Women
Transforming the Workplace

Collaborative Inquiry Into Integrity in Action

by Virginia Kaufman Hall

Doctor of Philosophy
(Social Ecology)

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University of Western Sydney
Hawkesbury
Locked Bag 1
P.O. Richmond NSW 2753
Tel. 045 701 280
FAX 045 701 531
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Contents

Summary .................................................................................................................. ii
Certificate of Originality ...................................................................................... iii
Christine Wiencke - in Remembrance ................................................................... iv
Dedications and Acknowledgements ................................................................. v

Section 1: Starting Where We Are - we can get there from here ...................... 1
1. Introduction to Our Inquiry ............................................................................. 3
2. Claiming Our Place in the World- our historical, philosophical and theoretical context .. 17

Section 2: We are the Next Generation of Changing Women - Research Findings .... 69
4. Meet the Women ............................................................................................ 71
5. Growing Our Own Research Process - Spiralling Story Spinning ................. 95
6. What we Did - growing the research process ................................................. 135
7. Why We Do What We Do ............................................................................. 153
8. Reflections on Researching and Learning .................................................... 175

Section 3: Women Present: Changing the Constructs of Workplaces for Future Women & Men ... 201
9. Women at Work - Issues for Change ............................................................. 203
10. Power - re-constructing a feminist view ....................................................... 253
11. The Atalanta Syndrome - towards a more people-friendly workplace .......... 283

Section 4: Conclusion
The Power of Story-Telling for Changing Women and Changing Workplaces .......... 313
12. End Story / Never-Ending Story - Research Implications ......................... 315

Appendices Section .............................................................................................. 327
Appendix 1 The Story of the Mother - a conceptual framework ......................... 329
Appendix 2 Interview Schedule ......................................................................... 341
Appendix 3 Atalanta's Strategic Plan ................................................................. 345
Appendix 4 Senior Women in Management Research Report ......................... 349

References ........................................................................................................... 361
Women Transforming the Workplace  
- collaborative inquiry into integrity in action

Summary

This collaborative research is an account of the recent lived experience of twelve women who bring about transformations in their own workplaces. The work integrates feminist theory with the social ecology focus of studying interactions between people and their environments. The study is multidisciplinary including psychological as well as social aspects and applies critical social research to workplace situations. The research group informed each other primarily by stories which narrated: social and family context; work situations; particular situations and specific strategies. Reflexive and archetypal meanings emerged from recounting ancient myths to help us understand complex and difficult work structures which constrain our creativity. We go beyond critique and focus upon strategic tools which empower us to work creatively and with innovation which consciously and consequently enables emancipation for co-workers. 'Work' in our context, includes voluntary activities both in and out of the home.

The research inquires into women's Ways of working originally inspired by Gilligan's ethic of care (1982). I found that co-researchers operate with a morality that is identified by Porter (1991) as 'self-in-relations'. Congruently, everyday language is used to be accessible to the co-researchers and to others as well.

This heuristic inquiry offers constructive critique using reflexive learning and pro-active reconstructions of these women's Ways of working. Such an approach employs the richness of difference, and varieties of working styles, problem-solving and creativity.

While inquiring into the nature, characteristics and focus of our work we identify where the energy (focus) is effective as well as where effectiveness is lost (energy-leaks). The research arises out of a belief that our workplaces and our whole society can be enriched by valuing and accessing both feminine and masculine archetypal characteristics; from Jungian psychology such as Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987), and women's ways of being and knowing explored by Belenky et al (1986).

Through collaborative research, co-researchers identify as change-agents and enable strategies to engage proactively with workplace structural limitations. Researching together lead us to discover a process of 'affirmative inquiry' Methodologies and group processes together, initiate consciousness-raising and strategic action from the co-researchers. Through the collaborative process co-researchers spoke of their own affirming empowerment and identified and supported their enabling of others. This inquiry is a fresh approach to a range of workplace problems by engaging many women's preferred working styles and applying this creative response: pro-active strategies which we demonstrate, are indeed, highly effective.
Certificate of Originality

Women Transforming the Workplace - Collaborative Inquiry into Integrity in Action

This thesis to the best of my knowledge and belief, is entirely original research which has not been submitted for credit towards any other degree at any place of learning.

Every effort has been made to ensure that writings and ideas delivered in any media, have been acknowledged and referenced.

Virginia Kaufman Hall
UWS Hawkesbury
April 1995 - Revised March 1996
In Remembrance of a
Woman
passionately committed to
engendering change

Dr Christine Wieneke

Throughout the last three years I have worked alongside Dr Chris Wieneke as a friend, colleague, and supervisor. Her sudden death in the last month of this project, was a loss to us as friends and colleagues and to students who knew her emancipatory and encouraging Way of supervision.

In many Ways for me, completing and submitting this work, continues Chris’ social change work. I spoke at her memorial service saying that her work goes on in anyone who is committed to calling the deep structural inequitities in our social and bureaucratic institutions. I concluded with the following poem, inspired by Marjorie Pizer’s first five lines from The Existence of Love (1981).

I had thought that your death
Was a waste and a destruction,
A pain of grief hardly to be endured.
I am only beginning to learn
That your life was a gift and a growing
And a loving left with all of us.
The shock of your death
May have momentarily stopped your life’s work
But the fact of death
Cannot destroy what has been given.
We are learning to look at your life again
Instead of your death and departing.
We are continuing your work;
There is work that must be done
While there are injustices to be named
Discriminations to be confronted,
And people are willing to ask the question
Why is this so?

Your work becomes our work
and so your integrity lives on.

Virginia Kaufman Hall 1994

...with gratitude and love for what was given so freely
and in recognition of a gentleness that is rarely so powerfully effective.
Acknowledgments
&
Dedication

This collaborative work owes its existence to the collective effort of many people. This work includes many women's stories and has been inspired by many other women in my life who have inspired passionate commitment to social change.

The work is dedicated to all who work towards social change by actively reforming structures and practices so that our Mother earth and all life dependent upon her may grow and learn in peace together.

In my journey many people have listened with interest and offered stories which are not included here. Loving acknowledgment and gratitude is offered to:

* the group of co-researchers - without whom there would be no story to tell - Ariadne, Chris, Electra, Gloria, Grace, Isobel, Jess, July, Kate, Kay and Margaret. These women courageously, passionately, and critically examined with me our day-to-day lives and dreams. Ours is a never-ending story...

* social ecologists - who offered passionately reasonable inquiry processes and support - Chris Wieneke, Judy Pinn, Kieryn, Kay, Hilary, Frances, Yasanne, Debbie, Vicki, Lesley, Jill, Jaki, Sue, Marilyn, Attracta, Pam, David, Peter, John, Martin, Brendan, Robert, Graham and all who offered stories and ideas; course members who share their work and so we learn together.

* my friends - who saw me through the stormy passages, the passionately powerful and hilariously humorous times - Rosemary, Franny, Catherine, Anne, Judy, Margaret, Chris, Brynnie and Jeanette.

* my family - Eva, Stefan and Ariel who constantly gave support, adapted, grew up and became independent and showed me the meaning of learning from the every-day; Byron - who for 24 years has supported my research and learning about loving and living and special appreciation for the art work assistance in this thesis; My parents who constantly supported their daughters' education and independence.

I acknowledge and appreciate that I live and learn always from the people who live and learn with me.

Thank you all for telling your stories and listening to mine.
Step by step the longest road can be won. 
Stone by stone to build a wall, singly none.
And by union what we will,
can be accomplished still.
Drops of water turn the wheel, singly none.

from a song of *Sweet Honey in the Rock*
Section 1

Starting Where We Are

-we can get there from here
Chapter 1

Introduction to our inquiry

This chapter invites the reader into a collaborative research by twelve women who inquired into our concerns arising from the workplace. I first outline the key theoretical approaches then demonstrate how these articulate in the research.

Critical Theoretical Underpinnings

The title of this work embodies some of the key theoretical terms which create the framework of this research.

Women Transforming the Workplace
- Collaborative Inquiry into Integrity in Action

The work is feminist; it is about women, by women and also develops and investigates a way of being at work which is beneficial to all people - women, men and children. While recognising the existence of many feminisms this work arises from emancipatory notions for all people whose epistemology and ontology is implicit in the statement "what is good for women and children is good for everybody". The works of Gilligan (1982) and Porter (1991) provide an ethical base with feminist Jungian Psychologists such as Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987) providing a developmental perspective. The more radical theory of Daly (1982, 1987, 1984, 1973) enriches the work integrated with wide ranging feminist theory.

'Transforming' - describes the position we take on engendering change. We take the optimistic view of social ecology (Pinn and Russell 1989) that through our own work we strive to influence and validate humanity's capacity for cooperation - with realism in the face of so much professional competition (Kohn 1986, Houston 1993ab, 1986, Eissler 1987, Schaeff 1985, 1981). Through the research itself we dialogue (Böhm and Garrett 1991) to take a pro-active approach to work cultures which we critiqued. Such a paradigm developed inevitably to investigating and applying Learning Organisation (Senge 1994, 1990) concepts and practices in our own workplaces. So we strive to go beyond critique to transformation for ourselves, our workplaces and our communities.

The women in this inquiry all perform both paid and unpaid work. Our view of the workplace includes the community within which any industry operates, local and global.

This affirmative inquiry arises from a collaborative exploration of issues arising for women from the workplace. I identified the research as affirmative after Cooperrider's (1994) notion of appreciative inquiry. The entire process affirmed our epistemology and ontology at the same time as applying critical reflection upon our ways of working. The collaborative approach (Reason 1994, 1988) ensured that all involved were consulted and had input to the directions and outcomes of the research throughout the process.
Our Inquiry developed as we had critical concerns and so asked critical and strategic questions (Peavey 1994, 1992) about why we experience the workplace as we do. The process of inquiry provided a form for us to develop our own theory explaining why we experience things as we do. The research process applied developed from multiple methodologies including feminist (Reinharz 1992, Maguire 1987), integrated with qualitative and collaborative methodologies including those already identified.

Integrity emerged as a term to describe the underlying philosophy demonstrated in our ethical and operational preference (Laborde 1987) and also articulated by Macy’s (1993) ‘dependent co-arising’. ‘Integrity’ originating from the Greek term for whole number (from whence integer Partridge 1983), identifies our holistic approach to ethics. Holism in our context, is contextual, taking into consideration family, community and environmental concerns. Our research revealed that these women hold a view that workplaces can and should provide emancipatory and equitable opportunities for all.

That the inquiry should also result in concrete outcomes was important to all of us. The subsequent actions included changes in our own strategies and understandings as well as more global approaches to workplace culture. Much feminist theory takes a critical perspective that advocates for change (Reinharz 1992, Gunew 1991, Daly 1992, Spender 1985 et al.) As advocates we engendered change throughout the process of researching, which in itself provided a forum for critical reflection leading to further strategy development (Grosz 1990a 59).

Further critical theoretical perspectives arise from the multi-disciplinary approach of social ecology. The work is well placed within social ecology which I practice as the study of people and their environments; this includes the inner and outer environments along with a focus on inter-personal interactions as well. Such a concern with contextualising, places social ecology itself within a post-modernist or post-structuralist paradigm. The emancipatory and collaborative natures of this inquiry are also central qualities of social ecology. Optimism too, is a stance that arises from a belief in the possibility of change bringing improved quality into people’s lives as they would prefer their world to be (Pinn and Russell 1989).

The development of our research process clearly articulated the need to utilise multiple methodologies not only appropriate to the nature of this inquiry but also modelling our preferred ways of working. Thus the above form the base assumptions and research philosophy as articulated in the Research Process section.

The rest of this chapter expands on these notions in the same order as presented above. A section on language use and style guide for the thesis then leads into an outline of the whole.

Why This Inquiry

This thesis emerging from collaborative inquiry effectively affirmed the women co-researchers’ approach in integrating the whole of life experience. This means working at transforming the artificial separation between paid and unpaid work as well as professional and private concerns. Our world-view recognises that we work and live with relationships within a working community as well as a neighbourly community. We learn about and define ourselves through these relationships, as in Porter’s (1991) notion of ‘self-in-relations’.
The work involves a critique of existing literature on women’s place in paid work and builds a holistic (and realistic) view of the way a small group of 12 women, transcend and transform their situations. We take a critical perspective as women who have experienced the margins of our society thus bringing “…real benefits through a healthy disrespect for the status quo -for the traditional way of doing things. This new perspective may initiate, and in some cases is initiating the revitalization and transformation that are so badly needed” (Kerpan 1993 78).

I specifically invited these women into the group because I had already noticed, or been advised, that their ways of working created transformation in their immediate workplaces. I liked what I saw. I wanted to know how they created transformations (indeed, did they know they were change-agents?). I believed that initiating a group with these women would allow for rich co-learning. I also suspected there might be a need for support for these rebels who went against the status quo. To work effectively as co-researchers we needed to be able to trust and offer mutual support. We are women who work in different places, doing different things, in the public and private sectors. Included are self-employed and part-time workers.

The work is framed and informed by feminist theoretical writings and draws upon methodological approaches which are more suited to these women’s ways of working. There is no one feminism of course; our group clearly presented a microcosm of different ways of acting as feminists. Even one high profile active feminist in the group declined to use the term but nevertheless affirmed her work as being: “…for the women’s movement”. The research methodology is similarly pluralistic and arises from notions of collaborative research which aim to emancipate and enable. In short, I wished to develop a support group to observe and research the transformative change these women wish to create in the workplace.

This is a pro-active work. It does more than critique. We are not satisfied with a work-world that glorifies the accumulation of wealth, that exploits the earth and denies workers their rights to basic family and community relationships (whatever they may be). We are indeed amongst those baby-boomers who are disenchanted with corporate goals or mission statements which rely on ever-expanding “growth”. So, we are activists who take responsibility for our own lives and for our communities both at work and at home.

Being pro-active, I range widely for contextual and supportive materials. Working from the multi-disciplinary perspective of social ecology enriches understandings by accessing sociology, feminist and workplace studies. To help us in our understanding, I also access psychology, sociology, feminist spirituality, anthropology, history and education.

**Integrity and Wholeness - Can we integrate paid work with the whole of our lives?**

I have often been concerned with the conflicts which arise when attempting to balance work with the rest of our lives. These tensions are felt predominantly by women, yet men’s quality of life is also affected. The toxic experience can be harmful to our working lives. This can contaminate the whole. More than thirty years ago Rachel Carson (1965) warned us of a Silent Spring where we would wake one spring morning and find no bird singing. There is a similar notion about the toxicity of the workplace described here:
"Early in the century, miners would take canaries below ground with them. When the canary stopped singing, they knew the air was too toxic to breathe. Like the canaries, women who work in today’s corporate marketplace are serving as an early warning system to alert us that the business environment is becoming unhealthy and we must make far-reaching changes."

Barrenteine 1993 jacket

I want to explore beyond the toxic notion; to swim through the noxious swamp of work stresses, and explore the whole territory. Workplaces do not exist in a vacuum. They are created by all of us who participate and interact within the structures of work. The workplace also sits within a context of a professional and personal community. It interacts with the global physical, natural and psychological environments (buildings, cities, nature, people, etc.).

Critical Perspectives of Feminism and Social Constructs

Questions arose in my inquiring mind. Why is it that women seem to hold the baby (literally) in juggling family and work-life? What is it in women’s lives, that seems to open up a possibility of dealing with complexity in a Way1 that comes out with richer options for everyone involved? It may be rewarding to examine the experiences arising from juggling complexities. Consider the sometimes almost-simultaneous demands made by childcare, inflexible work times, family needs, sick parents or partners and school teachers asking for help with the children’s reading (to list just a few). Do these experiences somehow equip us well in solving workplace problems? (While asking these questions I was critically aware of the danger of taking up simplistic answers that may indeed be exclusive, and or essentialist.)

A significant factor arose from the women involved in the inquiry (and many other women around me). It appears we radically set about to sabotage social constructs such as systemic discrimination: as we actively promoted change for all workers and clients of services. I am aware of the systemic and cultural oppressions we live with day-to-day. I wanted to consider the strength of a pro-active stand. As women who are now in privileged positions, we are very aware that many other women do not get to enjoy similar privileges. Beyond feminist critique of women’s struggle to maintain her family commitments and meet workplace requirements, we saw that all workers suffered from this imposed split between public and private lives.

That the work is personal and experiential is also a critical perspective of both feminists and social ecologists. I work with Lorde’s view that “...As women, we must root out internalized patterns of oppression within ourselves if we move beyond the most superficial aspects of social change” (Lorde 1992 220). As we worked together expanding possibilities personally and professionally we considered the construct of power. “... The old definitions have not served us, nor the earth that supports us. The old patterns, no matter how cleverly rearranged to imitate progress, still condemn us to cosmetically altered repetitions of the same old exchanges, the same old guilt, hatred, recrimination, lamentation and suspicion” (Lorde 1992 220).

1 ‘Way’ and ‘Ways’ are spelt with an upper-case ‘W’ to designate working with a wide range of creative options open. When lower-case ‘w’ is used for these words, I am referring to limited and possibly bureaucratic ‘ways’ of working.
We found as Lorde warned that change means growth, and growth can be painful yet we felt the importance of the work towards change struggling to find what “can mean new paths to our survival” (Lorde 1992 220).

Narratives clearly emerged from the doing of the research. The writings then report and reflect upon the stories which emerged including how we work effectively as change agents and still feed our families. Critique of workplace culture is integrated with a range of Ways of working which influences change.

**Research Methodology and Process - How May Such an Inquiry Proceed?**

**Historical and Cultural Context**

Without trying to draw the map for a territory we had not yet traversed, I invited these few women (described in greater detail in Section 2), to join together and consider work issues which are important to us. Quite deliberately, I chose women who worked in a certain ethical framework (also described more fully later). These women care about other workers, clients, family members and their friends. How did they work in Ways that are enabling and emancipatory and what do they do if the workplace dictated opposing ethics?

I started to explore these paradoxes. How do women perform in feminist Ways inside a patriarchal organisation? Indeed the notion of the paradox of feminising **patriarchy** (Kaufman Hall 1994) became an issue in itself. While feminists may aim to challenge and dismantle patriarchy, the notion of transforming it with feminism may be problematic. When I speak of transforming workplaces, I speak of a power shift. A shift away from domination power: - a few highly privileged white males in control; to what Eisler calls actualization power: - a partnership model of shared power and responsibility. We propose a very different type of social organisation (Eisler 1987) and this work demonstrates 12 Ways of bringing about such transformations.

Given that workplaces earlier this century were on the whole, patriarchal organisations, it is remarkable that big corporations have started to train executive managers in transformative strategies. Management theories and practices such as Total Quality Management (Hough 1993), Total Customer Responsiveness (Peters 1987), Transformative Community Building in organisations (Borei 1993), transformational leaders, Interactive Leaders (Rosener 1990) and the pursuit of excellence (Peters and Waterman 1982) apply strategies of providing service, relationship and sharing of power. It is notable that in all these management approaches, the core of operation lies in people-centred strategies. This is in stark contrast to the warlike strategies of earlier management styles. In fact Tom Peters in his book *In Search of Excellence* tells men “who wish to stay employed’ to study women’s ways of leadership (A burdene and Naisbitt 1993 64).

Wharton’s Edward M. Moldt says many men still ‘act like master sergeants. That’s not working nearly as well as it used to.’ Women involve people in decision making, he says, so they are more successful with people who ‘don’t want to be bossed around.’

A burdene and Naisbitt 1993 68

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Chapter 1 - Virginia Kaufman Hall - Women Transforming the Workplace -
We developed strategies and support to make the changes we wanted to see. We created our own ‘learning organisation’ (Senge 1990) where we critically investigated unhealthy work practices and designed strategies to manage and possibly change the situation.

We did collaborative research,

as we truly co-laboured -worked together towards transformative change.

As we worked together we developed what I call affirmative research as we affirmed our Ways of being while also developing strategies for change.

Core Research Concepts

Essentially, I developed a heuristic which is also a critique, reflexive learning and pro-active reconstructions of Ways of working. As earlier mentioned, I use upper case ‘W’ throughout, when I am referring to Ways of working which enable, emancipate, invite in creativity and directly calls the issues of power at play. The uppercase use, is intended to delineate a higher order of morality. I believe we have identified Ways in which these and many other women and men bring morality into the workplace and will not, cannot, leave morality outside.

A Heuristic Inquiry

We searched out an unknown goal by incremental exploration. Our guiding principle was to find out what is important to us at work and then to discover and develop how we go about ensuring that our ethics are activated.

Critique

I am not at all satisfied that our workplaces are on the whole, good (nurturing) places for people of both genders. I am advocating workplaces which enable workers to develop potential. This includes potential in learning, problem solving, communication skills (which are really about relationships!) and opportunities to exercise these skills and knowledge by being able to take initiatives.

Reflective

Reflection is used as a major research and learning tool. Focus group meetings enable us to reflect upon workplace situations and life issues. In this way an opportunity for meta-reflection, meta-cognition and meta-dialogue enabled us to ‘stand aside and think about’ the situation and possibilities for learning and/or change.

Pro-active Advocates

In the experience of these co-researchers, creating a forum to address our issues, provided us with some resources with which to address the issues. Thus we were strengthened, enabled to advocate change with a strong support group.

Areas of Inquiry

This work covers a range of interests and is multi-disciplinary. The main research methodology is story, the focus: women and our work. Story is used to hear what each woman knows and experiences. Through sharing these knowings in group interactions, we are able to develop further meaning for each of us. From
there, applications of this deeper knowledge are applied by the original storyteller, and/or another woman applying a strategy she has learned. Story becomes a tool for learning; story becomes a channel for knowledge; story is a Way of finding our own meaning.

"In storytelling, then, while asking ourselves what we can know and not know is important, particularly in terms of listening to others, and then deciding how to act in a particular situation, I think there is a more basic task at hand. This is the task of calling into question knowledge and of being both the teller and the listener, struggling for ways to take this out of the realm of abstraction and into political action."

Razack 1993 97

Through story, the co-researchers develop many layers of meaning. By applying this notion to Belenky et al's (1986) Women's Ways of Knowing, I make the following connections. Through listening to the voices of others, we have "Received Knowledge". By hearing the "inner voice" daring to be expressed through our storytelling, we become aware of our "Subjective Knowledge", which may stimulate a "quest for self" and thus creating our own meaning-making. Through hearing how things are done we gain "Procedural Knowledge" and so hear the "voice of reason" from which we become aware of our "Separate and Connected Knowing". By integrating the voices of all who tell stories around our issues, we develop "Constructed Knowledge" and thus are able to converse with many different peoples' ideas and knowledges (all quotations from Belenky et al 1986). Storytelling as a research method is extended in chapter 3.

The Telling of Our Stories

Clearly there are no works which do what we have done - researched this group of 12 women. We are unique - as would any group that set out to learn and explore together. This is not intended lightly. It was in the doing of the research that I and we, discovered the "specialness" of these ordinary women. Although we are ordinary women, given an opportunity, all ordinary women have a special story to tell when someone is listening with interest.

Most of us are not tall poppies in our fields. Some do attract publicity which infer they are leaders and ground-breakers. (This will be revealed!)

We choose our work to satisfy a deeper definition of success than monetary gain and power to control. Most workers are not known ground-breakers. All workers, women and men, have their construct of what work means to them. We set out to find out what work means to us and how work and all the rest of our lives, mutually influences and informs the other.

Naming and Claiming our Work

The topic which I decided upon in the early stages of our research Women's Ways of Working - Bringing our whole selves to work is worth considering. As a project working title, it served our purpose. It was only when writing the final version, that I decided upon the current title with 'transformation' in it. The emergent property of these women as change-agents, was self-evident by that time and needed highlighting. Much organisational literature which discussed transformative leadership seemed to define these women. These two titles still inter-relate. The 'whole-selves' concept I consider as an essential element for transformational community-building (Borei 1993) which requires genuine personal involvement.

Chapter 1 – Virginia Kaufman Hall – Women Transforming the Workplace –
Women's Ways

I speak here of their Ways. They are clearly twelve different women who do indeed work in different ways. I invited them to explore together particular Ways or working, which we discovered were (as indicated earlier) enabling, emancipatory and creative. Thus, we explore these ethical practices.

I cannot claim these are the ways of all women, nor do I think that is the case. I also have observed these Ways of operating in many men. These are 'human' qualities rather than gender-specific. Clearly it is significant that I have observed these Ways in women, and so I explore that phenomenon.

I believe I have modelled the ethical practice of these women in the research methodology. As a guiding principle, I design enabling, emancipatory and creative methodology and processes. If I was in error at any time, I had eleven advocates to correct omissions or to flag a new area of concern. We are very confident then, of the ethical processes we have used. It has enabled the development of authority and creativity in all of us as co-researchers and subsequently with co-workers in our own individual and separate workplaces.

Bringing our whole selves to work

This Way of being refers to the integration mentioned previously -our whole selves operating in the personal, public and socio-political domains. It also incorporates the richness of possibilities for creativity and problem-solving. I openly critique workplaces which limit possibilities. I claim that many rigid structures and bureaucratic procedures, severely limit the use of both creativity and learning.

This notion is analysed phenomenologically throughout the research group's individual stories and group focus. The implications of this critique leads us to pro-active practices which expand possibilities rather than limiting the options. We tell how we do that in our workplaces and overview some of the literature which also tells of work arrangements which invite creativity and enables workers' and organisational learning.

The notions of 'whole selves' also incorporate the spiritual self. We examine what keeps us alive, what keeps the home-fire burning within and tell how and why we do that. In chapter 11, I look at places which encourage the spiritual, creative life in the workplace.

Tools for Readers: Information to Support the Journey - a Style Sheet

This thesis is written as a feminist reconstruction of workplace practice. The doing of the thesis then, needs to demonstrate among other things, my principles of practice. These include the use of everyday language wherever possible, ethical practice throughout and methodologies that are appropriate to the research group.
Language

Just because this thesis is written in the English language and further strives to ensure that the genre is 'plain English', does not imply that there is one style of language used here. Women have many different voices. Different groups develop their own cultural language, professions enshrine their specialities in jargon and the meanings of our words change in different contexts. We all struggle constantly to work with Trinh's 'plurality of languages' (Trinh 1993 158).

The guiding ethic for writing-up is always to use language that the co-researchers can understand. I consider it arrogance and poor research, to discuss people's lives, work and innermost thoughts, in language that does not speak with them, only about them. While this has been my goal, I have not always succeeded. Two women (a psychotherapist and a medical doctor) were particularly alienated by the sociological and organisational jargon. While their responses changed with many rewrites and distributions, it remains an issue.

It is problematic to co-research and therefore write about one's friends and colleagues in academically acceptable language which is not their voice.

I have tried to address this problem throughout, by explaining terms in context, rather than creating a separate glossary. A glossary itself seemed to promote separation. I am aiming for inclusion.

I also followed Mary Daly's (1987) example and played with words. Sometimes I have put 'odd' ones together, other times used Daly's coined terms. I believe in order to create new Ways of being and doing, we also require new Ways of talking and writing. As Maturana and Varela (1987) say (in language that is incomprehensible to most people, and therefore I will translate it), the act of languaging brings forth our world. As we see it and experience it, we then express it. Thus we define the experience and the knowledge by the words we use.

When reporting on the research group, I have used individual's words wherever I could. These are represented by indented margin and italics. For example here is a comment upon the Ways this group supported transformational change agents given at the last weekend meeting:

_The group developed into a support network in lots of different creative Ways. We were able to bring problems to a group made up of people outside work. Often the process of just being affirmed was just as useful as getting a solution and then we would generate options, possible tools, and so find support._

There has been a tension between my desire to sort, analyse, draw out implications from the women's words and my preference to allow them to speak for themselves. The result is an integration of many voices. In section 2, the women have the most say, as it was important to allow their stories to speak through. Issues are drawn out and connected to literature in section 3.

For these reasons everyday words like 'kids' and 'shit' are included. Stylistically, the writing aims to communicate clearly, rather than to present formally. For this reason 1990's and other numerals are given rather than spelling out the words of a number (nineteen nineties). I am informed by many journalists who write particularly on women's issues, (Steinem 1983, Knepper 1990) and
others such as Australian journalist Julie Clarke (pers. com.) and consciously continue to learn to write more like a journalist than an academic. This use of language does not deny rigour. Far from it. As is discussed in chapter 5 where language is connected to the research influences, there is further rigour in working with complexity in clear language understandable to the people involved in the complexity.

Judi Marshall sums up the issue with references to Rich (1979) 'having to tell our truths in an alien language' and Spender 'starting by being in the wrong' and Olsen's (1978) 'telling it slant'.

"In speaking and writing, women are therefore using what is to them a foreign language, because it does not include direct reference points for their experience. Women must engage in a translation process to convert their meanings into male terms and forms of speech in order to express them in socially understood and accepted terms."

