socio-demographic characteristics of the neighborhoods were examined to facilitate the selection of a control group of students. This control group, not having participated in the project, would have similar traits with the participants and were the reference against whom the changes in the group of participants would be contrasted, to validate the findings of the research. As far as I know, the control group was not used in later monitoring and evaluation processes, or in the mid-term evaluation. Even though some qualitative data gathering techniques
were used in the mid-term evaluation, such as interviews and focus groups, the questions, the sampling methods, the field work procedures, and the analysis of the results clearly indicate that the study aims to describe a fixed picture, through the gathering of quantifiable data. The results of the study focus primarily on organizational parameters to evaluate the intervention, such as attendance and desertion rates, number of planned and offered workshops, limitations in the follow-up system, and the quality of the project as perceived by participants (in relation to facilitators, food, and uniforms, for instance). From the twenty-two main conclusions, only one refers to the perceived influence of the project on the participants and it says that “the type of evaluation does not allow for quantitative statements but the information collected is consistent and reflects perceived effects in the behaviors of the children. Particularly, perceptions related to academic performance, family relationships and concentration ability.” Clearly, this evaluation focuses on quantitative data and does not aim to profoundly understand the perceptions of the community about the influence of the project. On the contrary, it aims to apply a positivistic (“objective”) approach to the evaluation that is, as will be discussed later, ineffective to describe the richness of the transformations perceived by the participants since they joined the project.

This study aims to examine The Ma Project using an interpretive approach and qualitative and participatory research techniques. This research seeks to illustrate how the arts, and particularly dance, are used as a strategy for social change and how communities are empowered, through this ‘praxis’ of new communication, to
become agents of their individual and collective social change. Understanding how this communication process works, with dance as a language for social change, and the perceived outcomes of this process, is crucial to evaluate alternatives for social change and to advance our knowledge of the field. To understand these aspects, three questions were posed: what are the main elements of the Ma Project’s strategy for social change?, what are the community’s perceptions about the influence of the Ma Project on individuals and the community?, and what are the perceived challenges of the project for participants?
CHAPTER 3 METHODS

Research Paradigm and Approach

One of the main goals of this study is to understand more in-depth the diverse perceptions that members of the community have constructed about the influence of the Ma Project. To understand these multiple and diverse interpretations without restraining them, this study follows an interpretive approach. This interpretive paradigm, as Lindlof and Taylor explained (2002), recognizes that reality is plural and constructed through social interaction, that knowledge is emergent from the contact of the researcher with the observed reality for a prolonged period of time, and that theory is built through an inductive process that contrasts interpretations and understandings of the phenomena with the researched groups.

Constituent attributes of an interpretive approach, as well as some ethical concerns and personal inclinations, influenced and shaped the design of this study: the use of inductive methods, the aim to include all the possible voices in the community, and the intent to conduct research that would engage in a collaborative process both the so-called object of study and the researcher. First, an inductive approach guided the whole process of research, from the design of the methodology to the data collection and analysis process (which would follow grounded theory). Second, in terms of inclusion, under the belief that a participatory research project would promote the participants’ agency in their own process of self-evaluation, participatory research techniques were included, also, scholars (Byrne, 2009; Gray-Felder, 2002; Parks, Gray-Felder, Hunt &
Byrne, 2005) recommend qualitative participatory research to evaluate outcomes of CFSC processes. Third, with the aim of producing meaningful research for the community and the organization, collaborative research that would overtake the individual (and academia’s) self-interest was envisioned. These elements shaped a flexible, inclusive and collaborative research design and influenced the definition and the scope of the research in terms of questions, data sources, collection techniques, sampling and field procedures. This section seeks to describe in detail the methods used to gather data and to explain the reasons behind the choices made. First, however, I will offer an overview that I hope will clarify the terms grounded theory, applied research, and participatory research as well as my own interpretation of them.

**Inductive Approach and Grounded Theory**

As mentioned, the goal of this research was to interpretively understand the meanings of the community about the *Ma Project*. Despite considering some lines of thought and theories that had influenced previous studies, the intention was that, following an inductive approach, a thick description of these interpretations would emerge from the data collected through an immersion in the field, following grounded theory. This approach to research, originated by Glaser and Strauss, conceptualizes theory as emergent from the collected data (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). By using grounded theory, the design of the research evolves as the data found guides decisions and following steps (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). In the present study, this inductive perspective has influenced every step: from research design to data analysis. Grounded theory has been contested and applied in different ways, specially defined by which paradigm
(positivist, post-positivist, or interpretive) the research followed (O’Connor et al., 2008). The origins of grounded theory by Glaser and Strauss were rooted in a positivist research paradigm (Glasser and Strauss 1967), which aimed to deductively create theory by a process that would include diverse stages of open and axial coding and constant comparison of the data. The results of each round of data collection would inform the next stage (sampling and questioning) of the research. As O’Connor et al. (2008) acknowledged, Strauss and Corbin evolved the theory towards a more interpretive approach. The present study follows grounded theory from an interpretive paradigm, which, in accordance with the analyses by O’Connor et al. (2008), means that a thick description of the context will be the product obtained from the immersion of the researcher. Although also using a process of open coding and constant comparison, in this case, the analysis begins once all data is collected and, in addition to a process of constant comparison, a final stage of establishing relationships within the different categories and themes will offer a description of the structural relationship of the context.

**Applied Communication Research**

Applied communication is, as presented by Lindlof and Taylor (2002), communication that intends to find solutions to specific problems within an organization, and to advance communication theory at the same time. As Lindlof and Taylor exposed (2002), studies that follow an applied research approach are normally collaboratively conducted. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) offered another approximation and noted that in the conjunction of applied communication research, inquiry, reflection, action, and policy merge in a way that can generate spaces where the voices of the studied are heard.
Concerns about the utility of the research for the community (object of study), and some ethical questions behind entering a community with the only justification of advancing knowledge, stirred me to define a research that seeks, among its purposes, to offer tools for the advancement of the organization and the community. To define this purposeful research, a collaborative process was arranged with the organization to define areas of inquiry and methodologies in relation with their perceived needs. Although I was aware that this approach would shape the results and the research itself, I opted for combining my original research goals with the goals expressed by the organization, in an applied communication research approach. As many authors previously conveyed (Frey, 1998; Frey et al., 1996), I approached the study with the hope that the results will “be part of the solution” (p.163) as well, offering not only a deeper understanding of the case, but also offering perspectives for the organization to improve any aspect that the findings of the research identified, and thus, helping the organization reinforce their work.

**Participatory Research Techniques**

As authors argued (Byrne, 2009; Gray-Felder, 2002; Parks, Gray-Felder, Hunt & Byrne, 2005) qualitative research, particularly by the means of participatory techniques are recommended in research about Communication for Social Change interventions. Participatory Research techniques attempt to reduce the effects of unequal power distribution among the community and between researcher and participants, and aims to include the opinions of those who are normally voiceless (Van der Riet & Boettiger, 2009). As Van der Riet and Boettinger (2009) reflected, participatory research is not restricted to discourse and oral tradition but it can include “symbolic representation and
“direct experience” (p.5) such as the use of drawings, cameras, transition walks, among other means. Participatory research techniques based in the traditions of storytelling, drawing or the use of cameras or other form of folk media allow for the creation of spaces of dialogue among the participants when discussing the content of their products (Greiner, Singhal and Hurlburt, 2007; Rattine-Flaherty and Singhal, 2009;), and as Rattine-Flaherty and Singhal signaled (2009), these type of participatory techniques recognize other forms of expression, and create opportunities for individual empowerment when performing opportunities are generated.

The participatory techniques used in this research are *The Most Significant Change Technique* (Davies and Dart, 2005) and participatory video projects. The Most significant change, a “participatory monitoring and evaluation technique” as defined by the authors (p.7), is based in the tradition of storytelling. It was selected because, besides the possibilities it offers as a participatory technique where participants and stakeholders are involved in the research process, it allows for the emergence of the unexpected (Davies & Dart, 2005) and it is a very sensitive technique towards local and indigenous cultures (Tuhiway, 1999), which was considered appropriate for this research. Participatory video projects have been also widely used in participatory research projects and offer an opportunity to open spaces of dialogue among the community. A detailed description of these techniques is offered in the section about fieldwork procedures.

**Data Sources**

This section offers an overview of the data sources, sampling methods, and fieldwork procedures that will be further developed in the description of each of the data
collection techniques. Follows a description of the people involved in the Ma Project, who are the participants in this research.

Participants and the Community

The potential data sources for the present study are direct or indirect participants in the Ma Project. These are people involved in the development of the project, participants from the schools and the community, and indirect beneficiaries. First, people directly involved in the development of the project are the World Bank representative for education in Latin America, Staff from el Colegio del Cuerpo, the Director of the Ma Project, the technical coordinator, the pedagogical coordinator, the seven neighborhood coordinators, dance assistants, and workshop facilitators. Second, the participants from the schools and the community are the thirty-eight groups of thirty children each, the volunteer tutors of each group, the director of each school, and two Community Development Organizations. Indirect participants/beneficiaries of the project are the families of the children, the rest of professors and members of the school, classmates and schoolmates that do not participate in the Ma Project as well as neighbors and other community members. Other stakeholders that need to be mentioned for their role in this research are the Education and Culture Secretary and its Unaldes (Unidades Administrativas Locales de Educación (Unaldes), or Local administrative units of education).

In order to understand their participation in the project, a brief description of their roles follows. The World Bank member supervises and authorizes transfer of funds and coordinates external evaluations of the project. The technical coordinator is in charge of
the daily functioning of the project, including the communication with and within the schools, the neighborhoods, the monitors and facilitators and other stakeholders of the project (Education and Culture Secretary, Unaldes, suppliers, etc.). The neighborhood coordinators, dancers of *la Compañía* are the primary monitors of the *Body practices* workshop and act as linkages of the groups in each neighborhood with the technical coordinator, doing tasks of coordination and internal evaluation. Each neighborhood also counts with one or two dance facilitators who are dance students in *el Colegio del Cuerpo* and who may act as assistants for the *Body practices* workshop. The specialized trained facilitators of the other two workshops (*Languages of art* and *Education for the care of the body*) are external collaborators and with specific training/background on the workshop content. The volunteer tutors are teachers of the school who were selected, on a voluntary basis, to accompany the group of children during the project. They are responsible for the linkage of the group with the school. The Unalde are public/administrative working groups in the neighborhoods that act as a linkage among the Secretary and the Educatve institutions and schools.

Even though the participants will be described in more detail later on, in order to understand the development of the methods section it is key to introduce Luz Matilde Pulido (Maty). She was the technical coordinator of the Ma Project and become a key person in the research project for her engagement and commitment. She would act as a *sponsor* (as suggested by Lindlof and Taylor), and her level of engagement with the project and the research was what made this study possible in the way that it developed. First, she offered her time and vision of the project to re-define/refine/design a research
process that would adjust to the interests of the organization and that would be the most effective in the available time frame. Second, her orientation and help were absolutely crucial to obtain a deep understanding of the project and to create possibilities for me to access the participants in the project and their communities.

Sampling Method

As previously mentioned, this study is based on purposive sampling that follows a snowball sampling in which the subjects who are part of the sample will be contacted, reached, and then, defined, by the previous participant. I was interested in how the project was perceived not only by direct participants but also by the extended community (indirect participants/beneficiaries). This is the reason why I aimed to sample staff members, participants and community members not directly involved in it. The sampling method aimed to reach participants with a high level of involvement in the project (staff members in the organization) who would introduce me to other participants with a lesser involvement in the organization but closely related with the participants in the community and those, later on, would introduced me to community members not directly connected to the organization or the Ma Project. For example, staff members from the organization connected me with the monitors in each of the neighborhoods, who later introduced me to the children and the tutor-teacher of that group. In the majority of the cases, the tutor teacher facilitated my access to either family members, directors of the schools and other professors. In another direction, Maty introduced me to other groups of stakeholders involved in the project, such as the Unaldes or staff and representatives of
community organizations indirectly involved in the project. See figure 9 below, mapping the sampling method, for a representation of this process.

Figure 9. Map of snowball sampling.
Fieldwork Procedures: A Collaborative Process

As mentioned earlier, the design of the methodology followed an emergent process determined by both the collaboration with the organization as well as the conditions set up by the research itself. In this section, I will narrate in detail the various steps and decisions taken throughout this collaborative process. By doing so, I intend to offer a clear sense of how the research was designed as well as an account of the strengths and weaknesses of this collaborative process.

I first contacted the organization El Colegio del Cuerpo in October 2008. While doing research on “dance and social change,” the organization was referred to me by different relevant sources in the field of communication and development (the Communication Initiative Network). Despite various attempts to interview the director of the organization, agenda limitations resulted in no interview being obtained. Nevertheless, contact was maintained to keep the door open for a possible future collaboration between the Dance Company and Ohio University. In April 2009, the organization accepted my proposal of conducting research on their Ma Project as a Master’s Thesis project. During the following months, and until my arrival in Colombia, I contacted the organization several times to engage in a collaboration process by sharing the development of the proposal, accounting for their impressions of it as well as asking for information on the Ma Project that would guide and ground the research. Even though I intended to maintain correspondence with the director of the organization as well as the director and the pedagogical coordinator of the Ma Project, my most reliable and
responsive contact was the manager of the dance company. The only information about
the project I could access was the information on the website, a brief report from the
World Bank describing the project in terms of funding and very briefly expected
outcomes, as well as a collection of five news reports that the organization sent. When I
asked them for a methodological description of the project so I could develop a closer
understanding of it, the answer from the organization was that they could not pass on this
information due to limitations imposed by the World Bank. In the end, my initial
aspirations of advancing in the design of the research before I arrived in the country, was
truncated by a lack of communication with the organization. My own interpretation of
this opacity was that it was due to either lack of trust or lack of documentation and data
about the project. Despite the fact that I had some initial doubts about the feasibility of
the research and the reliability of the organization, I maintained my intention and went to
Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, at the beginning of July, with the confidence that, with
the World Bank as a donor, the project would be legitimate.

Once I arrived in the country, I contacted the Director of el Colegio del Cuerpo
(Alvaro Restrepo) and the Manager of the Compañía. They responded almost instantly
with a kind, welcoming message including their personal cell phone numbers so I could
contact them. After so much obscurity, there was light at the end of the tunnel. But this
little joy faded again after my first attempt to meet with the Manager: For an entire
weekend I waited in Cartagena de Indias for a call to organize a first meeting. The call,
however, never arrived and Sunday night I went back to Barranquilla, with suspicion and
an increased level of anxiety.
The following week, the Manager called me to arrange a meeting with the Director. I was to meet him in Barranquilla and drive with him to Cartagena, where I would be introduced to other people involved in the Ma Project. I met him the next Thursday at a school funded by the artist Shakira’s *Fundacion Pies Descalzos (Bare foot Foundation)*, in Barranquilla. A committee from *el Colegio del Cuerpo* was visiting the school in order to arrange the conditions for a future collaboration. At my arrival, I was introduced as a friend and joined the group in their visit at the school. When I first met Alvaro Restrepo, the director of *el Colegio del cuerpo*, he was playing and singing with a troupe of children that were delighted with him. He was singing and performing *La Icotea* (a song and dance about a lazy turtle that just wants to eat). The kids were laughing and playing around. I took some pictures. Afterwards, we drove all together to Cartagena de Indias. Although we were together most of the time, my expectations of interviewing with Alvaro during the trip were far from being realized. He was talking most of the trip with a prospective donor who had accompanied the group in their visit to the school. Instead, I interviewed the Educative Coordinator who, in the almost two hour drive, introduced me to the structure of *el Colegio del Cuerpo* and the *Ma Project*. On my side, I presented her with the research proposal. The idea of using the Most Significant Change technique was very well received. When we arrived in Cartagena, she handed me a partial report on the Ma Project and introduced me to Nico, the Manager of the Dance Company and Luz Matilde Pulido (Maty), the person in charge of coordinating the Ma Project. I explained to them my intention to outline a collaborative research project and
exposed the starting point: proposal, techniques and openness to their needs and suggestions.

The organization provided some key information about the project including the methodology, base line research, and midterm evaluation, which I examined throughout the next two days. These documents offered me a vision of a project with a strongly consolidated methodology. In addition, a mid-term evaluation had been done by an external agency (Econometria), a consulting agency from the capital of the country, Bogota. As previously exposed, this study followed a naturalistic approach, and even though it used qualitative methods to gather some of the data, these techniques included indicators such as attendance rate or grade of accomplishment (classes offered), which showed a preference for quantification over thick description.

From this material, I shaped a first set of questions, aimed at arriving at a more in-depth understanding of the project. In a later interview with Maty, I covered most of these questions. This meeting would serve as a first deep approach to the Ma Project and to the needs of the organization, and would also set the basis for the collaborative project. In a joint process, the questions, sample and procedure that I initially proposed were discussed and adjusted to the needs of the organization as well as to the reality of the project and the community.

In relation to the research questions, the results of the previously mentioned mid-term evaluation by Econometria, the consulting agency, created more concerns regarding the knowledge and the involvement of the families and the education system (Schools and Unaldes) with the project. Among others, part of the conclusions of this evaluation
state that the level of engagement of the schools is lower than was expected, and also the knowledge of the families is questioned. For instance, a point in the conclusions reads “even though the parents of the beneficiaries do not know what their children are doing in the project, they perceive their participation very positively (. . .)” (p.35). The organization showed much interest in exploring the question of knowledge and engagement. For example, as Maty commented, the organization was shocked about the statement that questioned whether the parents knew anything about the project, because they had done several presentations in the schools and neighborhoods. In addition, even though they were aware that the commitment of the schools was closely related to the personal commitment of the director, the organization was interested in deeply exploring the reasons why. Hence, in addition to the original questions proposed, the organization raised two more questions for the research: What factors favor/hinder the engagement of the families with the project? What factors favor/hinder the engagement of the Unaldes with the project? These were integrated in a broader examination of the weaknesses and challenges of the project with the community, and resulted in the question: What are the challenges of the project within the community?

In relation to the procedures, techniques, and sampling, we started an exploration phase that would help define the final sites and communities to conduct research with, as well as the particular research techniques that would be applied in each of those sites. This phase lasted one week, during which site observation was combined with conversations with Maty, dancers-monitors, children involved, and document analysis. At
the end of the week, a research agenda was settled. An overview of this exploratory phase follows, which precedes the final research plan.

*Exploration Phase*

As commented, this phase lasted for one week, over which long conversations with Maty introduced me to the essentials and history of the project, as well as to the structure, power relations, and specifics of each of the schools and neighborhoods involved. We would combine visits to some schools while the monitors and facilitators were conducting workshops. From these visits, I became acquainted with the workshops - their structure, the people involved and their roles, and the methodology. But more importantly, I was introduced to many of the monitors of the project. The monitors would be the next key informants in the research and would introduce me to their classes, the children, the tutors and the schools. Besides these exploratory visits to the field sites, research on organizational/internal documents and interviews with members of the organization *el Colegio del Cuerpo* involved in the development of the *Ma Project* offered a solid basis of knowledge about the project that was key in designing the research project.