Marshall 1984 51

We speak in our words to
know our own experience.

At times when I want to draw out a significant point or highlight an insight, I use this calligraphy:  
(as demonstrated above) to isolate a statement. If it appears in italics, then it originates from a group member.

"Every human act takes place in language" (Maturana and Varela 1987 247). By talking or writing we create a world that makes meaning in-between the act and the knowing. This meaning-making is also 'in between', in the sense of the different meanings people will place upon one expression. So our acts of language exist in a space of co-existence with other's constructions of meaning. Underneath every act of doing and/or languaging, is an ethical meaning. For us, as women, to get across our ethical meanings, we must speak with our own words. For me, as a social activist using participatory research as an act of transformation, I deliberately use language as a tool. I can and may sculpt a new shape -the shape of the shapeshifters. The shapeshifters in this case, are the women who dare to create different structures, different work procedures, different ways of being and knowing in the workplace, so that the full creativity of human potential can be accessed.

We are looking at women's Ways of working knowing and being. To fully understand multiple meanings in our lived experience this research is both reflexive and considers phenomena in different contexts. For these two reasons, findings, ideas and focal points are examined from a range of perspectives at various points in the thesis, some more than once. This accurately reflects the research process where we would return to earlier ideas, or re-focus on statements previously made and so uncover deeper insights.

2 Defined as "transcendental transformation of symbol-shapes, idea shapes, relation-shapes, emotion-shapes, word-shapes, action-shapes; Moon-Wise Metamorphosis"

Daly 1992 212
I have included some poetry I have written during the research process to express some processes symbolically. Metaphor and story-telling are included where they were part of the research process. Story proved a creative and productive Way to focus the group on particular workplace situations. Poetry, metaphor and story are used at times to introduce a central issue into a chapter as this one- giving my garden as a metaphor for our world - our context.

A further stylistic device of writing from the right margin in Avant Garde type face is used to indicate my voice of meta-dialogue (Böhm et al 1991). Here I am commenting upon the adjoining content as might a Greek chorus. I use this device to reflect upon historical or personal insights and comment upon the process.

Spelling
Australian - English spelling is used throughout except within quotes which are given as originally published.

Overview : Structure and Content of Thesis
This introductory section entitled Starting Where We Are - we can get there from here briefly outlines the nature of this inquiry into women at work.

Chapter 2 Claiming Our Place in the World - a landscape of our Historical, Philosophical and Theoretical context, positions the work within the writings. Our theory emerges from our day-to-day experience. A range of interest areas are integrated into this multi-disciplinary work. These include feminism - both theory and methodology. It also includes post-modernism's input (particularly related to feminism) and this is acknowledged briefly. Research ideas around participatory action research and collaborative research are considered (although there is much more on these areas in chapter 3). The morality theories of Gilligan and Porter acted as germinal notions (rather than seminal ideas) Working and living with ethics leads me to include eco-feminism briefly. I felt it important to contextualise our place in herstory; feminist history, especially including the constructions of our mother's world-views.

Researching Influences on Our Affirmative Inquiry Process arise from four main methodologies discussed in chapter 3. These four areas are 1. contextualising and informing life experience; 2. feminist influences on the research, particularly researchers writing of their work; 3. a range of collaborative and synchronous research methods and 4. stories as a tool and discovery pathway for research processes.

Section 2 reveals the research findings in the light of the notion that We are the Now Generation of Changing Women.

Chapter 4 invites the reader to Meet the Women: an introduction to each woman giving work areas, family background and major preferences in work practices.

Chapter 5 discusses the process of Growing Our Own - Research Process - Spiralling Story Spinning. This is a building of a philosophy; a development of theory from the thinking underpinning the whole inquiry. I look at why we experience the workplace as we do and use Jungian terms to develop notions of masculine and feminine aspects, and explore these in the workplace. I explore
masculine and feminine aspects, and explore these in the workplace. I explore these aspects, which are available to people of both genders as a way to understand internal processes which serve to construct our experience within external constructs of our society. I use a story, *The Peasant's Wise Daughter*, to express integration and creativity at work in problem solving.

I develop terminology for four Ways in which the women of the research group work. It also describes qualities of our knowing:

1. We work within the political realities of the system.
2. We use our own women's cunning (intuition, creativity).
3. We ensure justice by using absurd, shocking and unusual strategies at times as well as the subtle and also work with traditional structures in ethical Ways.
4. Love is our strongest weapon of all.

I develop what is for us, our grounded theory: gender identity including the position of women as 'other' and our preference for accessing all human qualities. I explore here our Ways of knowing such as taking everyday processes and transforming them into research tools. I tell the story of how we became a learning community, that is, a community of knowers.

I present the chronology of the research praxis in chapter 6, entitled *What we Did*. This includes an overview of the mechanics of the research with major events and turning points briefly noted and a summary of meetings. This chapter concludes with brief comment on the inquiry process.

I focus upon the daily construction of our work ethics in chapter 7, *Why We Do What We Do*. This is followed by the co-researchers Reflections on Researching and Learning in chapter 8.

Section 3, *From Women Present to Women Future: Changing the Constructs of Workplaces* draws out major issues important to the co-researchers.

First I discuss the matters of consequence that were identified by the women of the research group in chapter 9, *Women at Work - Issues for Change*. I ponder upon how we construct ourselves as Changing Women - the title of a Navaho Indian story. I describe why we women believe we need change in our workplaces and lived experience.

A major theme that kept emerging and re-emerging was perceptions around 'power'. In chapter 10 *P.O.W.E.R.- People (who are seen as 'Other') - Women Enabling Reform*.

This chapter opens with our 'power under' experiences and then proceeds to reconstruct the use of power to enable and emancipate all people. I play with concepts, test out some strategies and talk-up our transformation of power as an enabling force to be directed for the betterment of all oppressed peoples.

All the new paradigm ideas in the world, all the strong feminist talk about emancipation and empowerment, won't change profit-making organisations that see their only responsibility to their shareholders. In chapter 11 *The Atalanta Syndrome*, I put forward Ways that we may move from old paradigm organisations to new integrated workplaces.
In this chapter we see the transformation ideas that the women put into practice within their own lives, applied by multi-nationals through to small one woman businesses. I present pro-active exploration of honouring and profiting from full human potential in the workplace. I show how some workplaces create more flexibility by integrating the qualities of both feminine and masculine aspects. The strong organisation will be a learning organisation -one that bends and changes. My belief is, on the face of it, simplistic yet true: What holds an organisation together is the people. In this chapter I also move beyond critique by reviewing and promoting 'radical' workplaces which challenge and change current workplace cultures.

In the concluding Section 4, I review the power of story-telling for changing women and for use in changing workplaces. Chapter 12. End Story - Connecting Story is introduced by Aboriginal elder and poet, Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal tribe's story of - The Paperbark Woman. This story tells of the elder who collects and tells the transforming stories of her tribe.

I review the processes which we have shown to support change - how we create our vision in our everyday world. This includes co-researchers highlighting of major characteristics throughout our research process. I conclude with a brief evaluative critique of our process of storytelling for social change (Razack 1993).

The Appendices are also integrated into this work as section 5. These include the Story of the Mother (A1) - our mythical herstorical context. This was written in the first year of the research process and when circulated to the group, inspired 'ah-ha' experiences and recognition of the myths that have constructed our present day-to-day reality. It raised the core research question which lasted throughout: why do we experience the world as we do? and How can we do it differently?

The Appendices include The Interview Schedule (A2), Atalanta’s Strategic Plan (A3) reports upon the use of Fran Peavey’s strategic questioning applied to a work situation with one of the research group. The final Appendix is also a report; a research paper funded by TAFE NSW to review the concerns of Senior Women in Management (A4).

So the story begins. There are many stories to tell and much meaning to make from the transforming Ways of working of these 12 women in the 1990's in Australia.
Chapter 2

Claiming Our Place in the World
a landscape of our
Historical, Philosophical and Theoretical Context

From Gardening to Theory - Growing a Theory That Informs Change

Introduction
At different stages during this work my garden provides a metaphor for the ground covered.

What grows in my garden?

Huge weeds called radiata
planted in another age
when European was the one culture
worth cultivating.

... all foreign, Occidental, not of this land.
There are some tall straight gums
oriades - mountain ash
they battle with the pines and often they die
infused with the acid of competition.

Further into the wilderness grow tree ferns,
as they were in the primordial forest.

Natives and Occidentals growing side-by-side.
Privets and hawthorn choke native orchids.
I dig out and discard that which overpowers
and nurture plants which grow compatibly.

I go into a workplace with respect for those who are there and for what has gone before. I also hold a vision for what is possible. So, I look for others in the workplace who have similar values and a vision.

"In the real world, we start with what exists, confront the challenges as they come and derive great satisfaction from doing so. This has also been my experience in gardening: it has been very gratifying to work within existing conditions...rather than being limited by them."

Keating 1993 58

As I found my garden established with foreign ideas of beauty from another time, I notice the established structures in the workplace. The research group of women as self-proclaimed change-agents, want to see improvements. We therefore look at what already works, what is valuable, useful, informing and supportive for workers and clients. We also identify what is not useful. I hack away at dead wood structures and bureaucracies which waste our creative energy.

"Since both gardens and organizations are constantly evolving, their organizational design must accommodate change. Repressive organizational climates stifle all but the least imaginative individuals."

Keating 1993 59
...and this is why we want to change it. Each woman of the research group works to eliminate stifling practices and applies her creativity to workplace problems.

Purpose and Overview of this chapter

In this chapter, I harvest from the literature which contextualises our investigations. The work is fed by many inputs: trans-disciplinary and multi-focussed. I include a range of materials, which serve to explain some of the complexities of our lives and work in 1990's Australia.

First, I discuss notions of how theory serves this work. Then, I briefly build context within organisational and workplace practices. Later in the work there is emphasis on change rather than focussing on the existing status quo or re-interpreting history. Feminist writers are predominant. Recent social history told as 'herstory' provides an overview.

Using Theory to Develop Understanding

This work was designed as affirmative research so that we could talk up strategies for change together. We wanted to convey how we already do it and identify how we can sustain ourselves, provide resources and support others. This purpose could not be achieved by only researching works already written. Neither would change be instigated if I selected individual women to interview. Only by collective action could we extend the value of the work beyond personal growth and professional learnings. Thus, the ripple effect (setting an example that extends to others) was important. It means that the collective experiences go beyond our meetings and into our workplaces. These related experiences also stirred up friends and professional acquaintances as our critical questioning and reflexive thinking of our workplace concerns carried over into other networks.

"Where feminism has the most potential to convert and inspire people is in its effort to speak to the needs of everyday life... how rarely feminist theory provides any actual strategies for altering everyday lives."

bell hooks 1993 40

Feminist writings are used to integrate the social and historical position of the women in the research group. Because this research tells their stories, there is no single statement to construct one world view. I state my position as the prime researcher and presume to speak for the others in the group at times. These distributed writings continuously sent to them for review have ensured ethical and accurate congruency.

My background ‘thinking’ (the developing theory), arose from several sources as listed in chapter 1. Throughout the main body of the work, current media comment is also included when it informs or impacts upon our concerns. The foreground develops from our day-to-day dilemmas. The research process then, reveals the learnings and changes within and around these women.

My goal is to integrate theory, method and praxis.
We need multiple world-views from different disciplines and interest arenas, to inform us as "we transform women’s subordinate positions in our dominant institutions" (Apple 1991 x). Combining theory and practice in this way is successful when the “representation of reality” is tested “constantly by its usefulness in helping women transform that reality” (Jaggar 1983 387). I critique work practices which do not serve us as women and draw out women’s stories which identify such situations. Significantly, the research goes further than critique; we look at how we make a difference day-to-day, in our own workplaces. We strive to ‘feminise the patriarchy’. This previous phrase needs defining: we take what is useful to us in the workplace, discard that which does not serve people and strive to re-construct an integrated institution that is experienced more like a learning organisation (Senge 1990). I call it ‘feminising’ rather than humanising (which indeed it is) because these are aspects of humanity which are perceived as missing by this research group. The ‘feminising’ aspects are qualities of nurturing, caring, creative problem solving that is hard on the problem and soft on the people (Gilligan 1982). Clearly all humans are capable of these qualities. In our workplaces, we are noticing the need for emphasising the imbalance before we can integrate the practices - in all peoples.

I believe this research gives 12 examples of bridging Gilligan’s identification of ‘the ethic of care’ to Porter’s (1991) notion of a morality based upon the ‘self-in-relations’. Thus we transform by integration, rather than separation.

People in our society, interact with various organisations; schools, hospitals, local government bureaucracies etc. The most common interaction may well be the place where we work. These institutions, large or small, are usually imbued with ‘structures’ (including the ‘mind-set’ resulting from organisational culture) and procedures. When I speak of ‘structures’ I am considering the ‘way things are’ at each place. The daily routine of work hours, how people report to work, whether there are flexible arrangements for parents when their kids are sick; in short -how the place works!

In Kantor and Lonstein’s notion of “structural dynamics” they define as a deeper level of structure...

"Paradigms of the system: The overriding set of assumptions embedded in the organization’s values about authority and boundaries. People may expect their system to be closed (emphasizing stability, group loyalty, security, clear boundaries, and tight controls); open (emphasizing flexibility, collaboration, consensus, and authentic communication); or random (emphasizing variety, individuality, high achievement, excitement, unpredictability, and fun).

Kantor and Lonstein 1994 415

These structures arise out of history and our own thinking. First there is the paradigm -the mind-set, from which it arises. Then there is the organisational structure which is built upon a certain world-view. If the mind-set is patriarchal, then the externally- imposed structure will tend towards the hierarchical. If the mind-set is that of community-building, then the structures put into place will tend to the co-operative or collective. There are of course, many variations in workplaces. I speak not only of organisational charts describing positions and lines of communication. I also refer to the mind-set that every worker brings to their
function. A person in a large hierarchical bureaucracy can bring a co-operative team player mind-set to their work. Similarly, a member of a collective may look for orders to be given. Various examples of such phenomenon are included in Section 2.

Structures - Limitations or Vehicles?

"All organizations begin with a formal structure designed to achieve their core activities. To date, all the structures designed have been inadequate in their ability to capitalize on human potentialities."

Argyris 1968 344

This comment over two decades ago could still stand. Yet the managerial approaches have changed to include the values expressed by Total Quality Management (Hough 1993) and Tom Peters' (1982) striving for excellence. New management theories are less overtly tied up with masculine values (more of this in later chapters). As organisations step out of the limitations of patriarchal management ideologies of control and domination, there is more interest in developing relationship (TQM) and encouraging greater involvement from workers through team work and creative / lateral problem-solving (de Bono 1994, Kanter 1983, 90, 92, Peters and Waterman 1982, Sculley 1982, Senge 1990, 94, and others).

Feminising Patriarchy - a Paradox of Paradigms

What do I mean by putting these two opposing terms together? How does that inform us about the impact of women in workplaces of Australia in the 1990's?

I stated in the introduction that language is a powerful construct of our social domain. My intention is to go beyond polarities and find what is useful. ‘Languaging’ may help us to do that - by using terms in atypical ways. This device can shake us out of habits of syntax and vocabulary, so that we hear the ideas a little differently. This is what Mary Daly (1984) does with her ‘be-speaking’. Maturana & Varela (1987) state that we create our social experiences through what we say and do. This view may be more easily held by members of privileged classes, yet I am reminded of Ghandi speaking, living and creating his united India, and Louise Hay, speaking her way out of childhood abuse and trauma through creating her own affirmations (Hay 1988).

"Every structure is compelling. We humans, as human, exist in a network of structural couplings that we continually weave through the permanent linguistic trophalaxis1 of our behaviours. Language was never invented by anyone only to take in an outside world. Therefore it cannot be used as a tool to reveal the world. Rather it is by languaging that the act of knowing, in the behavioural coordination which is language, brings forth a world. We work out our lives in a mutual linguistic coupling, not because language permits us to reveal ourselves but because we are constituted in language in a continuous becoming that we bring forth with others."

Maturana & Varela 1987 234

1 trophalaxis - the structural correlations that takes place between organisms through exchange of food or secretions; (Maturana & Varela 1987 233) e.g., ants communicating
Let me clarify my use of language in this research.

*Language to Effect Change*

My use of the term ‘feminine’ and ‘feminising’, here and throughout the work, is problematic - these are clumsy and polarising words. I am using ‘feminine’ here, in the Jungian, archetypal sense. It denotes a Way of being that incorporates the values of emancipation, equity and egalitarianism. While it evokes thoughts of nurturing and softness, one who acts out of their ‘feminine’, may also act with aggression (just as a mother tiger fights to protect her young). These qualities are inherent in most human beings: a parent nurtures the young infant, a manager encourages a new employee who is not yet confident; either gender can enliven these meanings.

The term ‘feminine’ is inherently disturbing because it stimulates antithetical notions. *I do* want to address the imbalance of the lack of ‘feminine’ values in the workplace - not to polarise, but to integrate these ‘human’ qualities in places where they are missing. To discuss the nature of the patriarchy we need to be aware of the contention (some might even say *fact*) that many of the values which are rewarded are displayed mainly by men. Therefore I contend they are termed ‘masculine’ - meaning goal-orientated, without being personal, dividing work from families, separating the heart and the mind. Yes, these terms can be contentious when applied to the masculine alone, but this is necessary in order to underline this point of view.

To effectively critique this polarisation, I need to name what *isn’t* there. What I see missing are qualities that lie within the ‘feminine’ aspect along with Eisler (1987, 1993), Marshall (1983) Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987) French (1992). This list could quite realistically, cover much feminist literature. It would not be expressed in feminist literature which exhorts women to be as men. Such works are fewer now, yet in the 1980’s writers such as Still (1986, 1988) promoted success for women in masculine terms. It seems quite likely that this line of thinking is changing. In her latest book, Leonie Still (1994) acknowledges at length the ‘other’ qualities many women bring to managerial positions.

While the terms ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ may also represent contrasting thinking, the limitations of our language apparently does not have one term for ‘whole person’ qualities. Later in my chapter on changing workplaces, I speak of feminising the workplace which does not mean pink painted walls and flowers on the desk. Similarly, when I speak of masculine values in the workplace the term is not fully representative. The masculine values that are lauded and rewarded as I’ve implied, have been and continue to be those of the dominating master.

“... it is not a masculine identity pure and simple, but the multiple, complex cultural identity of the master formed in the context of class, race species and gender domination, which is at issue.”

Plumwood 1993 5

I have observed that when the qualities of the dominating master are at play, feminine qualities can become those of the emotional manipulator. These qualities are further investigated in chapter 5.

If we are to realistically grapple with environmental and population problems then striving towards the ‘possible human’ (Houston 1982) includes all human qualities which respect all life: different gender, different cultures and

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Chapter 2 ~ Virginia Kaufman Hall ~ Women Transforming the Workplace ~ 21
different species. Just calling for the feminising of our policies, workplaces and communities runs the risk of claiming only a few elements of humanity as the solution. History has shown us repeatedly, that there is not one solution to replace one form of domination over another (Plumwood 1993).

My goal is to go beyond opposing, divisive terminologies. As indicated, I find it limiting that as yet, our language does not seem to have a term that incorporates the fullness of the feminine and the masculine which is in all peoples (unless we just say 'human' or the more caring 'humane'). The term human and the use of the word androgyny, like many others, seem to deny the feminine aspect. We have been made invisible in the Family of Man (Steinem 1983, Spender 1980, Friedan 1963, Woolf 1929, Austen 1818). However, androgyny arises at times and titles emerge such as The Androgynous Manager - Blending Male & Female Styles for Today's Organization (Argent 1983). The idea of inclusiveness is useful, our language limiting.

"The fact remains, however, that we are all human beings. We are all the children of patriarchy. ...What began as masculine values has degenerated into lust for control. Power has bludgeoned both our femininity and our masculinity. We all function with these two different energies. ...For me these words are not gender bound."

Woodman 1993 2

Daly used the terms gynocentric which is useful when referring to 'woman-centred' qualities and ways of thinking. It does not cover the range of human qualities. I strive for integration via acknowledgment, valuing and using women's Ways of transformation.

I agree with Gloria Steinem that...

"The alternative to being a feminist is being a masochist. We're whole human beings or we're not."

Steinem 1993 38

Social ecology as another Way of integrating all human qualities

The practice of social ecology at the University of Western Sydney (Hawkesbury), is striving to attain this integration. This search for wholeness; this acting out of systems both for informing and to increase awareness is a major characteristic of the discipline. We are striving to create the practice and the theory which leads to informed action, just as are feminists who are committed to change. There are few models around for us to follow. There is no bible, no manual, which tells us this is the way it is done'.

"Currently, there are no theoretical means, except for fine sentiments and good will, that enable feminism to ally itself with other social movements that oppose the power networks that sustain the white, masculine universal subject."

Brennan 1993 vii

As social ecology is still very much 'on the academic edge' and not mainstream ('male-stream?') there are still plenty of fine sentiments and good will expressed towards feminism. Just as feminist theorists struggled 30 years ago (and still do) to validate their theory, so do social ecologists strive to establish this 'new' trans-disciplinary study. (In the early days of sociology and anthropology, there was a similar struggle.) It is early days yet and the feminist debate addresses day-to-day work issues. These issues include student access for
oppressed peoples and the difficulty of ensuring a gender balance on staff. However, few structural / systemic changes are effected. The sharing of knowledge and insight goes on. Feminist researchers contribute theory and praxis to collaborative research (Davis, 1993 - a practising social ecologist nurse academic, Reinharz 1992, Maguire 1988 and others).

U.W.S. Hawkesbury-style social ecologists are not alone in striving towards systemic change (Pinn and Russel 1989). Macy (1993) terms such striving as ‘dependent co-arising’, where we act out of awareness of the nature of our inter-dependence, with nature and with other peoples. Covey (1990) calls it ‘inter-dependence. Senge (1990, 1994) and Hames (1993) and others, approach it as systems thinking applied to management. Agriculturalists work towards sustainable agriculture and planners towards sustainable development. The honouring of differences and the richness of experiencing different cultures from multi-culturalist policies, is another expression of this approach (Gunew and Yeatman 1993).

The nexus of feminism and social ecology

In social ecology we study the relationships between people and their environment Their environment includes the inner as well as the outer physical, emotional and spiritual, the human-built environments and that of nature (Kaufman Hall 1994).

Just as there are many feminisms, there are many different ways social ecology is defined and enacted. Many people working towards equity may not call themselves feminists, many do what we may call social ecology, even though they may not have heard of the term.

Patriarchy / Hierarchy

This ‘impossible’ and ‘idealistcally unsound’ notion of feminising patriarchies is a process of reform. Many of the research group women work in hierarchical workplaces. They consciously work with expansive approaches which may be identified as social ecology, as learning organisations or as equal opportunity practices. I am acknowledging a very close relationship between social ecology and feminism. Many of our present research practices are informed by feminist research and theory.

Not all the co-researchers work in hierarchies, however. Some work in their own businesses, one specifically set up as a ‘learning organisation’, another in a co-operative with a ‘flat’ structure. Their stories of these experiences are told in Section 2. These women have found that although the structures’ are different, some mind-sets are still limiting. We look at how to expand creativity, given the social heritage of patriarchy we have all received.

The hierarchical structure of most of our work and social organisations is patriarchal in its nature and historical roots. Hierarchy comes from the Greek meaning ‘sacred rule’ (Spence 1969 12 in Ianello 1992 15). The term is strongly linked with Christian organisational structures to “denote the power given by Christ to his apostles and their successors to form and govern the Church” (Scrutton 1982 202 in Ianello 1992 15).

In current business theory the term is used by Scrutton to define “...any system in which the distributions of power, privilege and authority are both systematic and unequal.”
In such a system there is great power given to people because of their position. This positional power gives the right to punish, coerce, as well as to encourage, support and provide resources. The French and Raven (1959) analyses of power are all operative within such a hierarchical system and form the basis of most organisational theories concerning power.

Many feminists challenge such a narrow view of power. In this research group, the women have defined their preferred mode of power as 'one which enables' both themselves and others. This emancipatory view is not compatible with hierarchical/patriarchal levels of control about power. Yet much leadership and management literature, is now advocating more people-honouring approaches. This leads me to question: how can a transformational leader truly encourage community-building within a hierarchical structure? Is it possible? The co-researchers tell of Ways they manage this problematic situation.

The oligarchic view of power and resulting controlling structures, are not only limitations to women. In practice, they limit most people. When there are only a few at the top, those few in most cases are men. In Australia they are also mostly white, upper middle class, Anglo-Saxon and rarely concerned with emancipation of others. I have observed that social ecologists, (women and men), hold similar values which drive the study and practice of social ecology. The areas of change which I advocate here, are useful to all peoples - except perhaps those very few who now enjoy limiting the power and rewards to themselves!

We need more flexibility in the workplace to invite a greater richness from workers and to meet their needs as complete people living in a community. An organisation which is flexible can bend to the winds of change without breaking. The strong organisation is a learning organisation (Senge 1990) - one that bends and changes; rigid structures are already breaking down, brittle with worn-out values and crumbling organisational mortar. What truly holds an organisation together is its people (Argyris 1968). They construct the environment and maintain the culture.

I see that people are not rigid units of production, despite rationalist economists claims. Nor, are they only “tools”. People are variable, with different needs. Different people bring diverse skills of their own into the workplace environment. By their very diversity, people are fascinatingly whole beings - not just ‘hands’ that produce things.

“The era of using people as production tools is coming to an end. Participation is infinitely more complex to practise than conventional corporate unilateralism, just as democracy is much more cumbersome than dictatorship. But there will be few companies that can afford to ignore either of them.”

Semler 1993 86

Co-operative workplaces challenge and change current workplace cultures. I believe organisations must learn to respond or fail competitively. A “learning organization” uses systemic thinking for planning and procedural design.

While I cannot claim that all women work in these ways, I show studies that reveal many women’s Ways of working are leading the way in transformational leadership - that of the enabler. Power is to be shared, and flourishes in a climate that encourages and allows us to ‘put love where our labour
is' (Ralph Waldo Emerson in Roddick 1991 161). It is often women (like Anita Roddick, founder of the Body Shop), who are showing this can be done and make a profit too. I chose to work with women, as I was curious to find out why these women of the research, followed such an ethic at work. Not only why, but how they put it into action.

Many commentators see the 1990's as a time of confusion and changes (Mackay 1993, Kanter 1990). There is no longer a defined book of procedures. In advocating more flexible approaches we are removing certainty. The possible result of states of confusion in our workplaces are opportunities for changing attitudes, expanding knowledge and ways of working. The “Learning Organisation” shows one effective and systemic way to make the best of it. Women in the workplace are bringing about changes because we are there. “Women are transforming the world we live in” (Aburdene & Naisbitt 1993a). Women are “prepared to break with business convention to get at the heart of the matter” (Aburdene & Naisbitt 1993b).

“Many women bring a healthy disrespect for the status quo” into the workplace (Kerpan 1993). Many women I have worked with over 25 years of multiple careers, also bring with them a strong dynamic of authenticity. (Certainly not all women, there are female phonies just as there are phoney men.) In selecting women into the research, I identified those who seemed to bring their whole selves to work.

“...being authentic means bringing all of yourself. Society has encouraged workers to leave their selves at the door.’ Of course, outside pressures and responsibilities come through the door with everyone anyway, but, those in the predominantly hierarchical work force have learned to put on the ‘proper’ business demeanor and shut out the rest of their lives while on the job. Focus on work is certainly called for. However, what is out of balance is that feelings have not been welcome in the work setting.”

Barrentine 1993 11/12

It is women who are at the forefront of these changes because it is women who predominantly carry the need for care of ‘significant others’. These voices are rarely heard in professional corridors.

It is women who often bring fresh ideas and creative problem-solving which arise out of years of innovating in the home. The hardest job I ever had was childcare of toddlers. I believe women who survive that, can do anything!

“...women need to know about how other women, from every walk of life, are shaping social, political and economic trends, and that men, in order to function in today’s world, need to know about it too.”

Aburdene & Naisbitt 1993a xi

Feminist Theory -the Basis of Feminist Research

The design and practice of the research followed feminist principles, as articulated by Rhoda Linton below. She uses active principles which specifically include strategies for action as a purpose.

I am now bridging theory with the praxis that developed through how we researched together. My research methodology is fully discussed later.
"Characteristics of Feminist Principles / Activities

1. Women are the active central focus/subjects;
2. Cooperative group activity is the predominant modus operandi;
3. There is recognized need for liberation from the oppression of the status quo;
4. Issues affecting women are identified, and strategies for action developed;
5. There is an open, inclusive, accessible, creative, dynamic process between people, among activities, or in relation to ideas; and
6. There is a commitment of respect to include women's ideas, theories, experiences, and action strategies from diverse experiences that appear to be, and sometimes are, in conflict."

Linton 1989 276

To this model I added further principles of practice:

5a. That there was an open, inclusive, accessible, creative, dynamic process operating within each woman as we openly challenged each other's assumptions and interpretations.

6a. In a commitment of respect and deeper understanding, we allowed and dealt with the tension arising from contradictions. Where our actions and statements contradicted ourselves, we were challenged; where we contradicted each other we accepted the tension.

7. The group gave permission to allow and support change as women worked through strategies and processes to assist their change.

Point 7 describes our version of feminism, which serves to liberate all oppressed peoples so that our feminism in action operates from...

"... not only a set of beliefs, but also a set of theoretical constructions about the nature of women's oppression, and the part that this oppression plays within social reality more generally. We suggest that implicit or explicit in any set of beliefs are more general ideas about the nature of social reality, and these ideas are theoretical ideas.

...It will be obvious from this that we don't accept any grand theory interpretation of what 'theory' means, but prefer something much simpler which recognises that we are all of us 'theoreticians' because we all of us use our values and beliefs to interpret and so construct the social world."

Stanley & Wise 1993 64 (emphasis mine)

Because of the co-researchers' emancipatory and enabling values and beliefs this inquiry set out to understand not only why many women have a raw deal at work, but to also find out how this need not be so.

We are acutely aware that we now enjoy privileged positions where we have choices and opportunities. We prefer to use these privileges in ways that opens up further choice and opportunities for those we work with. That is our version of feminist theory; that is our "feminist thinking" which leads to action.
This research is based upon the assumption that theory upon which any action is based, needs to be an empowering one, rather than further entrenching oppression. It becomes empowering when we go beyond the naming of the oppression and act.

*Foundations of My Theory Building*

1. Hannah Arendt’s (1978) notion of ‘thinking’ takes it out of the intellectual (male Aristotelian) realm and claims thinking as a process available to everybody.

2. Janice Raymond (1986) further builds on Arendt’s idea to discuss ‘thoughtfulness’ as a characteristic of female friendship.

   “Thinking is oriented to meaning whereas the intellect searches for truth...”
   Raymond 1986 221

This making of meaning is central to our inquiry. The women met to understand the meaning we create from our work. We wanted to discover what we ‘mean’ by doing our work.

We develop theory on our praxis, through critical and reflexive thinking stimulated by dialoguing about what we do, how we do it and why we do it.

I no longer want to use theory to separate and divide off those who know and understand, from those who don’t. The privilege of extended education has enabled many more to think critically and reflexively about how and why we live our lives as we do.

We are all keen to go further than understanding. We 12 women work to make a difference and strive to live as bell hooks describes.

“I want people to advocate feminism as politics. Feminism is perceived as a life-style, as something you become rather than something you do. I’m concerned about getting people to think of it as a movement to change something. It’s not just a movement about women getting equal pay, which I believe masses of people are more willing to deal with.”
bell hooks 1993 38

This work purposely creates a politics of action in everyday life. A politics which expands options and creativity for problem-solving in the workplace. Thus I go looking for different strategies, many of which arise in feminist thinking and practice and talk about how to utilize them in our lives (bell hooks 1993 41).

Like Gilligan (1982) Harding (1987) and many others, I believe that women’s research should be research for and with women, and usually be enacted
by women. By using collaborative research, I take this inclusive activity into the whole of the research implementation; what Harding (1987) calls ‘the same critical plane’—meaning researching with people who have similar access to power. With myself as the prime researcher (in the same sense as prime-mover, rather than a ‘primary’ sense of directing the research), then I include:

"... the beliefs and the behaviours of the researcher ...(as) part of the empirical evidence... (of) the claims advanced in the results of the research.

Harding 1987 20

Like feminist historians (Summers 1994/75, Kaplan 1992, Mathews 1982, Windschuttle 1980 and others), I renounce the assumption of a privileged male white reality as the norm. The argument of difference, multi-culturalism and any theory that pushes us to the edge (hooks 1984), celebrates the richness of difference for not only acknowledging varieties of life experiences, but also using that diversity for creative problem-solving.

As another social ecology researcher noted:
"Women's experiences are pluralistic and are related to class, race, age, ethnicity and culture. Women are also an oppressed group in society... it can be realised that not all women experience oppression in the same way or to the same degree. Therefore each woman's experience is valid."

Davis 1993 25

My feminism is about revolution. If we critique our work lives and day-to-day lives outside of work, then we will need to develop strategies for going beyond survival and coping to originating thriving and creative responses. We also develop further strategies for future situations. This is critical social action arising from our feminist critique.

We do not have to learn any elitist grand theory of the mind to acknowledge feminist theory that has gone before or to write our own theory.

We now speak with our own voice which is informed by feminist thinkers' theorists before us. Virginia Woolf (1929) asserted that we need a room of our own and independent means to take the time to write. Betty Friedan (1963) gave our problem a name and Gloria Steinem 19 years after she wrote Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions (1983), reminded us to continue to work on our self esteem as Revolution comes from Within (Steinem 1992).

“We want ‘feminist research’ to be constructed out of ‘feminism’. In order to do this it is necessary to stop merely reacting to existing social science work by using traditional ideas about how ‘science’ should be conducted. Instead we need to get back to a discussion of what ‘feminism’ is, and explore what implications this has for how we view social reality and so for how we do research.”

Stanley and Wise 1993 44

Of course, there are many feminisms. This work is built upon the richness of that diversity. Patricia Maguire pulls together many of them to reinforce this need to act:
"As used here, feminism is a worldwide movement for the redefinition and redistribution of power. Feminism is: a) a belief that women universally face some form of oppression or exploitation; b) a commitment to uncover and understand what causes and sustains oppression, in all its forms and c) a commitment to work individually and collectively in everyday life to end all forms of oppression. Given this definition, the ultimate goal of feminist research is the emancipation of women and the creation of a just world for everyone (Duell Klein 1983; Mies 1982, Deles and Santiago 1984, Acker et al 1983). How feminist research can best reach this goal is open to exciting discussion. In fact the 'how' of feminist research is its most poorly developed aspect (Duell Klein 1983)."

Maguire 1987 78

Like Maguire, Lather's, work is also a result of a long time interest in "how to turn critical thought into emancipatory action". She adds another element: that by doing so "our action is our knowing" (Lather 1991 xv). I believe the doing of this research demonstrates that for these women our epistemology is the basis of our ontology; meaning that what we know (perceive) is because of what we believe and, that we act because of what we know. This can be expressed in many Ways:

"... that is, a feminism rooted in the acknowledgment that all social knowledge is generated as a part and product of human social experience."

Stanley and Wise 1993 192

This is not to say that all feminists exposed to the same social experiences will construct that same meaning. It does acknowledge the power of the dominant social mores and our need to challenge that which is not equitable.

Stanley and Wise express this notion as grounded in experience arising from social context. I see that the next step, the action arising, is here expressed by Grosz because she draws political action out of feminist theory.

"Feminist theory is neither subjective nor objective, neither relativist nor absolutist: it occupies the middle ground excluded by oppositional categories... Absolutism and relativism both ignore the concrete functioning of power relations and the necessity of occupying a position."

Grosz 1988 100

To link Grosz' idea of 'holding a middle ground' and Maguire's notion of liberation, I see that the integration of epistemology and ontology is an essential philosophical and knowing position from which any activist grounds theory. If our knowing is based in our experience, then the things we want to change, arise from that knowing. Hence Mother Theresa acts out of the compassion from which she views the world:

Because she loves - she acts
Because she cares - she does

Fran Peavey acts out of caring for others. Every morning she meditates upon the question: "What could I do today that will support people and the environment?" (Peavey 1994 personal communication).

Because she loves - she acts
Because she cares - she does

Anita Roddick of the Body Shop, sees the mainstream cosmetic industry as "ripping-off" women, men, animals and the environment (Roddick 1991).

Because she loves - she acts
Because she cares - she does
The women of this research group also, place ourselves in opposition to hegemonic forces which dominate work practices and life experience. Because we challenge old practices which keep power in the hands of a few and puts limitations on social interactions, we work in Ways that will always critique that power.

Because she loves - she acts
Because she cares - she does

We believe that we are within a stirring time of change. This change is making use of 'feminine' Ways of being, knowing and doing (Belenky et al 1986).

While wrestling with the divisiveness of the concepts of feminine and masculine qualities, I came across Elizabeth Porter's notion of 'self-in-relations'. Such a moral theory seems to articulate an ethic that is workable for social ecologists (whether consciously feminists or not). The moral identity she espouses, while arising from women, is possible for both genders through

"... arduous but worthwhile dialogue to determine shared values, common purposes and the conditions whereby human potential might be realised. Then we can increase the appreciation of our commonality with others and our differences from others. ... This narrative of sense of self (-in-relations) confirms individuality and the social basis of our selfhood through the intermeshing of personal histories."

Porter 1991 196 (emphasis Porter's)

Feminists who are social ecologists (or social ecologists who are feminists of either gender), aim to work with people so that we truly hear their stories and we honestly share ours. This expression of being leads us to a level of respect and interconnection that I believe Porter, Macy, Covey, Houston, Peavey and many other change activists advocate under different languaging (Maturana 1987).

"Working towards a synthesis acts to break down the hegemony of traditional thought structures and the gender-differentiated practices that rely on dualistic assumptions, by acknowledging new moral tensions, new combinations of possible solutions and new forms of subjectivity. This provides a framework for an emancipatory ethic that is holistic in dealing with a general identity and sex-specific dimensions of identity."

Porter 1991 196

For these reasons and with the above voices calling for these changes, I did this work which aimed to 'feminise' our workplaces with an ethic of moral identity which aims to

"... help others explore exciting, plural modes of being, encourages growth of distinctive qualities and addresses the whole of moral identity."

Porter 1991 197

While doing the research I was often asked "What are women's Ways of working?" I would give various answers depending on my thinking at the time. The reality is, we were really only investigating 12 women's Ways of working. What implications that may have for others, comes out in the telling of our stories. Further 'meaning-making' (Bateson 1972) is constructed by the connections I make with our inquiry and current workplace practices and issues as well as feminist concerns.

Of course, there is little homogeneity in the details of life experience and our expression of that in our day-to-day work. We had to deal with the feminist and post-modernists' concerns of:
"... being able to deal with differences among women without losing the impetus that derives from being a coherent movement for social change."

Gunev and Yeatman 1993 xiii

While there are many differences, we worked with an ethic which held a vested interest in the political goal of 'making a difference'.

"The nature of all political claims is to work in terms of interested universalisms. The nature of all political claims is to work in some kind of ethical universalism... All political vision has an ethical as well as an interested component. Politics concerns the contestatory and conversational dynamics of how these two components enter into the ways in which we work with shared conditions of plurality and alterity."

Gunev and Yeatman 1993 xiv

Within our differences and our homogeneity, we found that we held similar ethical and political concerns. I understand now, that it was certainly an interest in ethical practice that defined my selection of participants in the research group. I observed in the first year of the research, these women worked from Gilligans' "ethic of care".

"Yet in the different voice of women lies the ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, the origins of aggression in the failure of connection."

Gilligan 1982 173

The focussing question became: how does this ethic of care operate when we are interacting with various organisations and their systems? Organisations are a collection of people, each one of whom would hold a world-view informed by their own values (Kanter 1977). People in the organisation, tend to respond to the 'collective mind-sets' of the organisation's culture (Deal and Kennedy 1982): which may conflict with personal codes of ethics. I was inquiring into our experiences of values operating in our workplaces. So it was appropriate for us to research through a sharing of our personal stories. Through story, we developed a process which enabled us to integrate our personal issues with the wider political sphere. This process was different for each of us and similar in that understanding ourselves, provides the basis of actions arising from conscious ethical understandings. Understanding, knowing and naming our experiences became both the processes and the outcomes of the research for each woman, and held further meaning in each woman's connections and/or knowledge of the diversity of the group. How we manage to keep the connection between relationship and responsibility is very important. What we were identifying with and in essence being, was in reality an intuitive "knowing" of Gilligan's model.

**Informed by Morality Theory**

As the research developed and stories emerged, I discovered that the values which underpin the Ways of operating of these 12 women clearly sung along with Gilligan's theory of a different voice for women as interpreted by Arnault.

"If one assumes the soundness of Gilligan's empirical findings, most women, and some men, construe the self as fundamentally connected with others; this affects the way they frame or define a moral situation."

Arnault 1989 197
By my own interest in how people live by their fundamental connections with others; how people ‘walk their talk’, I selected women who seemed to do that. The selection process was not so refined. I looked around thinking about the women I knew whom I admired. I would hear something of their work practice and I would think to myself: I wonder how she does that? To inform my own curiosity, I invited the group together. To describe the broader view of a social ecologist, I wanted to know the detailed stories of living and working the ethics of egalitarianism and emancipation. Not from women who were already leaders and tall poppies, but from women I met in my day-to-day work. These were ordinary women doing ordinary things. Of course we discovered that none of us was particularly ordinary.

It was in the connection we made with others, that we came to know not only others, but also ourselves. By working together in the group, we learned about our own morality in practice. The notion of working with ‘the-self-in-relations’ names a concern of the inquiry group.

“...the crucial distinguishing feature of feminist moral philosophy is that it explains the uniqueness of being woman or of being man as well as of being human. Thus I use the idea of self-in-relations as the most adequate concept to elucidate the moral identity of women and of men.”

Porter 1991 195

Elisabeth Porter argues that what is needed is a central concept around which to structure a comprehensive moral theory which as Baier suggests

“...might accommodate these moral insights women tend to have more readily than men... (and yet be) acceptable both to reflective women and to reflective men.”

Baier in Porter 1991 194

Rather than most women and some men, practising these qualities, the change factor our group would like to see, is that all of humanity develops beyond the state of fear from which aggression arises, or as Gilligan identifies: the roots of aggression lie “in the failure of connections”.

Then humanity could act out of caring and nurturing to not only save the peoples of the world from the personal aggression of abuse and poverty as well as the ultimate aggression of nuclear war, but also save the world’s ecosystems before it is too late to do so.

Eco-feminism as an expression of connection - an expression of morality

“Eco-feminism”, a term coined by French author Francoise d’Eaubonne, takes as its central problem the historical and continuing interstructuring of the exploitation of Nature with the domination of women.

Sandilands 1991

The very dualisms I see as divisive in our workplaces (family life and work life, personal and professional, ambition and relationships etc.), arise again when we look at the systematic denigration of women and nature through white man’s imperialist history.

I first became aware of such systematic denigration when researching birthing practices to prepare for home births in the early seventies. Then I found that birth was systematically taken out of the hands of
women. Symbolically, the use of stirrups were introduced, so it was said, when King Louis XIV, wanted to watch his mistresses give birth! No longer permitted to squat on the simply practical birthing stool, women lost comfort and safety given by superior support of the perineum!

Later, when supporting women with breastfeeding, I found that work practices and feeding needs had nothing in common. Babies do not slot neatly into adult mealtimes or award hours of work. It seemed to me then, that the greatest loss to the poor working classes during the industrial revolution, was that of paid work at home, or in the village or the fields with baby at mother's side. There seem to be no statistics on how many babies died from being fed slops instead of breast milk, because mother was in the factory 16 hours a day.

These are only two situations where women and nature have been systematically devalued and exploited because of their supposedly shared 'traits'. Such polarising systems divide:

"... all the basic dualities - the alienation of the mind from the body; the alienation of the self from the objective world; the subjective retreat of the individual, alienated from the social community; the domination or rejection of nature by spirit- these all have roots in apocalyptic - Platonic religious heritage of classical Christianity. But the alienation of the masculine from the feminine is the primary sexual symbolism that sums up these alienations."

Ruether 1979 44

Feminism has a voice in our daily work practices because our work; our economy impacts upon the environment. Feminism combines the struggles of women with the struggles of our mother earth.

"While I cannot speak for the liberation struggles of people of color, I believe that the goals of feminism, ecology, and movements against racism and for the survival of indigenous peoples are internally related and must be understood and pursued together in a worldwide, genuinely pro-life movement."

King 1990 107

In my thinking I simplify Ynestra King's view to:

What is good for the earth is good for the peoples of the earth as well.

"No really profound sense of human equality can ever emerge from a philosophy rooted in a stance of human superiority over nature."

Marilyn French 1985 458

The works of Marilyn Waring and Hazel Henderson apply a different paradigm to economics than the mainstream. The base value of their paradigm as I interpret it, is care.

The Process of Learning and Research: finding where we fit in other's research

Early in the life of this research project, I looked around for feminist research that was inclusive of the ethics I thought I could explore at that time. A pivotal work was Women's Ways of Knowing by Belenky, McVicker Clinchey, Rule Godberge and Mattuck Tarule (1986). These women had researched 135 American women to explore the epistemology and ontology of women's ways of knowing, learning and being. Their work validated for me inquiry into an 'other' voice. I have worked for 19 years in adult education, particularly with women to expand skills and attain confidence to return to the workforce after caring for...
children. These women had often lost any sense of their own voice. (Indeed, I wondered if some ever had a chance to speak their own truth?) They need a safe and encouraging learning environment, that builds upon their extensive and useful knowledge and skills used daily for survival in their homes.

The importance of ‘voice’ as noted in Gilligan’s ‘ethic of care’, named a quality I had observed in women and wanted to work with further. While teaching women-only groups it became very clear to me that we need to reconsider what is important knowledge for women. It is not just what we know but how we know it. In that dynamic of knowing, experience and emotion seemed to me to be very much a part of our lives. The women I worked with were showing that their preference was not to act as dispassionate learners. We want to be involved and passionate in our learning. Jaggar (1989) addresses the dichotomy women experience in western traditions of learning, where reason and emotion are separate ends of a pole (not even a continuum).

As I looked around for Ways women may ‘know’ that their knowledge is ‘valid’ (we already knew it was useful), I came across a study on women and the development of our own authority. Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987), two Jungian therapists with hundreds of clients mapped a developmental path towards Female Authority. Their work moves Jungian interpretations of the female psyche into contemporary experience, beyond Esther Hardings important archetypal study of 1971, which portrayed women as still primarily bound to the hearth.

Clearly Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann have identified a voice of modern women that holds its own authority. It seemed to me that many women had come a long way since the early seventies. It was useful to find Jungian therapists who were women, applying their collective knowledge with their women clients. A connection was made for me. Belenky et al showed different ways women can learn; Young Eisendrath and Wiedemann, showed different developmental stages that we can grow through until we attain our own voice. Our own different voice of women not only speaks with an ethic of care, but also speaks with our own authority. Porter’s ‘self-in-relations’ notion supports all the earlier knowledge about women’s ways of knowing and being by building upon Gilligan’s different voice and shaping the extent and value of the human quality of ‘self-in-relations’.

Not surprisingly, I observed that women who are privileged enough to have opportunities opening up to them and are able to recognise and utilise these circumstances, have developed their own authority. We are in essence, the authors of our own experience. This is a very different position to sitting back in a ‘passive’ female role and taking what was offered. The women I invited into the research had also attracted me to them because of their sense of the horizons of authority. I observed that given a situation that was untenable to us, we would work actively to turn it around. Either that, or turn ourselves around to other work.

Our research group was part of this emerging phenomenon: that women who are leaving organisations to work in their own businesses, and/or women who are declining the top positions, are choosing to work in their own Way. There are many studies referring to this phenomenon including Still (1993), Marshall (1983), Barretine (1993) and Australian Bureau of Statistics (1992). I believe women make these moves because we do not want our independent Way of working
usurped or taken-over by an organisational culture that denies our creativity. We want to work with our intuition intact and indeed our own manifestation of power (Estes 1992). For all these reasons, the clear development of women's authority given in Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann, gave strong psychological understanding for this work.

**Doing Feminist Research in a Post-Modern Context**

Our praxis arises out of, as well as creates feminist theory. Our doing is grounded in 'thoughtfulness' which includes an 'ethic of care' for each other, our fellow workers and ourselves. This thoughtfulness inspires a conscious and on-going critique of work practices and ourselves. The thoughtfulness grows out of and is created by a process of dialogue (Böhm et al 1991, Cayer 1993). I used dialogue as a process of discussing issues of contemporary concern, with an awareness of the meta-levels of 'thought' that goes on. Our 'thoughtfulness' manifested as critical thinking, reflexivity, ethical awareness and the 'messiness' of engaging in complex situations.

Thus the theories of Arendt and Raymond interact and add meaning to those of Böhm. All feed into each other. Such a view encompassing many views on reality may sound very post-modern.

"Post-modernists define everything as text, seek to locate meaning rather than to discover it. They avoid judgement, and the most sophisticated among them never 'advocate' or 'reject', but speak rather of being concerned with a topic or being 'interested' in something. They offer 'readings' not 'observations', and 'interpretations' not 'findings'; they 'muse' about one thing or another."

Rosenau 1992 8

In our inquiry, we consider the whole context of the workplace and our lives as the text worthy of study. We were considering 'intertextual' relations. In other words, how does the 'text' arising from our workplace, interact with the 'text' which emerges from our family and friends?

In this chapter I consider other writings which assist us in 'locating' meaning. While Rosenau states that post-modernists are concerned and never advocate, we dare to advocate. We are more concerned with justice and emancipation to be sophisticated and therefore to stand aloof from interacting with that which concerns us. We must certainly do reject notions of dominance and power which imposes limitations; which we do not tolerate. I believe, this is where our style of feminism differs from this post-modernist description. We understand rather than judge. We certainly have many concerns and these are the reasons for our meeting to locate (find) meaning. Our interpretations of the world include "...indeterminacy rather than determinism, diversity rather than unity, difference rather than synthesis, complexity rather than simplification."

Rosenau 1992 8

If we take a post-modernist view and consider all the focus of our inquiry as 'text', then we can critically consider the work within each woman's context. I present not one world view. Indeed, I present a climate for acknowledging the richness of diversity.

Post-modernism in the form that stays cool and aloof from the 'text' under study, is not useful to us. As a co-researcher I am attached, connected,
biased and involved. Yet there are elements of post-modernism, which I believe are useful to feminist activists. These are two major influences: 1) the recognition of multiple texts, in different contexts and the richness of diversity and 2) "... In the postmodern theory he has helped build, the white male middle-class universal subject has had to relinquish his right to speak for all."  

Brennan 1993 vii

By speaking out with our own voices, we women are ready to use any space vacated by such relinquishing. However, we do not wait for this to happen. So we use our own contemporary 'texts' (our stories) to understand why things are as they are. We need to understand, so that we may act to change injustice.

Between feminists of course there are different views about whether classical or post-modern philosophy is the most effective avenue for critique. Grosz (1989) argues that emerging feminist philosophy exposes the espoused 'truth' of classical philosophy.

"... the claim that the eternal, objective, valid and true ideals and universal aspirations of philosophy are masculine, not human, interests. ...Feminism threatens philosophy with its own sexualization."  

Grosz 1990 170

Grosz demonstrates and argues for our need to meet the 'masculine' intellectual on his own ground. At the same time she acknowledges and presents examples of feminist philosophy. In effect, she deconstructs classical philosophy and shows what a feminist philosophy may look like.

Yet we have noted others refute this approach saying "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde 1984).

There may be a third option which I see feminists utilising in works such as Naomi Wolf: Fire with Fire where she argues that women have grown up now, aware of their own power. Bel hooks critiques a perceived underlying assumption that women universally have access to power. Hooks tackles this assumption in the article Let's Get Real about Feminism - The Backlash, the Myths, the Movement with Gloria Steinem, Urvashi Vadi and Naomi Wolf in Ms September/October 1993 38. As a black woman, hooks denies that women today universally have access to power and warns that we cannot assume the battles have been won.

Even Mary Daly, a radical separatist feminist of the 1980's, in her recent book becomes more inclusive, openly critiquing her past work from a position that endeavours to see the future. This position does not deny or belittle the value of Daly's or other feminist earlier works.

"Perhaps the experience was comparable to how a snake feels when she sheds her skin ...I was indeed shedding a lot of foreground fears and fixations that had afflicted the early Daly ...I used (my) book(s) as an opportunity to criticize ideas that I could see by then were holding women back. I did this benevolently."  

Daly 1993 175

Daly's books continue to serve this purpose of criticising ideas which hold women back. As feminists we need to continue to identify oppressions and map systemic discriminatory practices. In Daly's Great Summation she calls to us to
"... not think of our powers to change the world merely because of our
technological numbers ... We cannot think that way because of the enormous variations
among us. We are not merely, say, one hundred thousand members within
the same 'species'. We are more like a hundred thousand species."

Daly 1993 414

In reality there is not just 'A Different Voice' of women. There are many
with great variation amongst us.

"While the practice of the productions of meanings, discourses and
knowledges (Groz 1989 234) is an important aspect of feminism, much of
this goes on outside the academy and outside of male framed, discursive
fields. This is to be celebrated. This is what escapes, exceeds, and
complicates that feminist work which does situate itself at the site of
metatheory, theory about theory, a discourse formulated largely by white,
middle class male theorists."

Lather 1991 157

Feminism in the 1990's is all the richer for this realisation. We now have
many different women informing us of their cultures. Women of colour like
Robert Sykes and bell hooks, have taught us not to make the same mistake as
"male, white, ruling-class oppressors".

Because there are many Ways that women work at transformation, I
want to demonstrate the lived experience of women who no longer regard women's
difference', our 'otherness' as a problem (Frazer et al 1992 13). Quite the opposite,
we are celebrating our differences and noting our shared understandings; (There
are no samenesses; we do not set like a homogenous junket.) Perhaps the value of
the pluralistic perspective has been summed up by another contemporary
Australian woman writer and academic Drusilla Modjeska

"The older I get the more I think it's a great achievement of femininity to
be many things - the woman who writes is also the woman of the house,
cooks, has friends, lovers. This is where my particular type of writing comes
from - this layering in female life. I'm a reader. A would-be gardener, a
good aunt and I have an intellectual life lived with other people. Friendship
is the centre."

Modjeska 1994 12A

Many feminists have struggled to bring about change. The struggle in
itself has changed us as well as those whom we perceive, need to change - the
oppressors. We have recognised that we do not need to discard all of the old order.
Some of it indeed may be useful to our purposes.

"Change means growth, and growth can be painful. But we sharpen
self-definition by exposing the self in work and struggle together with those
whom we define as different from ourselves, although sharing the same
goals. For Black and white, old and young, lesbian and heterosexual women
alike, this can mean new paths to our survival.

We have chosen each other
and the edge of each others battles
the war is the same
if we lose
someday women's blood will congeal
upon a dead planet
if we win
there is no telling
we seek beyond history
for a new and more possible meeting."

Lorde 1992 221
Placing us in our historical context

Australian feminist histories are important to us. They tell ‘herstories’ as opposed to the one story of “imperialist white oppressors” (Summers 1993, 1975, Mercer 1975, Mathews 1984, Windschuttle 1980 etc). These herstories serve to explain what leads to the present experiences that we live day-to-day. While I remember the Whitlam government’s establishment of feminist policy-making bureaucracies (Sawer 1990), I did not live through women learning trades in the war, or women agitating for child health centres in the fifties (McMurchy et al 1983). As well as the historical context informing us about today, I also wanted to find out about those ‘ordinary’ women who don’t usually end up in the history books.

We needed to understand our experience;
what we wanted to change around it, and how we would go about supporting that change.

For these reasons, the context of such herstories was essential. We were about to tell our own stories. We needed to know where our stories fit into the scheme of things.

When I was teaching women who were developing skills and confidence to return to the workforce after caring for their children, we would watch the film For Love or Money - a history of women and work in Australia. (McMurchy, Oliver, Thornley 1981) and the accompanying book representing a collection of source material used in the making of the film. For the first time, we were able to see images of Australian women, Aborigines and migrants and migrants’ families, over two hundred years. While the history starts with the white invasion/settlement, period, the first images are of Aboriginal women. Their story is consistently interwoven into the telling of this black tale.

The story was new to every group of women (12 - 15 groups of over six years). They were amazed, surprised, shocked and relieved. Amazed and surprised that they went to school in Australia and never heard a ‘herstory’ like this. They were shocked to learn of the blackness of Australia’s history of race relations; and relieved to find out historical and structural reasons for the difficulties that they themselves experienced. If women are to alter society, we must understand how society is altered. If we want to bring about change, we need to understand the nature of the social processes we are trying to manipulate (Mercer and Miller 1975 448).

A history that tells the story of women is as important as the history that tells the story of different races -British imperialists say Australia was discovered by Captain Cook; the aboriginal story is that many Aboriginal nations
were systematically invaded and destroyed. It all depends upon one's perspective... (reality, context, world-view).