During the exploratory phase we visited three neighborhoods: Inem, Nelson Mandela and Olaya. Following what would be one of Maty’s daily routines, we visited the three schools in the same day. It was Tuesday morning, the day of the dance workshops. Maty had to resolve some issues in each of the schools so we planned to visit them together and meanwhile, she could introduce me to the project. We arrived to the first school (*Inem*) around nine in the morning and two dancers-monitors were
conducting some stretching exercises. One monitor was performing them and the other was more of a support person. The monitor conducting the workshop was referring the other as a model for the children to follow. Once Maty have solved the matter that brought us there, we went on to visit the following school. Next one was Sueños y Oportunidades sin the neighborhood of Nelson Mandela. Here, the children were doing dance technique work. In the same way, a coordinator was guiding and a younger facilitator served as a model for the children to follow. During the break, I could talk to the monitor and explain the research proposal. He very kindly offered some perspectives and limitations about how the research could be done, which we took into account for the design. Also in this school, during a break from the session, I could briefly interview the tutoring professor of the group as well as some of the students-participants in the project. The third visit was to Olaya, a neighborhood that Maty described as very problematic and violent. When we arrived the workshop was almost finished and the children, organized in groups, were performing the dances that they created during the day to the rest of the class. This visit helped me understand the scheme of the dance workshops and offered me the possibility to be introduced to eight monitors and three docentes tutores (teachers-tutors), which would be very valuable for the research.

During this exploratory period, I also visited the main offices of el Colegio del Cuerpo where I had the opportunity to meet the co-director and most of the monitors of the Ma Project as well as members of the dance company and the office administrative staff, who would identify me from then on as someone involved in the project. These days, I also had the opportunity to attend a modern dance performance of la Compañía
del Colegio del Cuerpo, which offered me a vision of the professional quality of the dance company and the dancers and an understanding of the recognition that the Compañía has in the city.

During the last part of this exploratory period, Maty and I established the parameters/conditions that shaped the final design of the study. First, the results gathered by the Most Significant Change technique would lead the study and would be contrasted with the data gathered from the ethnographic perspective. To keep the different approaches as differentiated as possible, the techniques would be applied in different sites/neighborhoods. In this way, the voices of the community would be preserved from the views of the researcher, and the inside – outside perspectives could possibly better be compared. Second, to attain a deeper understanding of the pedagogical model and of the views of the participants, we found necessary to follow the same group of students for at least, one week, and therefore observe the three different workshops offered during the week. This would also offer us enough time to meet the requirements for the IRB, asking for the parents’ consent before interviewing any of the children in the class.

Final Research Plan

With these parameters in mind we decided to select four neighborhoods. The criteria to select them were: to include successful and less successful schools, the availability of the dancers/facilitators during the time, and where the workshops included topics related to health, civic education and dance, possibly. In order to cover the broader possible responses, two of them should be neighborhoods where the project was being successfully accepted and the other two should be more difficult neighborhoods where
the project had had problems in its implementation and acceptance. Each pair (good and bad) would be researched with one set of techniques (either MSC or ethnographic ones).

After reviewing the availability of the monitors and the topics covered in the seven neighborhoods, we defined a sample of four neighborhoods: Nelson Mandela, Simon Bolivar, Santa Rita y Baru, which were covering, respectively, the topics of addictions/literature, violence/music, ecology/traditional dance and sexuality/film.

*Table 2.*

*Research Final Design.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHASE RESEARCH</th>
<th>TECHNIQUES</th>
<th>NEIGHBORHOODS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preliminary research</td>
<td>Entry-field observation</td>
<td>(Inem, Nelson Mandela, Olaya)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews with staff</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial Document analysis</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage I. Vision from Inside (Participatory techniques)</td>
<td>Most Significant Change</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela Simon Bolivar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Participatory Video</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage II. Vision from outside (ethnography)</td>
<td>Participant observation</td>
<td>Santa Rita Baru</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Focus Groups</td>
<td></td>
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Dance as a Field Entry Point

Even though I counted with the support of Maty to enter the field, and she introduced me to many people so they would receive me, I was a complete outsider (a Spanish white university student, coming from the United States with a research agenda). This was quite a burden for me to connect with the community, particularly, in the early stages of the research. I tried many strategies to reduce the gap and be accepted, and found that what finally allowed me to build a good rapport with most of the dancers in el Colegio del Cuerpo and many of the community members was my own passion for dance. Dance became the common ground that would help me establish connections with most of the participants. For instance, the artistic director got interested in the research and me when I told him that I was dancing west-African dance. After mentioning my interest, he acted much friendlier than he had and invited me to join the rehearsal of an afro-Caribbean modern dance troupe he was directing. I perceived the same effect with the members of the Compañía, most of whom did not pay much attention to me until I attended one of their dance classes and showed my personal interest in dance.

The proximity to dance as a dance amateur allowed me not to just build rapport with some of the dancers, but it actually affected the research itself. I recall two specific situations in which being a dancer generated favorable situations. The first one occurred with Arturo, one of the monitors and performers of the Compañía. I approached him to collect his MSC story, but he refused to participate. The next day, I did a participant observation in the school where he was. During the session I joined the group and danced with them. After the class, Arturo approached me and told me that that day, he would
answer my questions. He did not just tell me his own story but accompanied me the rest of the afternoon to talk to some school directors, community members in the neighborhood and introduced me to his own family.

Second, I was trying to interview a mother about her daughter—a participant in the Ma Project. She was clearly overwhelmed and communication did not flow easily. At some point, her older daughter (who was in the room) and I started talking about dance and our shared passion. Shortly after, another daughter and their grandmother joined the conversation, which turned to be around/about dance, music and traditions and norms, as well as their own individual stories. The initial interview, which started forced, unnatural and very abrupt, ended up being a friendly and warm conversation among a group of five women with a shared common ground. Even though it was not planned, establishing rapport through shared common ground, in this case, dance, was the best personal strategy to enter the field.

As mentioned earlier, in this section I aimed to offer a clear sense of how the research was designed as well as an account of the lessons learned through this collaborative research. After describing the whole process in detail, I want to highlight three key elements that made possible the present study: a strong sponsor, a common ground and an attitude of patience and respect for the organization and the community. Maty, the sponsor of this study, was essential in the developing of the research design and a crucial connection with the members of the organization and the community. However, she was not the first contact. On the contrary, more than six months passed since the first communication with the organization before I was introduced to her, and it
required strengthening the ties with the organization before we were introduced. Some organizations might not trust an external researcher from the beginning, therefore, it is necessary to invest time and demonstrate care for the organization and its cause, to build up strong rapport and trust with the organization. Another crucial factor that facilitated this research was the finding of a common ground. Having a common ground situates the researcher closer to the community, and although he/she will still be seen as an outsider, this common ground will facilitate a better rapport and access to the people. In this research, this common ground, being dance, emerged unexpectedly throughout the entry process.

Data Collection Techniques

This section presents a detailed explanation of the diverse techniques utilized to gather data. As previously exposed, the techniques in this study have been divided into those offering a vision from inside, or participatory research techniques that would collect the (less directed) voices of the community and those offering a vision from outside that, through ethnographic techniques, would prioritize the perspective of the researcher.

Vision from Inside

To collect this “vision from inside”, this study includes two techniques: the Most Significant Change (MSC) and participatory video. The MSC is the primary gathering data process of the research and, although participatory video exercises were not contemplated in the previous proposal, opportunities arose to use this technique. Besides the main purpose of gathering data to answer the research questions, a secondary goal of
this study was to put into practice the research techniques, which would inform future research processes and offer new monitoring and evaluation tools to the organization.

*The Most Significant Change Technique*

Collects the viewpoints of participants in the project through the gathering of stories about changes that they perceive have been the most significant for a certain period of time. After the collection of these narratives, a systematic selection process is set in which those most significant stories are selected by members of the organization. This technique, as suggested by its authors, is a process that involves the organization in each of the various steps, including the planning of the procedures, the collection of the stories, the selection of stories, and the feedback sessions to the participants. However, in this study, due to time constraints and access limitations, members of the organization were involved just in some of the stages. Also, due to time constraints, it was not possible to complete the feedback stage while I was there and was left for organization to complete later on.

The design of the procedures for this technique involved the crafting of the questions, the definition of the collection system and the organization of the selection panel. In relation to the questions, in order to include stories about collective change as well as challenges for the project, three questions were shaped: What is the most significant change at the individual level that you have perceived since the Ma Project was implemented? What is the most significant change at the level of the community that you have perceived since the Ma Project was implemented? And last, what is the most significant challenge that you have perceived since the Ma Project was implemented?
In relation to the collection process, after some joint reflection about feasible possibilities, we decided that I would collect the stories. The schools chosen to participate were the school *Sueños y Oportunidades* (Dreams and Opportunities) in the Nelson Mandela neighborhood and the school *Simon Bolivar* in the *Simon Bolivar neighborhood*. Over three days, twenty-nine stories were collected among dancer-monitors, workshop facilitators, school directors, tutors, families and other members of the community.

Follows a description of the participants in the MSC process, starting with the neighborhoods, the schools, and some essentials from some of the individuals, which will be followed by a description of the procedures in the collection of the stories.

*The neighborhoods: Simon Bolivar and Nelson Mandela.* These neighborhoods are both located in the 14 UCG of Cartagena, in the farthest south (external) part of the city. The *Cartagena como vamos* (Cartagena, how are we doing) study on the distribution of poverty among neighborhoods (2008) found that this area is among those with the higher levels of extreme poverty in the city. Some of the characteristics of the area, as collected in the findings of the study, are that the majority citizens who belongs to stratum number one live in the area; that the area has one of the lowest level of coverage in public services (electricity, water, garbage and natural gas) and that the area has one of the highest rate in homicides in the city (per 100.000 of inhabitants). The two neighborhoods are touching boundaries and this is one of the reasons why they have very similar socioeconomic conditions. However, the Nelson Mandela is a much larger neighborhood in terms of population (almost 40.000 inhabitants) in comparison with Simon Bolivar, which is smaller (7.600). Also, a significant difference among them is
that the Nelson Mandela has a larger population of people that identifies themselves with the black race (22.6%) in comparison with Simon Bolivar (5.6%). Figures 10 and 11 are pictures from these neighborhoods.

*Figure 10. Going to visit a house in the Liceo de Bolivar Neighborhood*
The schools: Sueños y Oportunidades and Simon Bolivar. Even though the neighborhoods are very similar, the schools were the project is developed present major differences, especially in terms of engagement with the project. Whereas the School Sueños y Oportunidades in the Nelson Mandela neighborhood has a longer history of collaboration with the organization and thus, a stronger commitment with the project, the Simon Bolivar school was reluctant to participate at the beginning, and the level of commitment is lower due to a diversity of factors (commitment of the director, inherent characteristics of the school, absence of tutor-teacher, and relationship with the organization). Both schools have a large number of students (over three thousand) and count with extremely large facilities (several buildings of many floors each building with many classrooms in each floor). For this reason, these schools were selected to have the dance studio where the Ma Project would be developed. Therefore, the two schools host
groups of children that come from other schools of the neighborhood, every week. The dance studios have particularities/conditions that worth mention because they affect the development of the workshops and had significant relevance/impact in this research, as well.

The dance studio at the school *Sueños y Oportunidades* is a space of around 16 per 7 m., located in the second floor of the main building in the school, nearby the internal patio of the school. The studio has wooden floor and several not glass covered windows. For these characteristics, the studio is very clear and well ventilated but extremely noisy, as well. In contrast, the dance studio at the school *Simon Bolivar* is a space of approximately 12 per 14 mts. located at the farthest end of the school, adjacent to the exterior wall of the school. Even though this studio is silent, the lack of ventilation and the isolation make the space very sensitive to heat (it can become extremely hot) as well as exposed to attacks from the exterior of the school.

*The participants.* Narratives were collected from one dance assistant, one dance-monitor, three school directors (2 from the hosting schools and one from another school from the neighborhood whose students participate in the program), two tutor-teachers, five family members, and one workshop facilitator. For the sake of the understanding and readability of the research the participants will be referenced by names that are not their original ones.

The first participant, Jorge, is a dancer of the company involved in the project as a dance assistant. He was a mulatto boy in his late teens early twenties and had been involved with *el Colegio del Cuerpo* for almost eight years. We conducted the interview
during a rehearsal of a performance. During the same rehearsal, I interviewed who would be the second participant of the MSC, Jenny, a dancer coordinator. She was a young woman in her mid twenties that, even though she is from Bogota, had been accepted in the dance company. She was the only white woman in the dance company.

The third participant was Raul, the director of the school *Sueños y Oportunidades*, a white man in his thirties, tall and somehow snob, who, however, seemed pleased to collaborate and offered a very articulate and detailed description of his viewpoints and the MSC story. He had been involved in the Ma Project since the beginning of it. We conducted the interview in his office. The fourth participant was Jorge Rafael the tutor teacher of the group of children attending the workshop. He was a white man in his late thirties, very friendly and eager to talk. He was a professor in the *Rey Neptuno* School and (he) had been part of the project for the past year. He added much detail about the difficult situation of the children in the neighborhoods, talked about his own family and was also eager to collaborate and help with the research. The interview was conducted during a small break from the workshop while the children ate their breakfasts, in the corridor in front of the studio. At the end of the workshop, this fourth participant offered to introduce me to the director of his school, who would be the fifth participant, Luciana. She was the director of a small school whose students participated in the project while attending the *Sueños y Oportunidades* School. She was a white woman in her mid fifties and her body complexion revealed a strong, active woman. We conducted the interview while she was showing me around her little school. After the tour through the school, the fourth participant offered me to introduce me to a family that lived in front of the little
school. The grandmother of two participants, Maria, would be the sixth participant. She was a big mulatta\(^3\) woman of around sixty years old. Even though she offered us a sit and a drink at her porch, she seemed reluctant to participate and it was difficult to get an articulated and detailed story (the gap researcher/interviewee was huge in this case). The seventh participant, Pedro, would be the tutor-teacher of the group of kids assisting to the music workshops in the school Simon Bolivar. He was a white male in his early forties, very warm and kind who would also introduced me to the people in his community. The eighth mother, Carolina, was a mulatta woman around her early thirties. I interviewed her in her house, which was in poor conditions (a wooden and plastic made house, very dark inside and with dirt floor). Mother of four other children seemed a little bit confused by my presence and was shy and difficult to access. The ninth mother is Adriana, also a mulatta woman around her thirties. Also apparently living in extreme poverty, was very talkative and eager to share stories about her daughter. The tenth, Gracia Maria, grandmother, was a mulatta woman around her fifties. She was very open and kind to talk, and I interviewed her in the living room of her house. Although the house was in a non-paved street, the house was in better conditions than the previous too. The last family I collected stories from was the eleventh mother, Daniela, a very kind and warm middle aged woman, from around late thirties/early forties which offered us to sit with her in the living room of her house. The house was situated at the top of a hill and had nice views of the Cienaga. Clearly with more acquisitive power. The twelfth participant was Preston, the music workshop facilitator. He was a black young man of around his

\(^3\) Mulatta – definition by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: Feminine of mulatto. A person of white and black ancestry
thirties. He was a member of a recognized musical ensemble (Perona) with a background in pedagogy and music, openly talked about his plans for the future, and even engaged in a proposal. And the thirteenth, Miguel, the director of the school.

*The collection procedures.* All the stories were collected in face-to-face interviews, recorded with a recording machine and later on transcribed into Spanish. Each of the stories was transcribed into a template that was created for the purpose of facilitating the selection process.

*The selection of the stories.* It follows a description of the selection panel, that is a key element of this participatory research technique, as is during this selection when the appointed members of the organization will decide through a debate, which of the collected stories better represent the most significant change for a specific period of time. Doing so, the members of the organization reflect about their own values and come to terms about what is most significant about their action. This section describes the procedures and participants in the selection process.

The selection panel was organized with the collaboration of Maty, with whom we decided that a diverse and engaged group of people would add richness to the selection process. An initial panel of eight staff members and stakeholders was designed that included a member of the board of directors, the director and the pedagogical manager of the organization as well as three dancers-monitors and two external facilitators. Due to last minute changes in the agenda of the dance company, the selection panel had to be rescheduled and only three members could attend the final selection session: Maty, Gloria, the manager of the organization, and Dani, one of the dancers-coordinators.
During a two-hour session, all the stories were read out loud and following a discussion and debate, three stories were selected as those representing the Most Significant ones for the organization.

**Participatory Video**

As noted before, the opportunity arose to analyze videos that the organization recorded in a “film workshop”. Although this was not previously planned, an examination of the videos was considered an excellent learning experience for future research and an opportunity to complement the results gathered with other data collection techniques.

The facilitator of the photography and film workshops explained that the following week he was organizing a workshop in which the children would be developing plots around an open question that he would pose. The children, organized in groups of five would write and perform a story to answer the specific question and would also record/shoot the story with a digital camera. Taking on the opportunity, we agreed on asking the kids the question: what has been the most significant change since your participation in the project. As a result, six stories were shot. In addition, a group of students (selected among the children by the children) would have a (low cost) digital camera for a week, during which they would film what they wanted about the project. As a result of this second experiment, a set of eleven short videos was collected. As this process was totally lead by the organization, with zero intervention of the researcher, no description of sites or participants is provided, and just a transcription of the content in the videos is used as data for this study.
This vision in the study is offered through ethnographic research techniques such as: participant observation, interviews and focus group, which prioritize the researcher’s perspective. This section introduces first a general description of the neighborhoods and schools followed by a description of each technique and its procedures as well as the sites and participants.

As noted before, we planned that during the third week of August I would conduct ethnographic research in two schools/neighborhoods. We considered that an immersion during the three days that a group participates in the project would add a valuable new perspective never gathered before in any evaluation. She proposed Sta. Rita and Baru as two interesting sites to conduct this part of the research. For their particular history, these two sites presented radically different contexts and would offer a broad vision, especially in relation with the level of ownership and engagement of the school with the project. In addition, the two thematic modules were considered very interesting appropriate: the theme in Baru was *cuerpo origen-cuerpodestino* (origin body- destiny body), related with sexuality, and the theme in Santa Rita was *habitat body-ecology of the body*, and would relate ecology and traditional dance, which would reinforce the study of the uses of dance within the project.

First, I will provide a brief introduction to the neighborhoods where the set of ethnographic techniques were applied to understand some of the contextual specificities and differences of the program in these areas.
The Neighborhoods: Santa Rita and Baru

Sta. Rita is an area located in the mountainside of the city, between the neighborhoods of La Popa and Loma Fresca, in the 2nd UCG (Unidad Comunera del Gobierno). This sector is among those that present the highest levels of poverty in Cartagena (Cartagena Como Vamos, 2008). The study Cartagena Como Vamos, indicates that inhabitants in this area are those facing the most difficult socioeconomic situation in the city. This situation is evident in the state of the houses, many of which are built with non-durable materials and lack basic services such as sewer and electricity, and which, therefore, present serious hygienic and health problems. As noted by Maty, this is a complicated area because of poverty, high rates of unemployment and violence. As she said “insecurity levels are high and gang violence is a common problem, but now, more army troops are located in the neighborhood, as well.”

Two schools from the area participated in the project: Ana Maria Velez and Jose de la Vega. One of the particularities of the project in the area is the fact that none of the schools provided a space that could be adapted as a dance studio. For this reason, the project is developed in collaboration with Fundacion AfroCaribe, a local community development organization that offered a space in exchange for the possibility that some of the children whom they work with could participate in the project. The Fundacion AfroCaribe is located on the top of the hill (Loma Fresca) which is at the heart of the gang area. To avoid problems related with street violence, the children are accompanied to the studio by a private bus service that picks them up and drops them off at the front
door of their schools. Figure 12, is a picture of the street where the dance studio is located in the neighborhood of Santa Rita.