As Jill Mathews advocates, we need
...a history that seeks to understand in order to change. Between
the two lies unpredictability and indeterminacy. The meaning of women
cannot, ultimately be deduced from however much data. That meaning is
lived, and hence perverse reality, and the accuracy of any understanding
must be tested by all of us who live it. Similarly the accuracy of any
understanding about how to free ourselves from gender oppression must be
tested by us in the streets."

Mathews 1984 29 (emphasis mine)

So I turn to the lived experience of my mother because it is from our
mothers we, first learn about where we are placed in history.

Our Mothers' Stories

Like most Australian girls, the first I knew about women's work, came
from my mother and/or her contemporaries. For the women of the research group,
this part of the group story became our mothers' stories too. There were cries of
recognition and further telling of stories when this segment of the writings was
first distributed.

Our mothers were placed historically, before the last wave of feminism.
During the wars, our mothers saw that 'women's work' could be different, and were
captured in a social, political and economic structure that denied women those
opportunities in peace-time. Our mothers are the mothers of the 'baby-boomers'.
Indeed, as mothers of so many children, most women were shackled by the care of the
children, when no-body else considered that childcare may be the whole society's
responsibility.

Many of us would describe our mothers, and for some of us our fathers, as
holding feminist principles, such as encouraging daughters into careers, as my
mother did, saying:

"You must develop a good career for yourself. You never know when
you may have to be the bread-winner for your children."

My Mum was right. I have had reason to thank her over and over again
for this wisdom. My Mum was consciously breaking down the constructs of the
Cinderella myth (Dowling 1982) long before the book was written. She was
effectively alerting me to the fact that I need to be able to support myself and my
children.

Our mothers existed traditionally as women have usually lived: "wearing
a double standard" even since the industrial revolution (Arcana 1981, Mathews
1984, Windschuttle 1980). Our mothers did not have contraception in their
control; they did not have equal pay or equal opportunity policies; our mothers had
to accept the sexual harassment that went along with everyday life in Australia:
too many still do- it is the reality of many.

We were told to...

"Try and put up with it dear... think of it as a
compliment, but don't ever encourage them!"
We were supposed not to like it;
"Don't let them think you are easy;"
... but we did have to accept it.
Our mothers had to give up their public sector job if they married, could not work as bank tellers or tram, bus, train drivers or airline pilots, could not join the armed forces in a combatant role.

Our mothers’ careers were, to put it simply, to be mothers. Even if they had work outside the home, they were still defined as mothers. While “mothering is a career of a lifetime”, it was of such low status that it was considered that a full-time mother “did not work”.

_Mothers’ Stories Today_

Mothering today is still considered to be low status. The reality is that society is not constructed to benefit women or children, particularly women with young children. Try going to the supermarket with a toddler in a stroller. The handicap seems comparable to a shopper in a wheelchair. In the mothers’ case the child can pull down goods strategically placed to attract and eat sweets from low shelves. Can a mother register a complaint about structural inequity to store security when she refuses to pay for an allergy-inducing candy bar minus a bite? Will she be heard?

The problems are compounded at work. Workplaces are not set up to accommodate children on pupil-free days. Some women struggle to do their job with their kids by their sides. Others cannot even attempt this because the system denies the realities of caring for children. There is a current push for policy development for workers with family responsibilities. Yet none address the needs of a breast-feeding mother and child (Gliddon 1994 pc).

Some managers instruct their workers to not allow their children in the building -there is no insurance for them if they are injured! The problem is compounded when illness affects the kids or somebody else in care.

Yet circumstances have changed since our mothers were our ages. Our mothers did not have the benefits given to us by earlier and contemporary feminists. In our generation we have redefined gender roles. We have struggled with those roles handed on to us from our mothers. We know that they did the best they were able to do at the time within the social constructions which defined them (Nicholson 1983, Oakley 1974 and millions of mothers who did or did not speak out).

I want to base our historical context here in Australia, by acknowledging that women experience oppression globally. Women perform two-thirds of the world’s work (that is not counting our caring of children and emotional support of men) for less than ten percent of the world’s pay and own less that 1 percent of the world’s wealth (UN statistics reported by Spender 1983 374). Marilyn Waring’s (1988) critique of global economies, emphasises that women’s work fuels the economies of every country without any value being placed upon our labour in the definitive system of world-wide accounts, including the Gross National Product (GNP). My work acknowledges these realities and so our focus is upon women working in Australia.
We are the Now generation of changing women. - Our historical context

What follows is a solipsistic view of history. This is a personal vision which I share with the women in the research group. After sharing it with the women, I found I have represented a perspective on feminist historical writings which the women related to strongly.

While many people who have written of their times in history have pronounced that theirs is a time of massive social and workplace change, we claim that too. History is about how people handle change as it is either thrust upon them, (e.g. computer technology in the workplace) or it is brought about by social leaders / change-agents such as Mahatma Ghandi, Fran Peavey, and our sisters, the suffragettes. The interesting, intriguing, passionate thing about social analysis is that we are endeavouring to comment upon change as it is happening. Thus we bring to it a current and contemporary perspective.

That is what we women did. We looked at our issues and personally commented upon them. From that personal view grows our political standpoint. From the political position we breathe into life our passion; our ethic of emancipation for all workers. So we are bringing about the changes and commenting upon those which we are experiencing at this time in history.

Our Place in Herstory

We approach our understandings of woman’s place in the 1990’s in Australia, from an awareness that is definitely informed by feminism. From our standpoint we are able to name ‘the problem that has no name’ (Friedan 1963). And in the nature of the optimism of social ecology driven by the reformist nature of social-activated feminism, we believe we are going about ‘making a difference’. Just this knowledge of what has gone before, supports us in making that difference.

The compilation of feminist thought collected together here is selected by posing the strategic question:

What best informs and supports us in making emancipatory change today in our individual and collective spheres of influence?

Through three decades, from the 1960’s the women of this research group have lived through and experienced along with other peoples, major radical changes in society (particularly in gender-relations).

“A minute dot on the line of human evolution, the nineteen eighties have transformed the relations between men and women in a large part of the world, although we still have not realized the fact.”

Badinter 1986 130

“It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered in the middle of the twentieth century in the United States.”

Friedan 1963:15

The same discontent was surfacing in Australia. It must be acknowledged that on the whole, it was white upper and middle class women who were stirring. It was in places like universities, where women were both informed and able to meet and talk together. There were other stirrings happening at the same time. Not always with or about women, but all of them taking a critical look at our society and deciding that the ‘tough and aggressive’ way was no longer useful to
our society as a whole. Along with the idealistic revolutionary statements from the Beatles, we challenged the roles taught to us by our mothers and fathers, teachers and society. It was during the sixties we saw war live on television; we saw the outcomes of ideologies turned into aggressions, and many of us said ‘no’. The Beatles reflected youth’s wave of rebellion to the status quo and for a while we sang along: All we need is love; Can’t buy me love; and questioned if we wanted to become soldiers of society as along with Eleanor Rigby we put on our face from the jar by the door to enter the outer, commercial work-world.

We as women, put on our face so that we could work as tellers in banks, remain in the Australian Public Service after marriage and even started rumblings about the need for childcare support.

“Each suburban wife struggled with it alone. As she made beds, shopped for groceries, matched slip cover material, ate peanut butter sandwiches, chauffeured Cub Scouts and Brownies, lay beside her husband at night, she was afraid to ask even of herself the silent question, ‘Is this all?’

Friedan 1963 15

Of course, at that time, we were in various states of awareness. The asking ‘is that all?’ seemed almost sacrilege as the world became more of a global village and images of Vietnamese mothers mourning their dead children or struggling to rescue survivors, came nightly through TV into our living rooms.

Our parents, products of the first half of the twentieth century, lived through two world wars, where the following Nazi ideology manifested.

“During this period of madness, none of the positive aspects of manliness could be expressed. ...By shattering the concept of humanity, the war waged by the Nazis provoked genuine horror of all the “values” in whose name it had been fought. ...Whether we like it or not, it was the archaic manly values that people were thus putting in the dock ... The warrior had become suspect, and respect for the Other once again became a sacred value.

Badinter 1986 131

In the face of such destruction of life, female aspects of humanity became the “other” - that is nurturing and survival awareness. The explosion of the first nuclear bombs at Hiroshima and then Nagasaki, while bringing an end to war, also accelerated a worldwide ideal for world peace. This anti-war movement continued strongly through the cold war years, the Korean war and the Vietnam war. Now that the cold war has thawed, we continue to address issues of nuclear safety, ethnic conflicts, feeding our peoples and saving our planet. These movements give evidence of inclinations towards feminising our social values (Dinnerstein 1992). This is a major turning point. Yet in reality there is still a long way to go to achieve social justice.

These movements are a reaction to the horrors of war. A pro-active reaction which says ‘never-again’. Clearly the desire for peace and nurture can be interpreted as more feminine aspects of human values, given the archetypal and Jungian meaning of ‘feminine’ developed earlier. The values of the world-wide technological warrior were indeed tried and found not useful to us. We speak now of healing our planet and feeding our peoples. Dorothy Dinnerstein sees this Way of thinking as central to a humanly whole feminist vision.

“Feminism is a living movement... a movement honest with itself, only insofar as it embodies active radical try-to-put-the-fire-out hope; active
long-shot optimism, based on the widest knowledge we have - tentative, partial knowledge - and on love for the widest reality that human feeling at its mammalian core can authentically embrace - earthly life...

In doing what we do with gender we humans not only constrict and distort ourselves; we also rape and desecrate earthly nature...”

Dinnerstein 1989 193

Elisabeth Badinter, puts the gender-relations changes of the latter half of the twentieth century into historical context. After the Second World War, a massive movement of de-colonisation spread across the globe, completing what had started in the French Revolution. At this time arose various movements towards female emancipation that appeared in all Western countries at the end of the 1960's (Badinter 1986, Kaplan 1992). Youth involved in this movement toward world peace reject the values of

‘... insatiable consumerism leading to economic war, the arms race and the unprecedented exploitation of nature, constituted an absurd, mediocre and unethical model in the eyes of their sons.”

Badinter 1986 131

Badinter also interprets the movement as a ‘feminising’ of social values.

“Young people rejected the traditional manly values en bloc, and adopted more feminine values. Denying all idea of authority or natural superiority, they preached non-violence in all its forms.

...In challenging all their fathers' values the sons unconsciously moved closer to those of their mothers, who are traditionally anti-war, non-competitive, and have no experience of power - other than over their families - or of acting oppressor...

At the very moment when young men were turning their backs on the manly stereotypes and adopting more feminine behaviour, young women themselves were abandoning some of their millenarian attitudes and taking possession of domains that had previously been the preserve of men.

“

Badinter 1986 131

Women were claiming their space at the same time. Women were marching across Europe and Australia to ‘Reclaim the Night’. At the monument of the unknown soldier in Paris a wreath was laid -for his unknown wife (Kaplan 1992 19). In Australia on traditionally enshrined Anzac Day, women dared to march to remember women who were raped in war.

There is an inherent tension in this ‘feminising of social values’. While we were playing flower children, men who were barely grown boys, were being blown up in Vietnam. As the boom-time of the sixties dwindled, jobs became harder to get, and both employment and opportunities in education became more competitive.

“For while these men were trying to build a less aggressive world in which competition would be less fierce, women were now turning out to be formidable competitors. They were no longer merely tenderness and devotion, they were also ambition and egotism.

Badinter 1986 133

I believe that the young women were swindled too! All of us have been exposed to the media which responds to themes of the dominant paradigm.
Promoting concepts by incessant repetition: such as 'success equals money and all-controlling power'. Feminist have fought for our rights to attain these truly potent aspects of modern life. However, I question how useful it is to us if we gain money and power yet diminish relationships with our family, friends, other races and nourishing the Earth as our living, breathing mother?

Strong ideals! Easy to write at home; able to donate some money to the day's famine or disaster relief fund; able to encourage students to work towards a career which will give them privileges too!

While we live and work within the dominant (male) paradigm we dare to claim we subvert it. In developing a work of 'critical social science' (Fay 1987) I work with the women of the research group to watch, observe, gather together resources to continue to subvert, to continue to challenge that which we see as unfair in day-to-day work practices. It was our intent to speak in a wilderness where there may be

"... a noted lack of audience for critical theories, intended to 'enlighten', 'empower', 'emancipate' people from oppression (e.g. Fay 1977; Aronowitz, 1981)."

Lather xvii 1991

Such are the elements of 'bespeaking' (Daly 1984) where we speak our truth.

Our version of practising feminist research is to be critical social scientists (Fay 1987) who go beyond critique to action. Daily we find situations where we ask "Why is this so? Is this the best way it could be? How could the structures better serve both the clients and the workers? Such is the nature of participatory research arising from the paradigm of critical social science. Add feminist concerns to that and it compounds the possibilities:

"Participatory research emerged in part from people like ourselves struggling with the contradictions of our work, including our research practices and our politics. What are the implications of our work for the redistribution or consolidation of power? Which systems of oppression do we openly seek to transform? Feminist participatory research expands our challenge to create a world in which women have a central role and voice in determining what that transformed world will include."

Maguire 1987 215

The women of the research group take opportunities to be and act in different Ways. For example one chooses not to advance in her career of teaching the unemployed. She chooses to instead, advance her art and so teaches part-time. Thus she gives herself her life- 'time' to develop her avocation of painting, making pottery and jewellery.

Within the research group, the younger women (teenagers of the '70s), indeed responded with a stronger sense of their rights, plus the recognition of what needed to be done. Three women, had different goals. One married young sand proceeded with a family. In a 'professional' fashion, she involved herself in voluntarily training parents in Human Resources skills. Additionally, she extended her working knowledge to the needs of children and families. She also ensured that her higher education continued. Just one person but involving a multiplicity of expressions to achieve her Ways.
Two others of the research group followed older siblings to university, and early in their careers became directly involved in women’s activism. They worked with others to develop a Rape Crisis Centre. Their ideologies (forming a decade later than many others in the group), were clearly identified as feminist and politically Left. They were pro-active from the start of their involvement in these various activities.

These two belong in the group that Ann Curthoys writes about in the seventies in Australia in her personal journey into feminist theory and history, *For and Against Feminism*.

“The social base of modern feminism was that expanding group of women who were entering the professional, technical, administrative and skilled occupations. This group, and its male counterpart was the product of the changing occupational structure, the expansion of the tertiary sector, and of the related extension of education. They occupied a relatively privileged position by virtue of education and recognised skills, and they were becoming increasingly unionised. First as students, this group formed the basis of the New Left and later feminist, ecological, and other radical movements.”

Curthoys 1988 81

Most women in our group want to be identified as feminists, while a few others have struggled with the term when applied to themselves. All of us have clearly uncovered intentions and strategies for emancipatory change. Emancipatory, because none of us are satisfied with things as they are now. Although many of the group earn above-average salaries, this is not their prime motivation for work. What satisfies us most, is knowing that our work is making a difference. Not a controlling, imposing difference, but one that facilitates and empowers those we work with. The ‘with’ is underlined because even though we may be working for clients, union members, customers, students or patients, we prefer cooperative power-sharing models rather than controlling ‘power-over’ paradigms.

To become like this we have to be optimists. In order to believe that the world will still be a fit and even beautiful place for our children to live out their lives in a self realised and fulfilling way, we need to be extreme optimists. What are emancipators but optimists? To be an optimist we have to be able to hold a vision. Willy Russell the author of the plays and films: *Educating Rita* and *Shirley Valentine* said that he chooses women like Rita and Shirley to say what he wants to say about current issues in society. Through women characters, he believes he can say what needs to be said. We need to be able to say, like Rita, “We can sing better songs than those that have already been sung.” The optimism of feminists is explained by Hester Eisenstein:

...a commitment to optimism itself is a major political stance, a belief in the future in order to try and ensure that a future is possible. The second is a sense of optimism about feminism itself. That is, that feminism has made significant gains to date and will continue to do so in the coming years and decades. By feminism, I mean broadly speaking the set of beliefs in the entitlement of women to emancipation, and the political and social movement which seeks to ensure the achievement of that aim.”

Eisenstein 1991 75
My chosen discipline of social ecology is also built upon a strong optimistic base. If we did not believe in the possibility of bringing about changes it would be hardly worth bothering! Social ecology is ‘emerging’.

"... whenever various parties representing divergent viewpoints are brought together by a desire to act together around an agreeable but controversial theme."

Russell 1993 43

We are in the time of Changing Women; we've seen the history books in our school days with hardly a mention of the pioneering woman, the convict girl, or the migrant woman's struggle. We've heard herstory told only as grown women. We've ensured that our children, when they think of the peoples of this world, include women in their imaging; we've used the opportunities our foremothers fought for - we've taken up the university places, tried out for and won the jobs that only our fathers did before us. We do work that fulfills us, enhances our values and feeds our families. We want our daughters and sons to know the stories that portray these rights, and we know that we are still, nearly a century after women in Australia won the vote, only Halfway to Equal.

For all of these reasons this research into how and why we support bringing our whole selves to work as change-agents, must be done with women. We also needed to hear each other's stories, because in doing so, we would inform and support our individual and therefore our collective revolutions.

“When they ask ‘what have you achieved?’ Have the answer ready: as a woman I am a human being entitled to full recognition of myself as a person, as an achiever in my own field, as a success on my own terms. Our terms are valid. Our success lies in embracing the real achievements of women who have worked, lived, strived in this country to create a world where women and men are equally recognised as human and women are fully acknowledged as contributing to the cause of humanity. As a woman, I am ‘of the world’.”

Woolf 1929 in Scutt 1992 8

Jocelyn Scutt uses Virginia Woolf’s words in her introduction to the book As a Woman. I claim a parallel celebration in writing up a research thesis that is in essence women’s lives and concerns. This

“... gives us cause to celebrate. In doing so, we are celebrating our own lives, and the lives of all women.”

Scutt 1992 8

Chapter Summary

Within this chapter I have contextualised our investigations. To come to some realistic understanding of the complexity of living and working as women in 1990’s Australia, I included a range of trans-disciplinary materials.

I have shown how theory serves this work. Then I built context within organisational and workplace practices. The strong influence of feminism and feminist writers informs this affirmative research with women who want change.

The next chapter serves to inform the research process and methodology.
Chapter 3

Researching Influences

Theories and Practices

Overview

I present here a range of complexities resulting in rich resolutions as I researched appropriate methodologies for this project.

The following diagram 3.1 served to inform the research group of the range of sources which led to the development of our methodology. First the sources of each influence are identified with explicit comparisons, secondly congruencies, and thirdly differences and contradictions highlighted. Finally our resulting research process demonstrates and defines my resolution of these different schools of thought. It is in the complexity of processing multi-layered concerns that I named affirmative inquiry both as a process for developing strategic planning and action and as a form of collaborative research methodology.

The format of this chapter models the multi-layered process we developed, the petals synchronising the congruencies between the four (and multiple) approaches to our research. Diagram 3.1 demonstrates the multi-layered methodological basis of affirmative inquiry. First I reveal the development of our methodology arising from congruencies, specific differences and any apparent contradictions of collaborative literature sources including using stories as a tool and discovery passage for research processes. Secondly feminist sources as central to the research, are considered by the same criteria. Thirdly the whole research process lies within the context woven by the threads of lived experience, which served to create the resolution of our research process.
Affirmative Inquiry an explanation

These seeds of methodology lead to a resolution which is our researching processes. While this process clearly utilises multiple methodologies, from wide ranging sources, I named Affirmative Inquiry to specifically describe our process where by participating in all the above, we affirmed each other, our work values and preferred styles. Affirming in our process does not deny critical questioning. Indeed a meeting often included the tension of revealing aspects about ourselves. Questions would follow as the group struggled to understand and/ or offer strategies for engendering change if invited. This tension is more fully developed in this chapter.

Research methodologies serve this work by telling stories of multiple Ways of researching. Thus, I gathered ideas that may work with us. I believe the methodology, the Way of doing, designs the outcome hence the importance of operating in feminist and affirming Ways. Therefore it is important to be able to create Ways of researching which are congruent with what we set out to do.

1. Collaborative Research- Story Telling and Listening
Multiple Methodologies for Affirmative Inquiry

What follows is the thinking that underpins my Way of developing and directing this collaborative research which demonstrates the theory, the values and ethics of specifically affirmative inquiry.

The genius of affirmative inquiry,

lies in the interactive process

which creates the methodologies used.

Living our lives and researching what we do, enriches day-to-day reality. In the doing of research we specifically carve ourselves some space in which to critically consider what we do, why we do it and how we may like to do it differently. These are vital qualities, I believe, that can lead us to be more effective while affirming our current competencies.

Congruencies with Affirmative and Collaborative Inquiry

Our group of women met to consider together what issues we may have around work. By creating the space to do just that, we found we affirmed each other’s understanding of our work situations. In effect, the research ‘problem’ did not exist until the group said “this is a problem” thus demonstrating David Russell’s definition of Collaborative Research (Russell 1990 pers. com.): that the group designs the research, instigates the processes, decides on the nature of the reflection and any proposed changes and then proceeds to design change.

Our research process was affirmed by Peter Reason’s reference to Cunningham’s model of emergent research as a multiple method approach using collaborative, dialogic and action research methodologies (Böhm & Garrett 1991) all locating contextually (Reason 1988:163). Our approach was congruent with these approaches with the critical difference of employing the perspective of women’s lived experience.
The interaction of collaborative and action research is significant. Emancipatory social action and engendering change was part of our context and became a purpose for meeting. As we inquired into issues that concern us, we considered effective courses of possible action. Thus the two research processes meld together when as a collaborative group we looked upon the situation (problem identified), fully contextualised it, critically examined what we could do and reflected upon the outcomes (Wadsworth 1991, Reason and Rowan 1981). Such a process notionally developed research stories to tell but also developed personal and group learning as well as affirming our capacity to learn, develop and manage all concerns raised.

**Working with Differences - Facilitation issues**

In the telling of research stories, I find a rich and intriguing collection of processes; ‘things-to-do’, possible activities for processing issues. Reading and talking about collaborative research is a Way to learn about others’ researching and group skills. A range of interpersonal communication skills are necessary in my experience, to deal with conflicts or tensions that arise as people struggle with our language to communicate clearly. In group sessions when we reflect upon our activities, we are making public what is often kept hidden: why we do what we do; and what is really important to us?

This research used focus groups (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990) to not only collect information but essentially to process change agency ideas together as a co-operative learning and research group. Because research with people in groups often generates people discussing different values and ways of operating I see it as an essential that any researcher ensures that there are people (or someone) in the group who have facilitation and group skills. Planning should involve then the ethics of revealing information about people with their peers.

My style of facilitation is to be open to the people and the process and is certainly not prescriptive... but there is one area I am quite definite about. Because collaborative research is often a process with a group of people, the process needs nurturing. It needs skilled facilitation. In my experience, to launch a group of people into a reflective process focused on their own actions, can be a volatile and dynamic act. To do it without the adequate support of at least one skilled facilitator in the group, is to quite possibly, cause (ethical) harm. It is certainly not likely to assist team development or productivity from that department / team if it is work or community based.

What then are the required skills? The person willing to take on facilitation needs to be responsible (able to respond) to anyone who may be distressed by any of the discussions or internal processes that may occur. The facilitator needs to be able to explain the processes and ensure that the planning is flexible enough to allow for input from the group at the time. Facilitators need to be able to model open, respectful and affirming language (oral and somatic) and to be able to generate a ‘safe’ inquiry group culture of “sympathetic and critical friends” (Brown et al 1988 342).

Further, I see it as critically important that the facilitator does all this from a position of great respect for others’ ideas, experiences and feelings. To truly facilitate learning, one needs to be able to carefully integrate the sharing of ideas and the drawing out of newly-formed emergent concepts. There is a need to see *where*, and know *how* to create space so this can happen.
The learning of these skills is never perfected, because every random group of people (no matter how similar they appear in interests or skills) will usually require a dissimilar approach. This is particularly true of community or ethnic groups or those of mixed ethnicity. Even in family groups we have the mixed cultures of older and younger, genders and sub-groups within age groups.

**Congruencies of Learning Theory and Collaborative Research**

I discovered the evaluation methods which I regularly developed throughout the life of learning groups (classes), were informed by the action research cycle (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988; Guba & Lincoln 1989). By ongoing evaluation with learning groups, I was working with them to reflect, plan, observe and take action. So I too, found a name for something I already did. I took the theory of action research and applied Kolb’s (1984) learning cycle through stages of learning developments for my students.

In this Way I found a practical use for the learning of theory. It validated what I had discovered for myself. This ‘naming’ recognises just how much ‘theory’ is in practice by activists. Theory is transformed into action by people who care in education and people who are critically thinking about how to be effective in their day-to-day lives.

Maybe the theory of the day-to-day is naming what people are always doing. How valuable it is then, to keep the doing, conscious. Shotter proposes this as ‘knowing of the third kind’. A knowing which emerges from the feelings arising out of joint action in social contexts (Shotter 1993 xiii & 3). I believe the awareness that is developed in the reflexive cycle of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and similarly in our collaborative inquiry, is in the nature of this awareness.

Thus there are critical social scientists, social ecologists, community workers, environmental activists, organisational change-agents, health-educators - all developing ‘theory-on-the-run’ (Wadsworth 1991). This ‘doing’ is integrated knowing. This is not reified academe.

While participatory action research has indeed informed this research, it is more accurate to describe this work as feminist collaborative research which developed as affirmative inquiry.

**Congruencies Beyond the education framework**

As I developed the notion of affirmative inquiry, my epistemology and ontology (ways of knowing and being) were informed by learning theory. As a lifetime learner and educator, it was indeed part of my way of being to learn from what I was doing and thinking about. So too the process of inquiry became a way of learning for the co-researchers. Peter Reason’s description of co-operative inquiry, also acknowledges learning as an outcome, particularly through critical thinking and reflexivity (Reason 1991 2).

My understanding of our process, is congruent with these theorists. The cycle of plan, act, observe, reflect, (Kemmis and McTaggart 1987) links in with the Kolb’s learning (1984) ‘learning spiral’. So the very basics of collaborative research, arise from a framework of active learning.
Again from the educational paradigm is Guba and Lincoln's work on evaluation. They speak of *created realities* as quite literally constructions. This type of research they state, enables us to understand at a much greater depth, what goes into the making of social and personal constructions which affect our lives daily. Guba and Lincoln use the term *hermeneutic dialectic process* to describe their approach "... *hermeneutic* because it is interpretive in character, and *dialectic* because it represents a comparison and contrast of divergent views with a view to achieving a higher-level synthesis of them all" (Guba & Lincoln 1989 143).

The point Guba and Lincoln make which is relevant to our work, is that in the doing of this hermeneutic dialectic process, those involved in de-constructing the realities they have built-up are likely to re-construct their thinking around the issue in focus. Guba and Lincoln state that even if consensus on meaning is not achieved all parties are simultaneously *educated* as each one has experienced their ideas being given full consideration and subsequently have heard others' constructions of the world (Guba & Lincoln 1989 149).

**Critical Differences**

However I believe our co-researchers don't "get educated". These women are active participating co-learners. They are able to be so because of their openness to the research process. It was always an option to continue or to stop. The core members were finding great value in their learning process. We know this because they continued participating and we 'evaluated on the run' (Wadsworth 1991).

They were not being 'educated' because they all learned different things. They each learned what they were looking for as an individual; if they raised a question, it was that question they wanted answered.

I see a difference in the use of the term 'education' and 'whole person learning'. The Greek word *educare*, means 'to lead out of. The notion that learning requires a leader (educator, teacher) is a very different paradigm than that which sees an individual as being open to all influences (interpersonal, formal, spiritual, environmental) and thus responsible for their own learning. Feminists mostly prefer learner centred learning, than imposed (patriarchal) curriculum.

Further links with feminist methods and collaborative research are also found in the ethics of the practice and intent of the practitioners. Skolimowski (1990) says that in the participatory method a crucial concept is that of empathy. He uses the bonding experience of being inside our mother's wombs, to describe the depth of connection he feels that empathy entails.

Skolimowski clearly has a great deal of respect for all peoples and emphasises our need to prepare ourselves with what he calls the yoga of participation. Here we would "be on good terms with the cosmos to understand things from within" (Skolimowski 1990 9). To put this into practice, he advocates that participants prepare themselves by 'meditating on in-dwelling with another'.

I have concerns about the intimacy of his language. Many women and people from different cultures, including of course Australia's many ethnicities, are very wary of physical or metaphoric reference to (body or soul) intimacy. Using such language with many groups, would create the opposite effect than that desired; -it would alienate. Women who have been abused, are understandably
wary of intimacy. We cannot expect them to feel comfortable in a group that speaks of ‘in-dwelling’ as a necessary requirement for participation. While I agree with Skolimowski’s notion of compassionate dialogue with all, we also need to recognise that all may not be able or willing to respond to his call in the form it is expressed.

I include his thoughts here, because I do agree with the overall idea of being experimental and creating new strategies. Polanyi also uses the term ‘indwelling’ with a different purpose… to explain tacit knowing. Applying the terms to learned skills he refers to the innumerable muscular acts in which we ‘indwell’.

“Therefore, since all understanding is tacit knowing, all understanding is achieved by indwelling” (Polyani 1967 160).

The connection lies in accessing new meaning. To learn a skill, we ‘indwell’ in the doing of that skill; becoming familiar with how the fingers move to knit for example. Until the fingers hold the memory of familiarity (indwelling) we are not fully competent. To know another person’s ideas arising from their experience, it seems that Skolimowski is arguing we need to ‘indwell’ in that other. I believe this is impossible as we can only get a sense of the other’s experience. We can only use ‘active imagination’ to develop an ‘understanding’ of that person’s world and therefore their reality. Hence it is essential, to make connections; to be aware and develop one’s own sense of ‘self-in-relations’ (Porter 1991).

For these understanding to develop, for these connections to be built by researching, our heuristic approach was particularly valuable. As a research group we clearly connected with each others’ questions and problems, suggested a process that affirmed and encouraged “imagination, intuition, self-reflection and the tacit dimension” (Douglas & Moustakas 1985 40). Such a heuristic approach leaned towards the collection of women’s stories as a valid and appropriate collective search for knowledge and understanding. (More developments with our process of heuristic inquiry emerge in the next chapter, describing ‘what we did’.)

Stories as a Research Process
- Finding Out through Storytelling
- Life Stories, Fairy Stories, Myths and Metaphors

"Men have had every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been in their hands. I will not allow books to prove any thing."

"But how shall we prove anything?"

"We never shall. We never can expect to prove any thing upon such a point (...) as histories, stories, prose verse and songs and proverbs, which all talk of woman’s fickleness. It is a difference of opinion which does not admit proof. We each begin probably with a little bias towards our own sex, and upon that bias build every circumstance in favour of it which has occurred within our own circle."

Conversation with Anne Elliott and Captain Harville from Persuasion by Jane Austen 1818/1965, 234

Contradicting the Mainstream

Less than two centuries ago, Jane Austen recognised the mainstream stories of her world were in men’s hands. To present this work as a mainstream
higher degree document with women's stories as the major method, intent and meaning, is indeed walking on the edge. As stated, I believe that our knowledge and ways of being can attempt to be more accurately represented, by using our language and our style of building connections - telling stories. As Marshall McCluhan revealed, the medium is the message.

**Congruencies with Story and Research Methodologies**

The collection of stories in itself is a research method. It can be a teaching tool, a gossip session, a fantasy, an entertainment. It is always a Way of knowing.

Through story we found the meaning of our work and life experiences. Our research provided such a hermeneutic process. Wilber defines hermeneutics as"...the science of interpretation, or the determination of meaning of mental productions ... meaning is established, not by sensory data, but by unrestrained communicative inquiry and interpretation" (Wilber 1981 32 in Reason 1988 82). Clearly stories provides a suitable vehicle for interpretation.

"Human meaning-making rests in stories. Lifemaking calls for accounts, for story, for sharing. To be human is to be entangled in stories."

Eckhartberg in Reason 1988 82

"The Hegelian inquirer is a storyteller and Hegel's thesis is that the best inquiry is the inquiry that produces stories. ...Science consists of taking stories seriously, the question is not, 'Is storytelling science but can science learn to tell good stories?'"

Mitroff in Reason 1988 82-3

Reason (1988) talks about using storytelling as an inquiry and method to share and learn about each others' practice. They found the best way was to tell each other stories. These included stories from their own lifetimes, stories as children on summer holiday. Looking at the different stories within a story they found different levels and reflections; e.g. outside reflects inside, individual reflects the collective and the past reflects the present.

**Stories as a method for Critical Reflection**

Our group heard and read each others stories throughout our work. Early on, we shared life details emerging from interview. These were distributed in writing. These interview questions (Appendix A2) were designed to draw out the life and work stories from the women. The women's stories were told within a framework of deep respect and a collective inquiry into learning. Thus, the stories were reflected upon by each woman and within the group specific aspects were considered - a liberating process arising from critically telling our own stories (Freire 1970).

This 'art of gentle focusing' encouraged women to be critical of their past situations and design strategies to either deal with the past, or create changes for herself.

A similar approach we used was to invite co-researchers to tell their story of their experience of our research community. Our research could be described as, collecting and reflecting upon stories and then building other possible stories and then testing them out so we could tell the story of how it went (Reason 1988 99).
In a significant Way, my research process used a traditional tool quite deliberately. Stories act as a teaching tool in many cultures, and over all of time. Here is an example from the Pitjantjatjara people:

"The women surround themselves with each other and live together. They tell each other stories. The older women telling the younger girls stories to teach them. They teach them about providing food, looking after children, looking after husbands. Learning from the grandmothers, looking after grandmothers. The women are maintaining their strength by being as they are. We’re continuing to look after our daughters and live the way we’ve lived as far as possible. Doing what’s always been done. Looking after our shelter, bringing in the firewood, making day-to-day life possible and enjoyable. We’re content and we know everything that’s around us. We know all the stories for the foods. We’re using the foods and living the way that makes us happy."

Nganytyjja, Pauline and Faith (Pitjantjatjara tribe) in McMurchy et al 1983 182

Comparison with Different Genres of Story

The reader may well ask if am I talking about fictional stories, or narratives of ‘fact’, which could be termed history / herstory? I am considering all these types of stories. Through our group process we even incorporated feminist comics’ humorous stories, drawing out sensitive and political issues into day-to-day entertainment (Bareca 1991). Fran Peavey in the seventies did comedy to promote the banning of nuclear weapons. Peavey (1986) speaks of the importance of getting people to laugh about the unthinkable (total annihilation) so that they can start to talk about it.

Did we not, back in the seventies laugh at David Williamson’s play The Removalists? - specifically that scene where the woman who had been beaten up showed the bruises to the police. This was before domestic violence was allowed to be talked about! Was laughing a way around the thinking that said, we must not let on this happens, we hope it never happens to us, but we know it happens to Betty next door, and Mum had a pretty rough time of it when Dad was out of a job and had been drinking.

There is more than one way to get a good story across. As an activist, a teacher, a social ecologist, I use any genre that I think will speak to the audience. That includes acknowledging and using the language that is most familiar to them. This is simply good communication.

I am working at integrating different Ways of knowing, including story for expression and working at many levels. Hence the language of the every-day (e.g. ‘stuff’) is side-by-side with the language of academe (epistemology etc.). It is heartening to read of Susan Krieger’s work the Mirror Dance which she uses as a fictional model for Social Science. Her ‘multiple person stream of consciousness’ narrative shows rather than tells her story. She consciously removed herself “as author to shock her readers into recognising the passivity-inducing style of conventional social science writing” (Reinharz 1992 227).
Congruencies of Storytelling in Academic Research

This is what we have done in this research. This is still a risky new area. Other foremothers have created new forms and explored new intellectual strategies. Angela Brew's PhD thesis *Research as Learning* (1988) tells the story of her learning as stream of consciousness processing -as the second part of her thesis. All the academic theory 'stuff' came first. Similarly in a more integrated Way one of our research group Kay Fielden (she agreed to being identified) has written a PhD thesis, (quoted earlier) *Extending Human Potential in a Technical Learning Environment: Living the Conscious Feminine in a Patriarchal World* (1994). Kay makes extensive use of poetry and weaves her feminine consciousness around the academic content. Another social ecologist Jan Davis (1993), wrote her Masters thesis in four separate voices to express the different knowings her explorations revealed in *Finding Voice, Being Heard and Living in the Tension: Novice Nurse Academics' Critical Engagement with a Problem Orientated Curriculum in the Academic and Practice Setting*.

So I join with these women in our rebellion. I will demonstrate the rigour and importance of our work, by writing in a Way that I believe expresses the essence of how and why we went about it.

There is a power in what we do that is not easily described in academic language. That is why I use poetry and story to express inexpressible elements. Throughout the research process the story was also 'growing us'...

"In the best tellers that I know, the stories grow out of their lives like roots grow a tree. The stories have grown them, grown them into who they are. We can tell the difference. We know when someone has grown a story and when the story has grown them.

Estes 1992 463

The Value of Including Difference

Clarissa Pinkola Estes is a *cantadora* - a story-teller from both the Hungarian and Latina traditions and also a Jungian analyst. She uses stories to remind us of our 'wild woman'. There are women who leap to her words like the wolf on a moonlit night, and there are those who do not. The research group included both kinds of women. Clearly we need many different stories to talk with and hear different women.

Jean Houston is another wandering story teller of our age. She travels the world telling stories of other times and other cultures which impact upon our issues today. At a business breakfast in Sydney in 1993, she introduced her story-telling session with a Greek chant heralding what she calls the *dromenon*.

"... storytelling is the oldest form of teaching, and the basic vehicle for the transmission of culture from one generation to another. Story is living and dynamic. Stories exist to be enlarged. They are the currency of human growth. Stories need to be told and retold, heard and reheard to reveal their meaning. Storytelling builds a bridge between the teller and the listener and that transcends all factual accuracy."

Houston 1986 95

This work constructs the bridge which transcends our discoveries about ourselves as women working in Australia with other women's knowings. We collected and reflected upon our life stories. We also use fictional story, myth and fairy story to process issues in the group or as an expression of an issue.
When we women tell our stories, especially in a safe, respectful space, as our group created together, then we feel deeply the truth of our story for ourselves, at that time. It may be, that in reflection and processing the story in the group, the 'truth' may change its flavour: i.e. the woman whose story it is, may see it differently and change part of her story. At the same time, another researcher may glean a different meaning than that originally intended.

We developed our own politically effective strategies by listening to each other's stories and so we accepted our stories as 'true' by listening to each other, not striving to become something we were not.

"Part of the feminist strategy of making the personal political and of theorising emancipatory practices and discourses for women, has been to take what women say as "true stories", as the raw authentic material of women's consciousness and reality. The position 'logically' stands counterposed to the acknowledged fictions about women authored by male theorists and social scientist. As Dorothy Smith (1987, 1990) has long argued, feminist theory and research can only provide an alternative to male mythologies about women if feminist research listens to the ruled rather than the ruler."

Critical Differences of Storytelling for Political Advancement

However, there is another side to this idea. In negotiations it is wise to tune into the other parties via the use of their language to access their patterns of thinking (Laborde 1987). However if we are always capitulating to the 'other's language, how are we ever going to teach them about ours? So we are 'telling it slant' and always translating (Spender 1980, Olsen 1978, Tannen 1990). As DeVault urges: "Part of the task of feminist writing then should be to instruct a newly forming audience about how to hear our words" (DeVault 1990 112).

Our stories then aim to make connection between many different worlds. There is the misrepresented world of women that emerges from masculinist theories; there is the untold story of women's experience in the workplace; there are the stories that lie deep in our hearts that tell of a world we would like to be... Our story weaves on...

"The writer (of stories) is always between the beginning and the end of the world and she must write in both directions at once, back and forth, so that the past and the future coincide in one seed. And so I create and cancel time so we may meet in the desert where I hear the spirits can live."

Metzger 1986 181

Where is it that we can hear the spirits of women speak to us? In their stories, they tell us what lies behind their busy-ness in this world. Or, we can hear it in their telling of the matters of consequence that drive them to follow through an ethic to pick up an issue in the workplace and advocate for change. Also, we hear it in their articulation of their values. In the finding of who we know, what we know and why we must discover this, we find our epistemology "... a weave of knowing and not knowing - which is what knowing is" (Spivak 1987 78 in Lather 1991 49).

Stories enable us to explain to ourselves, what it is we are trying to know. It is through the stories we find the connection that is that knowing (Bateson 1972).
Our group shared out stories over and over again; first together, later through the writings. Then a sequel may be added, or extra meaning noticed in the reading. Our stories in effect never ended as our learning continued (Estes 1993 29). We may never finish the learning that informed us about our knowing, because it is unlimited and continues.

As we explored the integration of all our lives which became our knowing, we tried to extricate 'bits' to understand them. Yet to fully understand we needed to look at the whole. To get to understand our epistemology we needed to look at all we knew within the context of our worlds. The search for each woman's epistemology was "always and inevitably personal". And each woman's "knowing is a small part of a wider integrated knowing that knits the entire biosphere of creation" (Bateson 1979 93).

Collaborative methodologies as outlined above especially the use of story, are clearly consistent with emancipatory feminist research.

2. Feminist Research Methods and Theory - comparisons, congruencies, differences.

I now turn to selected feminist researchers and compare some of the thinking that underlies their work. I selected from many and diverse feminisms and methodologies for research, looking for the most useful material. These ideas lead me to consider a philosophy which informs our research. The question of rigour is addressed and is defined into the context of feminist research. Finally, in this section I give an explanation of how and why our research process is located within a web of feminist ideas, values and ethics which construct the methodology.

Comparison and Congruencies of Collaborative and Feminist Literature Sources
Maguire’s study of a feminist approach to participatory research (Maguire 1987) is a text based upon the congruencies arising from collaborative and feminist methodologies. (N.B. Participatory research and collaborative research are for the purposes of our work, considered synonymously - as does Reason). Like Maguire we were using research as a tool for radical social change through action (Maguire 1987 16).

She notes that participatory research claims to begin with people’s everyday experiences and goes on to critique that it must be then recognised “that women’s everyday experience of class is often different from men’s” (Maguire 1987 66). In claiming the space for us to critically consider our everyday experience, we affirmed not only our reality, but also developed a critical learning system (our group) wherein to develop beyond the problem to either resolution, change or understanding.

Congruencies with Feminist Critical Social Research and Action Research
Feminist research that connects intimately with affirming our Way of being the world and thus proposes to bring about changes, has been informed by action research. Clearly, one is enriched by the other. Feminists include action research theorists in their books. Lather (1991) mentions Fay’s critical social science (p. xvii) and Heron (p. 56). They specify the preference for doing research with people rather than on people. People have the right to be informed and participate in decisions that claim to generate knowledge about them (Lather 1991 56).
Congruencies in Sources

Shulamit Reinharz' (1992) comprehensive book of feminist research methods includes four chapters on complimentary emerging areas of research: Feminist Experimental Research, Feminist Action Research, Feminist Multiple Research Methods and finally Original Feminist Research Methods. Here she talks of her own "discovery of experiential analysis" (Reinharz 1979) which included working with the whole person, doubts and all; in her words "a human knower complete with feelings and ambivalence" (Reinharz 1992 215).

Reinharz also notes synchronous development of similar methods in others' research. A point which underlines for me, the creative inspiration that is engendered by the doing of research with other people. Ideas are generated by people working and reflecting together. It is not surprising then, that different groups come up with similar notions to describe phenomenological observations. In our experience, a great deal of creative possibilities arose because of such congruencies.

Sources Congruent with the Research Group's Ways of Finding-Out and Thinking

The following is framed as my researcher's journal of the more significantly appropriate feminist theory traversed while developing the research. Reading and doing at the same time had a number of advantages. I could try out an idea I had recently read with the group. I would bring the latest books and articles to meetings and distribute a number of copies of significant papers / chapters. Other women would introduce readings, and various ideas they discovered.

Is this heresy: to admit that I played around with research before reading all the relevant literature?

A Method of Strategic Heresy

Heresy is defined as 'choice' - not from the mainstream. The word comes from the Greek meaning to seize, to take, especially for oneself, hence a choosing...

(Partridge 1983 609).

Star uses the term to describe a politically useful approach:

"...feminism is, in essence, a method -a method of strategic heresy -a method for understanding, from marginal or boundary dwelling perspective, one's own participation in socially constructed realities, both politically and personally, both socially and cognitively ...feminism, viewed methodologically, is an emergent scientific method -one which begins with the death of the subjectivity/objectivity dichotomy and which involves questioning the very bases of socialization and perception."

Star 1979 in Reinharz 1992 241

Critical Difference - Perspective or as Method?

While Reinharz sees feminism as a perspective rather than a method (Reinharz 1992 241) I find Star's political positioning useful - as a method. I deliberately designed this research to identify existing strategies which enable women (and all workers) greater choices and creativity in the workplace. When we reframe heresy as 'seizing a choice' then it is certainly an apt term for feminism... our style of feminism, that is.
Our position on feminist research is more accurately described as a process of co-learning which includes using strategic heresy. In this learning we came to understand a great deal more than before: about ourselves, and women’s experiences in Australia in the 1990’s. Especially useful is learning how and where to place ourselves as agents of change to further affirm and empower other women and men co-workers, to also facilitate enabling, emancipatory work and life practices.

How we do our research is how we live our lives

and do our work. I call it affirmative inquiry.

We affirm our ability to learn from what we discover and to influence situations which do not affirm the people involved.

**Apparent Contradictions - Tensions inherent in the Struggle**

Clearly, the most useful research theory, was that which informed us on what we were doing. Like many women, we discovered the usefulness of theory because it named our lived experience. This is where theory is most valuable to women who are activists. If we can validate that which we are doing, by others who have written about it and given it professionally effective names, then we are validated in the mainstream. Thus may heretics convert orthodox practice to our ideas.

Or do we?

This is the struggle.

"... the dilemma of the feminist scholar, always, is to find ways of working within some disciplinary tradition while aiming at an intellectual revolution that will transform the tradition."

DeVaul 1990 96

The tension lies in the risk of losing our ‘selves’ as we struggle with such contradictions. How then do we tackle DeVault’s dilemma? Through theory, we can validate and explain our experiences. The intellectual revolution is won when we claim our own theory as many feminists have done... to break free of the masculine, and orthodox overtones of the term ‘theory’ (Stanley & Wise 1993 162).

One of the major tenets of the ‘old’ disciplinary traditions, is the method of argument used to develop and sustain ideas. I prefer to work with multiple voices rather than set up an argument against the establishment. The paradox of paradigms (Kaufman 1992) stretches us again. I put forward an argument against arguments to challenge the established way of changing ideas.

The resolution I work with in the research process is to bridge the paradigms - which is in itself a tension. If we want to communicate to those who think differently, then it helps to use their language and style of operating. At the same time our research affirms many different styles. The process is a fine dance which at times is more fiery than delicate!
Polarities do not Serve to Integrate

In my practice of feminism, activism and social ecology, I am in a lifelong learning process of dissolving the dualism of subjectivity/objectivity. So I aim to present this thesis in an integrated style to contextualise the work as far as possible within our language constraints. This approach is of course, problematic.

In submitting this work as a PhD thesis I am entering a tradition wherein an argument for the thesis is expected. In place of an adversarial argument I present a patchwork quilt of women’s stories, bound together through dialogue within a framework of emancipatory philosophy. By presenting our stories within their various contexts I am working with (feminist) multiple world-views and so expanding beyond positivist research limitations as do other feminist researchers (Reinharz 1992), Stanley & Wise (1993), & Dubois (1983) amongst others).

The complexity of such a task which I set myself can be described by Stanley and Wise’s “feminist fractured foundationalist epistemology” (Stanley and Wise 1993 193). My approach then is to recognise within the feminist framework of our research, the many different concerns which arise when we aim to challenge the status quo from a multi-faceted position. Inclusive feminisms aim to recognise different social and cultural contexts.

Such a complex process can serve to fracture feminist concerns which are already multi-voiced and contextualised within many cultural foundations. Yet it seems appropriate that there are times when our language serves many voices. While I cannot resolve the tension simplistically, I can state that the position necessarily changes according to context -who is talking/ writing and who is listening/ reading.

My preference (and political position) is to honour differences. That includes people’s ideas. I respect people’s thoughts and their reality as they know it. Yet little would change if we did not challenge and reform entrenched thinking which arises from inherent values and assumptions. Neither do I take a stand of difference feminism or essentialist. Both have a voice that should be heard within their context.

Congruencies with Feminist and Post-Modern Research Approaches

In stressing awareness of contextuality, I am working with the belief that there are as many different ‘realities’, as there are people. Our realities shift and change with our situations. I believe, along with Patti Lather, that the post-modern philosophies, can serve our style of feminism by promoting this notion of many realities, all within context. She calls feminism: “...the quantum physics of the post-modern” (Lather 1991 27). That notion seems to place feminism philosophically as a prime-mover of post-modernism. We bring in the chaos that upsets the hegemonic orthodoxy, just as the chaos theory upsets objectivity and determinism (Capra 1982).

"Philosophically speaking, the essence of the postmodern argument is that the dualisms which continue to dominate western thought are inadequate for understanding a world of multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways, all of which are rooted in a limitless array of historical and cultural specificities."
One way post-modern discourses can serve feminist politics by working within and challenging dominant hegemonic discourse (Lather 1991 39), is in the challenging of power relations. The philosophy of Foucault particularly has been taken up by feminists investigating power relations (Sawicki 1991, Woodhull 1988, Diamond & Quinby 1988). Especially useful for direct political action is Foucault’s notion that power need not necessarily be imposed from above. Those of us who know experientially what ‘below’ means, do create our own power, develop strategies and proceed to instigate ‘powerful’ redress (Macy 1993 453) while always recognising there are those who are not so empowered by such a ‘choice’.

Throughout this work we tell stories of power - our experiences of it both imposed and developing within us. Thus we must both at the same time - acknowledge the reality of the existence of ‘power over’ dropping full force upon us and re-frame that experience so that we develop and use our own power. I do not see this as a vacillation between two opposing positions. I see this as the context of feminists today who have heard and experienced the stories of both ‘victim feminism’ (Wolf 1993) and affirmative enabling power both collective and within.

Post-modernism has developed contemporary notions which impact upon our philosophical base yet I do not want to collapse our identity as women into a post-modern total deconstruction. That would deny our experience as much as patriarchal definitions. The interaction of feminism with postmodernism provides a space where it is not only not possible to take a certain position (Rosenau 1992), but rather draws strength from the multiple views considered. Rather than polarising the world-views (post-modernism / feminism, or feminism / patriarchy), I struggle to discuss our stories as narratives within the context of these influences as illustrated in diagram 3.1. This, I affirm as an effective position for contextualised research, which allows for resolution between different ways of being by creating strategies using appropriate parts of a range of views.

Worth noting is that there are many valid methods of research. More procedures are being created as feminists work towards designing research to suit the situation that is being researched. (Clearly an appropriate approach for those of us who recognise the notion of multitudinous realities.) Creativity, and responsiveness to situations are not limited. Reinhartz (1992), Stanley & Wise (1993), & Dubois (1983), draw our attention to the issue of the underlying challenge that all feminist research inherently carries with it: - challenging traditional positivist frameworks. For feminists like us, we directly challenge the values underpinning the epistemology and ontology of positivism.

I write these words as the Australian government health minister, Dr. Carmen Lawrence, suspended trials on the abortion drug RU486 (Sydney Morning Herald and Canberra Times 17 + 18, August 1994). The concern to be addressed is the ethics of the consent forms. It seems the forms do not adequately explain unknown and known risks to women who sign up for research which aims to trial the drug’s use in Australia. Feminist researcher Dr. Renate Klein, also attacked the ethics of the process of ‘informed consent’ (ABC Radio National, 17 August 1992).

Feminists have a constant watching brief to critique the ethics of all positivist based research. It helps enormously to have a health minister who is informed of the issues and has her own ethical approach to the job (which embodies her role as protector of Australia’s health). As the only current female minister in cabinet (at the time of this writing), she has a huge job to do.
3. Resolution in Action - The Way We have Done This Research

Given the richness and complexity of the wide ranging theoretical sources that inform this work, resolution between the different schools of thought lies in the resulting research methodology applied. Including feminist, participatory and collaborative research methods, our investigation paradigm is radically different to a traditional/positivist approach. We research with people not do research on people. People are participants in identifying the focus of the research and the development of the process. The research timing and mechanics, (group meetings, open-ended interviews, questionnaires, journals, group painting, drama or whatever) are flexible to the needs, concerns and preferences of the group. Ownership is collective, (including this prime researcher). Writings emerging from the research may or may not become public. Participants have the right of veto.

Simply put, if the research process does not meet my participants' needs, than it is not (for me) truly collaborative feminist research.

That last statement requires that co-researchers have enough power to access their own needs, both internally (knowing their needs) and externally (able to access resources necessary -whether people or things). If the prime researcher has more access, then she has a great responsibility to clearly explain possibilities and outcomes, ensure that co-researchers understand them and give over to them power to make decisions and take action. Belenky et al 1986 provides a practical example of the complexity of such research in practice in Women’s Ways of Knowing.

Dale Spender (1985 5&6) explains why women need our own and different research practices as there is no one truth, authority or method which can espouse ‘pure’ knowledge. One strong reason for doing this research was that I am challenging that situation where as women our knowing cannot be expressed through the voice of patriarchy - that in itself describes the oppression of our experience.

I go further and suggest that patriarchal knowledge is too often based upon the premise that only the welfare of a few privileged (usually white) males is taken into account. Oppression as an experience, knows no gender barrier. Our style of feminism works actively for emancipation of all people.

To tell the stories of women we need to change the ways it has been done. As DuBois observed, "we literally cannot see women through traditional science and theory." (DuBois in Fonow & Cook 1992 86). Fonow & Cook (1992) follow Dubois’ comment with a detailed summary of feminists who have argued against traditional methods. I stand with them, creating our own Way of doing (research), arising from our own way of being and thinking.

This work is personal research with political outcomes. I have started where I live and work because this is the context that I know (Stanley & Wise 1993 163). The women co-researchers also start the research journey from where they are. So first we share our situational stories -in our work, our relationships and our experiences and family and community backgrounds. Our research process develops by drawing out our direct experience of the world. This is "the basis of our knowledge as social scientists" (Smith 1974). I take the view that there can be no mistakes (Stanley & Wise 1993 150). There can be only learning.
Philosophical Resolutions Applied to Research

With a worldview of multiple realities, I need to use research methods that can hear 'the different voice of women' (Gilligan 1982) and not presuppose and thus define into the methodology, what these women's 'Ways' of working may be.

Negative personal experience has taught us that harm can be caused by many research methods. This includes unethical practices. The practice of emancipatory ethics throughout this research is always a high priority. Because other social scientists were in the group, we constantly had recourse to possible anomalies. There was little opportunity to pursue practices which could harm.

This meant of course, that the prime researcher (me) could be challenged at any time. While ensuring that co-researchers were 'mostly' comfortable with the research processes, I was often on tenterhooks in the early stages when conflicting views would emerge in the group. It took me time to recognise that the multiple realties of women's lives was here in microcosm.

A second concern was the political nature of inquiry. We stated from the start, our intention to practice our politics of enabling learning and emancipating beyond the research and into our workplaces.

Thirdly, we have a clear philosophical position which embraces holistic emancipatory practices. After all, we want to know how to bring our whole selves to work, so that we can be effective social change agents.

I found that researching with these women requires flexible options of 'going with the flow' or, 'making it up as we go along' and changing the 'results' to suit the participants' outcomes. Such flexibility requires extensive skills, determination and rigour, I would argue.

I became cross with myself because I wrote 'argue'. When a divisive old paradigm polarising term slips out... (call it a mistake), when I feel strongly, how can I speak out without using habitual old paradigm words. Is it in our awareness that we live our ethic? Do we heighten that awareness by changing our language or do we change the language use after rasing awareness?

...And that 'mistake' embodies my rigour by raising that awareness and asking that question.

Resolving The Rigour Question

Like that pesky 'woman' question, it just doesn't go away. But is the method rigorous? Is the work valid? How does it stand up against 'hard' research?

Our rigour lies in the constant attention to process; the awareness of the meta-dialogue occurring. The rigour lies in making meaning from the complexity of the inter-actions in focus group and process work. It is far easier (but often less rewarding), in my experience, to have a set questionnaire and collect data one-to-one. The latter collection-of-data method is of course useful to gather specific information and for that purpose I used a questionnaire early in this research.

The rigour lies in letting go of the notion of compiling a neat pile of data, and knowing that in researching through story we will collect lifetimes of rich
learnings. The rigour lies in making sense of specific and group contextuality to people of other singularities.

There is rigour in being able to combine and interpret both quantitative and qualitative data. Without hard statistics, how can we advocate for childcare places, affirmative action to increase the number of apprenticed girls in non-traditional trades or know how many women die each year on the planet from childbirth? If we don't know the figures, we cannot advocate to change inequities.

Clearly, our research is all the richer if we can be multi-skilled. We are then able to competently practice a range of research approaches covering both the qualitative and quantitative spectrums. To dance between the worlds, we must also be able to use the language of those in power. 'Hard' evidence I contend, is useful.

_**Learning Process within Methodology**_

Our research experience is also a learning process. I emphasise process, as a core essential of our methodology, for the following reasons:

- We did not know what we would discover.

- Each woman was learning something about herself, about others in the group and gaining other ways of seeing her own workplace issues.