![Figure 12. Santa Rita neighborhood.](image)

Baru is a very peculiar area. Even though it is considered part of the metropolitan neighborhood of Cartagena, Baru is located on an Island, *Isla de Baru* to which the access is very limited in terms of transport. To access the area is necessary to take a ferry that crosses the river several times a day, between eight am and five or six pm. The geography of the area determines the isolation of the community, not only in terms of access but also in the community’s perspectives about insider-outsider and about their job/future possibilities. The area’s main economic activity is tourism and, even though poverty is one of the main problems, violence rates are low and school dropouts are also
almost nonexistent. In relation to this, Maty mentioned that there are almost no dropouts because the children do not have anywhere to go instead. Below, figure 13 is a picture from the river that needs to be crossed to arrive to Isla de Baru.

![Figure 13. Crossing to Isla de Baru](image)

In the Santa Ana neighborhood of Baru, the Ma Project involves two schools: Santa Ana and Colegio Barbacoa. El Colegio del Cuerpo had a previous history of collaboration with the school Colegio Barbacoa before launching the Ma Project. An artistic program was implemented in the school three years ago, and this is the reason why a studio was built years earlier. There is a strong bond between the school and el
Colegio del Cuerpo, which developed during more than five years of mutual projects, and facilitated the adoption and integration of the Ma Project in the school.

Following this overview of the neighborhoods there is a description of the procedures of each of the research techniques (participant observation, interviews and focus group) and follows a description of the main participants.

**Procedures: Participant Observation**

Before starting the site observation, I spent one and a half months in Colombia, mostly in the Atlantic region, which offered me an overall understanding of the country and the area. Over this time, I became acquainted with Colombia’s post-colonial history and politics as well as with essentials of the Caribbean culture (social structure and roles, norms, values and traditions, including dance traditions). I maintained a diary where I took regular notes on specifics about the culture and the research process. During the time of the exploratory stage and the MSC process I became familiar with the different components of the Ma Project and shaped the questions that would offer a closer understanding of the role of dance in the strategy of the project. I was especially interested in getting an in-depth understanding of the elements of the body workshops and how the three workshops were created around a specific theme. With this focus in mind, I established four parameters for the site-observation: activities developed, oral interaction between monitor and children, children’s attitude during the workshops, and the role of tutor-teacher. Over three days, I conducted five sessions of three hours of participant observation during which I joined the workshops with the children. Even though I entered the sites of observation as an observer, through active participation in
some of the activities, especially in the workshops on Body practices, the children
accepted my presence and acted very friendly and inclusive, so I became an observer-
participant (Lindof & Taylor).

I observed the three days of workshops in Baru, and two workshops in Sta. Rita.
During the observation, I took notes by hand as well as I recorded conversations with my
recording machine. Later on I transcribed the notes and complemented them from
memory. In both cases, I complemented my own observation with conversations with
participants, monitors, tutor-teachers or facilitators, which offered me clarification and
support for my own observations. Also, posterior conversations with Maty offered new or
deeper perspectives on my own observation.

In relation to the sites and participants, in Baru, I observed the whole week of
workshops, which included the body practices workshop, a cinema workshop and a
workshop on sexuality. During the three days, a total of three facilitators, two tutor
teachers and an average of twenty five students participated in the project. In Santa Rita, I
observed two of the three days of workshops, including the literature and ecology
workshop and the traditional dance workshop. In this school, two facilitators, one teacher
tutor and an average of twenty students participated in the observation sessions.

Procedures: Interviews

I conducted personal interviews with the purpose of getting a deeper perspective
on the perceptions of the participants and community members about the project, but
specially, about how the project had influenced, or not, the human, social, and cultural
capital in the community. With this perspective, I designed a semi-structured interview
that guided the questions around three main themes: changes in knowledge, relationships, and social norms and values. The interview had an introductory question about the relationship of the participant with the Ma Project, which would allow starting the conversation. After this introductory open question, a set of questions asked about the perceived changes in the knowledge of the kids as well as the knowledge of the interviewee, the perceived changes in the relationships of the children as well as the own perceived changes in relationships, and a final question about the perceived changes in the social and cultural norms of the interviewee and the community. I conducted a total of sixteen interviews: to two tutor-teachers, two director of schools, one monitor dancer and two facilitators, to two community organizers, a group interview to a family, and to four students. In addition, to gain a deeper understanding of the project and its strategy to social change, I conducted an interview with the director of *el Colegio del Cuerpo*, the educative coordinator, as well as many hours of unstructured conversations with Maty.

In order to get a sense of the knowledge that the non-involved community had about the project, I complemented the interviews listed above with very short personal interviews to members of the community that were not involved directly or indirectly in the project, that is, other professors, staff or students in the schools. These interviews were almost limited to their knowledge about the Ma Project. Before any interview, consent forms were read and signed by the participants. The interviews were recorded with a recording machine and transcribed into Spanish.
Procedures: Focus group

Two focus group were held in the neighborhood of Santa Rita. The first one was held with family members (mostly mothers and grandmothers) of children participating in the project, originally from the two schools in Sta. Rita neighborhood. Thirteen women attended. Even though it was programmed to be attended by exclusively family members, due to organizational circumstances, the tutor teachers also joined this first focus group. The focus of the session was to reveal their knowledge and perceptions about the Ma Project and their perceived influence in the children and their environment. The session lasted for an hour and a half and the session was taped recorded and transcribed. The second one was a focus group with the tutor teachers of the Sta. Rita neighborhood. A total of 5 women attended, the focus of the questions shifted towards their vision of their present and future role in the project. The session lasted forty five minutes and was tape recorded and transcribed.

The participants

Follows a brief description of the participants from whom data was collected either through the interviews, focus group or participant observation. First, Amanda, she was the tutor-teacher of the group of students in Santa Rita. She is an ethics professor, a white woman on her early forties, involved in the project since two years before. She believes in the project and demonstrates a strong commitment to it. We conducted the interview in the break of the second day workshop. She facilitated my interview with a family, and helped me organize a focus group with family members for the following week. The second, Ivan, is a coordinator dancer of La Compañía. He has been involved
in the project for more than ten years and became the monitor of the neighborhood in Baru. He is a mulatto man in his late twenties, early thirties. We spent two days together during my observation in Baru, as he was conducting an internal evaluation session. He had profound knowledge about the organization and the project and offered it quite openly. I interviewed him during the trip to the school, which lasted more than hour and a half. The third, Nana, was a facilitator of a workshop in ecology and traditional dance, in Santa Rita. She is a mulatto woman, in her late twenties, early thirties. She is the wife of the dancer coordinator that I had interviewed the previous day. She was involved with the dance company for a while but her area of interest and expertise is traditional dance so she left the company. Her nowadays connection with the organization is as workshop facilitator. She was very kind and accessible. Carina, a tutor-teacher in Baru was the fourth participant. A woman in her mid-thirties, involved in the project since the beginning but with a lesser engagement and commitment with it than the tutor-teacher of Santa Rita. We conducted a face-to-face interview during the cinema workshop that lasted one hour.

The fifth participant was Marcos, the facilitator of the cinema workshop. He is a white man in his late twenties, very knowledgeable about film studies, and very committed with the power of cinema for social change. We conducted a face-to-face interview in our way back from the school to downtown. He facilitated and organized the participatory video experience. The sixth participant is Rodrigo the director of the Sta. Anna School, in Baru. He was a white man in his late forties. Even though he agreed in doing the interview, he seemed a little reluctant and was not helpful in organizing an
interview with other professors in his school. During the interview, besides several call phones, a speaker with loud music was interrupting the conversation. In contrast, the seventh participant, Fernando, the director of the school in Santa Rita was very helpful and kind. A white man in his late forties that had entered the school one year after the project had been implemented but who knew the project from a previous center where he had been working in. Two key participants in this section of the research were Martin and Manolo, both community organizers working with different organizations. Martin, a light mulatto man in his late thirties was very open, direct and committed to the project. Manolo, also a mulatto man in his mid-thirties was somehow more closed in his communication style and seemed less involved in the project. In relation to the children, I interviewed a white sixth grade kid (male) that had just joined the program in Santa Rita, Dani. In the same neighborhood, and while in the bus that led us to the studio, I interviewed a group of children, Laura, Yenny Luciana, Melissa and Leidy. In Baru I interviewed another group of five students, between twelve and thirteen year old. In Santa Rita, I interviewed a family. Even though my first intention was to interview Josefa, the mother of the family, she seemed a little bit shy at the beginning and I took the opportunity that Rosario, (the grandmother) and Lucia Denisse and Gisele Maria (two other daughters) were in the house and the conversation easily flooded among the group of women and me.

It follows a table that summarizes the names and main description of the participants in the MSC technique, interview and focus group. The names of the participants have been changed for pseudonyms to preserve their anonymity.
Table 3.

List of Participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>TECHNIQUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>Workshop Facilitator</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge</td>
<td>Kid dancer</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Dancer coordinator</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raul</td>
<td>Director School</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jorge Jair</td>
<td>Teacher Tutor Nelson Mandela</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luciana</td>
<td>Director School</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Grand Mother</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro</td>
<td>Teacher Tutor</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolina</td>
<td>Mother 1</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td>Mother 2</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gracia Maria</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denis Daniela</td>
<td>Mother 3</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miguel</td>
<td>Director School</td>
<td>MSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Luz Pulido (Maty)</td>
<td>Coordinator of Ma Project</td>
<td>MSC selection panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloria</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>MSC selection panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dani</td>
<td>Dancer coordinator</td>
<td>MSC selection panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ivan</td>
<td>Dancer Coordinator</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nana</td>
<td>Workshop facilitator</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danni</td>
<td>boy participant</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nico</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martin</td>
<td>Community Organizer</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA Anolo</td>
<td>Community organizer</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marina</td>
<td>Teacher tutor</td>
<td>Interview- Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz Maria</td>
<td>Teacher tutor</td>
<td>Interview- Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodrigo</td>
<td>Director School</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fernando</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>Dance coordinator</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arturo</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Jenny</td>
<td>Sister</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz Dany</td>
<td>Girl- participant</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yenny Luciana</td>
<td>Student participant</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Student participant</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Agnes</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosalinda</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magdalena</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leidis</td>
<td>Student participant</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carina</td>
<td>Teacher-tutor</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danamor</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcos</td>
<td>Cinema facilitator</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>Child participant</td>
<td>Interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Management

In relation to data collection procedures, notes were mostly recorded using a recording machine and complemented with hand notes. The narratives collected were transcribed and saved in Spanish. In some cases, pictures and videos were taken with a video camera with which I would record parts of the body workshops so I could later on remember the exercises and the movements created within. Following IRB procedures, the IRB was solicited and approved. A first IRB approval was obtained before entering the field, but a modification was solicited and approved later on that would allow interviewing minors of thirteen years old and older. Consent forms were distributed to all participants in the study. The consent forms of the parents for the children to participate were distributed and collected through the children in most of the cases. In those cases where a direct contact was established with the parents, the consent form was hand distributed by the researcher.

In relation to participatory videos, after viewing the videos, a first transcription was done that describe the main themes and actions. Then, transcription of dialogues and notes in relation with body positions and movement were taken.

Data Analysis

Data was collected, managed, and analyzed in Spanish. All the texts were entered into Atlas.ti, a software for the analysis of qualitative data. The results were translated into English. The main themes were defined by the MSC technique. The three selected stories as the most significant ones for the organization, established three main themes. These are: More than dance, Transformations based on respect and Continuity and
Access. These themes were contrasted, compared and complemented with the categories found in the rest of the texts (data gathered with interviews, focus groups, participant observation and participatory video).

To analyze the rest of the texts, following grounded theory, a process of open coding offered 93 Codes, which, through a process of constant comparison were reduced to seventy one. For instance, the quotes collected into a code that was named “the value of respect”, were distributed into the codes “respect for the self” and “respect for others”, allowing for the code “the value of respect” to disappear as a code. The resulting codes were distributed in twenty subcategories and categories. To simplify the analyses, these categories, through a process of unification and synthesis were reduced to nine categories that integrate the three main themes. Even thought the sub-categories were eliminated to simplify the analysis, some of them remind conceptually in the results. Figure 14 illustrates the final categories and themes.
Figure 14. Final categories and themes
Indicators of Rigor

The design of the research, combining participants driven research with researcher driven research, allows for a holistic research that integrates multiple perspectives. A combination of multiple data gathering techniques reinforces triangulation in the methods, as well.

Besides incorporating multiple perspectives through the research design, another measure of rigor was to conduct a process of constant confirmation of the partial results. Through follow up conversations with members of the organization (especially Maty), I contrasted the information gathered with the different techniques. Generally, I checked most of the notes taken throughout the ethnographic approach with Maty, in our daily conversations. Through this check process with the coordinator, I reviewed possible meanings and corrected misinterpretations.

Another person I checked my notes with was a dancer coordinator in Baru. After the participant observation in the school, I could contrast most of my own notes with the ones taken by him, who was conducting an internal evaluation process. In addition, the participants in the selection panel, who knew all the stories collected through the MSC technique among the participants and community members, verified them all.

An activity log was maintained throughout the research, which kept track of all the research-related activity. This activity log was complemented with a research diary (trail) in which the decisions made throughout the process and the rationale behind them was recorded. In this way, the emergent design is explained and justified; context is provided so further researcher can use it to follow the context. Finally, a personal diary
(notes on emotional reactions, on cultural shock, on thoughts about the research process),
allowed for a process of constant reflexivity
CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS

In this chapter, I examine the main finding. As a mode of recapitulation, the main purpose of the study was to examine the elements of the Ma Project as an intervention for Communication and Social Change, as well as the perceived influence and challenges of the project in the community. The questions posed were:

RQ1. What are the main elements of the Ma Project strategy for social change?
RQ2. What are the community’s perceptions about the influence of the Ma Project on individuals and the community?
RQ3. What are the perceived challenges of the project for participants?

To answer the questions, stories were collected among the community and three of them were selected as the most significant for el Colegio del Cuerpo. From these stories, three main themes emerged that responded to the three questions: the first one describes how the Ma Project entails more than dance in the intervention; specifically, the categories Silence and the Present Body offer a picture of the essential element in the Ma Project strategy for social change. The second one introduces the notion of transformations based on respect that are occurring in the children and beyond. The five categories describing these transformations are Respect for the self/care of the body, Respect for the environment and others, New modes of communication, Challenging cultural norms, and Influence beyond the children. The third theme is related with the challenge of continuity for the Ma Project, and includes two categories that will expand on the challenges, Structural weaknesses and Limited access to the project and elitization.
Summarizing, the findings of this research indicate that the Ma Project, by introducing salient innovations, is generating transformations at different levels, scopes and rhythms within the communities. More than dance, a new epistemology that incorporates silence and languages of dance and arts, is fostering transformations based on respect at the individual and collective level. The project is also facing some challenges that might hinder its continuity. This section will respond to the research questions through the examination of these themes and categories.

More than Dance

The theme *More than dance* offers an exquisitely complex answer to the first research question, What are the main elements of the Ma Project strategy for social change? That brings nuanced conceptualizations of the role that an epistemology based in silence and the body can play from a Communication and Social Change perspective, expanding existing theories and practices in the field.

The title of the story selected as the Most Significant Change in the community was titled “*The dance where body and mind are used to dance and to make progresses throughout life. One option offers another chance/opportunity.*” In this story, Raul, the director of one of the schools explained how the methodology of the Ma Project, which involved other elements besides dance, impacted the children and offered support for them to change their behaviors at school. This story was selected as the most significant by the organization because it reflected the many other implications, besides dance, that the Ma Project brought. Maty, on the MSC selection panel, summarized why they considered this notion to be relevant for the organization. She said:
When we first arrived to the institutions, they imagined exclusively dance and not all the implications that the project includes. The Ma Project is not to train dancers- this is the excuse, we intend other things such as promoting team work or reinforcing respect. That is what we want.

A child-participant in the project offers a clear-cut picture of this notion with a brief response to the question “what have you learned in the project?” Dani, the boy, stated, “about dance and about how to manage our bodies, as comrades, with respect.”

Here, the participant demonstrates a clear awareness of having acquired some dance skills as well as certain values and training to “manage their bodies,” which is, at the same time, challenging his/her relationships with the other.

From the analysis of the rest of the data, two categories emerged that complemented this theme, Silence and The Present Body. An examination of these categories will expand the understanding of the main elements of the Ma Project approach as a strategy for social change. These categories emerge from a rich synthesis of components that, for the sake of the readability of this study, have been integrated. Figure 15 offers a visual recollection of these components to facilitate the reading of this section.
Silence is a key element in the strategy of the Ma Project as an intervention to social change. I want to highlight that this theme that emerged in an inductive way throughout the research was completely unexpected. First, some of the narratives collected through the most significant change mentioned the “noise” in the neighborhoods and how this is a problematic issue in the region. At the beginning, this surprised me but after some time of living in the region, I started understanding what “noise” meant for them. Interviews and stories pervasively mentioned one or other variation of silence (pause, calmness, distance, space). These narratives, together with my own observations about the neighborhoods and schools and the atmosphere of calm and peace in the studios during the workshops, start offering me a clearer picture of this emerging theme. The analysis of the videos made by the children, where they reproduce a
dance without music, in silence, in contrast with the dances that are normally performed in the region added more data to build upon the idea that silence was a salient element of the intervention. Finally, my own experience in Loma Fresca, one of the neighborhoods were one of the studios is placed, was also very enlightening. After an episode of acute tension in the street, with people screaming at each other that made me quite anxious, I joined the body practices workshop, were a very relaxing music was being used to do a dance exercise. I could experience this silence by myself. Through the posterior analysis of the collected data, the element of silence pervasively appeared and reinforced the notion that it is a key element in the strategy of the Ma Project as an intervention for social change.

This theme covers a broad understanding of silence, as a space, a pause in time, and an interval of creative presence. From the analysis of the data, three main constructions of silence can be made within the intervention; silence as a safe space (a space where the kids are safe and tranquil from their outside problems), silence as a space for awareness and reflection (where the children can find a time to reflect on themselves and on their visions of the world), and a silence-space where participants are invited to explore their creative power and agency. This broad understanding of silence is, then, related to space, time and creativity.

First, the project offers a safe space, an environment where the kids can recover/hide from the outside world of problems, invasions, and their daily violence. Caribbean Colombia is a society associated with music, openness, loud talking and fast jokes that is ruled by noise, loud music, intromission, and where privacy is almost
nonexistent, particularly in neighborhoods such as those where the project is implemented, which are governed by violence and lack of security. Either in their homes, schools and/or neighborhoods, many references are found that report about this noise and lack of silence/peace. For instance, Alvaro described, “These kids do generally live in very small houses, cramped with all the family sleeping in just one room. They live in great promiscuity also with their neighbors, with very loud music invading intimacy.”

These declarations by Jorge Jair, a thirty-something professor, and Martín, a community organizer, picture schools and neighborhoods as places with a lot of conflict:

These are neighborhoods with gangs, drug addiction, prostitution, and where the children are recruited for drug and arms trafficking or where many of their parents traffic themselves or are in prison. Wanted or not, these difficult situations are brought to the school.

The neighborhood of La Victoria is on the other side of the swamp of Cartagena. When one wakes up, the first thing that one smells is the filthy pipe. With that, one goes to class, a space of about 50 square meters without any recreational area and cramped with kids. In this cramped space there are pregnant teenagers, armed kids and a lot of very difficult processes going on.

Some of the notes I took in my personal diary while reflecting on a violent episode that I witnessed also reflect the intensity of noise in the region,

While visiting the Simon Bolivar School, in the afternoon, I witness an episode of violence. A kid was carrying a huge knife and tried to attack another kid. But I am not surprised. This school is a breeding ground for violence. More than 3,000
children attend this school. They scream and run and there is a lot of noise everywhere… I sometimes can barely deal with so much noise. It is everywhere; on the streets, cars and motorbikes constantly blowing their horns, on shopping areas and malls sales are cried out through speakers, and huge “picos”- as they call the speakers- sound Caribbean music nonstop. Even at the beach. There seems to be no rest anywhere.

In opposition to this noise, spaces of safety are created during the workshops by generating an environment of comfort both through relaxation techniques and through the repetition of messages of care and respect. As Ivan explains, in the relaxation stage of the Body practices workshops, their aim is to:

Isolate them from the noise and the disorder, the heat, the problems… using a discourse that aims to calm them, set them quiet and tranquil and in peace. To put them in silence so that they can listen just to the inner self… with a soft beautiful music that normally is Sebastian Bach.

Marina, one of the teachers attending the focus group, explains to the mothers how well the relaxation exercises work: “They initially get relaxed. They lay on the floor, with a soft background music that is very calming… sometimes some get so relaxed and concentrated that they even fall asleep”. I even noticed and noted how, in one of my observations of a Body practices workshop, more than thirteen students fall asleep during the relaxation practices. The following is a quote from the same observation:

“we are going to look for silence,” Ivan says to start the relaxation. The next instruction is: ‘we listen to the music of the body. We see and acknowledge all our
body’s parts . . . everything is all right. Everything is in calm. Everything works fine. We are healthy and relaxed. Here, we are secure, nothing bad can happen to us in this space of security.’

Figure 16. Image of the children in the relaxation practices. Observation in Baru

The space plays a key role in creating this sense of security, and many references to the care for the space are found throughout the project. From the building of wooden floor, lighted and spacious studios, to the daily routines of the care for the space, to the importance given by the dancers and workshop monitors to the children’s distribution over the space. “Occupy the space, each of you in your own spot. Respect the other’s
spots,” said Nana in her workshop on traditional dance and ecology. All these elements reflect the salient role that creating a space of security and peace plays in the context of these neighborhoods in Cartagena, were “noise” is hegemonic.

This sense of security and calmness is widely identified by the participants. Some children report, as in the case of Dani, a sixth grade kid, “to get the mind relaxed from all the problems, when one feels heavy, music brings you to rest for a while.” Others react to this sensation of safety and comfort, revealing hidden personal cases of abuse and mistreat, as reported in various occasions by facilitators in the Ma Project. Marina, a teacher tutor, also reports that these relaxation practices bring the students a space of retreat: “They have a warming process. A relaxation. During this phase they forget about their studies, their parents and their problems.”

These spaces of retreat, of calm, of being away from the external noise, create spaces of safety for the children where they are allowed to feel safe and calm. This silence also creates pauses were the children can connect with themselves and engage with others, to reflect.

Silence becomes also a pause in time for the children to listen to themselves, to stop and reflect, to feel their bodies, and to think about their selves and their visions of the world, a tool that will allow them to be present in their bodies and their reality. The Ma Project creates these times for self-awareness through all the workshops. In the Body practices workshop, the children take a time out to feel their own bodies, their own breathing and their own movements. A mom explained to the focus group what she knew about the body practices: “they are with themselves, it is as a concentration, as a
projection into the space where they start acting upon themselves. They start knowing their own bodies.” Ivan, the dancer refers to this moment of relaxation and self-awareness as “to put them in silence and that they solely listen to their own interior”. Many participants acknowledge these moments as important. For instance, Luz Maria, a teacher tutor says: “I believe that the relaxation and concentration practices are a very important contribution for the kids”.

Having time to pause, the opportunity to remain in silence and listen to their own internal bodies prompts the children to listen to themselves, to acknowledge and discover themselves and their potentialities. Manolo, the community organizer, reflects these spaces as “the opportunity to self-acknowledge their innate potential, so they can start channeling it,” and in the same lines, Luz Maria, a teacher-tutor, refers that through the workshops, the kids are “developing the work of knowing themselves, self-discovering and strengthening everything that they [the kids] have inside, so they can spread it to others”. This self-awareness is a solid step for the children to recover their self-confidence and agency. Through silence, the children become present in their bodies with themselves, in the space and with the group.

Silence, as pauses in time, also allows for time for reflection. These spaces of reflection are introduced in the project, for instance, through the children’s’ personal diaries or through moments of collective discussion about a topic during a workshop. In the daily diaries which the children complete after each of the workshops spaces and times are open to individually reflect on what they have done, on their practices and their daily lessons learned. In contrast, spaces of group reflection during a workshop allow for a
more collective reflective process, in which the children reflect on their realities, issues related with the topic of the workshop (sexuality, addictions, ecology, for instance) and their visions.

As an example, during my observation of a workshop on cinema, the children, after viewing a documentary about the flight of birds (the documentary called *Winged Migration*) started a collective debate about how some birds, original from the region are disappearing, and how the care of nature implies also taking care of birds and avoiding violent practices against them.

Also from what I observed, the moments where the children reflect in their diaries was important for them, as they were very prompt to sit by themselves and do their own reflection in a calm and concentrated manner.

*Figure 17. A girl reflecting in her diary*
Figure 18. A group of children reflecting in their diaries.

The fact that the children included these moments in the participatory videos also reinforces the idea that they consider the daily reflection in the diary as a relevant moment of the project.

Marie France, in her reflection about the pedagogical model asserted that the children should “take the time to distance themselves and to analyze these experiences, to be able to confront dream with reality, to have the capacity to ‘realize’. ” This time, offers the children the tools to reflect upon what they have learned and experienced, and is offering spaces of reflection to balance and evaluate their action (what Freire would call “praxis”).
Up to now, we have clearly identified how silence allows for spaces of awareness and reflection, however, in the Ma Project silence is also allowing for spaces of creative action. Silence is as well enabling (free) spaces that allow the children to enact their creative agency through performing. These spaces are opened through dance and art sessions, where the children are invited to craft their own pieces, (movements, pictures, drawings or rhythms), individually or in groups. During the workshops, the facilitators encourage the kids to create, while respecting each other, listening and avoiding judgment. For instance, Nana, during the workshop in ecology and traditional dance, encourages the kids to create their own movements. “In the process you should look for and observe. You need to create a movement and adapt it to the music . . . create by myself and show it to the world.” At the end of the different workshops, the children showed to the class the exercises that each group created while the rest of the class observed and applauded, giving the children the opportunity to share their creations.
Figure 19. A group presentation moment.

Figure 20. A collective creation moment.
It is relevant to mention that these spaces of creation in groups, both by crafting a dance piece or by discussing a script for a theatre performance, are fostering team work, - as Maty recognized as one of the main outcomes of the project “The Ma Project is not to train dancers- this is the excuse, we intend other things such as promoting team work” - and training the children in collective creation.

The project is offering the children the opportunity to develop their own creative agency by opening spaces where there is no outside voice to guide them, spaces where the children themselves have the time and the opportunity to develop whichever voice/movement and art piece they want. Manuel, the community organizer acknowledges, “they have learnt about the possibilities that they have to create with their bodies, with a movement or a picture or playing and the resonance of the drum and of my body.” He adds that the project is enabling the children to be more creative, which, at the same time, pushes their freedom to try new things and become empowered.

Also, the experience of doing non-usual things. The children are normally very shy, reluctant to do new things, and this constant trying to do unusual things brings them confidence and much security. Now, they are less fearful of creating. They are less blocked, less afraid of making a mistake. With more freedom to try.

Fernando, the director of one of the schools reinforces this idea of empowerment recognizing that, “they have lost 'la pena' (shyness). Now, they are volunteering to perform. They dare more. They lose the fear of their classmates and of the public. They are sort of awakening”
The idea of creativity being a door to new possibilities is pervasive in the project. For instance, in an exercise in which the children are invited to run all over the space, filling the empty spaces among them as they wish, and in which they are asked to freeze in a specific moment, the children stop in the most diverse and creative poses. Looking through them, the director identifies “these empty spaces, here.. all this is Ma, space for respect and for creation.” In the same analysis, the director says: “look at these poses.. very creative.. These are children who dare to discover, who look for opportunities.” This “dare to discover” is a manifestation of the children gaining power over the space and self-reliance over their bodies. We can see how these invitations to participation and creation, in which the children realize/enact that they are able to create, offer clear opportunities for reassurance and empowerment. Silence, then, is inviting the children into creative activities where they can develop their individual and collective creative agency and become empowered.

As we have seen, silence offers the children, on the one hand, a space where they can be tranquil and protected from the outside world, which allows them for individual and collective presence; on the other hand offers pauses in their activity which allow for individual and collective reflection; and finally, opportunities for creative performance, that empowers them for individual and collective action.

This presence, generated through these safe, reflective and creative spaces of silence leads us into the next theme, the present body, the second key element of the Ma Project, as a strategy for social change.
The Present Body

This theme examines how the project positions the body as a central piece of the intervention through the diverse components of the project among the participants. That is so that the body becomes a central object of knowledge, as well as an instrument of knowledge and a communication tool.

First, the body is conceived as an object of knowledge, an essential common ground for individuals and humanity and, in this sense, bodies are the “shared territory” of humanity. The body is positioned as something valuable that needs to be respected. As Amanda, a teacher tutor commented, this is especially significant in a society with high levels of violence such as this one.

We are not just soul, we need this skin to be able to move; to be able to think. In addition, I understood that one of the main causes of our violence is the contempt (desprecio) for the body. It is worth nothing, we can kill it.

As described in a document that collects an approach to the pedagogical model by the dancer and choreographer Marie France Delleuvin, who is the director of the project, knowing and recognizing the body is a starting point: “first, the body must be examined: its architecture, functions, the physiology-anatomy that defines and regulates all the motor skill to transform it in vehicle of thought.” Accordingly, the children learn about the human body, how it works and how to take care of it through different components of the project such as the dance and physical exercises, the messages regularly repeated by their dance facilitators and art instructors, and the preventive messages during the workshops for the care of the self. For instance, as Marina, the teacher asserts, in the Body practices
workshop, the children gain awareness of and connection with their own bodies, through diverse practices, one of them, the relaxation practice:

They are with themselves. It is like a concentration. (…) They start acting upon themselves. It is a knowledge of their own body (…) They start discovering their bodies. Through the body practices they do a run through the feet, the knees, following their stomachs, shoulders, head, ….

The following is a quote from one of their relaxation practices:

We are going to look for the music of the body: the stomach digesting, the lungs filling up with air.. now, we visualize our bodies, we see and acknowledge/recognize (reconocemos) our body parts: the metatarsus in the finger toes, the calves, the legs.

In addition to this moment of awareness of and connection with their own bodies, the monitors and facilitators of their workshops, especially the dance coordinators, offer continuous explanations on how the body works during the workshops. The following is a quote from my notes of my observation with the dance coordinator David:

David says “let’s see, guys, what is a joint? Enumerate me joints.” The children, slowly and shy, respond: “wrists, hips, knees.” David keeps on explaining: “The articulations stretch and shrink. For instance, what is this bone called?” – says while he points to the femur. The children respond. David says “Yes, very good, the femur is the longest bone in the body and it joins the hip.” David, then, explains the movement.
All of the children interviewed in Baru, after the workshop on sexuality, declared that they had learned about the body, how to take care of it and how to prevent other people touching their bodies without their consent. The body becomes, as Martin, the community organizer, asserted, “a pervasive element in the discourses of the children.”

The children reflect about the body in all the workshops, the body practices, but also the languages of the arts and the workshops for the care of the body. The figure 21 shows the result of an exercise of reflection about the integration of body into nature, in the visual arts workshop. As we have seen, the children discover and learn about their bodies, and through the different workshops the body is placed in the center of the intervention as an object of knowledge, and ontological element to study and to reflect about.

*Figure 21. Body into nature.*
However, the body is not only the receiver focus of attention, in addition, by a reflexive process; the body is incorporated as a means through which the children obtain knowledge about the body and the self. Notes from a pedagogical excerpt explain:

The preparation of the body must be optimal to obtain the control of the essential motor mechanisms. The work must be organized by the consciousness of the anatomical and physiological structures and functions: flexibility, lightness, resistance, speed, coordination and knowledge of the rhythms of the breath and heart.

This work will, through the body practices reinforced with messages from the instructors, raise awareness and understanding on how the body functions. The following is a quote from my notes during the observation of one of the body practices workshops that exemplifies this method. “The kid executes again the same series [dance movements] that the dancer [David] has done while he (David) points out how the kid bends his knees. David takes this opportunity to explain how body articulations work.” In this case, as in many others, practicing with their own bodies (enacting the practice) is the main learning tool. Many examples of learning through the body are found in the body practices workshops, where children learn mostly by mimicking and practicing certain movements until they incorporate them in their bodies. For instance, on another occasion, I noted how David demonstrated how the children should strengthen their legs:

The monitor corrects one by one, each of the children’s positions. He demonstrates the movements with a roll of paper that rolls and unrolls. He reviews the movement one by one until they embody/incorporate it as he has demonstrated.
As Maty describes, body education is a process of awakening the children’s own bodies. Through body exercises, the children gain self-awareness of their physical body, realize their possibilities in terms of flexibility, strength and movement, and learn to read their own signals as well.

The body education is about knowing one’s body and how different emotions are felt (in the body). For instance, knowing that rage is felt in the stomach and one blushes and starts trembling, and that one needs to breath slowly and control these emotions.

This process of self-understanding through their own bodies is clearly a process of mind-body connection that will surely have an impact on their perceptions of themselves, most probably reinforcing their self-reliance.

In addition to self-awareness and knowledge of the body, the children will also approach concepts by practicing them with/through their bodies. For instance, in a body practices workshop, the kids were working with the concept of space and “body origin-body destiny” and the coordinator, Ivan, explained,

See, we are working, with our bodies. Now, we are going to walk. First, distribute among the space. Then, look for a point A (origin) and a point B (destiny). Do you see? We are working with the original body as a point A, as a starting point and the destiny body is the arrival point.
On another occasion, in a workshop about the care of the body, focused in traditional dance and ecology, Nana, the facilitator, posed a problem/question: the kids should create a movement that they could experience in nature. While the children chose and performed a movement, she made an analogy with the movement of the wind and how their bodies could move as the wind, creating a link between a concept (wind and nature) and an enactment of this concept through their bodies. Another example is how contact-dance is used to reflect on respect and sexual relations. As Maty explained,

One idea to work with sexuality was to work with contact dance/improvisation. With it, the children could see that there can be harmony between the bodies and not necessarily lead to a relationship in which all is sexuality. So then, we could work on how to be able to dance with partners, to do partner work where the respect for the space and the other’s body must be present.
In the creation of the content of the modules and the workshops, the dancers work with the body, not just to develop body-work, but also to create concepts and notions through a body-based epistemology. When I asked specifically for the body practices workshop, Ivan expanded,

Even though it is a corporeal practice and needs to work the body, we start looking for analogies in relationship with what is education. Education-through-dance is not an artistic-corporeal demand- but a demand to comprehend the topic that it has been working on. There must be a care for the body but the premise, what prevails is the education that they are receiving.

The project places the body as a lens through which the children acquire self-awareness, knowledge about their body, their emotions and reactions, and the outside world. And this knowledge is mostly fostered through problem-posing education, where the facilitators ask questions or pose problems to which the kids have to answer/find the solution through their bodies.

In addition, the body becomes also an instrument of communication. With body practices and dance exercises, but also through the practices of other artistic expressions (music, theatre, painting, among others) the children engage in spatial, kinesthetic and creative conversations through their bodies with the space, the environment, their teachers, facilitators, and the rest of the group in a way that enhances their communication skills.

For instance, in the workshop about literature, the children were asked to work in groups and, first, associate each of the vowels with a color and an emotion. A group made
this association: “A, white and peace; E, blue and happiness; I, green and hope”.

Afterwards, the children created a movement that represented each of the combinations of vowel-emotion. When they had created a movement for each of the vowels, the group combined them in a phrase conveying their associations of colors and emotions. At the end of the exercise, the group performed it for the rest of the class. In this exercise, the children used their bodies to enact visual and conceptual images, engaged in new forms of body language, as well as worked in teams and promoted their creativity.

By practicing new uses of dance, as one more of the languages through which the body can communicate and represent different concepts, the children are expanding their own communication skills.

Many members of the community also declared to have noticed how the participants are enacting this body-communication. For instance, Mari Jenny, the oldest sister of Luz Dary, a 7th grade girl attending to Sta. Rita, acknowledges how her sister has developed her body expression in a way that she can understand her without the need of words:

I think that she is being trained in body expression. I like when I see her because she is not just moving. She is creating a figure or moving like an animal, or as the wind or the water. – She transmits what she says. And she really transmits. I can understand her without her telling me exactly what she is doing.

Amanda, a teacher tutor in Sta. Rita, recognizes that this training in body expression enables the children to communicate through their bodies and allows them to
engage in different modes of communication, in more dialogical ways, through their bodies.

With this project, that is about the rescue of the body [of the man and the woman], and how we communicate through/with it, and how we can do it differently. [The children realize that] I can learn to do it in a more respectful, healthy, and free way. The kids have learnt a lot about the way of communicating with their bodies.

Dialogical interactions with fellow participants are established through dancing/body exercises in which each of the children has his/her own voice (and creates a movement) and where the others look/listen to it and respond with their own movements. In a music workshop, the kids did an exercise where they had to listen to each other and repeat the patterns, opening new ways of communicating and engaging in dialogues, making rhythms with their bodies. Another exercise where the kids engage in dialogues through their bodies is, for instance, the “mirror exercise” in which alternatively, by pairs, the kids perform some movements and the partner follows, creating a call and response or a dialogue enacted through the body. In one of the videos recorded by the children, they portray one of these mirror exercises, which tells a lot about how important they have become for the children. “They do slow motions in partners. A leader starts the movement and the follower copies it, as in a mirror. They are quite close and the level of communication is high.” The figure 23 is a snapshot of the video recorded by the children, where they are performing the mirror exercise.
The body becomes an instrument to communicate in different languages, in this case, the language of dance (as well as other languages of the performance and the arts). By enabling the discursive body, the children gain communication skills and engage in new modes of communicating. Dialogical modes where listening means to pay attention to the other’s body messages, and answering means to enact a movement or action through/with the body, are also practiced.

In this examination of the theme the present body we have seen how the body is placed as a central element in the intervention. Through the various workshops, the children engage in a learning process where, first, they become present in their bodies, and
second, they learn to express and engage in new styles of communication. This process entails that the children gain self-awareness of their own bodies and their emotions; acquire knowledge about their bodies—how they work and their possibilities—at the same time that use their bodies to learn about the environment and also expand the body as a valid tool to communicate in different ways. Through the challenges posed by the facilitators (in a problem posing education of Freirean tradition), the project is offering new communication tools to the children. The children-participants enhance their communication skills and engage in dialogical conversations with/through their bodies.