- As an 'action' oriented group, we did not know answers before we went with the process; this includes:
  1. What the issue would be for each woman.
  2. How she may want to go about processing it.
  3. What action she may choose to take (including non-action).

'Process' also describes the group interactions. Clearly our group had its own group dynamics. Fortunately, I had experience honing the skills of group facilitation (and a post-grad thesis on Group Dynamics in State-wide Women’s Learning groups, as already mentioned).

There were other women in the group who were highly skilled in this type of work. They brought their approaches too, which are detailed in later chapters.

The practice of Process Oriented Management (Zuber-Skerritt 1990) and Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperider 1994), both apply similar approaches to management. In psychology, this area of human learning has developed its own process-oriented paradigm by Arnie Mindell (1989).

With so many different practices and theories available, it is a wise place to start research, right where we are (Stanley & Wise 1993 163 so our existing context is the 'right' starting place. These women wanted to become a group of co-researchers and needed to be able to design a process that suits their purpose and context (Fonow & Cook 1991, 100). For us, the most appropriate research processes are those which we can take away and use at work as strategies. "... feminist theory should consider itself a form of strategy. Strategy involves recognising the situation and alignments of power within and against which it operates" (Grosz 1990a 59).
It is essential, by common agreement of the research group, that our research leads into purposeful action. Strategies were formulated by the process of the research. I believe this women's research group was developing our own theory that was tested out in practice. So far the evidence lies in the fact of our effective doing.

I took feminist ideas, theories and strategies and applied them to how we researched together. This led inevitably to collaborative research methodologies; a typical feedback loop - theory informed strategy and vice versa. As this research worked from heuristic, phenomenological and hermeneutic frameworks, a core processing tool and research dynamic, was our use of Story and through our stories we applied lived experience as research.

Resolutions through Lived Experience - Gathering Ideas which Nurture the Ways of Researching

Who was that research
I saw you with last night?
That was no research
That was my life.
(Reason 1988 18)

While Reinhart (1992) sees lived experience as a perspective, I clearly used it also as a research method, thus turning our context into an inquiry process for critical reflection. Contextually centred in living and integrating research is my ideal. Meta-cognition which develops consciousness and awareness, means that what we do day-to-day, influences our process. Significant influences came from talking with friends and noticing what motivated them. When women friends are talking about their concerns I often ask: "Why is this important to you?" and "How do you feel about that?"

I research to find answers to questions. I want to discover more about issues of concern, to learn from others who have gone before. My experience as an independent researcher over many years, leads me to ask more questions rather than less. In this study, I discovered my research focus appeased my own burning curiosity about a subject that was of enduring interest to me. I began learning how effective and ethical women worked.

Through setting up the research project I discovered an acceptance and legitimising of such a curiosity. Similarly co-researchers also discovered that satisfaction of experiencing the privilege, to find out how and why other co-researchers operated and thought. The very idea of collaborative research makes this inquiry process legitimate because all information is a shared experience.

Early on I was concerned about the ethics of my receiving a higher degree from telling other women's stories. The problematic situation of myself as the chief investigator reaping the expected award of a PhD, in practice became a non-issue to group members as they experienced their own satisfaction in meeting together for support and sharing of knowledge. Indeed, affirming the value of the work by the award became a group goal of external validation of our processes.
'Listening' as a Research Process

Before starting the group I was intrigued and delighted by Fran Peavey's 'listening projects' described in Heart Politics (1986). Fran went to Japan and sat at public places like railway stations and market squares with a sign: "American Willing to Listen". She collected stories which people volunteered in response to the sign. Later at meetings with her (1993 and 1994), I discovered that strategic listening was a preferred method of her research.

Listening is a powerful tool when collecting women's stories. For 10 years I listened to women’s tales of breast-feeding and caring for young infants, post-natal depression, etc. In my role as counsellor and later trainer of counsellors and group leaders for Nursing Mother’s Association of Australia (NMAA), I learned that offering oneself as a listener, effectively opened doors into their hearts and minds. This process quickly revealed important issues that concerned these women.

The Process of Questioning

Fran Peavey developed a process of Strategic Questioning (1992 / 1994) which collects together a range of questions aimed at supporting a person to facilitate change in an area of concern: Briefly these cover:

0. Focusing questions
1. Observation questions
2. Feeling questions
3. Fashioning questions
4. Change questions
5. Personal Inventory and support questions
6. Personal action questions

This style of questioning informs me of a process which is many steps beyond the counselling technique of active-listening; a technique often used for building rapport. I found that 'just listening' did not always serve to move along a problem situation. At one stage, I offered to construct a focus session to look at one woman’s distress at work. The strategic questioning process served to move her along so that she developed her own strategies. Step-by-step, her situation improved, her work team's productivity increased and stress levels were reduced thus affirming her strategies and ability to manage her section. (This story is told in Atalanta’s Strategic Plan, Appendix 3.)

Researching Self

Integrating life and research means constantly building awareness of process. I noticed before reaching age 20, that there were people who lived their lives in a very conscious and 'aware' manner. This awareness is akin to the Hindu concept that mind is indeed the source of bondage and is also the source of liberation (Venkatesananda 1972), and the Buddhist notion of mind as the still centre of a turning wheel (Rinpoche 1992). Hence the practice of meditation -to train the mind’s awareness. This I believe, is a state of clarity, a realisation of possibilities. It permits accessing options and doing it all (the task at hand) from a mental state of objective and universal love.

I realised I was working with women whose power came from a state of love and caring.
At a concert of Afro-American women Sweet Honey in the Rock, I saw six very powerful women working from a state of love. They advocate and sing out against oppression with their love for music. An example - a rap song Women are a Priority stated our issues clearly.

It seemed to me that one purpose of my research was to learn about how we know things.

I looked for other Ways to describe these women’s work. My research clearly extends my own knowing and process of that knowing. I wanted to extend the usefulness of learning about our knowing to other women and indeed, to all workers.

I was researching myself. This of course, is part of the process of collaborative research. I could hardly probe into other women’s lives without also revealing my own concerns.

Further, to express this woman’s Way of writing, then I need to find my own narrative. And there is a conflict here: it is a battle between tradition and revolution. There is a tension created by speaking out in my own voice and at the same time attempting to meet some obviously traditional expectations common in our society (such as reporting on research impersonally and objectively).

Before coming to this work I had 2 significant and effective experiences of researching with women that I brought to this project.

1. *Group Dynamics in Learning Programs*
   In my first post-graduate program with social ecology, I researched the group dynamic in programs for women to build confidence and return to the workforce (Kaufman 1987). This work was distributed state-wide by NSW TAFE along with training sessions which I designed and presented to teach experiential learning and process-oriented communication skills to teachers of the women’s groups.

2. *Senior Women In Management*
   In the first year of this candidature, I was funded to research Senior Women in Management in the central sector of TAFE NSW. I designed qualitative research, interviewed the women, and wrote up a report which was distributed to all the women involved and executive management. The fruits of the research grew into a two-day conference designed to address the concerns raised in the research. The research report is included as Appendix 4.

*Other Influences*

Our research process was enriched by a range of inputs. In the next chapter, I track those personal, professional and collective sources.

I have mentioned that I delight to read / hear of other women’s discoveries. This is especially so, when I have had the experience of working out various ideas
and processes that are effective for me. Later, when discovering someone else has recorded similar ideas and processes my illumination is enhanced.

After 20 years of co-learning (teaching) with adult learners, I found the delight and despair of similar discoveries in others. Concurrently, there is a conundrum around the source of ideas. After more than 4 decades of reading, it is very easy to just ‘know’ things. It is not always possible to name the original source. I advocate the value and richness of ‘a-literate’ knowledge. I coin this term to describe the myriad of knowings, that women often have. These knowings may not have been learned from books. While I love and devour books (my home is indicative that it harbours a bookaholic), I also love to learn from women chatting.

“How did you know that you had to go to another department to solve that problem?”

“How did you collect all your gardening knowledge.”

“How do you turn a hem.”

I am reminded of my 15 year-old son asking me recently: “Which book should I read to learn about how the world works? You know, all that stuff you know about governments, how people do their work, how they live and know what to do every day. Show me which book on your shelves will tell me all that?”

...And I was stumped. He could read this and that, and he could listen and join in conversations round the dinner table with guests, and observe the media...

What he didn’t want to know at 15, is that much of it is learned by living - and that takes time.

Such is the dilemma of a feminist researcher endeavouring to acknowledge and integrate all influences upon her work. It is easiest of all, to track down the literature. It is there. It is written down. I also want to acknowledge all the influences of lived experience; every person we observe, talk with, work with provides valuable insights. They are all the women and men who have taught us by being themselves and whose story is not recorded here.

Summary of this Chapter

So, I have knitted together the sources of the strands of my creations which affirms the women collaborating in our research.

These sources are examined by comparison, identifying congruence, specifying difference and apparent contradictions. First affirmative research is informed by the multiple methodologies of collaborative approaches including different genres of storytelling designed to deepen research understandings.

Secondly I considered the major feminist influences, which work in correlation with collaborative research. Finally I articulate the resolutions between the different schools of thought and integrate lived experience as research influences and process.

Australian Aborigines use ‘Songlines’ (Chatwin 1987 177) to tell strangers crossing their lands the Way through their territory. I see that women sing our songs / tell our stories to show the Way through our lives, especially so that we can see the patterns - the storyline, ourselves.
Section 2

We are the Now Generation of Changing Women - Research Findings
Chapter 4.

Meet the Women

Overview

This chapter answers the question: who are the women? I briefly introduce the women individually in order to integrate the process, and findings (in this and next section) with their biographical stories.

The chapter is marked so the reader can refer back to it and the names are given alphabetically. Created names were chosen by the women for anonymity where preferred.

One difficulty in compiling group research is to inform the reader about individuals. I wanted to record the women's lived experiences enriched by the group learning context. While issues of importance to the group are identified, there is still an individual life-story to be told. The brief biographies are very much a part of the research process.

Meet the Women

Following are introductory sketches. They paint informal pictures of our work areas, social backgrounds and current family. The information was collected initially from interviews and refined by the woman many times.

The structure of these “discoveries” reflect work situations. When we first meet people professionally, we tend to make assumptions about their positions, duties, some of their past experiences and possibly their qualifications. At work we may aim to learn how best to structure the tasks we are to perform together or delegate to individuals. By working together then, we learn bits and pieces about each other. This chapter presents some biographical and professional information about these women. As at work, we gradually learn more. Other chapters give further views and information from different contexts.

Ariadne

Ariadne personifies her own practice speaking of:

...the blurred line between work and service.

She willingly identifies as Stella Cornelius, founder of the Conflict Resolution Network. CRN sustains her ideals for co-operation and devising collaborative solutions to problems involving opposing viewpoints.

All of her CRN duties are voluntary. To financially support her CRN obligations, she manages her own property company.
She has always been a working mother, with motivations of both love and to earn money. Ariadne is a grandmother and widow in her seventies, written up in Susan Mitchell's (1987) book as one of Australia's 'Matriarchs'. She left school in her early teens, and learned the skills of the fashion industry. She ran a canvas factory for the defence department during the second world war. Her management experience developed in her husband’s fashion business. She commented that as the boss’s wife, she was sheltered from much of the lack of authority granted women managers in her earlier career experience.

Ariadne started in management with no previous training. She enrolled herself in a private training college (Hemmingway & Robertson) where she received first-class management training by distance education.

**Women Created Organisation**

I very much wanted to include Ariadne, for these reasons: firstly to have the perspective of an older woman in the group, with her experience of women’s changing roles, and secondly, her work with CRN actively models, promotes and teaches more feminine Ways¹ of being effective within the heart of business and government organisations. These Ways aim to share power by integrating CRN philosophy and practices which:

- see conflict as an opportunity for change to improve social interactions
- offer a systemic approach which invites all affected parties to have their needs and concerns heard
- produces a range of solutions
- invites decisions about collective action
- builds in review in case the action does not suit a party

CRN offers to the workplace, tools with many opportunities for problem-solving *within* the work place. The needs of all parties are heard, addressed and acted upon. CRN offers tools for new management strategies that see their people as co-workers rather than units of production.

Through my own involvement in CRN, leading training programs in conflict resolution and managing change to business, government and community groups, I witnessed the beneficial effect of these strategies. People are eager - often relieved, to learn other Ways, to have tools/skills which provide choices in Ways of managing.

So, it is useful to this research, to look at the founder of the CRN - which is a learning organisation (Senge 1990). They use and promote strategies for change *all* of the time. Ariadne and the many other skilled women at CRN (the staff are nearly all women!) are bringing interpersonal and intrapersonal skills into open-agenda political management for many workplaces.

**Chris**

Working as a senior manager of a section in a large training organisation, Chris specialises in preparing people to acquire or enhance community skills development and welfare skills; acts as a consultant to many activist/lobby groups; and is an effective feminist activist for over twenty years. She is known as a powerful advocate for using political and public systems to benefit *all* people, especially those who are oppressed.

¹ My use of the term 'feminine' is discussed fully in chapter 5.
Her current work is part of a very extensive career. It involves social policy, community development and management and local government. Chris manages a range of programs with a team of forty. This includes 5 full-time, 20 full time casuals, and 15 part-time workers.

Chris brought to the group her perspective of operating as a known lesbian in her community and professional work.

*Roots of Activism*

Chris' activist skills were first learned through her church youth work as well as being the wife of a pastor of their fundamentalist Christian church for several years. Leadership, communication and advocacy skills, as well as public speaking were grounded in youth activities (camp, coffee shop, bible studies). Her strong evangelism then transferred to effective advocacy for disempowered peoples.

She learned about political opportunity early in her career. Active in committees which fed into government policy, Chris was at the same time involved in welfare lobby groups. There she had influence upon decisions to fund the first women's resource centre. It was the first women's centre funded that was neither a refuge or a health centre. It had a multi-purpose role.

*It happened because I was in two positions in that point in history. I was on two separate funding advisory committees so I made sure it got picked up and got recurrently funded. So that meant while that was happening we were also looking at something in other cities. A lot of it was just being there, and being aware of what the issues were.*

Like any of us, Chris has the sense that things are not right; that 'it' could be different. For Chris 'it' encompassed the social and political reality of day-to-day life for many oppressed peoples. Her evangelical training gave her a powerful skills and values base to build a career in engineering Social Change. I say engineering rather than facilitating, because Chris sees the machinery, the frameworks which construct what is, identifies where there could be possible movement, and goes in as surely as an engineer with the appropriate tools. She tests an area for movement and oils social/political process by talking and working with people towards change, smoothing the changing of gears for other people.

*Handing on Skills and Power to Others*

In most recent years Chris' work has focussed more on training individuals. The result is that many more people have the skills, confidence and ethic which can change oppressive constructs.

*Working Together*

Collaborative team work is a maxim for Chris.

*I was never the only player and not always the key player. I was just as capable of being a really good follower as I was of being a really good leader. In both those kind of things I found feminism and moved away from Christian stuff. The follower or leader stuff just went out the window. And I was introduced to a whole process of equality that confronted me initially, but that I*
thrive on ever since. And that is in creating balance, and co-operation and equality.

Roots

Like Ariadne, Electra, Grace, Jill and Virginia, Chris has working class roots and a commitment to equity.

*I grew up in a working class environment with a fairly poor family with very strong individual parents. A very strong labour and union type of father who taught me my politics - to never let anyone stand over me, to stand up for myself no matter what. Yet at the same time he didn't respect women very much.*

*My mother told me that you can do anything, but didn’t believe it of herself, yet believed it of me. So there were contrary messages from both of them. I grew up with a bit of a chip on my shoulder about wanting to change the world. That it was very unjust, unfair and it could be fairer. That led me into Social Work which for me was never counselling, always community work.*

Families

At the time of this inquiry Chris was in her early forties. She was the third of 7 children; the eldest girl in the midst of 4 brothers. She says this was significant as she was always competing with the boys.

Chris described her environment as very woman-centred. She lived in a blended family with her partner for 16 years with their 4 children from earlier marriages. These are now all young adults. In the last phase of writing up, Chris’ partner left the relationship to explore her own needs. Chris in relationships is very loyal and highly committed and found this emotionally a hard time. As noted earlier, her lesbian orientation added a revealing attitudinal dimension to the group.

Electra

Electra runs her own company in partnership with her husband. Her work involves change-consultancy, marketing and strategic public relations activities. Electra supports her clients in raising their profile amongst industry, the Australian public and various business communities. Clients include women in legal, business, publishing, computing, accounting and trustee companies. During our project Electra was executive officer of the State’s largest business women’s group. She has been using this position with media involvement, to publicly address many areas of concern to women.

Urban Life-style

Electra’s home is within easy walking distance from her office in an upper-middle-class residential and business suburb of Sydney. Initially the office was a room at the back of the house. Their business has expanded over the time of the research project and now employs 3 other people as well as herself and her husband.

*I have a very urban life-style; 1 of 2 working parents and we employ a Nanny. Materially its quite a rich life-style. Socially it might be impoverished because we both work such long hours. At the moment its a bit of a merry-go-round.*
This comment was recorded during the early weeks of the second baby. With a toddler then not yet 3 and a few-weeks-old infant, life indeed was a merry-go-round. Add to that, the complexities of running a business and we see Electra doing the amazing and difficult balancing act of new Mum and effective professional business woman.

_I'm hoping it will slow down a bit in the next two years. The reason it's a merry-go-round is because we have two small children and our life-style hasn't really slowed down to accommodate them. At the moment with an 8 week old baby, I put in about 35 hours at work, which isn't a lot, but is a lot with children and especially when you're not sleeping a lot. That's 35 hours in a 7 day week._

**Working Now with the Future in Mind**

Electra sees this pace as short-term to invest in opportunities and choices for their children in the future.

_A lot of our life-style is future-directed. I work so that I can pay for my children to go to a private school as I don't want them to go to a traditional school. Sometimes I feel like I'm caught in a trap because you want to give your children a better start in life - a quality of life. But to do that you have to separate yourself from them for a long time._

The juggling act of earning a 'good' living and ensuring 'good-living' for family members at the same time, is a familiar one to many professional women. In considering her own needs, Electra is able to balance her life.

_But then I've never been a good career home maker. I'd be bored shitless. So its probably better I do this and they have me for a couple of hours a day._

_I finish work at 5.30. Then they've got my undivided attention._

Electra emigrated from Great Britain to Australia, in her twenties, the fourth of 9 children. At the time of the research she was around 40. She came out to Australia specifically to ensure a better life for her future children as well as widening career possibilities.

She wanted it known, that she always considered she had advantages and privileges that she saw others did not. When the above paragraph was first distributed, she felt I had given a romantic view. Electra is very pragmatic.

**Creating a Learning Organisation**

Because of her belief in the value of collective working, Electra and her husband initiated Senge's concept of the Learning Organisation (1990). A Learning Organisation plans its management around systems analysis: -looking at the big picture, noting all who may be affected and endeavouring to get their input. The demand for their work is increasing. Their expansion takes form by bringing other workers into their business and it is paying off.

At first, they found that 2 out of the 3 workers took some time to become autonomous, self-initiating workers. Past work environments promote such a strong directive culture that the inter-dependence promoted by Covey (1990), requires time to develop in work teams.
There's Always a Way to Go
If any aspects of Electra's work is not working the way she prefers, she seeks to change it.

*I rarely see myself as powerless.*

Electra describes herself as a catalyst. Understanding her preferred working styles is very valuable to Electra.

*It lets me see that there is no right or wrong personality type; that each has their own contribution. It allows me to legitimise my weaknesses and recognise why I would be in a stress position. It gives me control.*

The value of accepting that there is more than one right way, is one that group members acknowledged again and again. We have learnt it is useful for valuing our own Ways of working and we encourage other workers around us to be flexible in solving problems.

She has high energy in her work, describing herself as a workaholic - the more stress the more energetic I become.

There is a paradoxical balance between this position and her earlier statement about *hating stressful environments*. Electra has been exploring her own inner needs in the past few years; playing golf for fun not business, creating support groups, seeing a few close friends and completing the Social Ecology Masters degree in Applied Science.

Late in this project she launched her own PhD (social ecology) research on the role of values in organisational change:

*My research to date has led me to hypothesise that to achieve equity for women in management, existing corporate cultures must be reviewed and re-aligned to accommodate the difference in value systems of men and women. Only by considering individual value systems and their importance within the workplace can we appreciate that management cultures are socially constructed and can therefore be reconstructed to respond to demands for increased female representation in shaping corporate cultures.*

*In this research, I propose to map the value systems in operation within one of Australia’s biggest accountancy firms. (The accountancy profession has a poor reputation of female representation at senior management levels.) We will compare the value systems of men and women at the same executive level and compare these to those of the Management Committee (representing the dominant value system). From this research we will be able to identify if the dominant value system acts as an informal barrier to female access to senior management levels. Using the findings and working with the participants, we will outline several alternative strategies to accommodate differences in value while still achieving the corporate goals of the organisation.*
Electra holds a balance between the personal and the global, (like many women in the group). She initiated a fund-raising event for women of war-torn Bosnia and regularly offers her skills voluntarily to causes that concern her.

**Gloria**

Gloria manages learning environments to facilitate skills and enhance confidence development for the long-term unemployed, adult, youth and particularly women. Gloria has been a Lifeline telephone counsellor and was the vice-president of the C G Jung Society of Sydney for 3 years.

In her late forties she is amongst the oldest in the group. The oldest in a family of 3 children, she now lives in urban-fringe bushland with her husband of 20+ years, and son in his late teens - from whom she learned that football was a spiritual experience. Of Gloria's pleasant home, her garden is as she says: 

"...the most important part of me".

This focus shifted through the research years and her art took over as her major creative outlet. She has developed this into a business by hiring market stalls to sell her beautiful works of art in the form of hand-painted and died scarves, ties, and wall hangings.

**A Mature-Age Graduate**

Leaving school at 14, Gloria was 25 before she returned to studies. As a mature student, Gloria gained a degree in Fine Arts (London) and art teaching qualifications. She developed her skills of working with people through Lifeline telephone counselling for 3 years; (training for this involves 4½ months of one night a week). Further psychology skills were developed in many years involvement in the Jung Society of Sydney. This included 3 years as vice-president, setting up workshops and undergoing extensive analysis with 2 Jungian practitioners. Like so many other women, Virginia and Chris included, Gloria developed considerable professional skills and knowledge through being an active volunteer.

Virginia invited Gloria into the group, because of her vast experience with preparatory training needs for women to enter or re-enter the workforce. Particularly valuable, is her Jungian understanding and perspectives. I wanted to explore the idea of anima and animus, the Jungian view of the balance of male and female within all of us. This exploration is developed in chapter 5. The initial motivation for the research was to redress that imbalance and integrate both feminine and masculine aspects of humanity.

In her work practices Gloria needs some independence, and...

I like to discuss and share and interact a lot with others, swap ideas and support each other. I look for support from my colleagues and look to give a lot.

**Life is an Exciting Drama**

Gloria is an extravert who feels deeply for others, and so intervenes in oppressive situations. She holds a very even view of life seeing all possibilities for the play of good and evil in anyone. Being a Jungian, she celebrates the shadow (explained in Chapter 5) and never denies its expression from anyone. She will aid another in exploring their unknown depths to see options rather than barriers. Overwhelmingly optimistic, it is unusual to find Gloria in a 'down' day. Even then, her equanimity and acceptance of the need to go into the "darker side of the moon" shows her acceptance of all aspects of being human.
My extraversion comes out in my teaching. I love to put words together in a new way that reveals new levels of understanding. Sometimes I do that in preparation, sometimes it comes together in class, sometimes from the students; that's wonderful. I keep trying to get it so the meaning is exposed. Having a progression of ideas linked so that it unfolds in a really clear way. My intuitive responses are uppermost in class interaction. My judgements are based on my feeling values rather than any reasoning process, nevertheless, they are rational judgements.

Conflict style
When I am in conflict with another at work, I look at the situation from a personal angle and support that person's view rather than the bureaucratic view. It's essential to me, that the person is not to be crushed by bureaucratic systems.

Need for reflexive time
While recognising her extraversion, Gloria has astute awareness of her needs for reflective time to re-energise - alone. For this reason she keeps within a part-time employment framework so that she has control over the hours she works. It is essential for Gloria to spend around 2 days a week at home alone. Here she will garden, do creative art and practice her newly-learned skill of beading and later her silk paintings.

Some years ago Gloria coped with a serious illness. While not wanting to detail that, she learned about pacing and allowing time for the spirit. Her husband too, works part-time and they share costs and parenting responsibilities.

Grace
At the time of this research Grace was the branch secretary of a large labour union of public servants in a major city. She has been a Vice-President of the Trades and Labor Council in her area, and a representative on the Women's Consultative Committee to the State Government. Grace's style is the antithesis of the branch secretary before her. She was voted in by what one journalist saw as a "new wave" of the union movement. Grace puts into action the consultative process amongst members that is firmly based on progressive principles. She talks with members, finds out their concerns and raises their issues where appropriate. She actively works at enabling 'ordinary' members to advocate for themselves. In the final year of this research, Grace did not stand again for re-election and returned to the public sector.

Grace has worked in the public sector since graduating university with a sociology major. Her family were working class. She was the last child of 4 - a menopause baby with older brother and sisters around her as a young child. Yet, at 7 years old, was an only child at home with elderly parents.

Her early political activities included battling to save the Franklin River in Tasmania's wilderness, where as a dam protester she spent time in jail. She also worked with Jess to establish a rape crisis centre.

Life-style
In the last year of our research, Grace bought a house with her male partner. She found the 'love-of-her-life' and is about to start a family. She acknowledges a big shift in her relationship focus in her commitment to one male partner for a possible long-term relationship.
A very important part of my life is my social life with my friends. It's a very important part of how I feel about myself. She still spends time with her friends and they will always be important to Grace.

Learning to Be the Boss

In the early years of her job as union boss, Grace found it difficult to dissociate her concerns about others' responsibilities. We often see models around us saying "I am the boss. The buck stops here. I take full responsibility". She thinks this position is extremely limiting.

If I do try and take on others responsibilities I'm paralysed by it.

This position is like being still when action is needed. In a patriarchal structure the patriarch, the boss, is given full control and along with that goes full responsibility. If we take a different position (not necessarily women on top!), we can hand over control to those immediately concerned with the task or issue. In handing over control, we can also hand over responsibility. This doesn't mean we relinquish all care or support. In fact, it frees us to offer support and suggestions when asked for. In such a case, our suggestions will certainly be heard more openly by work colleagues, than when we impose advice upon subordinates.

Grace, like many women including Ariadne, found herself in a position of leadership with no management training, elected with a mandate to make changes. As a Changing Woman, Grace is well equipped for that and knew she needed support to find out all the nitty-gritty aspects of administration and management.

I have a lot more confidence as a result of all these changes. I recognise my own judgements are sound and that I can't do everything. My role is to get others to do things. The hardest task is the range of jobs in the office and trying to find out all the things going on. I like to see clear signals of what priorities there are.

As Grace holds a strong position on managing as if people matter, she sees that others may well need to be better equipped; to be offered choices in Ways to get things done.

The issue of communication with colleagues is the lynch pin of how things work. I realise structured training is important. It's a chance to have time out and contribute to the openness of ideas. Planning is done so that goals are generated through a co-operative approach incorporating the organisational and the individual needs.

Three years after we began this research and 5 years after Grace took the position of General Secretary, she is now much more relaxed about her work. Like Jess, she has developed a work team that can operate inter-dependently (Covey 1990 185). She enjoys her work and at this stage is happy to let it go. She chose to not stand for re-election. Her decision to have a child is a major influence upon this outcome.
Isobel

During the research period Isobel resigned her position of 2 years as CEO for a national human resources company where she was the youngest of the executives by many decades. The institute accredits trainers for a range of programs in communication skills; as a Human Resources consultant and trainer and educator, Isobel acts as a training and development consultant to business, and teaches these skills in many arenas. During the research she completed a range of studies and has in process an action research project on adult learning for her Masters.

At the time of writing she is full-time training students as the Assistant to the Director of Studies at a private tertiary college.

In her early thirties, Isobel is the second-youngest woman in the research group. Similar to other women in the group, she is combining career and family development concurrently. Isobel describes herself as very happily married for 12 years. In their own mortgaged suburban house when interviewed, they sheltered their 3 young children under 10, an au pair, an ‘extra’ woman downstairs, plus an old dog.

Later, the au pair left and the area downstairs was turned into a study for Isobel. Her husband, made redundant from an executive accounting position, then worked on contracts or as a temporary. This event turned income generation into a shared responsibility. Before, Isobel concentrated on the children when they were very young and did a lot of her work voluntarily.

Young Executive (She never thought of herself as this!)

When she was CEO of the national human resource company, Isobel acted as the major force for change to include more businesses among their clients. She ran this operation from home and balanced the demands of her university course, her adult teaching (in human resources and communications) and family needs. With a husband who then worked 12 hours a day in the city, this made for a very busy schedule. During the research project she also published a book on group dynamics. This sold well as a text in social action courses and is used by teachers and trainers of adults because of its inclusion of adult learning group strategies.

Housework is Work Too; Paid Help at Home or Not?

Isobel alone made a point of household duties being unpaid and not always voluntary.

The issue of paid help in the home when mother is working is one that arose with a handful of the research group. Isobel had to re-negotiate this which was a priority for her, after her partner lost his ‘permanent’ well-paid and ‘secure’ job. Like many other families in Australia in the 1990’s, Isobel and partner had to face an immediate adjustment from upper executive status and income to becoming unemployed.

A Lifetime Learner

She has a passion for learning that has never stopped. Even before her children were born, Isobel was always studying. Her initial qualifications were Personnel Management from TAFE in 1982 - 84.
I just love my studies. I’m really obsessive about learning in the very purest form of sitting back, hearing ideas and developing them into my framework. It’s not an end, it’s a process. I love doing it. It’s so internal I can’t externalise it to explain it. My enthusiasm increases with each course.

Her studies also served as a cushion from the difficulties of full-time ‘professional’ mothering in isolation (Nicholson 1983).

*That was a saving grace for me. The first child was born in ’84 and I went back to 2 nights a week when he was still 2 weeks old.*

Later, in 1989, she completed the Advanced Certificate in Training and Development, in 1990 the Associate Diploma in Adult Education and in 1991 started her Bachelor of Education with an Applied Psychology sub-major finished in 1992, and then after completing a Masters in Education she wishes to do PhD research.

*There’s something intrinsically linked in the studies that I do, to become a really good practitioner in my field. The thing that I think a lot of people miss out on is that to be a really good practitioner, you have to be a practitioner of yourself first. You can’t distinguish being excellent in your field and being really connected as a person.*

**Acting ‘as if’ or putting a good face on it**

Isobel presents very impressively, as a competent professional who knows what she is about. It was only way down the track that I suspected she may be very similar to me. Like me, in that I am awfully good at ‘acting as if’ I know what I am doing. The trouble with this strategy I find, is the shadow side. By the time I really do know what I am doing, I can still believe that I am only acting. Along with this comes the fear that: “one day, someone will find out I am a fraud”.

The ‘up-side’ is that I can try out new ideas and experiment, advocate for others or situation improvement while playing a role of being competent. Most of the time it works quite well. Through support offered by our group, the true value of the competencies we really do exercise become known and appreciated - to ourselves as well as others.

Isobel ‘acted as-if’ she did it all the time when she was called onto national television and radio to launch a new book from her organisation. By going through the motions, she found a competence and skill at handling media people, an ability she would not have discovered otherwise.

Let me state this quite clearly. Isobel is highly competent in all her professional areas. It is because she is always learning, always trying out something she has not done before, that I wanted to discover what her strategy is for taking risks. Her strategy works well!

*After reading this interpretation she commented*

...*this was interesting and your analysis seems quite correct.*
Influencing with Integrity
Her practices are based on her values of...treating people with dignity and respect and not playing political games with hidden agendas.
I choose to not do things that are against my values. I've hung on to something in a management committee for a year and now things are coming around.
If this way of working is not possible, Isobel feels frustrated.
I try to implement something that will counter the block. I certainly confront. I'm not in the position to say that's OK when something is against my ethics.

Isobel has a strong sense of working with process. Her reading of life and work as learning situations, affects this greatly. Knowing this, I felt her influence would be beneficial to our group learning—and it was.

Jess - Management in the Community Sector
During the research project, Jess was the co-ordinator / manager of a national community child care lobby group. She manages a team of 14 staff. They produce a quarterly journal and issue publications which generate income for the organisation. Jess’s is a very political position and actively works to affect government policy at all levels. She is continually involved to raise public awareness of the needs of the special interest group she represents.

At the start of our research Jess lived alone in a large city where she was a newcomer. During our project she cohabited with a male partner. This meant for a fortnight each month on average, Jess plays stepmother to her partner’s pre-school daughter. Later on she gave birth to her first child, took maternity leave, and resigned near the end of our group work. She is now consulting to the public sector around childcare, environmental and social concerns.

Living with Politics
I've always been really actively involved in Labor Party politics, since I was 21, primarily in the areas of women's issues and social politics. My first experience was with a rape crisis collective (the first in that city where she then lived) in 1984,85. It was one of the most important things in my life for discovering my personal politics and developing political skills, strategies and campaigning.

Jess acknowledged the value of this political training ground which she shared with Grace when they were both in their early twenties.
It was really a remarkable group of women and there is still an enormous bond. We did formal counselling training and learned stuff like how to write submissions, and negotiate for all-women’s services. I co-ordinated and drafted submissions for all -women’s services, representing these groups. I had responsibility for these groups therefore I could not be nervous. For the first time in my life, people listened to what I had to say and responded to it. I never before felt I should be taken so seriously.

Chapter 4 - Virginia Kaufman Hall - Women Transforming the Workplace - 82
Child-Free - for a Time

Jess was invited into the group by Grace as a consequence of asking if she could suggest other single women without children. At formation, Grace, Electra and Jess were the only child-free participants. I was seeking this category to add balance and perspective. There are so many women we meet in the workplace who do not have the complication of children in their professional lives. I wanted to hear them tell their story too. Jess and Grace provided that for the duration of the group meetings. Electra announced her pregnancy at the second meeting.

It played out, incidently that the two child-free women during the research period, made definite decisions to have children in the near future. Both of them settled into significant, heterosexual relationships during this time. They feel these relationships provide good co-parenting situations.

The term 'child-free' I use to describe the condition in a non-deficit way. 'Childless' seems to imply something is missing. I felt initially we may find in Jess and Grace 2 women who quite deliberately decided they would not have children. Grace and Jess kept the decision open during their younger child-bearing years and made their pro-child decisions in their thirties.

It seems we have struck a situation similar to the workplace. We do not know if the woman we work with will decide to stay child-free or will make radical changes in her life by becoming a parent. Grace and Jess are trying to select a time that will effect their career with the least amount of disruption. For example, Grace would not even consider having children while holding a higher elected office in the union. She knows the work load is too much. This says a lot about women's career choices and her choices for timing of children. It is complex, difficult and never easy for a professional (or any) woman to decide if she will have children; who she may have them with (including the possibility of co-parenting with women); when she may be able to do it with the least disruption to her career and the best quality time for her relationship with the child or children.

In Jess's case, because her partner brings with him his three-year-old daughter, she is suddenly in a co-parenting situation which was not planned ahead.

Throughout the research, Jess provides a picture of working with flat co-operative structures in the workplace. She was also engaged in developing a responsive work team with an objective to influence government policy and industry practices.

Julie - Administration Management

Julie - is the Faculty Executive Officer of a large teaching/research section at an urban-fringe university. Julie has an honours degree in mathematics as well as a long career teaching children and adults (often times, women returning to studies and work). Julie has picked up again the threads of her administrative career and during the research period, moved into executive management of her area.

In her early forties, she carries out the routine administration of a medium-size faculty, including: financial planning and monitoring, co-ordinating student records, developing student programs, liaising with areas outside the faculty, co-ordinating decision making bodies in the faculty, etc. She reports directly to the Dean of the faculty.
Decision Making and Delegating

During the research period, Julie gradually attained a work team. First, an assistant in “half a position” and 2 steps later, 2 women work for her; 1 full-time the other, half-time. When Julie returned from 5 weeks overseas, she found the women really knew her work and carried on the administration very effectively. She had trained them well.

Julie is very aware of the power inherent in administration:

_Unofficially I make a lot of decisions and officially I make none. I prepare the material on which decisions are based and make the recommendations which are usually carried out, particularly on the financial matters._

_I have complete autonomy to set up whatever systems I think need to be set up, but then I have to get co-operation to carry them out. Although technically I have decision-making ability there, I am well aware I need others’ goodwill. I can’t just go ahead and decide this is how it will be. So while I have a lot of autonomy all my work is co-operative._

Family Background

Julie lives in a medium-sized suburban home on the urban-wilderness fringe with a male partner and 2 primary school-aged children. In her urban Australian family-of-origin, she was the eldest of 5 children. This was significant to her, as she recognised the amount of responsibility she felt for the younger children; hence she organised them quite a bit. Her parents were both academics, and she took on some of the parenting role herself.

Creating Effective Systems

Virginia first met Julie as the office manager and maths teacher of our small, alternative school. I recall her as the first person able to pull together a vast range of information and create order out of the chaos. (Only voluntary parents at sporadic times had kept records before Julie took on the job.) During this period Julie had her first child. I was impressed by Julie’s organisational ability, her way of approaching problems by listening to the others’ needs too, and her desperate struggle with childcare and inflexible working arrangements.

I invited her to the group because she understands collaborative research and social ecology. I judged that she can create order out of chaos (very helpful to a diverse group!) and also valued her as an experienced administrator and educator who has set up an ongoing professional women’s support group at her work place.

Staying Six Feet Out of the Mud

Julie’s work preference is to plan and design systems to suit big unwieldy, even ‘messy’ situations and enjoys putting it all into order. She runs a danger at work: she is the person whom everyone goes to in order to find out procedure and get their needs met. We later look at strategies applied with help from the group to help her change that less than desirable situation (Appendix A3).

Julie has been known to say:

_**I must look after my body as it keeps my head six feet out of the mud.**_

She is aware of her prime mode of working which forgets she has a body!
Because I work so much in my head, the physical environment is fairly unimportant. Occasionally I might be told for example by Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) that I should have an ergonomic chair.

More than a year after the above was recorded, Julie had new offices built. This time she thought carefully about her work environment. If you visit Julie now, you will see occasional flowers on the desk, perhaps hear Hildegard of Bingen music playing quietly in the background. On the walls are drawings by her children, photos of her last visit to her mother in France and her preference for working with natural light, is built into the office design by a large window at the side of Julie’s desk. Yes, she now has an ergonomic chair!

Julie’s Work Team

Her work-team is in an office separated only by a glass screen and a door I have never seen closed. (Julie assures me that it has been closed at times!)

I like to know there are other people around. I don’t need them to interact with me.

There is a strong sense of ethical relationships which supports Julie’s work.

It’s important that colleagues hold values that I can at least agree with, if not identical. It’s important for me to respect my colleagues.

Seeing Results

She needs to see practical results for her work closely interrelated with an egalitarian ethic.

Work practices need to actually achieve something: efficient systems and effective public relations. There must be an articulation of fairness and some attempt towards achieving fairness, more than lip service. While the institution is striving towards outcomes that I believe are worthwhile, its important that all hidden agendas are not in contradiction to my values and ethics.

If Julie cannot see that the organisation is heading for outcomes that are worthwhile in her terms then:

I have the power to change work practices and I do. I can change my own work environment. When colleagues don’t share my values I would manipulate by withholding or presenting information which favours my values.

Here Julie is making use of the negative-feminine aspect (explained in chapter 5), to enforce changes she sees as essential. In an earlier job...

As an actuary I could not accept the values of the company and left.

Going by Myers Briggs type indicator (Keirsey & Bates 1978), Julie comprises the one percent of the population: the kind of person who really enjoys creating administrative systems. She enjoys making order our of chaos and feels a creative satisfaction in doing so.
Given that Julie's work day is one of constant people-requiring-services or people-requiring-information from her, she does not work in an environment which maximises her preferred Way of working. We will be looking at what she does about this to not only survive, but to thrive.

Kate - Health and Community

Kate, around forty, runs her own busy, general practice, in partnership with another woman doctor, in an outer urban area. She was the first medical practitioner at a regional Women's Health Centre, runs various support groups for women and the general community, and teaches general practitioners.

I am a mother of 2 children, 10 white mice, 2 rabbits, a dog, chooks; am occasionally a wife. My life-style is difficult (complex), fairly affluent, middle class, we have a home in the bush. When I have time to do the garden it's relaxed, (not often). I live in the working class end of a small mountain town.

Qualifications include Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBBS 1977), Australian Diploma of Obstetrics, Fellowship of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (FRACP). She completed the family medicine program and also has training in hypnotherapy and manipulative therapy. During the research period, Kate completed a new Masters in Psychological Medicine especially designed for GPs to provide new skills in diagnostic psychiatric and cognitive behaviour therapy. As part of this, Kate helped develop a workbook to educate other GPs and hence help them to manage psychological problems within their practice.

Early Background

Kate was the second of 6 children in a family of mixed cultures. Her father was a refugee of World War 2, her mother of working class background who had earned herself a Masters in Science through scholarships. Her parents put everything into education of their kids, including her mother giving up career prospects to ensure the children had a 'good start'.

Meeting and Working with Women

When I first met Kate, over 10 years ago, she was the doctor of the first Women's Health Centre in our district. She highlights that as a significant time; her first exposure to lesbians and other women who were actively working to improve living conditions for women. It was a time of great learning and opening up to other Ways of being. Chris, of our research group, was a member of the original Women's Health Centre Collective at the time, working alongside her partner. Kate speaks about her learning:

The effect of meeting lesbians started changing my whole perspective and gave me power. Chris and her partner were the most influential people in my life, during that period. Chris' partner taught me something very good and powerful and taught me critical appraisal at the same time. She gave me the positive side of the women's movement.

I learned to be more constructively critical. She helped me to learn a lot more about people. I stopped being so naive and that gave me a greater sense of personal power: power over men as a woman; power not to feel intimidated as a woman.
Power Plays in the Hospital system

Kate came up against the power plays in medicine through a job application.

_The medical hierarchy and the hospital system are very patriarchal. At 28 I was to be interviewed for one position at a hospital by the male superintendent. The specialist, who wanted me to get the job in his department said I would probably fail the interview as I hadn’t got on with a male urologist, a friend of the superintendent. The specialist asked ‘Why didn’t you get on?’ I replied because I didn’t play cricket and added that I thought (the urologist) was a male chauvinist pig. The specialist advised that at the interview, to tell the superintendent. I did. This was the first time I used my power up front. It worked and I got the job._

_It was only when I hit the hospital scene I was aware of the discrimination. At university, I was happily blind to any male/female bias._

Virginia wanted Kate in the group for the medical perspective, for surviving in the patriarchal hospital system and for Kate’s experience in promoting women’s health needs. I was concerned that her commitments may preclude her involvement yet she has been to most of the meetings, and acknowledges that she gains much personal and professional support from the group. The professional support takes the form of being able to talk out work problems such as managing relations with staff at the surgery, political plays in the hospital system, and the personal support of friendship. It helps to talk openly as the rest of the group is not involved in the medical system.

She expects her staff

...to deal with the patients and answer the telephone right. I expect them to do it my way, not their way.

Kay - Academe and Technology

Kay is a senior lecturer in computing at a university in a major city geographically apart from the rest of the group. Because of the distance, she has been involved by correspondence and interview only. Kay works towards a balance of the technical demands and the “soft” systems approach to learning and developing technologies. She submitted her PhD thesis in Social Ecology entitled: _Extending Human Potential in a Technical Environment: Living the Conscious Feminine in a Patriarchal World_ while this research was being written. In her thesis she expands upon her way of teaching systems technology, experientially. Kay is also a colleague in applying Social Ecology and Feminist Ethics in large bureaucratic systems.

Kay eagerly wanted to join our research from the start. Living away from the rest of us, her involvement has not been in the group meetings themselves. However Kay still wanted to be involved in the interview process and talked with me from time to time.

Kay around 50, (oldest in the group after Ariadne) is a Senior Lecturer in information systems at a university.

_I enjoy my work, especially the interaction with the students. I get frustrated with the level of social interaction with the staff. It is predominantly male academics who live in their heads and I don’t find it a supportive environment._
Personal Changes

During the time of this project Kay has gone through a time of enormous personal change. She is now living without a partner for the first time in 21 years after moving peacefully out of a violent marriage. Her 3 children: in their early twenties and late teens, moved with her from a large upper-middle class home to a tiny town house in a middle class suburb, and economically are much worse off.

Virginia wanted Kay in the research group to include a woman working in a non-traditional technical area.

Work Preferences

Being academic, its almost essential to operate with a sense of autonomy. I value my privacy with my own office. In it I put plants, paintings, books. The desk is in a mess and that’s OK. Its a pleasure to be able to work with natural window light.

For all women in non-traditional areas, their working lives are spent with mostly men. They are colleagues, can they become friends? Kay’s experience includes few women. For her, these women do not operate in a particularly ‘womanly’ Way. Kay projects her softer inner-creative self in her dress and manner. She wears her own creations of outrageous tights and colourful tops. While she works very effectively in her technical area, her teaching and Way of being is markedly feminine, as she describes it herself.

To succeed in academia whether on the academic side or the administrative, is to infuse a highly patriarchal culture. A culture that is rich or reeking in male-oriented tradition. Consider the titles of degrees: ‘Bachelor’ and ‘Master’ and the ceremony designed around the conferring of degrees, reinforcing strict hierarchies by people’s position in processions and seating.

So Kay, like the rest of us, needs to find contacts at work that enable her to develop workable and even friendly relationships; colleagues who also accept her as she is.

My colleagues are a strange bunch of mostly introverts. It’s essential to have close contact with a few people; a mix of women and men. I enjoy project meetings. It would be nice if I had a boss who’d organise meetings for staff to know what they are doing.

At this time, Kay was working under a female Dean whose style was more autocratic than informative or sharing of power.

Support staff tell me I am highly organised. I don’t like to work in crisis mode. I like to go to a lecture well prepared. If I’m not organised I run around in a panic. Organisation is essential for my busy life.

I have a sense of ‘if I’m going to do a job, to do it well’. Its the Protestant work ethic from way back. I have to be true to my way of being in the world. To help students learn better, is true to my integrity and honesty of where I am. This gets across to the students.
Kay wanted to openly address the violence in her home life as a way of raising consciousness around the issue. Kay drew attention to domestic violence by delivering a paper on her own experience at a professional conference. There she experienced no compassion, no acceptance, especially from women present. She felt she had broken a taboo: that of mixing the personal and the professional worlds. Although she finished the paper with the following words, she had clearly confronted those present with unwelcome news.

*It has taken time, courage, strength and determination for me to leave a violent relationship and to develop a life of my own. I could not have done this by myself. No amount of gathering information in isolation and intellectual effort will do this. I needed the help and support of others. Now I am receiving this I am beginning to feel like a whole person again.*

Felden 1993

Kay, as a social ecologist, has the same approach that I pursue through this work: that of working with our whole selves:

*We need to guard against attitudes which undervalue coming from the feminine. We need to go beyond the masculine/feminine split and live, work and learn as human beings, honouring the differences as we intersect as people.*

Felden 1994 175

**Margaret - Societal and Personal Change**

Margaret - is a Psychosynthesis Counsellor running her own practice and stress management consultancy over ten years in a prestigious metropolitan clinic. Margaret also designs and leads workshops, among them addressing Fear, Anger and working on removing blocks to creativity using Art Therapy. In the final stages of this research, she is doing a Master's in Applied Science, where she is researching Attitudes to Ageing.

Margaret and Fran both provide a different working pattern, in that they work selective part-time situations. It is important to both of them to keep control over the major use of time in their lives, pacing and reviving themselves by contact with nature. They are, nevertheless, busy women but is worth noting their different style of working that is often the experience of women. With Margaret and Gloria, it is a definite choice to hold personal control over the quantity and pace of their work hours.

**Multi-Skilled - Many Jobs**

Margaret does many things in her professional life. Any week could see her working 2 days a weeks in the city and 1 day consulting as a Paramedical Behavioral Therapist (PMBT) for a major city psychiatric clinic. Another day, counselling in her own practice as a psychosynthesis therapist, both in the city and from her mud brick home.

Psychosynthesis was developed by Roberto Assagioli, an Italian contemporary colleague of Carl Jung. It is a particularly holistic form of therapy which uses many visualising, drawing, image-finding techniques, as well as useful concepts (like sub-personalities; characters within our own shadow personalities which can complicate work-life).

During school term time she has taught for 1 night each week mature-age students who have struggled to get where they are.

*Often not very articulate or literate, but real strugglers with a lot of life experiences.*

Chapter 4 - Virginia Kaufman Hall - Women Transforming the Workplace - 89
They are community workers with disadvantaged and de-valued groups in society. Margaret frequently does occasional casual nursing often with children with disabilities, and in intensive care wards, when extra money is needed.

_Space to Re-vitalise_

_I love doing so many different thing in one week. And I get very stressed if I don't get my time out. I deal with so many and such different types of people._

Margaret personally built her mud-brick modestly-sized house with her de-facto partner of 7 years. She lived during the research, in the far urban fringe/wilderness which they shared with her then 13-year-old son.

_To me its a committed relationship. It’s a simplified life-style, I love to try and keep things simple. I’m very nature-orientated - organic. I'm surrounded by wood and mud and trees, When I stay with people in Sydney I know I couldn’t live there permanently. I have a harmonious, balance at home. Two very loving partners with my partner and son. I aim for a simple life-style often saying next week is going to get quieter, but I know if its too simple, I'll get restless. I need to have a certain amount of stress in the form of challenge._

_Changes Happening to Changing Woman_

Margaret at the close of this writing has been through the parting of her son from her home. He has gone to live with his father in another city. Margaret used many processes to help her deal with the change and move through the intense mourning induced by the parting.

At the same time she has felt it necessary to do some inner searching - alone and has been processing with her partner, amicable and loving ways to do this. They will soon stop living together. Margaret, for a time, plans to live alone and return to the city where her son is living.

While this is what she needs to do, she is not yet entirely sure it is what she wants. Like Chris, she is having to adjust to being alone. In Margaret’s case it is her own action which led to this. In Chris’ it was thrust upon her. For both women, we are seeing changes which some women face as they approach menopause. Relationships moving away, the children off our hands and the woman is left to wonder, wanderlust, shape-shift (Daly 1984) or just deal with her aloneness.

_The Sisters are Doing it for Themselves_

Like other situations in our lives, we do not see earlier models for us to learn from. Women such as Margaret and Chris, are walking paths that their friends have not yet, or may not travel. Certainly our mothers and aunts did not. Where then do we find support and ideas for Ways of dealing with new and unknown situations?

In our cases, we deal with much alone. We are also learning to ask our friends for help. The support of women friends for me is an absolute necessity day-to-day. At such a time of great change or crisis, it is a lifeline. This is one of the major reasons I did the research: to find out what is it in women that supports us; to explore our experience of women’s friendship.
As the researcher, I am also a member of the research group. As a co-researcher, it is important that I go through the same processes as the research group. I was discovering much sensitive and intimate material from all the other women. Understandably, they wanted to know where I stood, what was my story? So two women from the group, Margaret and Julie, interviewed me one afternoon on the shores of a lake. Following is information derived from different writing stages. In an effort to treat the information in the same way as the others' stories, I have given direct quotes (in italics) in response to the interview questions. Other commentary and interpretation stressing relevance to the research area, are presented in plain type face.

**Virginia - Research, Co-researching, Education and Social Change**

My background is in education and teaching for more than 25 years to all ages and people of many backgrounds and professional areas. This included 12 years experience in training and skills development with adults. It involved multi-skilling for work enrichment, changes or re-deployment. I have devised educational programs particularly in response to the needs of women. For example, I designed the first syllabus adopted by New South Wales TAFE for Career Education for Women (CEW) and previously helped design the syllabus for New Opportunities for Women (NOW) which was used throughout TAFE. I was also involved with its successful implementation and the training of TAFE teachers to deliver the program experientially in adult learning styles.

A lot of my work has been concerned with women's training needs. That is learning in the wider sense; providing support and structures so that women can learn what skills and strategies they need to develop careers. I enjoy a mix of teaching and creative/researching and development work. A balance of the doing and the planning and creative is important to me. I have a concern not to be overloaded with a full teaching program so that I would have no time or energy left to put into research and program development and writing.

I also act as a training consultant in trainer/teacher development and strategic planning, change management and conflict resolution. As a consultant to the public and private sectors I serve these clients with my own training and research company. In the last two years, I have been a member of the staff team at the faculty of social ecology teaching/facilitating undergraduate and post-grad students. I deal with adult professionals and students who are “doers” in their field and involved with critical social action. Put simply, these are people who are making changes in our society that affect the quality of life of all social and economic strata. Because the Social Ecology process involves (among other factors) “people participation”, these changes are not just participatory but are usually non-hierarchical. With these students I develop the conceptual tools that in many situations ideally aim to revolutionise the way people do their jobs (or get them). This work also helps achieve self-realising goals that enrich our society in this country and elsewhere. It is exciting and uses innovative techniques and modelling. I will go further, the type of participatory research which is a feature of social ecology may become an effective paradigm for creatively transforming social interaction and cooperation now and in the next century.
Life-style
When interviewed by group members, I described my life-style as *...middle class, post-hippie; mid-life creative/activist.*

*We live in a large home in the mountains which we can't afford to maintain, surrounded by bush which looks after itself very well (in other words, as nature intended). Since having 3 children, I've been constantly working on the issue of striving to have both the career and the family in quality terms. My husband works from home on publicity and marketing in the past, more recently with art and other creative areas, and provides a very important stabilising effect on my life. Much of that has been very practical as he has usually been around to provide childcare at home, so that I can go off on training programs, or work in the city.*

Working with People
I love teaching and process-oriented training. I enjoy working with people who are ready to work with change. I find all the adult students I work with, interesting and get the chance to work with a vast range of courses and types of people which I enjoy very much. I find that I have been a social ecologist all my life, without previously knowing the term.

My adult-learning and group dynamic skills first developed through a voluntary involvement including counselling for most of my 10 years in the Nursing Mothers Association of Australia. That this was a women's support group is significant.

Other voluntary work has been in the non-traditional, human-centred school our children attend.

Environment
*My environment needs to be quiet and have some form of nature around. I like to be able to get outside and walk amongst trees or garden during the day.*

*In the classroom or when running programs, I prefer the same. I note its very relaxing to be able to work in small groups outside and come inside again for large group work. It makes a big difference to the relaxation levels of a learning/processing group. So, I hate having to run programs in city buildings with air conditioning and no surrounding nature.*

Learning from People
*It is essential for me to have people around. I like and learn from all types of people. I prefer those who are able to listen to each other and present their own needs clearly. I enjoy socialising a little, with those I work with. Collaborative structures are my preferred management style even though I mostly work in a hierarchy. Whenever I can, I'll set up collaborative teams in projects I do. I find people (especially women) respond to that and work in that style while in the team (mostly).*
I need time to plan and reflect. A full teaching/training schedule exhausts me as it is delivery all the time. Pacing myself is essential for renewal. Also without quiet time, I don’t get any creative work done. I need this, e.g. writing, researching, developing programs etc.

During the second last year of the research project, I took a year’s leave without pay. Then I experienced being in control of my own time - and loved it. While I taught at university, because my students were mostly distance learners, there was considerable flexibility. This suited me perfectly. I paced myself between face-to-face programs and writing.

The reality was, to sustain such a lifestyle and feed my family, we sold a block of land and lived off my mother’s small inheritance. In gratitude for this, I decided to incorporate my maiden name, in recognition of my family-of-origin’s support for my continuing education. For any parent who is the major breadwinner, the getting of higher qualifications, is a financial struggle. No wonder there are not many women yet who do it! “It ain’t easy!”

In the final year, I joined the social ecology staff team full-time. While needing to attend to various undergraduate needs, I was still able to pace myself a great deal. It seemed extraordinary to me to have a paid job which encouraged and supported my writing and research. I was very aware of this privileged condition.

Now I feel ready for a new career leap and want to develop my consultancy more into public participation research. In this way I see I can effect change by supplying a channel for the people’s voice, to government and then into policy making. The skills of collecting information from many stakeholders, being able to write-up a coherent report out of chaotic data, and to then influence policy, are complex and I believe very powerful forces for change. After 46 years of investment in developing the skills, I want to use them directly where they can make a difference: i.e., supporting oppressed groups by giving their voice a public hearing.

That is my intention for the future.

Transforming Women: Stories of Change-Agents

Throughout the rest of this work, more will be revealed about these women’s ways of working. It is an intermittent presentation as each woman addresses particular issues. I acknowledge the reader’s difficulty in trying to get a full picture of each woman. I have tried to design the writings in a way that is similar to real life. We meet people in particular contexts such as at work, and bit-by-bit we find out more about them.

While each woman had her own story to tell at the group, the issues became our central focus and are presented as the story of the group in the following chapters.

The issue seemed to me to embody the complexity of doing research on lived experience. The tension seems to centre around how to fully contextualise the people involved and to address the issues collectively. While our group focussed on the issues, we were also learning about each other. This grew into trust and friendship which I can only tell you about here, but the experience is so profound, I can not convey completely the depth of this ongoing experience.