As in the work of Freire and Boal, referents in the CFSC approach, this intervention is offering the means of communication to the community and reinforcing their communication skills. The children own the new tools and participate in creative process. Similarly to Boal’s *Theatre of the oppressed*, the communication tools in the Ma Project are grounded in languages of the body and art, avoiding textualism.

Concluding, the theme *more than dance* examines two essential elements of the Ma project as a strategy for Communication and social change, silence and the present body. From a CFSC perspective, the Ma Project is a process that combines innovative and alternative communication strategies and tools (such as the incorporation of silence, dance as a language of the body and other languages of the art) to engage the participants in individual and collective reflection and action. Through this process, the participants acquire/learn new languages that enhance their communication skills. In a dialogical way (through problem posing education), the children get empowered by participating in this process of individual and collective reflection and action. Following Boals’s
recommendation, the children are offered the means of production of their communication, which empowers them to participate and to become agents of their own change.

Next section examines the perceived influence of this process in the participants and the community, from the lenses of the participants in this research. Answering to the question what are the community’s perceptions about the influence of the Ma Project on individuals and the community, will offer a perspective on what the outcomes of the Ma Project are for the children and the community, and a deeper understanding of the approach of the project to Social Change.

Transformations Based on Respect

The theme Transformations based on respect expands on the second question, related to the perceived influence of the Ma Project in individuals and the community. The answer, based in the second story selected as Most Significant by the organization, recount the various transformations that the community members observe, and how respect is at the root of these changes.

The title of the story selected as representing the Most Significant Change in the individuals was Transforming lives and building dreams”. The story narrates the case of a girl who, having suffered a case of abuse, with the help of the Ma Project, overcame most of the socio-relational barriers caused by the abuse. This is part of the story:

A girl got problems because she was abused. She was very shy and sort of aloof, aisled in her interaction with the others. After she participated in the project, she started developing herself, showing a higher grade of extroversion, more
teamwork, and more spontaneity. She defeated barriers limiting her psychosocial and social development.

This story was selected precisely because, as the participants argued, it reflects how, through respect, transformations occur. The participants in the selection workshop emphasized the relevance of respect in the methodology of the Ma Project. As Maty said, “the story is a demonstration that [the project] is done based on respect and on the respectful relationship with the other.” Gloria, another participant in the selection workshop added “I like the story about transforming the girl because a very important element is the respectful manners (trato respetuoso), and that she was comfortable working in the Ma Project demonstrates the high level of respect with which the work is being done.” Dani, the dancer coordinator added “She could trust the people that were monitoring her and let the methodology help her, transforming her” which reinforces the aspect of the transformations based on trust, and ultimately, on respect.

Throughout the data, the notion of transformation based on respect is pervasive. For instance, in one of the stories performed by the children in the participatory video, the plot tells the story of a father that beats and mistreats his daughter. At the end of the story, the people from the Ma Project go and talk him into treating her with respect. Following is an excerpt of the transcription of the story, “Representing the meeting with the family are the father, the daughter and the coordinator from the Ma Project. At some point, the father wants to hit the child but the professor tells him to correct her with respect, to dialogue with her and not to hit her.”
The high value of respect is frequently found in the data. Yenny Luciana and Melisa, two seventh grade students, declared that one of the things that they like the most about the project is “how they treat us, with respect”. In a follow up conversation, Maty suggested that this is an element that the children commonly highlight. She adds “It is fundamental. Above all, it is about rescuing their dignity and respect. Here, they feel well treated. Is as if the most important for them is that the teacher is treating them well, they have not been scolded (regañados) neither mistreated in words nor physically”

The data largely supports the claim that respect is at the grounding base for transformations. Respect, as the understanding that each person deserves an equal treatment is also a crucial element in Freire’s notion of dialogue, which will be one of the most remarkable contributions into Communication for Social Change, as interpreted by Gumucio-Dragon and Tufte (2006).

Respect is then a relevant element related with transformations. These transformations vary in their form and intensity, and can be seen as new modes of being in the world, of performing daily lives, but also, as new modes of understanding and communicating with the world and with the environment. Next, an exploration of these transformations is offered through the categories emerged from the data: Respect for the self and care of the body, Respect for the environment and others, New communication style and Challenging culture. A note of caution, even though I have artificially created this four sections or types of new modes, in reality, they are occurring in an interlinked manner. One transformation cannot happen without the other and they happen at the same
time, concurrently at the individual and the collective level, ones conditioning the existence of the others.

Respect for the Self, Care of the Body

One of the first transformations that are widely acknowledged by most of the participants and members of the community is a major respect for the self, and particularly, an increased care for the body among the children. As the teacher Rita acknowledged, with time and throughout these workshops, “they are getting the notion of respect and of the care for themselves”. This care is particularly manifest in changes regarding the care of their bodies. Children, families and educational environment report an increased degree of care for the body that is reflected in different ways. Some assert to have changed their nutritional routines; others recognize an increased knowledge about how to take care of their own body, where to go if they have problems related with the body or who to talk to in these cases. Maria Agnes, a woman in her mid-late thirties, declares during the focus group: “I see my son Joel. He before ate too much and now, not anymore. He wants to lose weight; he wants to eat balanced, salads. He does not want to be fat anymore. He is taking more care of his body”. In the same round, Rosalinda asserted: “In my daughter Ana Maria I have also seen a change. She ate a lot before and I always told her ‘Ay, Ana Maria, daughter, see how much weight you have’. Now she eats better. I noticed a change”.

Many references are found also among teachers that refer to the children giving more value and respect to their bodies. For instance, Amanda said: “I have seen many boys that have discovered the potentiality of their bodies. They have learnt to take care of
themselves. When asked about the major lessons learned by the children, Manolo, the community organizer declares that “the fact that the respect for the body is recurrent [among the children] is important” the director of a school also stated that the kids had “learned great lessons (aprendizajes). Among them, to take care of themselves, to acknowledge their potentiality and to see other possibilities through the art of the care and the acknowledgement of the self”

The care for the body is recurrent and pervasive among children, families, professors and other members of the community. The body is a valuable part of the self that needs to be taken into consideration and that needs to be respected and taking care of. The Ma project is placing the body as a central part of its intervention. As we have seen, through body-based practices and reflections, where the children obtain knowledge, values and habits, they are acquiring new skills and perspectives to take care of themselves. A respectful care of their bodies is one of the most salient outcomes of the project. Respect (for the self/body) seems to be a basic premise to take action and adopt healthy behaviors towards themselves and their bodies.

Next section explores how respect plays also a relevant paper in the relationships that the children establish with the environment and with others and how, through their participation in the Ma Project, those relationships have changed.

*Respect for the Environment and Others*

‘now I am rude no more’

Besides greater respect and care for the self and their own bodies, transformations go further. Many respondents assert that increased respect is also transforming the performance, communication, and relationships of the children with their environment and
others. These transformations have affected the relationships that the children establish with their whole environment, creating/fostering, consequently, an increased order and respect for the space, more respectful manners with others, and decreased aggressiveness.

First, respect for the space is pervasive among the data. The majority of family members, teachers and community members who participated in the study, reported improved behavior, particularly an increased organization and respect for the space. Magdalena, the grandmother of a participant asserts: “What I have noticed is that my little granddaughter was very disordered and in this aspect she has changed. Now she organizes everything, puts everything in order . . . Her mum, my daughter, says that she has changed a lot.” Amanda, the teacher, declares that “with the passing of the days the children have learnt to value the spaces.” Carina also referred to the children’s well-mannered behavior: “Their behavior is excellent. Let me tell you, when the children arrive, they take off their shoes, order them. Also, silence rules.” The reflection on taking off their shoes while being in the Ma Project is an important norm in the dance studios. The children have assimilated it so well that it is also portrayed in one of the videos, where one child says to another, “c’mon, take off your flip flops.”

This respect for the environment goes beyond the physical space, and also relates to their respectful behavior during the workshops. I observed how the children are notably ordered, quiet, and attentive most of the time, despite the conditions (heat or noise). For instance, during the cinema workshop I wondered to myself “how is it possible that the kids can be paying attention to such a difficult and elaborate type of film . . . We are watching black and white films and documentaries such as Chaplin’s Modern Times and I
am surprised that the kids not only follow most of them but that they are in almost absolute silence and paying an extreme attention to it.”

Second, in relation to their relationships with others, more respectful behaviors and decreased aggression is another of the most mentioned transformations among the children. The children themselves admit to being less hostile with their friends and families. For instance, Leidis, a seventh grade girl, responding to the question, what has changed the most since you joined the project?, answered:

My behavior towards my friends, my family, and the people I talk . . . Before, I was very rude. But now I am rude no more. I am not the same anymore. My mum and dad both have noticed. My mum says that I have changed so much and that the Ma Project has helped me a lot.

The adults (family members, professors and school directors) report that they notice how the kids have changed their behavior and their manners with them, being more respectful. “Last year, the kids that I had were very aggressive,” said the teacher Carina. “This year, they still bother me sometimes, but it is the normal thing among children. Before, you could not even enter the room, it was like a Vietnam . . . the project has helped me a lot. Now they study more and are more tranquil.” Fernando, the director, brings up the case of a boy who also changed his behavior through his participation in the project. “Before, he was quite aggressive and disorganized. He has changed quite a bit. ‘El pelao’ [the kid] has changed. And the project has helped in his behavior, in the way he relates with his classmates.” Later on, he asserted that the Ma Project was a very useful educative tool because “they are reinforcing their social behavior learning.” Changes in
behavior, reducing hostility among students and increasing respectful relationships is one of the key transformations reported by the majority of the participants.

The notion of respect is soaking into the participants of the project and is leading towards transformations of their relationships with themselves and with others. Respect with themselves is fostering care for the self, particularly through care of their bodies (with better nutrition or hygienic habits, for instance). Respect for the environment and others is observed in order, organization, attention and peaceful manners with their environment, teachers, families and friends. As mentioned, this idea of transformations based on respect resonates with Freire’s notion that dialogue based in respect leads to transformation. Next, we will see how respectful relationships with others are also leading towards new modes of communication.

*New Communication Style*

Along with changes in relationships and behaviors, new ways of communicating with their environment are reported by the participants in the study. School professionals highlight more assertive communication style of the children in the school and with their families, and family members also refer to transformations in the way their children speak to them. For instance, Danamor declares that her daughter, Gisela has softened her mode.

I have seen the same in Gisela, principally the expression, because she did everything in loud voice. She screamed all the time and we used to tell her to lower her voice. But now, she does not scream anymore. She does not address to you like ‘eh you, this and that’, on the contrary, her manners-modes [modales] have changed so much.
Besides these changes in style of communication, being softer and more respectful, other changes in the styles of communication are presented. For instance, Dani a sixth grade child, declared that they have learned to be more open with each other, more accessible and to have a less conflictive communication style “I have learned about respecting, about values such as being nice and sharing with my friends, being tolerant and also to be friendly with the others. To talk when you don’t know someone, to avoid tense looks among strangers” -[Hablar cuando uno no se conoce para que no se miren como raros]. This boy offers a clear picture of the lack of trust and high tension levels in a society affected by violence for so long. Relationships among strangers are tense and friendliness is rare. So what he is referring to with this quote is that through the Ma Project, he haslearnt to be friendly and to talk to strangers without/avoiding tension.

In relation with this more accessible (less demonized) communication style, Martin, with large experience in organizing with children in the community, asserts: “They have started touching (relate with) each other without prejudices, without having to think that if another boy touches you it means that you are gay or to look at a girl without ‘pensamientos morbosos’ [thinking about sex].” Again, this quote reflects on some values and social norms characteristic of patriarchal Caribbean Colombia, such as gendered communications where man do not touch each other and relationships among man and woman are impregnated with sexual intentions.

Reflecting upon this new mode of communication, which is grounded in respect and has less prejudices, Amanda, the teacher, explains how, after the workshops, the kids transmit a serenity, calm and confidence that they did not have before and that allows
them “to express themselves and to be able to hug and be hugged.” This new mode of communication is related with opening/creating new understandings on what human communication is, breaking down some prejudices and building trust and respect to reenact communication and express emotions in a total different mode that the children are normally used to.

This different mode is remarkably clear in some of the clips that the children recorded in the exercise of the participatory video, offer a vision of these new ways of communicating, that create more open and respectful modes, with less tension, and that challenge the social norm where an eye look among strangers is perceived as aggressive and two males touching is “cosa de maricas” (an homosexual behavior). Following is the transcription of one of these videos where the children were performing an exercise called the mirror that they had learnt in the Body practices workshop.
Video 9.108 the mirror

Without shoes.

Two couples of girls and one boy.

All dressed in the MA clothes.

There is no music.

In silence, they represent the mirror.

A couple do very slow movements changing the plane very much. Extremely concentrated.

Staring at the eyes and following the movements. There is a High degree of communication.

The other couple is looking at their bodies but also concentrating... . ..

Very slow motions and extremely concentrated.

After being in Caribbean Colombia for two months, immersed in speed talk, loud noises, constant jokes and highly sexual approach to dance, watching these videos made me understand the reported influence of the project on the communication skills of the children, as well as the potential impact of it on their relationships.

As we have seen, high level of respect generates more assertive and open communication modes that decrease levels of tension and aggressiveness. Also, a different understanding of human communication challenges the children daily relationships with themselves, with the environment and within themselves. Enacting different communication/relationships is, at the same time, challenging hegemonic social norms. In the next section we explore how these changes in relationships with themselves, others and in communication style are also challenging cultural and social norms.
Challenging Culture

Social norms and roles are contested through the participation in the project. On the one hand, through the practice of dance, the children are performing movements and actions different to those they are used to, forcing their bodies to assume different positions, challenging their embodied culture, for instance, challenging gender roles that determine some of their everyday life performances and behaviors. On the other hand, through the spaces of reflection on their realities, as well as by embodying new dancing modes, values associated with dance (such as patriarchal norms and homophobic attitudes) are also faced.

In relation to transformations in the children’s performance, family members, professors, and the kids themselves identify modifications in the children’s behavior associated with the ruling patriarchal values system. For instance, girls open (act less shy, become more open) and boys stop violent conducts (more typical from man in a patriarchal society). Several mothers declare their daughters to be less shy, as Maria, the mother of Fernanda, who explains that her daughter has changed her shyness for a more open style “the truth is that Fernanda was very shy. She almost did not talk. One had to push her to greet the visitors and talk to them. But now she has changed, she greets, kisses and talks. She is more open and nice. She has changed”. As mentioned in the previous section, kids being less aggressive are also reported by many family members. Additional manifestations of new ways of performing that might challenge gender norms have been exposed in the previous section as new ways of communication that are more open and less “high sex related.”
In relation to the values associated with dance, some rhetorically constructed meanings of dance in the community are revisited through the project among the children, particularly, patriarchal and homophobic attitudes. In a very patriarchal society such Cartagena society is, many norms about gender and power relations are reflected in dance. Some assumptions, as described by the participants are, for instance, that dance has a high level of sexual implications where women dance exclusively in couples and with a man, or that traditional dances are seen as acceptable for male to dance, but other dance expressions such as modern or classical dance are related to homosexuality and thus, not accepted for males to dance. For instance, partner dances in these communities are Caribbean dances some of which have highly explicit sexual connotations (such as “champeta”). In opposition to the rule, the children in the videos are enacting a ballroom, with the Blue Danube waltz as background music, and the girls are the ones picking the boys to dance. Another example I found in the videos was the demonstration of the mirror dance, in which two boys were doing the exercise together. To me, both examples seem clearly challenging the hegemonic patriarchal values embodied in Caribbean dance.

In relation with changes in homophobic attitudes associated with dance, as a teacher notes, now the families accept that the boys dance modern dance (what before would have been impossible for being associated with homosexuality). The teacher reports: “I think that the cultural change is slow but important …it is important because Colombia, and especially Cartagena, is a very patriarchal region where ‘contemporary dance is for homosexuals’, but they have seen the changes and now they accept it.” This declaration seems to imply that through the participation on the project, families have
unhooked modern dance from its association with homosexuality. However, an acceptance of certain homosexuals is also reported in some cases where parents modify their negative pre-conceptions of some of the members in the company, acknowledging the “good job” that they do. As Ivan reported, ‘there is a change. The parents accept more. Another thing is that we are the life example of the process of el Colegio del Cuerpo. When they realize that we are not from stratum five [the second higher socioeconomic stratum] but that we come from the popular neighborhoods, the same as them, and that we have taken advantage of this opportunity, and that we had the opportunity to travel internationally, and that we have our way of transmitting knowledge, of establishing relationships with other people, then they know that the process has nothing to do with being homosexual. The parents realize that, whichever the sexual inclination, the dancers in the company assume it with such a dignity that makes it acceptable in the society. And here is when they start changing their way of looking at them. After the project, when they see what we do, they change”

Participants talk about cultural transformation. Here, I have explored the most salient voices that reflect changes in social values and norms that define attitudes and behaviors.

As Amanda noted, “human processes are slow”. And yet, whereas transforming social norms and values is a slow process, the project, with the introduction of an epistemology based on silence and the present body, is challenging some of the more hegemonic values and its manifestations in the Caribbean region: patriarchy, homophobia, hegemony of noise, and an ethics rooted in Catholicism that divided the self in spirit and
body, leaving the body helplessly exposed to the various types of violence against it. We have seen how through the participation in the workshops, where respect and problem posing education is at the center of them, the children modify their behavior. Through individual and collective reflection and enactment of artistic practices, individual and social/cultural transformations based on respect are identified. As in CFSCH, transformations are affecting the individuals and the collective, and are prompted by individual and collective reflection, as well as individual and collective new practices.

We have seen how these norms are challenged specially among children, (although some is recalled on the families too). Until now I have mainly focused on the perceived influence on the kids. However, some participants reflect on certain influence of the project beyond the kids, and the next section offers a brief exploration of these reflections

**Influence Beyond the Kids**

So far, we have seen perceptions about the project, particularly related to the transformations seen in the children. Fewer, but some voices are heard that talk about the influence of the project among other people within the community.

**Influence in the teacher-tutors**

The teacher tutors, who attend every workshop with the children are, perhaps, the second group of people most influenced by the project, as reported by the participants. For instance, willingness to adapt techniques learned in the workshops such as the relaxation techniques were reported by a group of teachers “among us we want to implement the body practices before we start the jouney/day”, because as Marina reported, “*that would help us in preparing the children for the class . . . it is better to dedicate some time to get*
the children ready to listen and to learn than spending one hour trying to convey content that they will not be listening at.” Amanda, who reported to be implementing the relaxation techniques in her classes asserted: “I spend a little time there but it always works for me. I can calmly give a lesson. If I cannot teach on peace, I rather don’t teach.”

Besides the relaxation techniques, other components are also seen as a good complement to the children education, as for instance, some of the methodologies used in the workshops for the care of the body. Amanda reported that she had retaken some of the topics covered in these workshops, and offers an example:

my topic of the second semester in sexual education I took it from here. I designed my class section taking the structure or a workshop as a guide. The facilitator was a psychologist and I liked the structure so much. It is based in a fable about a vain little frog. I liked it so much, so I am copying it.

Martin, the community organizer reported that they have helped other teachers to implement/adapt content of the workshops in various classes such as in biology and sciences class. Martin also reported that another of the influences of the project in the teachers is related with their perceptions of the children and of education. The project is, under his view, opening new perspectives to the teachers who, “now they are more aware of the cultural issue and of the multiple intelligences. They have also learned that from the everyday realities of the children they have the possibility to help the children develop their multiple intelligences.”

Influence in families and close community members. In addition to the children and the teacher tutors who participate in the workshops, many respondents perceive the project
as indirectly influencing the families. This influence is particularly related to the spread of new knowledge and different perspectives among the family members. Many reported that the children, after the workshops showed what they have learned to their siblings and parents, “she teaches us the choreographies and the new steps” said Mary Jenny, the sister of a child participant in the project.

Even though at some point of the research, as a researcher I was collecting the impression that the parents did not seem to know very much about the project, (because in two interviews with mothers, they asserted to have very little knowledge) this particular idea changed after the focus group. In the Focus Group with parents and tutor teachers, the thirteen parents were silent and reluctant to talk after my initial question “what do you know about the project?”. However, when Marina, the teacher, suggestively prompted,

I can’t believe that you do not know anything about what your kids are doing in the project. Do not they tell you anything? Besides, would you let them go to a project once per month and do not ask them anything about it? c’mon, ladies, don’t be shy (no pasen pena). We are here to share what we know.

Many mothers shared they knowledge about the project and mentioned issues like the relaxation, the body practices, the food the kids are offered and the workshop on sexuality issues. Another example is Rodrigo, a school director who believed that some [participants] would spread the lessons they learnt “what they learn here, they multiply in their environment, maybe some will not, but most not all the children, will be multipliers of this ideas.” This multiplying effect is perceived by some of the facilitators, such as Marcos, who remembers many parents requesting him to teach them how to build the
cameras so they could have them at home and play with the other kids”. For the sake of the organization of this document, let me remind that we have also seen how homophobic attitudes among parents seem to be challenged through the participation in the project.

**Institutional level changes.** Besides influence at the family and schools level, also at the institutional level, some influence is perceived and acknowledged as a result of the project. For instance, in one of the neighborhoods, a problem of sexual harassment was identified through the body practices workshops. Martin, the community organizer, who works in this neighborhood, explained how from then, and with the support and mobilization of the mentioned organization, a campaign on sexual harassment was organized. The ministry of education, the ministry of health and several other organizations and schools, *el Colegio del Cuerpo* included, were collaborating in organizing a two days campaign with workshops to educate and raise awareness about the issue in the neighborhood.

The influence of the Ma Project pedagogical model on the public education system was also identified. In relation to this influence Maty reported that “*the Education Secretary is planning to build two new big schools. In their infrastructure, it is planned to include dance studios inspired in the Ma Project studios*”. In the same conversation, Maty noted that the project was very well positioned at the political level, and that the Secretary of Education was very aware and pleased with the project. However, she also mentioned that there was a need for the project to be more influential at the administrative levels and that the Unaldes needed to be more engaged with it.
We have seen that the project is reported as having some influence in the community beyond the children who participate; certainly, with families and teachers, and at the community and institutional level as well.

To conclude, the exploration of the second theme *Transformations based on respect* offers a clear picture of what is the perceived influence of the project in the children and the community. Above all, respect is identified as the basis of transformations. This respect marinates the children’s relationships with their own selves, their bodies, the environment and others, fostering new attitudes and behaviors, as well as new modes of communication and modifications of social norms and cultural values. The children are becoming aware and concerned about their bodies, more respectful with the spaces and the people they relate, and more open and assertive in their communication patterns. Even though are described as “a long term process”, collective transformations are also perceived, particularly among the children and their parents, with challenges to social norms and values that are hegemonic in the region, such as gendered styles of communication affected by patriarchal views, or some visions of dance, linked to homophobic values. The new epistemology introduced by the Ma Project is engaging the children in new practices and reflections within the group, which translates into individual and collective reflection and action. As we have seen, the perceived influence of the Ma Project is related with Respect, new modes of communication, collective action and reflection and transformations at the individual and the collective level. All these elements are expected outcomes of processes and interventions grounded in Communication for Social Change Approach.
Next section, as a result of the collaborative research process, and in an attempt to respond to the concern of the organization about their challenges in engaging with the community, this section explores the question what are the perceived challenges of the project for participants? Recommendations based on the theory and practice of CFSC are offered as suggestions to the examined challenges.

**Continuity and Access**

‘Que el proyecto Ma no se vaya’ (*that the Ma Project won’t go*)

This theme explores the main challenges of the project within the community; a question directly posed by the organization and that oriented this part of the research towards an assessment about communication challenges.

As in the previous two sections, a most significant story was the one that signaled the most significant challenge for the project. This challenge was identified as the continuity of the project. The title of the story was “’til our strengths enable us” (*hasta que las fuerzas lo permitan*). The narrative, brief but straightforward, claimed:

The challenge is to maintain Ma until the strengths enable us. Things arrive not to die but to collect its fruits. The hardest part is to continue, to project it and that everyone knows it. Also, to ensure that the kids and the community are the ones who benefit from the project, and not the institution.

In the selection process, Maty concluded that this story was the most significant because the biggest challenge and concern for the organization was, at the moment, to remain active.
This distress about the future of the program was gathered from many children throughout the research. Laura said “my wish is that they will never take us out of el colegio del cuerpo. That they won’t take me out because I like this so much”/to me this is terrific,” and Magdalena the grandmother of Ana Maria asserted that “there are times when she (Ana Maria) says: ‘ay mami, it seems that this is not going to continue’ and then she gets anxious.”

Mothers also share this concern, and many of the participants emphasize their desire for the program to be extended in time (so the kids could be in the project more than just one week per month) or in scope (that other children could join the project). For instance, Maria Agnes said: “I wish it would be extended, that there were more than just three years. They like it so much”. Whereas mothers have an inclination to talk about the feelings of their children, Martin, the community organizer is concerned about the future of the children if the project does not continue. He stresses that the continuity of the project should be a priority.

Despite the fact that a majority of participants hope for the continuity of the project, there are some factors that hinder this continuity. The Ma Project faces many challenges due to the difficult social conditions that clearly affect any development project in the region. In addition to these challenges, there are other organizational factors that might burden its continuity. This section, while answering the question posed by the organization, offers an examination of the main challenges that the organization is facing, and introduces the main aspects that will be collected and summarized in a recommendations section later on.
Organizational weaknesses

Some weak and interrelated points in the implementation of the project such as lack of institutionalization, inadequate resources to cover the scope of the project, and weak communication networks are among the most salient factors that hinder the continuity of the project.

Lack of institutionalization

Is related to the appreciation that the project is too dependent on individual commitment and personal engagement for its successful and effective implementation. References to individual commitment are pervasive and bidirectional, with examples where personal commitment favored the project and others where lack of personal commitment hindered its success. For example, Luz Maria, the teacher declares: “the dance studio is not in the school because when the project started, the director did not make any effort. Now it would be different because the new director is much more engaged with the project.” Many of the directors in the schools and the majority of the other teachers, who are not directly related to the project, have very low levels of engagement and commitment, which affects the development and institutionalization of the project. Maty complained about some of the directors:

They are as if they were disconnected from what is going on in the project. With them, we need to do very aggressive work. We presented the project to them, we passed them our pedagogical model, and we regularly invite them to presentations. However, last year, we invited them to a meeting and they were completely out.
As if they have never heard of the project before. It is a matter of compromise, and this is harder to change.

The Ma project remains an external project, lead by *el Colegio del cuerpo* that belongs to them, and not to the institutions. This position is reflected in many aspects, as for instance, in the care of the spaces that in the majority of the schools has been left in hands of the people from the Ma project. This lack of commitment on the side of the institutions makes it harder for the project to gain solidity and to become integrated in the schools, which hinders, at the same time, the continuity of the project once the funds from the World Bank will be exhausted.

*Limited resources to reach the scope of the project*

The project, as acknowledged by many members, has an unbalanced ratio of workload and number of participants in relation to its internal human resources, or structure to support it. The initial design of the project planned to establish neighborhood committees as well as a technical committee that would offer guidance and support to the technical coordination. These committees, although existing ‘on paper,’ were never implemented. Furthermore, after the first year, each neighborhood reduced the number of dancer coordinators from two to one, which increased the workload of Maty, the technical coordinator. In many conversations, the matter of lack of resources was brought in as a strong limitation of the program. Maty acknowledged being overwhelmed on many occasions, during our follow up conversations,

I am overwhelmed and many times I have the impression that very important supervising and communication job that I could be doing does not get done
because I am doing daily management tasks. All the work that would guarantee the continuity does not get done.

She repeatedly identifies the reduction of the structure as one of the factors that added excessive workload for her: “before, while one of the coordinators was conducting the workshop, the other was talking with the tutor-teachers or the director to solve daily issues. Now, it is me who must do this work.”

In addition to the limited human resources, Maty and other participants also identify the spread of the project in the territory as an added burden for the adequate implementation of the project.

I did not participate in the project proposal but I know that the initially written plan intended to address 400 families. However, this number rose up to 1,200. This is an impressive number, a quantity that goes beyond our reach. We said that we could not manage it . . . I think that the difficulty is in the dispersion. Just one person cannot mobilize all the necessary processes and supervise them.

Martin, the community organizer, shares Maty’s vision of the excessively wide scope of the project as one of factors that hinder it. As he said:

One of the challenges that I see for the Ma project is the load capacity. Reaching 1,200 children is very difficult, and a project that is not just about teaching dance but about raising awareness and establishing new perspectives requires a very big structure. I think that this has been one of the challenges of the project.
Another element identified and mentioned by Maty as adding workload on her shoulders and limiting the continuity of the project is the lack of engagement of the directors of the schools.

We need that the director follows up the work of the teacher – tutor, that they supervise their task somehow. I cannot be supervising if the teacher has an appointment with the doctor. This should not be my responsibility. The directors should pay more attention to their groups and teachers.

This lack of commitment (related with the lack of institutionalization) burdens the project, as it overloads the daily tasks of the technical coordinator who, then, cannot accomplish other organizational work that is necessary.

On many occasions, references to organizational deficiencies were found, that seemed highly related to this internal structure weakness. For instance, during the week of observation in one of the schools, the children could not write in their daily diaries because there had been some disconnections in the organization, and one of the days the diaries were not brought in, and on another day, the pencils were missing.

Another consequence of this internal structural weakness is sometimes, a lack of internal communication to coordinate the modules and their content. While doing observation in one of the schools, I noted that the workshops within the module, which were supposed to be approaching sexuality and ‘body origin- body destiny’, did not seem to be hundred per cent coordinated, by which I mean they did not all consistently address the issue of sexuality.
On another level, there was a certain disconnect among the approach of the facilitators, some of whom, for instance, paid a lot of attention to the situation of the children in the space and to the previous relaxations, while others jumped into the workshops and the activities without paying attention to some of these aspects. Following is a quote from my notes of an observation of the workshop about sexuality “the facilitator is standing on the dais and the children are all sitting, cramped, in the floor, which is dirty.” When talking about these issues with one of the coordinators, who was doing an internal evaluation, he asserted that one of the problems was that some of the workshops were hard to fit with the topics and that, even though the previous year they all had done a hard work in several meetings to coordinate the modules, this year that had not happened. He asserted that,

This coordination last year was a little bit richer because there was communication among facilitators. They regularly sent us their notes and reports. This year this has not happened, but anyhow, everything is working because they get the experience throughout last year.

I confirmed this lack of coordination the following day while observing a workshop on sexual education. Even though I can see that there is intent to avoid an excess of (unilateral) presentation, still, the facilitator has much to improve, and this is not coherent with the overall observed style in the rest of the workshops. From my notes:

She tries to create debate but her position on the stage and the tempos do not allow the children to participate. Also, some of the information that she is providing is highly judgmental. More than a debate it resembles a lesson. She asks ‘what are
the consequences of pregnancy’ but she herself ends up answering the question ‘dropping out of school, poverty . . .’ The kids barely participate in the debate, and at the end, they all lose attention.

As this was not common in my observations, I checked with Maty the following day. She explained to me that the facilitator was new, that she had enrolled in the project just two months ago and that she still needed to be trained, but that she had not yet found the time to meet her. This is another sign of how an excessive load of work is hindering, in this case, the cohesiveness of the project and, at the end, its success.

Weak communication network

Is another factor that burdens the continuity of the project. This lack of communication is perceived through both explicit demands from family and community members and lack of knowledge among community members, particularly teachers and members in the participant schools.

In relation to explicit demands, many participants declared that they wished more demonstrations and meetings were held. For instance, Rita declared: “I wish all the community knew what their kids are doing and that they are doing it very well”. Even though parents get information through their children about what they do in the project, there is a clear demand among them [parents] to have more information about the Ma project, either from the schools or from el Colegio del Cuerpo. During the focus group, one of the main claims was that the school had not provided some specifics about the project or informed them about why their children were chosen to participate. Rosalinda complained, “every other moment there are meetings with parents [in the schools]. They
call us every two months and yet, they never told me about the Ma Project”. In relation to this, when talking with the director of a school, he admitted: “the community knows very little about the project. Well, this is my perception because we still have not had the opportunity to do any evaluation with the parents.” This declaration supports the claim made by the parents about the school not informing them about the project. Another demand among the parents was to be able to see what their children were doing. Daniela a mother, declared “I wish they [the organization] offered some demonstrations up here because they offer them downtown but not here.” Clearly, this explicit inquiry supports the notion that there is a weak communication flow between the organization and the community.

In relation to the lack of knowledge and awareness among school members, when asking professors and other staff members in the schools, the majority of them answered very vaguely about the project. In most of the cases they told me that they knew the kids were doing something because they saw them in their colorful uniforms but that they had never been told anything else. For instance, this teacher acknowledges: “yes, I know something but very little about el Colegio del cuerpo. Well, once they showed us a little video about a girl who performed very well and earned a lot of money... but this is all.” This answer shows that the participant had very limited knowledge of what the Ma project is about.

In one of the schools, I talked to the secretary and the counselor - therapist of the school and both profusely denied to have ever heard about the project before. Later, in the same conversation, the counselor reflected… “ah . . . yes, those kids, the ones who wear
The tone of this conversation however, made me doubt whether the educators did not know about the project or were reluctant to acknowledge it on public. I found it quite intriguing that they did not recognize the project at all until another staff member joined the conversation and prompted them “c’mon, of course you know, all these kids that wear the uniform.” Then, they immediately acknowledged it.

Besides these uncertainties among professors and school staff members, other participants brought some complaints about their communication with the project, for instance, Manolo, a community organizer declared: “there are some things to improve, I can tell you that now, the communication between the person who coordinates and us is not the best. They should offer us more information and sometimes it is myself who has to call asking for it”. Certainly, there is some communication trouble that is shaping the engagement of the community with the project and, most certainly, represents a high-risk condition/burden for the continuity of the project.

We have seen that some structural problems such as lack of resources for an over extended project, lack of institutionalization and lack of fluid communication with the participants might affect the continuity of the project. The Ma project is relying too much on the individual will and engagement of the teacher professors, without a direct effort on creating tools and channels to foster the institutionalization of the project and to establish stronger relations with community members.

Next, we will examine the issue of access. Limited access to the project, combined with this lack of communication, seems to be the root of various manifestations of power
struggles such as rumors, critiques, and aggression, which might certainly jeopardize the continuity of the project.

**Limited Access to the Project and ‘Elitization’**

Limited access to the project is creating a differentiation between students who join the Ma Project and those who do not. Throughout the research pervasive manifestations of this sense of differentiation are found and, in many cases, this differentiation is perceived as generating divide and ‘elitization’ among the community. This divide hinders the engagement of the community in the project, therefore its success and continuity.

On the one hand, differentiation and willingness to be part of the project was collected in different ways, either by direct petitions or by demonstrations of curiosity and interest. Many tutor teachers reported that other kids in the school were constantly asking to join the project. For instance, Marina reported that “*some* [students] are eager to participate. They ask themselves why they are not participating in the project. *Some kids directly approach us and ask ‘teacher, why they are there and not me?’.*” Another teacher, Luz Maria, acknowledges that this willingness to participate is generated when the participants explain to the other children what they do in the project. As she declared, “*Yes, the children [who participate] talk a lot with the rest of the children. They motivate them. The rest of the children are constantly saying ‘teacher, I want to join the project’ for what their fellow classmates explain to them.*” In addition, curiosity and interest in the project is manifested through the attitudes of many children who do not participate. For instance, I observed how quite a few children spent time looking through the windows and
doors of the studios while the participants in the Ma Project were there, or how children
joined some of the workshops even though they were not supposed to be in.

On the other hand, this selected participation in the project produces, in some way,
a new “elite” among the students. This section explores this “elitization process” and how
it is generating struggles among the community and shaping various perceptions about
and reactions towards the project that can jeopardize the continuity of the process.

First, this sense of elitization was mentioned by many of the participants in the
study. For instance, Amanda, the teacher, refers to the project as offering an “added
value” to the kids:

When I go to pick up the children who participate in my group, the rest of the
students shout ‘Ma Project, Ma Project’ and everyone knows that one came for
them. These children generate attention. They make things happen, and this
rescues them so much. The project offers them an added value above the rest of
the class.

Martin, the community organizer implied that the project is shaping a future elite
of professionals by offering them a different educational perspective:

it offers a different educative perspective to the children. The children gain a more
creative way of perceiving reality, and if in years to come a study is done about the
effects of the project on the children, I am sure they will stand out. This creative
complement in their education will help them so much. They will become
filmmakers, dancers, but also engineers, biologists. They will have a different
perception of how things are.
This elitization is perceived also with negative lenses. For instance, Agata, a nun director of a school, blames the project for separating the children from their communities. She accuses the project of creating “a sense of superiority among the children in relation with their neighborhoods.” During the interview, she declared that some of the children did not change and had to be retired from the project because of their bad behavior, and she emphasizes “they believe themselves to be superiors, if one drives them without AC they complain” and in relation to a specific girl, she mentions that “after being in the project, she overgrew. She believed herself to be from a better family and she could not stand the neighborhood, as if she was better”. Under Agata’s point of view, the project fostered the girl’s arrogance and her dissolution from the community. In this case, we observe how this elitization is seen as a challenge for the unity of the community instead of a benefit.

Other manifestations against the project are direct or indirect aggressions towards the studios or the children participants. In relation with the studios, for instance, Maty declared that in one of the schools the director did not collaborate with the program and that a clear symptom of this lack of commitment was that the studio was not being taken proper care of and that it was being used for other purposes. Another example of aggression towards the space was the one I witnessed while I attended one of the workshops. As I collected in my field notes, we lived through an episode of violence against the studio, where somebody threw stones against the windows and broke the glass. Besides the high level of violence of the act itself, it was dangerous because the children were barefoot and the broken glass could hurt them. The tutor teacher acknowledged that
that had been going on for awhile and that, even though he tried to find out who were the aggressors, he could not identify them. He asserted that they probably were other children-students not participants- in the school. This is a clear sign of disrespect towards the space in were the project takes place, and that could be interpreted as a sign of aggression towards the Ma Project and the children participants.

Another expressions of the struggle among the children who participate and those who don’t is that many times, the participants are made fun of and called (most of the times offensive) nick names relating to their distinctive clothes (berenjena, tomates…)

Other manifestations against the project were reported or observed among the community due to this limited access. Nana thinks that the lack of access to the project generated rivalry among the professors in the school, which resulted in rumors and a negative vision about the project:

We do not need to go very far away to look for these rumors. Even among professors, as the project does not reach all of them [the teachers], here it starts rivalry. Most of them would say ‘why is she in and not me’, or ‘I was more or I was less’. From the very school the rumors start saying that ‘X or Z was chosen because she was better teacher than us’. Then, the teachers that are left out of the project start complaining that the children who are selected for the project are offered a preferential treatment. This is damaging for the children, who repeat this in their homes, and finally, their families continue with the rumors and the struggles. These rumors make that people who do not know anything about the project will not engage.
Nana discussed how rumors and power struggles were generated among the community due to this process of differentiation. She also referred to one of the basic rules of communication (you want to communicate to avoid rumors or negative communications.

But if the people do not know, then, they make up stories, and here, in the Atlantic Coast we do this a lot. We do not know, we do not want, so we just make up (bad) stories.

The solution proposed by her to these rumors or to the lack of appropriation due to limited access is to increase the rate/level/range of communication between the project and the community. She said,

I think that due to the fact that these children were left out, so was the community. I think that organizing more meetings within the school and the neighborhood would allow people to approach the project. It would shorten the distance. It would make the project not being exclusively for the kids who are in, but the whole neighborhood would know what is going one. Raising awareness among them all would show them that the Ma Project is a second trail besides school . . . And that it has nothing to do with what they say that the Ma Project is just for the kids that really can and that the rest who cannot join will rest excluded.

This last note summarizes the point that the Ma Project is creating differentiated elite of students among the community and that this ‘elitization’ might be generating power struggles within the community that could jeopardize the success of the project. It
also supports the argument that weak communication, together with a lack of community engagement might be challenging the continuity of the project.

As a conclusion, we have seen that the main challenge of the project, its continuity, is hindered by some challenges that require to be addressed. Organizational weaknesses such as weak communication or an overload of the coordinating structure seem to be at the root of other problems such as lack of institutionalization of the project. Besides, a limited access to the project seems to be creating elitization problems. Even though elitization could be a positive outcome, as it offers new perspectives to the children (providing a more “elite education”), the lack of access to the project by other children, together with a poor effort in communicating and engaging in relationships with community actors, is turning ‘elitization’ to be a critical point and a source of power struggles and rumors among the community. It seems clear that these challenges require a great communication effort to avoid or reverse this effect and generate community appropriation of the project to ensure its continuity.

Even though the project was designed to be developed in coordination with other stakeholders in the community, due to organizational/funding limitations this component of the project was not fully developed. As a result, the implementation of the project lacks of a strong network of community members and organizations to support and embrace it. From the perspective of Communication for Social change, networking and sharing of knowledge are key elements in any CFSC intervention. The weaknesses of these elements (at the community level) in the Ma Project might be at the root of some of the power struggles and could be jeopardizing the continuity of the project.
CHAPTER FIVE WHEN THE BODY IS THE OPPRESSED

This chapter, first, introduces a brief summary of the study and its main findings, second, places the Ma project within the Communication for Social Change approach examining its main elements through the lenses of Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal, and finally, situates the main findings of the research in the Communication for Social Change (CFSC) literature. Many of the findings that emerged from this research propose innovative avenues for the theory and practice of CFSC. With this chapter I aim to contextualize these innovations and establish ground for future research.

This study aimed to examine the Ma Project, an education-through-dance intervention in Cartagena, Colombia, funded by the Japanese Government through the World Bank. For over three years, more than 1,200 children have participated in a series of workshops combining dance/body practices, training in other art languages and discussions about issues regarding care of the body (including addictions, nutrition, sexuality, ecology, among others). Vast literature in a diversity of fields covers the relationship between dance, individual, and social change. However, from the perspective of communication and development, particularly from the Communication for Social Change approach, no literature is found that examines the outcomes of a dance intervention from the perspective of the community. Through qualitative research, combining participatory and ethnographical techniques such as the Most Significant Change, participatory video, interviews, focus group, and participant observation, this study sought to answer three questions: what are the main elements of the Ma Project as a strategy for social change?, what are the community’s perceptions about the influence of
the Ma Project on individuals and the community?, and what are the perceived challenges of the project for the participants? The findings of this research indicated that the main elements of the Ma Project as a strategy for social change are something *more than dance*. The project, through the diverse workshops, especially through dance, is introducing a *silence* that allows for secure spaces, reflective time and creative spaces, and making *the body present* in its ontological, epistemological and dialogical dimensions. The participants reveal that *transformations based on respect* are perceived/occurring at the individual and the collective level, among children and community members, fostering *respectful relationships with the self and others, new modes of communication and challenging culture*. Finally, the project receives grand support from the children participants, teachers and their families. They ask for the project “not to leave us”; however, *continuity and access* seem to be challenged by *structural weaknesses* and a few voices, which are symptomatic of power struggles among community actors that critique *lack of access to the project and elitization* of the participants.

Having presented the main findings of this research, I will now make sense of the Ma Project and its main elements as a Communication for Social Change intervention examining the project throughout the lenses of Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal, two of the most influential authors in the field. As Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* introduced distinct methods to liberate the oppressed, the *Pedagogy of the body* (in the Ma Project) is an epistemological process that allows for a liberation of the body through performance. Along with Freire’s and Boal’s methods, it is
also grounded in alternative communication strategies and languages: in this case, the incorporation of silence, dance as a language of the body, and other languages of the arts. Through Freirean “praxis,” action and reflection, the children and participants in the project raise awareness of their living conditions (how their bodies are being mistreated, and some of the values and social norms that support this disrespectful relationship), gain new visions of the world, and become empowered to act and to be agents of their own change. Even though the dialogical element, which is the grounding construct on Freire’s liberating education and central piece of the CFSC approach, is maintained, the liberating education, in the case of the Ma Project, enacts this dialogical praxis mostly through languages of the body (dance), other languages of knowledge and arts, and reflexive silence. In the process, through dance and silence, the children increase their knowledge and awareness of their own bodies, so the body becomes present. As in Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, the body is offered the opportunity to move and perform differently; hence, it becomes expressive and discursive in a new mode, enhancing the communication skills of the participants. This training opens spaces of practice for real life, where the children, by performing new movements/embodying new values, challenge some social norms and cultural standards engrained in their individual and collective bodies. This practice for real life is enacted through artistic practices and reflection, both individually and in groups, offering the Ma Project as an arena for individual and collective action and reflection. Finally, another essential in Freire and a key element in any communication that aims to establish egalitarian and dialogical relationships is respect. Transformations, based on respect, are found at the individual
(changes in behaviors, knowledge, and attitudes) and at the collective level (through the challenge of social norms and values).

For a visual representation of this reading/examination, see figure number 25, which relates the essential elements in CFSC, Freire, and Boal with the essentials in the Ma Project. The figure shows four salient moments of the communicative process for social change: the introduction of a new epistemology, the dialogical “praxis,” and the “conscientizao” that leads to individual and collective transformation. In Parallel (to Freire), key elements of Communication for Social Change are introduced: ownership of the means of communication, participation in the communication process (from audiences to engaged actors), empowerment through this participation, the cultural perspective that considers individuals and communities non-static but socio-cultural constructions, and the salient role of networking and sharing of knowledge that will enlarge this movement into a broader community. Table 8 shows how the Ma Project mirrors these elements in Freire and Boal and how the three of these epistemologies- Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Theatre of the Oppressed, and Pedagogy of the Body- are communicative strategies that lead to individual and collective transformation, following principles of the CFSC approach.
Next, I will situate the main findings of the study within the field of Communication for Social Change, expanding on three theoretical constructs in current Communication for Social Change discourse: the role of dance and performance, silence, and the body. My hope is to bring new theoretical and methodological perspectives to the...
field of Communication for Social Change, which will nurture existing conversations and inspire alternative practices.

First, in relation to the role of dance and performance, many authors in the field of development communication define them as traditional or folk media (Riaño, 1994; Melkote and Steeves, 2001), and recognize their value as development communication channels (Hamelink, 1984; Colle, 1996; Vallbuena, 1980). As “carriers of the cultural system” (Hamelink, 1984) or “prime disseminators of culture” (Okwu Ugboajah, 1985), traditional media are commonly seen as tools to craft messages in a culturally appropriate language and to increase feedback and participation (Hamelink, 1984). Traditional media are also seen as instruments to develop community-based interventions (Riaño, 1994) as well as effective ways of transmitting and reinforcing beliefs, customs and values (Vallbuena, 1980).

However, in addition to being an instrument for the transmission of knowledge and values and an enabler of participation, the findings of this research situate performance in the realm of relationships, intimately connected with social and cultural transformation. As we have seen, the Ma Project offers the children new communication and relational skills that will ultimately challenge current social and cultural norms, or, as Dany recognized, they learn “about dance and about how to manage [their] bodies, as comrades, with respect.” More aligned with the purpose of social transformation, essential for/in the Communication for Social Change approach, some authors have recently reflected on the relational side of performance and its implications for the maintenance-challenge of social structures and power distribution. For instance, as cited
by Malan (1998), Juan Diaz Bordenave (1995) called practitioners to remember that the purpose of traditional media is expression, relationships, and communion, among others, and should not be used as a means to manipulate individuals. Pradip Tomas (1995) asserted, “relatedness, which is a central function in traditional communication” can have positive or negative effects depending on the context, either legitimizing a dominant ideology by perpetuating social roles or enabling the continuity of traditions, preventing instability and creating the basis of a normative order. Augusto Boal (1970) explored the relational aspect of theatre and used performance as a site to reflect and practice for the transformation of social structures. John Downing (2001), reflecting on the notion of radical media, included dance within the range of radical media, and, drawing on the definition of development power by C.B. Macpherson, defined them as media which bridges “information, reasoning and cognition with feeling, imagination and fantasy.” Radical media also enable dialogue, counter hegemony and the creation of alternative public spheres as triggers for developmental power, or the developing of the “positive possibilities for human achievement inherent in cooperative social life” (p. 833). In recent years, other authors have analyzed the role of performance as a site for activism and civic engagement (Singhal & Greiner, 2008). Lately, Mohan Dutta, author of the Culture-Centered Approach to health communication and social change, recognizes using performance as an “avenue for enacting change and participating in forms of resistance to the socio-structural forces that create conditions of poverty, deprivation and marginalization” (Performance section, para 1).
Some voices are being heard in the field of CFSC that acknowledge performance not only as a culturally appropriate/sensitive channel for messages, but also as a space where norms and values are reinforced, negotiated or contested within the collective, producing dialogue, counter discourses and spaces to practice alternative visions. We have seen that, through the Ma Project, new relational modes are being established that are challenging the everyday performance of the children, and with it, challenging current hegemonic norms and opening possibilities for change. Communication for Social Change scholars should pay more attention to the relational function of performative arts, and its impact on identities, relations, discourses and cultures. More research should be done to explore how performance fits in the field of Communication for Social Change, and how “ultra-linguistic modes of communication help illumine the many ways in which society is built on mutually reciprocated relationships” (Tomas, 1995).

Second, in relation to silence, communication scholars have disproportionately attended to speech over silence, and when attending to silence, to repressive or negative forms. Particularly within the field of Communication and Social Change, silence has been mostly conceptualized as an absence of participation, sign or result of oppression, as a symptom of isolation or discomfort, or as defensive reaction against a potential stigma.

Silence, as an absence of participation, is already found in early critics of mass culture, such as Pasquali (1963), who qualified the mass audience by saying “they can be silent and become purely passive and unknowing from which communication is impossible” (p.5). Silence, therefore, is characterized as the result of an information system that does not allow for the participation of the receiver. In 1970 Freire, who set
dialogue as the basis for liberation, named the lack of voice/participation of Brazilian peasants as “mutism,” and forged the term “culture of silence” to describe the pervasive practice of non-communication among colonized people as a result of oppression. Jose Marques de Melo (1979) expanded this idea in his interpretation of Freire, and described the oppressed as “someone who does not communicate. He receives communiqués. The greatest oppression is perhaps his silence, since when he speaks, it is to reproduce the speech of his oppressor” (p. 179). The notion that discursive modes of dialogue are the pre-requisite for participation and the realization of citizenship, and that silence equals absence of participation is prevalent among scholars (Habermas, 1962; Fraser, 1990; Alfaro, 2003; Krohling-Peruzzo, 2005). The public sphere has been widely discussed, and authors Habermas (1962) and Fraser (1990) agree that it is formed by private individuals discussing and negotiating positions about the common good in a public arena. Even though both have different perspectives on who participates in this arena, they both take discursive negotiation as a starting point. Expressions, such as “the voiceless citizen” (Krohling Peruzzo, 2005), refer to the lack of participation and engagement of individuals, while others, such as “breaking the silence” or “breaches in the wall of public silence,” convey the idea of using speech as an expression of political participation in oppressive regimes. This is not the only construct around silence in the field of CFSC: silence is also conceptualized around issues of isolation, discomfort and stigma. Slim and Thomson (1994), for instance, in their reflection on the uses of oral history, referred to silence as a symptom of social isolation, observable among elders: “a sense of meaning and purpose in life can be rekindled, giving people who had become almost silent something to relate and
exchange with others” (461). Fals-Borda (1987) links silence with tension and discomfort when conducting participatory research. Tomas Tufte (2005) identifies silence as a defensive response in front of stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS, and calls to “conquer a space in the public sphere and create a “speech environment” where HIV/AIDS can be openly recognized and talked about.” (citation!)

It is not my intent here to negate that oppression and stigma result in silence, or that discursive discussion and dialogue are primordial elements of participation and Communication for Social Change. What I’d like to challenge is the trend that conceptualizes silence as a sign of repression and oppression in any context. In the case of Colombo-Caribbean society, where noise is hegemonic, the right to silence is a claim for the right to ask for space, but also for the responsibility towards the others’ right to silence/ spaces. In this context, the introduction of silence offers a new perspective that challenges the existing/hegemonic one. In the case of the Ma Project, silence is understood as a presence, not an absence. In a society that is characterized by an accumulation of loud, external and oppressive voices, silence is that space where internal voices can be heard and listened to. In this understanding of silence, children are silent and present, reflecting on their own bodies and realities and getting connected/present for themselves, and also gaining presence and recognition within the environment (by other kids, professors and family members). Through this self/outer recognition, as well as through the opportunity to reflect and create, the children gain value and agency over their own self, their bodies and their actions. Being silent, in this case, is not a result from oppression but a source for empowerment. The Ma Project offers support for the case that
silence needs to be revisited and incorporated into Communication for Social Change theories. The right to silence needs to be contemplated, contextually, and not always in opposition to the right to speak. That would amplify the scope of many theories and constructions that, for now, have left silence out of the playfield. As seen, silence is a valid strategy for participation and empowerment and a key tool to create respectful and listening modes that are necessary in processes of dialogue and negotiation.

This notion of silence as a space of resistance that pulls the agency of the oppressed was approached by Eugene Genovese in his book Roll, Jordan, Roll (1976). In his book, Genovese explored acts of resistance among American slaves and argued that the slaves, through what he defines as “acts of resistance in accommodation,” consistent in acts of love, mutual support, and collective spiritual life-, created a sense of dignity and humanization among a community that was humiliated and dehumanized. These spaces of strength, of recovered dignity, grounded what would more mature acts of political action towards freedom. Similarly to these spaces of resistance, in the Ma Project we found that silence enables respectful environments which rescue the children’s sense of dignity and self-esteem whom, consequently, become empowered to transform.

In relation to the field of CFSC, I would not be fair if I did not acknowledge at least one author who seems to refer to silence in a generative mode: Augusto Boal. In his Theatre of the Oppressed, (1974) Boal introduced silent exercises in order to prepare the body for the practice of the theatrical performance. For example, on a first stage of his method, which he named knowing the body, and that aims to make participants aware of their own uses of their bodies, a silent exercise is suggested “the whole scene is performed
in silence; the participants are not allowed to touch one another but must react to every
gesture or action” (p.129). Augusto Boal, drawing on Freire’s concept of liberation
through dialogue, will conceptualize his *Theatre of the Oppressed*, where theatre is seen
as a language to empower, to negotiate and practice new understandings, new political
possibilities. Boal, as an innovation, included the use of the body to promote this dialogue
and to empower the oppressed. And taking on this innovation, the next section will
expand on how the body has been conceptualized in the literature of Communication for
Social Change.

Finally, in relation to the body, a majority of “non-western” scholars in the field of
Communication for Social Change acknowledge the body as an organic support of
cultural symbols and codes commonly used in traditional and indigenous media/societies
(Malan, 1998; Ugboajah, 1985; Nyamnjoh, 1996). However, following dominant views
where the division of the subject into body and mind is pervasive, the body has been
mostly overlooked in western communication and development scholarly work, which
tends to separate the discursive-analytic-conceptual (mind) from the emotional corporeal –
dramatic-emotive. Lately, some authors, in an attempt to correct this tendency, are making
efforts to integrate the body in discourses of Communication for Social Change, specially,
when examining leisure and entertainment-education strategies (Fuenlazida, 2004), or
when analyzing alternative media (Rodriguez, 2001). Clemencia Rodriguez (2001), for
instance, recognizes the body as one more of the avenues for individuals/subjects/citizens
to explore and re-shape their identities and cultures and to expose them in the public
sphere. In her own words, “exploring the possibilities of one’s own body and face to
create new codification, new identities, to explore new codifications of the body, never seen before, and to put them in the public sphere.”

The Ma Project incorporates the body in its ontological, epistemological and dialogical perspective and centers the intervention in the exploration, recognition, awareness, and transformation of the children’s own bodies (therefore identities) and social and cultural norms. The Project promotes the corporeal engagement of the children-subjects in a process of exploration of their own bodies, their relationships, and the hegemonic social values. Through this engagement, the children participate in their own change and sow the seeds for a social transformation. The body, largely excluded from scholarly research and practice in Communication for Social Change, is clearly incorporated in the Ma project as an essential element of the subject-active agent of individual and social change. If it is widely accepted that social change requires dialogical processes where subjects participate and engage in practice and reflection to examine and reconstruct identities, cultural values and social structures, and the body is largely recognized in nonwestern literature, and becoming recognized in western literature, as an essential element of the socially constructed subject, the question that follows is: why are we leaving the body out of scholarly research and practice of communication for social change?

As we have seen, performance, silence, and the body - main elements of the Ma project- are covered in a very limited way within the CFSC literature. We have also seen, however, how respect and dialogue, essentials in Freire and Boal’s liberating humanism, soaked into communication for social change theories, inspiring new practices and
lessons; when the oppressed were voiceless, liberation came through words and dialogue. Now that the oppressed are the individual and social bodies, liberation is sought through silence and the dialogical body. Scholars and practitioners in communication and development, and especially in CFSC, should identify the oppressors in order to spur the more adequate response, being it words, silence, the body, or any other that allows for love, respect, and liberation.
CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following from the idea that new elements should be considered in CFSC practice and research, this chapter concludes with recommendations at the organizational, methodological, and theoretical level. Suggestions emerge from the outcomes and limitations of this research and I hope these will be of use for scholars, practitioners, donors, and policymakers in the field of communication for development and CFSC. Practices in communication for development are, unfortunately, still too tied to texts and discourse as the only communication mode that allows for transformation. My hope is that these suggestions will enlarge the existing body of knowledge but will also promote alternative practices, inspire new policies, and encourage initiatives that will move beyond current dominant CFSC practices.

Institutionalization and Scaling Up

From an organizational and social perspective, the findings demonstrate that positive transformations occur at the individual and collective level through the implementation of the Ma Project. Structural weaknesses within the project and power struggles among the community, however, are symptomatic of some challenges that might burden the continuity of the project and, most important, trouble the access to its positive outcomes to the larger community. Institutionalization of the project in the local educative system is key to broadening the scope of the project and reinforcing inclusiveness. This institutionalization should occur, nevertheless, without burdening the resources of El Colegio del Cuerpo, which are limited. The aim should be the scaling up of the intervention. Beyond the implementation of the Ma project in a limited number of
schools and for a limited number of students, the education system should integrate some of the key elements of the project in curricula. Social change requires sustained effort and interventions that aim for long-lasting, perdurable, individual and collective change. Policy makers, donors, and key actors should place their support in promoting the creation of the social and structural conditions that will facilitate the integration of the Pedagogy of the body in the curricula of the education system in Cartagena. From a communication perspective, efforts should be made to encourage the compromise of the local education system with the project and its pedagogical model.

Qualitative and Participatory Methods Require Time and Commitment

Second, from a methodological perspective, two main lessons are learned which also offer suggestions for future research in the field of Communication for Social Change. First, this study supports the contention of Gray-Fedler (2002) that, in terms of evaluating Communication for Social Change processes, long-term qualitative research is highly effective. This study demonstrates that qualitative research methods (especially those that include participatory means) offer a much more detailed and nuanced understanding of the processes of social change than the results offered by positivistic quantitative research. This approach also allows for the emergence of the unexpected, which is of key relevance in terms of capturing unpredicted changes in any social change intervention. For example, as we have seen, the findings of the midterm evaluation, which relied in a positivistic approach, monitored/evaluated the intervention based on indicators that mostly relate to project development such as the grade of attendance or the number of workshops offered. The outcomes of the Ma Project, however, using
qualitative and participatory techniques, offered a deeper understanding of the perceived transformations in the children and beyond. Crucially, this approach allowed the identification of important unexpected results, such as the salient role of silence and the body as communicative elements of the intervention. A research that aims to gather quantitative data in a certain moment, without investing enough time to incorporate the multiple visions of the participants, runs the risk of making assumptions from biased information. Again, the mid-term evaluation produced a conclusion that stated that the parents lacked knowledge about the project. The present study, however, with the use of qualitative techniques over a longer period of time, was able to detect that the families knew about the project and what their children were doing. Indeed, some parents even asked the facilitators to train them in replicating what they had done in class. Through a short-term evaluation mainly based in the use of quantitative methods, the mid-term evaluation produced misleading results, and a willingness to know more about the project could easily be misinterpreted as a lack of knowledge. As we can see, two very different interpretations emerged from different research approaches: one, from a quantitative approach states that the families had no information about the project; the other, from a qualitative approach said that the families were willing to know more about it. This example supports the claim made by Gray-Felder (2002) about the need for long-term qualitative research to evaluate processes of social change.

A second key learning in terms of methods emerged from some limitations of the study. Particularly, lack of time and limited commitment of the organization resulted in narrow participation and/or unfinished discussion processes that weakened the research.
Due to limitations in time neither of the two participatory research techniques (participatory video and the Most Significant Change technique) could be concluded with a process of discussion with the participants. In relation to participatory video, this research analyzed the content of their stories, but could not add the children’s reasoning behind them. A discussion with the children about their stories would have added richness to the understanding of their visions. In relation to the Most Significant Change, this technique is a participatory monitoring tool that aims, not only to gather information, but also to create a discussion among the people involved in the project, which will facilitate the managing of future change. Although feedback was provided through a report to the organization, this research did not facilitate the process of feedback to the storytellers, which would have produced a richer outcome. Time is an essential asset when conducting qualitative and participatory research. Furthermore, research that aims to be collaborative needs, in addition to time, the commitment of the organization to design a research that guarantees the participation of the community throughout the research processes. For instance, due to a lack of prevision, only one group of students had access to the camera for the participatory video exercise. In the Most Significant Change technique, due to organizational limitations or unequal power distribution, only a few members of the community had the opportunity to tell their stories, and only three members of the organization formed the selection panel. A wider participation could have enriched the results of the research by incorporating additional voices.

On a methodological perspective, when monitoring/evaluating interventions, two suggestions emerge from the lessons learned. First, scholars and practitioners of the
CFSC approach must include long-term qualitative-based research that allows for a deep understanding of processes of social change. Second, in collaborative research, when using participatory techniques, scholars should provide enough time and guarantee an adequate commitment of the organization throughout the research in order to foster wide participation of the community.

Body, Silence, and Liberating Performance: Alternatives to Current Discursive Media-Based Interventions for Social Change

Finally, from a theoretical perspective, we have seen that the findings mirror the essentials of relevant authors for the Communication for Social Change approach, Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal. The Ma Project is introducing a new epistemology (*a Liberating Performance of the Body*) based on innovative strategies and languages that go beyond discursive discussion and texts. This new epistemology, rooted in Freirean *Praxis* - the combination of action through embodied practice and reflection through spaces of individual silence and collective discussion- is generating awareness among the children. Furthermore, the Ma Project incorporates additional fundamentals of the Communication for Social Change approach. For instance, during the process, the children acquire new communication skills (dance and other languages of the art). With these new techniques, the children gain agency to create/act and participate in processes of individual and collective reflection about issues relevant to them (their bodies, their communities, sexuality, addictions, ecology, among others). While gaining new perspectives and awareness, transformations occur that go beyond the individual change and also challenge cultural values and social norms, fostering processes of social transformation. This
research demonstrates that a groundbreaking intervention for social change rooted in alternative communication methods distinct from current dominant discursive and mass media based solutions is not only possible, but also promising. The results support the claim that overlooked elements such as ‘Silence’ or the ‘Present Body’ can play a key role in promoting new modes of ownership, participation, and dialogical and respectful communication, allowing for individual and collective reflection, action and transformation.

My suggestion is that Communication for Social Change practitioners and scholars must expand some constructs (such as the role of performance or silence in communication) and include innovative epistemologies that go beyond text and discourse media-based interventions (including body engagement and liberating performance, for instance) to foster more effective praxis. Introducing the use of silence as well as body-based performance as praxis offers a myriad of new possibilities for the notions of ownership, participation and empowerment that should be seriously explored in the field of Communication for Social Change.

The findings of this research certainly support the argument that, in specific contexts, Freirean praxis can be best acquired through embodied participation and reflective silence than through discursive modes of communication. From here, a whole field of inquiry sprouts with questions such as: In which circumstances do embodied performance and/or reflective silence become an effective epistemological and/or dialogical tool? In which contexts are body-based epistemologies more, less, or equally adequate than text-based knowledge in order to reach levels of awareness, and thus,
transformation? Which are the factors that favor one or the other? How perdurable are changes prompted through embodied epistemologies? In what ways does body based performance transform individual and collective identities? How do identities, behaviors, social norms and cultures get challenged through embodied reflexivity? Or, which are the contextual factors that allow for silence to be an instrument for participation? How can silence be used in dialogical processes? How can Communication for Social Change practitioners and scholars more effectively incorporate these alternatives to current discourse-based interventions?

This research has brought many lessons, and most importantly, has advanced understanding of performance as a site for transformation of identity and culture. Additionally, it has contributed to the field of Communication for Social Change with alternatives to current dominant discursive media-based interventions. Some directions for future research are to deeply explore the role of performance, or embodied praxis, as a site to examine and reshape identity and culture, for social transformation. A starting point could be a follow up study of the Ma Project that explores the long term outcomes in terms of individual and social transformation among the participants and their communities. Additionally, conducting research on other communities and groups that use performance as an embodied site for action and reflection, would add a wider perspective on the potential of (using) the body as an epistemological and dialogical tool for social change.
REFERENCE LIST


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Title of Research: *El colegio del Cuerpo. Telling a new story through dance*

Researchers: Carolina Novella Centellas

You or your children are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

**Explanation of Study**

The study pursues to understand which different constructions of realities occur in individuals that have a direct or indirect relationship with *el Colegio del Cuerpo*. The aim of the study is, through participant observation, interviews and focus groups, to get a notion of the community members’ points of view regarding the project, themselves and their communities since their direct or indirect participation with the project.

As a first step, the study will be based in participant observation that will be complemented with interviews and focus groups to direct participants in the project as well as with members of the community. Interviews and focus groups will be audio taped, transcribed and translated into English. **In the case you refuse to be recorded, the investigator will take notes.**

**Risks and Discomforts**

*No risks or discomforts are anticipated*

**Benefits**

In the case the results show positive outcomes, that could result in a promotion of the project itself and this, indirectly, would be beneficial for the participants and the community as well.

Besides adding knowledge to the field that could be ultimately shared by presentation or publication, the results of this study could provide a deeper understanding on the role of dance as a tool to foster individual change and to enhance communities and generate respect, trust and tolerance in a society extremely damaged by conflict. Of a special
value will be the knowledge about the methodology of *El Colegio del cuerpo*, which could be replicated in other areas affected by conflict, in case this research identifies positive outcomes to individuals’ and communities’ lives since their participation in the project.

Confidentiality and Records

Names of participants will be labeled with numbers to avoid recognition. The key that links name and code will be destroyed after completing the research. Identifiable data will not be shared with anyone and the tapes and notes will be stored in a locked cabinet into investigator’s office until its destruction two weeks after the research is finished.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:

* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Carolina Novella C. 740 591 5212 e-mail cn224508@ohio.edu / Rafael Obregon Email Obregon@ohio.edu

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:

you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions
known risks to you have been explained to your satisfaction.
you understand Ohio University has no policy or plan to pay for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this research protocol
your participation in this research is given voluntarily
you may change your mind and stop participation at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled.

“☐ YES, I CONSENT to being audio/video recorded.
I also understand that I reserve the right to change my mind;”

“☐ NO, I DO NOT CONSENT to being audio/video recorded.”

Print Name of Participant: ____________________________
Signature of Participant: ____________________________ Date: ________
Signature of Parent or Guardian: ___________ Date: ____________
Appendix 2 IRB Determination  (English version)

A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category  2. research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Project Title:  El Colegio del Cuerpo. Telling a New Story through Dance

Primary Investigator:  Carolina Novella Centellas

Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor:  Rafael Obregon

Department:  Communication and Development

Robin Stack, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

06/03/2009

Date

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Appendix 3 Minor Assent Form (English version)

Many of the children interviewed were minors of thirteen years old, thus, a minor consent form was required.

Ask as many questions as you want before you decide to be a part of this research project. You can ask questions at any time before, during, or after you help me with this project.

Date Agust 20

You are invited to participate in my research project entitled, “El colegio del Cuerpo. Contando una nueva historia con la danza” I am conducting this research project to understand what the community thinks about the project MA.

If you want to be a part of this research project, you will be asked to talk with me about what you like about the project and what will you change in the future. You will also be asked about what changes do you observe since you joined the program. I will tape-record our talk. The total time you will spend on this project is about one hour. You will not be paid to work with me on this project, and your grades in school will not be affected by being in this research project or by not being in this research project.

No known risk is associated with this study. A code number instead of your name will be written onto the interview tape, and everything you tell me will be coded with the same number. A possible benefit of your participation is that I hope to learn something about the project MA that will help the people of el Colegio del Cuerpo in improving the program and make it more durable in the future.

If at any time you do not want to answer any more questions or quit being a part of this project, you are free to stop. You can also choose not to answer questions that you don’t want to answer. If you decide to stop, everything you told me will be shredded and not used in the report about this study. Only a summary of what everyone says will be included in my report, other writings, or professional presentations about my research study.

Your name will not be used in any reports that I write about this project. No one will know what you tell me during this project. Everything will be confidential. However, if I hear about or notice any signs of abuse, I am required by law to report it. Also, if you threaten serious harm to yourself or to another person, I may need to report it.

If you have any questions or do not understand anything, you can always ask me. You or
your parent or guardian may call me, Carolina Novella 300 830 7430; or you may e-mail my faculty advisor, Dr. Rafael Obregon, at obregon@ohio.edu

Sincerely yours,

Carolina Novella

I have read and understand this consent form, and I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate in this research study.

I understand what this research project is about and what I will be asked to do. My questions have been answered, and I agree to participate in this project. I have received a copy of this form.

Name of Participant (printed):

Signature of Participant

Date

Principal Researcher’s Name (printed):

Principal Researcher’s Signature:

Date:

Please sign both copies, keep one copy, and return one copy to the researcher.

Questions about your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Jo Ellen Sherow, Directora de Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664.
Appendix 4 IRB Determination for Involvement of Children (English version)

The amendment, detailed below, and submitted for the following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University.

Project: El Colegio del Cuerpo. Telling a New Story through Dance

Amendment: Interview Children Aged 13 - 15

Primary Investigator: Carolina Novella Centellas
Co-Investigator(s):

Advisor: Rafael Obregon
Department: Communication and Development

Rebecca Cale, AAB, CIP
Office of Research Compliance

Protocol Expiration Date: 6/2/2010

Date: 08/30/09
Appendix 5 Most Significant Change Protocol. (English version)

This protocol was used to collect the stories of change from the participants in the community.

Please, describe, narrate, tell us a story about What do you view as the most significant change in the community since the implementation of the program *Mi cuerpo, mi casa*?

Date:

Do you give your consent to your story to be published? (names and any detail that could identify you will be erased)  Yes / No

Title:

What is the most significant change in the community since the program was applied? (restrict to one)

Provide Justification. Why is it the most significant change under your point of view?

What was the most significant challenge for the community since the program was implemented?

Provide Justification. Why was it the most challenging?
Appendix 6 Guide with Questions for Focus Group

These are the questions used as a guide for the Focus Group with families.

1. Do they know the program? (Proyecto Ma?). If so, what do they know?

2. What do they think, overall, about his/her children participating in the program? (before and now)

3. Have they perceived any change in his/her children since joining the program? (behavioral, educational, communication, self-care)

4. Any changes in their perception of dance?

5. What do they think that art, culture can support the community in any way?

6. Have they noticed any change in the community since the implementation of the Ma project?
Appendix 7 Guided interview protocol

These questions are the ones used as a guide for the interviews with families, teachers, and members of the community.

Introductory questions:
- Which is your relationship with the project?
- Since when have you been involved with the project
- Could you provide an overall description of your experience with the project?

Regarding their perception of the outcomes of the project, and following the scheme proposed by the Most Significant Change technique, questions will be:
- Which is the most significant change that you perceive in your life (regarding to skills, behaviors of attitudes) since your participation in *el Colegio del Cuerpo*? Please provide some justification for your choice.

- Which is the most significant change you perceive in your relationships with others since your participation in *el Colegio del Cuerpo*? Please provide some justification for your choice.

- Which is the most significant change you perceive in the community (regarding the common values, beliefs, norms and visions of future)? Please provide some justification for your choice.

- Which is the most challenging situation that you have faced since your participation in *el Colegio del Cuerpo*?
Appendix 8 Invitation Note for Families

In order to inform the parents about the meeting (Focus Group), I created the following informative note and hand it to the teacher tutors, who would distribute them among the children from the Ma Project, and these, would pass it to their families.

CIRCULAR INFORMATIVA COLEGIO

Reunion Evaluacion Proyecto MA con padres de familia

19 de agosto de 2009

El proximod día .......... a las 5.30 de la tarde, en la escuela ............... 

Ud. esta invitado a participar en la reunion de evaluacion del Proyecto MA en el que su hijo participa.

El objetivo de esta reuni'on es el de participar en el estudio “El colegio del Cuerpo. Contando una nueva historia con la danza”, que esta llevando a cabo por la Universidad de Ohio, sobre los efectos y la aceptacion del Proyecto MA en la comunidad.

Su participacion en el estudio es de mucha importancia ya que sus opiniones e ideas como padres de familia, serviran para la mejoria del programa, lo cual beneficiara a sus hijos y a toda la comunidad.

Si Ud. no pudiera acudir, le rogamos que algun miembro de su familia acuda en su lugar o nos lo haga saber

Reciba un atento saludo,

Carolina Novella
Universidad de Ohio

Nombre del alumno:

Nombre y firma del familiar o tutor que asistira:

Fecha
Appendix 9 Invitation Note for Teachers

In order to inform and invite the teachers and schools representatives to join the meeting (Focus Group) I made a note.

CIRCULAR INFORMATIVA COLEGIO

Reunion Evaluacion Proyecto MA con padres de familia

19 de agosto de 2009

El proximod dia .......... a las 5.30 de la tarde, en la escuela .............

Ud. esta invitado a participar en la reunion de evaluacion del Proyecto MA en el que su hijo participa.

El objetivo de esta reunion es el de participar en el estudio “El colegio del Cuerpo. Contando una nueva historia con la danza”, que esta llevando a cabo por la Universidad de Ohio, sobre los efectos y la aceptacion del Proyecto MA en la comunidad.

Su participacion en el estudio es de mucha importancia ya que sus opiniones e ideas como padres de familia, serviran para la mejoria del programa, lo cual beneficiara a sus hijos y a toda la comunidad.

Si Ud. no pudiera acudir, le rogamos que algun miembro de su familia acuda en su lugar o nos lo haga saber

Reciba un atento saludo,

Carolina Novella
Universidad de Ohio

Nombre del alumno:

Nombre y firma del familiar o tutor que asistira:

Fecha
Appendix 10 Example of Most Significant Change Story

The Most Significant Change
The Ma Project. Individual Stories # 2 (translated to English)

Date: August 11th 2009

Name: Jenner Quintero. Coordinator of the School Escuela Ciudadela 2000 (Nelson Mandela)
Title: Transforming lives and building dreams

A girl (that we will call Angelica even thought this is not her real name) had suffered a sexual aggression. She was very shy, isolated in her interaction with others. She joined the program. As long as she developed activities with the Project, she developed. She started acting more extroverted, more spontaneous and showed more team work. Whe could overcome barriers that were making her retraida and that were affecting her psicosocial and social development.

WHY IS IT THE MOST SIGNIFICANT?
Each child has his/her own story but I remember this case because the girl was being treated and helped and the Ma Project was a tool that allowed to move forward in the process. This is an area very affected by psychosocial risks. It is a very heterogeneous settlement. There is people from many zones from the city and from the country. Nelson Mandela has received many displaces and also the group of people who received the benefit of a getting a protected social house.
Appendix 11 Example of Topological Sort of Network View on Atlas.ti

Topological Sort of Network View: TRANSFORMATIONS BASED on RESPECT

CO:TRANSFORMATION: healing {5-0}
CO:RESPECT: for the space {5-0}
CO:ORDER, TRANQUILITY, ATTENTION {13-0}
CO:BODY: Care {10-0}
CF:RELATIONSHIPS/ TRANSFORMATIONS (19)
CO:VALUES: RESPECT {4-0}~
CO:TRANSFORMATION: possibility to become {7-0}
CO:Recognition {2-0}
CO:TRANSFORMATION: school {6-0}
CO:RESPECT for the Self {2-0}
CO:TRANSFORMATION {1-0}
CO:RESPECTFUL Relationships/ for each other {5-0}
CO:TRANSFORMATION: self-Agency {9-0}
CO:TRANSFORMATION perception dancers {2-0}
CO:TRANSFORMATION: New modes of communication {12-0}
CO:TRANSFORMATION:relationships {18-0}
CO:Respect for MA referents {3-0}
CO:TRANSFORMATIONS BASED ON RESPECT {6-0}
CO:TRANFORMATION CULTURAL NORMS {9-0}~
Appendix 12 Example of Visual Chart on Atlas.ti for Category ‘More than Dance’