Chapter 4 – Virginia Kaufman Hall – Women Transforming the Workplace – 93
Summary

In this chapter I have given an overview of each woman who was involved in the research. Briefly summarised are her work areas, home situation, social background and motivations. This chapter is delineated by concise biographic annotation so that the reader may return to re-contextualise any co-researcher while reading the rest of the work.
Chapter 5

Growing Our Own
Research Process

Spiralling Story Spinning

While I worked at the development of this research, I landscaped the corner of my garden, that I could see through my study window. It was a sensation of...

As I hauled great sandstone blocks away from a rough place, it struck me that I was deconstructing a garden I did not like, and was constructing a new garden. It is an old area, with old materials and there are many re-cycled plants along with new ones.

That’s just what I want to see in workplaces. New structures built from the strengths and usefulness of the old; discarding bureaucratic procedures which waste people’s creativity. To incorporate the indigenous with the introduced (multi-cultural workplaces) can be exciting. Consciously building new cultures which enable and empower is, well, a life of constant discovery.

Take the old structures - the stones to build a path, and replace them in a gently curving track.

Was it Descartes who spoke of logic as “stones along a path?” - each statement of truth stepping logically to the next. Instead of a logical path going from “A to B” if “A” is “A”, then “B” is not “A”. What if “A” + “B” work together? What do we call it - synthesis?

The path of ‘what if’ meanders through the garden, taking the wanderer through private corners and attractive outlooks, and if we dare, further into the lesser-known bush wilderness.

Discovering our Ways of Researching.

This chapter explores my thinking processes which underpin the whole of the research process. It therefore serves to develop my theories around why we experience the workplace as we do.

My interest is to bring more creativity into the workplace and more flexibility for problem solving. These researching women demonstrate their own Ways of bringing their creativity to their work and provide valuable insights in this pursuit.

The way I see it, the traditional hierarchical and bureaucratic (patriarchal/masculine) constructions of most workplaces, discourage ‘other’ forms of problem solving. I describe as ‘feminine energy’, the creativity and different Ways of thinking that many women apply to workplace situations. ‘Feminine’, in the sense of types of thinking which is often not acknowledged nor welcome in most traditional workplaces. While these are detailed further into the chapter, I

1 syn-cronicity - A term originating from Daly 1987
will explain my meaning briefly at this point. 'Feminine' is often that which (in my opinion) is *not* mainstream (malestream), that which is *not* traditional.

In my working with feminine and masculine aspects, I observe that all these qualities are in most people: women *and* men. The use of these gender-related terms of *feminine* and *masculine* arise from Jungian psychology and are more thoroughly investigated within this chapter. Certainly some cultures encourage the development of one over the other, or certain attributes for each gender.

Because the range of qualities are inherent and active at different times in most people, clearly these qualities are not limited to either biological sex. I am concerned that this theory is not viewed as an essentialist, or biologically-limited position. On the contrary, I am arguing for an expansion of possibilities. I am proposing that our workplaces not only be more tolerant of a variety of approaches to problem-solving, but also invite many Ways of being.

**Overview**

In this chapter, I develop notions of masculine and feminine aspects, and how I see that these may play out in the workplace.

The story adapted from the brothers Grimm, *The Peasant's Wise Daughter*, is applied to draw forth not only a metaphor for integration (the mortar and the pestle) but also to demonstrate creativity at work in problem-solving. I used the story as a research process with the group to reflect upon our own creativity and already identified workplace issues.

From the story emerged four Ways in which the women of the research group work. It also describes qualities of our knowing:

1. We work within the political realities of the system.
2. We use our own women's cunning (intuition, creativity).
3. We ensure justice by using the absurd, shocking and unusual strategies at times.
4. Love is our strongest weapon of all.

I then build up the framework of our research, from my thinking, and this leads to the development of our grounded theory. Here I examine gender identity, the position of women as 'other' and our preference for accessing all human qualities. How do we develop to our full human potential (Houston 1986), the reason we want to be able to bring our whole selves to work?

I work towards Ways to create our own meanings, and therefore use creativity with language. This works the other way: how language 'uses' us and this, too, is considered. I use language to describe particular qualities which emerged through our research and discuss the power of naming in this context.

Certain qualities emerged from the women and I created a specific language (triggered by Jungian archetypal notions) to reflect this. The term *active feminine* (the predominant quality) is explained along with other terms.

This 'language' enabled me to describe the development of our epistemology - to know about our own learning processes. A prime mover of this research was to find out Ways we solve problems, so our heuristic inquiry is a central process.

I weave a tapestry of the women's voices; their description speaks in their words. Intentionally, the women are discovered bit by bit... the same way we
discovered ourselves. It's a gradual building of knowing. I use the women's names, for acknowledgment of source. Their words illustrate their truths.

We look at what process means to us and other Ways of knowing. Always, we are made aware of the tension of living in multiple realities. Thus our being was only one expression of many; our energies were in many different demand arenas. Multiple frameworks and how we communicate in such a chaotic multivariate is explained from this personal perspective.

Everyday tools and processes are transformed into research tools. Basic skills include: listening, watching and noticing how we speak (and how language speaks about us)! How do we play out our knowledge into action? How do we construct our epistemology as the basis of our ontology and thus integrate the two?

I tell the story of how we became a learning community, that is, a community of knowers. The values and ethics which guided community are articulated, including why we use stories. The problematic aspect 'control' in collaborative research is woven in as part of the process of learning.

Following this chapter is a brief description of the chronology of the research process. It explains how we got together and what we did. Other chapters tell our stories and relate our conclusions.

A STORY TO SET THE FRAMEWORK...

_The Peasant's Wise Daughter_

There was and is, once (and for always), a poor peasant who had no land. He did own a small house, and one daughter.

In true patriarchal style, the daughter is listed in the original story as inventory, along with other property.

The daughter, proactively addressing their poverty, suggests: "We could ask the King for a plot of newly-cleared land."

Her suggestion works! Hearing of their poverty, the King gives them land. Father and daughter dig up the whole plot to plant corn. When their digging is nearly complete, they find an exotic mortar made of pure gold buried just under the earth.

"We should present this to the king to thank him for his generosity," says the father.

"Father, if we give the king the mortar without the pestle, he will think we stole the pestle and he will want the pestle as well. So better not to say anything about the find," his daughter warns.

We can see right away the daughter is uncommonly experienced in the ways of men of wealth and power.

But, father would not listen to a mere girl, and dutifully takes the mortar to the king, telling him how they had found it buried.
Well, did the King gratefully accept the gift with thanks? Or did he throw the peasant into prison, because he could not present the pestle as well? You guessed it. Off to the dungeon goes the peasant.

The servants who bring his daily bread and water often hear the peasant lamenting: "Ah! If I had but listened to my daughter!" He eats and drinks nothing.

The King, hearing of this, commands the peasant be brought before him and demands: "What did your daughter tell you?"

"She told me I ought not take the mortar to you, because you would desire the pestle and we found no pestle. "Ah! If I had but listened to my daughter..." The peasant continues to wall.

"If you have a daughter as wise as that, I command her to come to me with her wisdom." And the King's men bring the daughter to him.

The King decides to challenge her wisdom. If she really is so wise, she could solve a riddle. If she can guess the answer, he will marry her, as a wife with such wisdom can only be an asset in a world where there are fewer and fewer kingdoms due to a rash of republicanism.

The King presents the problem: "Come to me not clothed, not naked, not riding, not walking, not in the road, not on the road. If you can do that I will marry you and free your father."

She goes back to the peasant's hut, disrobes, then she is not clothed. She takes a large fishing net, sits herself down in the middle of it and wraps it all about her, so she is not naked. She finds an ass, and ties the fishing net to its tail, so that as it walks it drags her along, and so she is not riding and not walking. The ass drags her in the ruts of the road, so that she only touches the ruts of the road with her big toe, so she is neither being in the road nor off the road.

She travels to the king in this bruising, begrimed and demeaning fashion. The King realising she has designed an answer to meet his impossible proposal, orders her father to be released from prison and takes her in marriage. And, seeing her wisdom, gives into her care all the royal assets.

The daughter meanwhile reflects wryly, that being dragged in the dust enmeshed in a net, unprotected from adversity despite using one's wits, must indeed be the price of earning rewards in a King-dominated society. However, in her heart, she knew it was the sacrifice needed to save her father.

Some years pass. The King is asked one day to give a judgement upon two peasants who are arguing over ownership of a foal. One peasant's cart is pulled by oxen... the other by horses. The foal causing this dispute had run off and laid down in the shade of the oxen. The peasant who owned the oxen claimed the foal as his, claiming that one of the oxen had given birth to it.
The King gives his royal judgement that the foal should stay where it was found. So the peasant who owns the oxen, is freely given the foal by the King’s (mis)-judgement.

The true owner of the foal, hearing the Queen is a gracious lady, takes his problem to her. He knows of her origins from simple peasant folk and that she understands the value of livestock.

She gives him the following strategy...

“Promise not to betray the source of your advice and I will tell you what to do. Early tomorrow when the King passes by, place yourself in the middle of the road, take a great fishing net and pretend to be fishing; go on fishing-casting your net and pulling it in.” And she told him what to say when the King would inevitably ask him what he was doing. Relieved that he did not have to wear the fishnet with no clothes on, this peasant is pleased to follow the advice.

The next day the King comes upon this fisherman. He watches him casting with his huge net, in the middle of the road, on dry ground.

“Man, what are you doing?” the King asked incredulously.

“I am fishing” replied the peasant.

“How can you fish where there is no water?” asked the King.

“It is as easy for me to fish on dry land as it is for an ox to give birth to a foal.”

The King is furious and demands that the peasant tell him who told him to answer thus in the manner of a smart ass. The peasant keeping his promise to the Queen claimed it was his own idea -even when he was repeatedly beaten. Alas at last, desperate to stop the beating, he reveals that the Queen gave him the idea.

The King in his anger, throws his Queen/wife out of his castle for betraying him. “Back to your peasant’s existence! That’s where you belong.”

However, he grants her a favour; that she may take with her one thing that is nearest and dearest to her heart. One thing only.

“Yes, my dear husband, if you command this, I will do it,” and she embraces him and kisses him and takes her leave of him.

The Queen then orders a powerful sleeping drought, to drink a farewell to her husband. She drinks just a harmless slip, the King unknowing, takes a long drought.

While the King is in a deep sleep she has him wrapped and bundled into the carriage with her. They travel together to her father’s peasant hut, her home. She gently lays the King upon her bed and waits an entire day and night until he awakes.

When he eventually awakens he’s shocked at his surroundings. The King calls for his attendants... but none respond. At last his wife comes to him, saying:
“My dear Lord and King, you told me I might bring away that which is nearest and dearest and most precious to my heart - I have nothing more precious and dear than yourself, so I have you with me.”

Tears rose to the King’s eyes: “Dear wife, you shall be mine and I shall be yours.” They return to the palace. The couple re-unite in a renewal of their marriage vows and thereafter the King recognises her wisdom and consults his beloved queen in matters of judgement and strategic importance.

(Liberally adapted from The Complete Grimm’s Fairy Tales, 1975 437-440)

Women’s Ways of Working - now and then

The Peasant’s Wise Daughter plays out for us a timeless view of women’s work-style preferences.

The theme is set at the beginning with the finding of the solid gold feminine symbol of the mortar (round and full of wisdom like a chalice and worth its weight in gold). The mortar is encasing, holding in its nature. It stands up to great force against the pestle, and together mortar and pestle combine and changes spices, herbs and other elements. The mix of herbs coming from their transformation within the mortar, may then be used for healing transformation in other bodies. The mortar as a tool, has a corresponding relationship with the pestle. To be effective, they need to operate together.

The mortar is found alone without the masculine symbol of the pestle. The mortar can still be useful as a vessel; it can encase and enfold, it can embrace whatever it holds; it can be used to pour liquids or scatter grain, it can be used to mix. The pestle could still be useful as a pounding tool; it can pound on a rock or be used to bend or fragment sticks or herbs. Apart and separately, both tools are useful and limited. Combined, many solutions can be created by grinding and/or mixing different elements, herbs and potions together.

The King does not like this. He wants the pestle too. After all, the mortar alone, is only useful to hold and encase, without the pestle it brings no transformation. However, throughout the story, the active principle is one women’s wisdom, a woman’s Way of knowing, solving the puzzles, creating solutions to nearly impossible man-made situations.

As the story plays out we find that the King (as the all-powerful male) cannot operate to his full capacity without integrating the wise, intuitive and loving female. To regain all he must re-integrate with her. That is why they remarry. In this, the second marriage, he acknowledges and uses her wisdom. She integrates her active-feminine principle with his active-masculine (terms explained below).

In the story, neither is complete without the other. The peasant takes the incomplete mortar to the King to find the male pestle (the King). The King acts as a symbol of male authority, the boss of this workplace if you like, sets up hoops and loops for the peasant girl to jump through (selection criteria). She succeeds, using her integrated feminine wisdom and acts upon her inner knowledge.
The King (as the boss in the workplace) holds the power and position. The peasant girl/queen, holds the power of intuitive wisdom and cunning. They both need the other to integrate, to survive and to thrive. The peasant girl could not live without the gift of land from the King, allowing her to grow food. The King learns that with her wisdom, he is better equipped to be a just and wise King. He is unable to learn that on his own.

In real life it is too simplistic to apply this notion of complementary roles. The story symbolises archetypal feminine and masculine roles. In real life, there is said to be a little bit of the King, the wise daughter, the father and the fool in all of us. What is useful here is the notion of imbalance exemplified by the King's foolish decree.

As a symbolic metaphor, I apply this to the workplace. We have an imbalance because of predominantly masculine (hierarchical) ways of working, in most workplaces now. In my experience, it is still rare to find encouragement for creative thinking and being true to one's nature and also be financially and psychically honoured in the workplace. Can this be one of the reasons that some women try to become self-employed when they find the opportunity to do so?

But we have in this story, the archetypal feminine, symbolised in the mortar and the girl, standing alone against masculine power. When she is given the rules of the game as in the riddle, she fares very well. When the rules change mid-stream (the judgement on the foal) there is no balancing factor of female wisdom.

So he can see her out of the shadow of his ego, she has to prove her wisdom alone without his help. Similarly he is only able to recognise the need to integrate their energies when he is away from his palace, the base of his consummate (masculine/hierarchical) power.

Men are trapped as well, by positional and coercive use of their power. Power that only directs and does not consult with others, will not be as rich, as useful, as integrated as power shared. Power used in this way is extremely limited, arising from just a few. An oligarchy does not have the input of other options.

Of course, if I tried to tell this to those who held the power, I would not be heard. It is indeed one of our greatest challenges, to turn around the holding of power from a few, to many. There are also many workers who quite deliberately do not want power (in a leadership or autonomous sense) and prefer to be told what to do. (We see this with Jess and Electra's co-workers later.) I perceive that these workers are constructed into this thinking by their patriarchal experiences. Perhaps they feel safer on the bottom where they hope they may not be a target.

“The seductiveness of the hierarchy has emotional roots. The emotions that make it easier to reproduce the hierarchy than to operate as partners are principally fear and comfort. The basis for fear is obvious: ‘crossing’ a powerful figure in a group, even if for the purpose of the group is to get diversity of opinions, can make people afraid of external retribution later. So the lower-status people hold back, or feel very daring if they contribute. But there is also a comfort factor: it is easier to maintain familiar patterns of relationships with appropriate support from the higher status figures, people are more likely to act in ways that place them outside the hierarchy.”

Kanter 1983 257
Another approach to this difficulty is to focus on the working relationship. Anne Wilson Schaefer sees the patriarchal approach as the 'white-male system' where position must be defined in workers' relationships by a position of 'one-up' and 'one-down'. In what she calls the 'female system' the relationship preference is for 'peer' interactions.

"Women managers often complain of this. When they do not go one-down, as expected, then the men they are dealing with go one-down, resent being there, and label the women "uppity".

Schaefer goes on to say that she believes

"... it is very important to realize how strongly white men believe in their own System and its myths: as a result they are severely limited in their ability to take in new information and have new experiences.

Schaefer 1985 107

The research group set about inquiring into:

"What does it mean to work in a Feminist Way in organisations?"

Our answer lies in the integration of feminine and masculine energies.

In other words, enabling the accessing of a range of human qualities.

I am concerned about waste of human potential in the workplace; waste of creative forces and a scarcity of creative options considered on problems. There is also a waste of people. If they are indoctrinated (inducted) into how the organisation has always worked, they are being impoverished of their own input. As the culture of the organisation is daily recreated by the people who are the organisation, there is constant room for creative movement. - or is there? The women of this research, have 'other' operational styles which are not orthodox, certainly not the traditional procedures of mainstream organisations. They have Ways of honouring their lifetimes outside the workplace, as well.

We focus on the implications of our current organisational and social systems in the workplace, particularly its effects on women. How the women of this research work with these tensions is drawn out in this section. In the next section, I explore how it could be different and give evidence of business places and people who are doing it differently.

Riane Eisler focuses on the implication of "how we organize the relations between the two halves of humanity for the totality of a social system" (Eisler 1987 xviii).

Metaphors for Meaning-Making

Raine Eisler uses the chalice and the blade as a symbolic dialectic where the tension lies between the balance of male and female energy. Similarly I apply a symbolic parallel with the mortar (female) and the pestle (male).
The root of the problem lies in a social system in which the power of the Blade is idealized - in which both men and women are taught to equate true masculinity with violence and dominance and to see men who do not conform to this ideal as ‘too soft’ or ‘effeminate’.

Eisler 1987 xviii

Eisler’s model of a partnership society is preferred to the dominator society which we experience daily. We then work towards being able to acknowledge and work with differences which are not necessarily equated with inferiority or superiority.

Thus prominent academic and commentator on women in management Leonie Still, acknowledges that ‘women are different’ and because we are, we experience different tensions.

“Women have to live and work in a work environment that is alien to their very essence... Because they live in two cultures, managerial women have different identity problems from men (but perhaps the ‘new age sensitive man’ is a forerunner of a similar problem among managerial men).”

Still 1993 147

I repeat, that the qualities cited are ‘human’ and as such are possible modes of expression for all people. The co-researchers call these ‘women’s Ways’ because they are our Ways of being. Maybe this is so, because of our socialization as females. Whatever is the cause, these Ways are of our “very essence” (Still 1993 147).

Four Ways in which these women work

The peasant’s daughter demonstrates four examples of women’s wisdom shown in the research group. Firstly her advice to not take the mortar to the King. (It is incomplete, it is unbalanced.)

She knows the need for a balance of energies. She also knows the political realities of the system.

Secondly, her solving the impossible riddle through creativity, cleverness and cunning.

Remember the derogatory term cunt in itself describes a Women’s Way of Knowing, the same root as cunning, kenning and ken, and can be reclaimed to refer to women’s wisdom (Walker 1983, 197).

She knows and uses women’s cunning.

Thirdly she ensures justice again, cunningly creating an absurd situation, so that the King will hear the true owner of the foal.

She uses absurd, shocking and unusual strategies to effect justice.

Finally, she is punished for her meddling in kingly justice and turns this around with love. Love is the final way of Knowing. The peasant’s daughter requests to take one thing with her that she truly loves. In ‘taking’ the King, she regains the entire kingdom.

Her strongest weapon of all is love.
What were the women’s Ways of working which we applied to our research process? In many and varied ways our research tells stories of all of these ways of knowing. Ways which I stress we believe are human qualities that all of the women in the research group encourage from all workers.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the research group have these similar qualities:

1. Acknowledgment of the systems’s political realities.
2. Use of our own women’s intuition, creativity and above all: cunning.
3. Ensuring justice by occasional use of unusual strategies.
4. Objective love as a (compassionate) weapon.

Our Story of Our Research - Moulding Our Framework

Gender identity is constructed as central to anyone’s ways of knowing and being. In our society what has been observed as gender differences have often been enshrined as archetypal gender opposites. It seems that, now is a time to remodel these understandings so that we work towards inclusiveness. We want women's input acknowledged, identified as valuable contributions in the workplace. When this happens and many ways of being are not only acceptable but welcome, I believe that we may no longer need to label these ways as ‘feminine’.

I am reminded of a t-shirt slogan: “I will be a post-feminist when we live in a post-patriarchy.”

Patriarchal control of power ensured that women were perceived as different. The result of this was that we, as women, were defined and marginalised as other (de Beauvoir 1975 16) and seen as not quite human. The use of the term ‘man’, in our language, literally defines the masculine gender alone as ‘human’ (Spender 1980).

To be fully human is to manifest both masculine and feminine qualities (Schaef 1985, Eiser 1987, Johnson 1991 and others). For a man to show tenderness makes him no less a man; for a woman to be tough and ambitious, does not make her any less a woman. Neither direct action nor deep emotion is inappropriate in either gender. A central understanding of this inquiry, is that the range of qualities spreads across both genders - these are indeed human qualities (Porter 1991).

“If we are to forge a politics based on a radically new appreciation of the potentials of all beings, then men’s openness to the views of women is an essential part of the program. Women and men are at a point in history when each is learning to find and use the parts of themselves previously suppressed by patriarchal lore.”

Salleh 1992 199

It is because our whole selves have been suppressed “by patriarchal lore” that I call attention to the lack of recognition of the ‘feminine’ side of being human. The argument to integrate all qualities into the ideal human, runs a risk of denying these feminine aspects because so much of our history, our institutions, our language and our social constructs are defined in masculine terms with masculine thinking underlying them. To be fully human we need to acknowledge, welcome and integrate feminine aspects.
Advocating People-friendly Workplaces

I have co-opted the term 'people-friendly' to go beyond the now common computer term: 'user-friendly'. I refer to people, not users. I want to convey that such workplaces can build into their structures, the whole-life needs of their workers and clients, in order to recognise the inter-connecting systems of public and private spheres. At each workplace, cultures and structures are constructs of the people within that workplace, therefore what I advocate need not be a long-term future goal. We can choose to change our behaviour moment-to-moment. With a world-view of serving all peoples, a dysfunctional workplace culture can be turned around.

"The reason that structural explanations are so important is that only they address the underlying causes of behaviour at a level that patterns of behaviour can be changed. Structure produces behaviour, and changing underlying structures produce different patterns of behaviour. In this sense, structural explanations are inherently generative. Moreover, since structure in human systems includes the "operating policies" of the decision makers in the system, redesigning our own decision making redesigns the system structure."

Senge 1990 53

It is common to get caught up in the often-played office game of 'don't get mad, get even'. The reactive question 'who did what to whom' usually stimulates reactive and revengeful responses. Instead, preferring pro-active strategic questioning (Peavey 1994), we choose to go beyond reactive event explanations with a systems perspective. This asks "why is it so" looking for what in the current system triggers the undesired situation?

Our operative styles bring into question our workplaces. We activate the workplace with a conscious 'ethic of care' (Gilligan 1983) transforming it into a place for emancipation and empowerment of others and ourselves. By consciously working with our 'selves-in-relations' (Porter 1991) we model and create our moral code. We do this by honouring and incorporating these Ways of working.

Why? Men and women, are discouraged to bring our whole selves to work by management and co-workers' recreation of organisational culture. The overwhelmingly patriarchal culture of most workplaces, are constructed to deny feminine Ways of being and doing. Such a workplace culture has been driven by economic and possibly rationalist concerns. These over-riding concerns of 'profit' in the private sector and the other measurement: 'productivity' in the public and private sectors, usually over-ride the needs of the people within the workplace. This often extends to the community wherein the organisation operates. Success in most careers, demands competitiveness over co-operation.

Our children are often denied any part in this economic activity-based society. They are locked away behind walls called schools. Here they are taught to compete and are measured against their peers by norm-referenced scores of somehow-magical digits that will open or close rites of passage into adult society and above the more beneficial learning process of co-operative learning (Gato 1993, Burns 1993, Kohn 1986).
This research group is working towards creating inclusive working methods and environments. We do this to incorporate and integrate clarity, logic, rationality, objectivity and abstraction which all work alongside and are enriched by passion, intuition, persuasion, and connection. This includes lived experience and other-than-workplace concerns, subjectivity, the particular and the individual (Porter 1991:5). We enjoy our work and like to be successful in establishing effective and mutual goals, outcomes and profits.

"Both men and women have been engaged in oppressive and distorted relations with each other, and both can benefit from, and contribute to, constructing creative alternatives."

Porter 1991:5

In this context we gathered together to talk about things that concern us. Through the telling of our stories and our group focus on our concerns, we came to understandings about our own feelings, behaviours, perceptions and our own experiences of our 'place' within our social and workplace constructs. Together we 'unpacked' (de-constructed) the bricks that build 'the walls' around our experience 'the walls' that separate us from our 'Feminine Ways of Knowing' (Belenky et al 1986).

Without 'the walls' we are strengthened by our own knowing and conscious realisations of social constructions that impact upon us. Naming 'the walls' helped us. We can then navigate around, over, through and then demolish such walls as 'glass ceilings'. By naming, the oppression becomes overt and external. Without naming the experiences which deny our reality, this can be easily internalised and we blame ourselves rather than the social system in which we live and work. This includes conflicts with work demands and family responsibilities, and the ways we are perceived at work.

"We have to first create a language" said Hilary Clinton, "that would better communicate what we are trying to say, and the policies would flow from the language."

(Safire 1993)

Hilary Clinton's priority to create a language first, then develop the policy has been termed the politics of meaning (Safire 1993). Indeed, it is a core political activity to define and describe problematical social situations which then give rise to policies to address the issues. The language then is in the appropriate style to suit the story being told, and speaks with the people affected.

By developing a specific terminology I am trying to integrate -to discuss the experience of living in socially constructed dichotomies and yet go beyond dualistic thinking. Women know this paradox of paradigms well. We have had thousands of years of experience in trying to discuss 'women's business' in a masculine-based language. The experience has not yet solved the problem, and we are still trying to name, trying to define and to deconstruct “problem(s) that have no name” (Friedan 1963).

I am striving to do this 'core political activity' of working with terms to change 'the politics of meaning' (Safire 1993).
I believe it is important to stretch our language into new shapes, in order to stretch our thinking into new forms.

I looked carefully at what constitutes our experience and understandings of female and male energies, the sum of our creativity perhaps. The game of work, whether it is experienced as a level football field or a vegetable patch with mounds and gullies, weeds and snails, defines in our society’s perceptions, who we are. This research then, is an analysis of different aspects of a self-in-relations which

"... searches for a space where women can define themselves. There is no implication of uniform experiences, but a plurality of perspectives. While we currently need feminist moral theory to deal with significant differences of which we are now aware, the aim is that such theories will contribute to the development of non-sexist societies, new modes of togetherness and of relating to ourselves, so that the need for such a distinctive feminist moral theory is rendered obsolete (Held 1987 113, Benhabib 1986 158). What emerges is not the philosophical categories of the past, nor a utopian blueprint, but an exploration into expanding possibilities for contemporary ideas of moral identity."

Porter 1991 7

I believe we are working towards what Jean Houston calls the possible human \ (Houston 1983). In tracking the development of the "Mind, both personally and universally" she states:

"... each stage or thesis suggests its antithesis, and a higher, more complete form emerges in a synthesis."

Houston 1993 19

By working towards Houston’s ‘possible human’, we work towards transforming the ideal of as yet untapped human potential, into our reality. I am building upon Porter’s idea of a philosophy of synthesis to integrate the full range of human activities - so that an understanding of sexual differences (psychologically as well as biologically) may not appear as threatening (Porter 1991 51).

In Jung’s analysis of the human psyche, he spoke of synergy containing:

1. the femininity pertaining to the man and the masculinity pertaining to a woman (animus and anima)
2. the experience which woman has of man and vice versa
3. the feminine and masculine archetypal image

Jung adds a fourth element “in a man the archetype of the Wise Old Man, and in a woman the Chthonic Mother” (Jung 1979 22). She is a subterranean epithet of Black Demeter, Cybele and other underground forms of the goddess (Walker 1993 168). As a personification of the shadow side of humanity she also appears in the Hindu goddess Kali as the destroyer/transformer.
In adding his fourth element Jung seems to me to be allowing for the possible developments of humanity towards incorporating the synergy/synergy of both the masculine and the feminine aspects - the Wise Old Man and the Hag Mother. I stress these elements because in their incorporation we are integrating the energies which lead us towards further human development which honours and uses qualities otherwise forgotten or deliberately shut away (Houston 1993/83).

Why would such useful and perceptual qualities be closed off in the dark realms of human experience? Possibly, because they are powerful elements. Just as the archetypal goddess Kali is a destroyer she is a transformer too. When goddess Shiva dances with god Shakti the universe is formed. When Kali dances, the universe is changed. We are at a time in human history where much of our nurturing world has already been destroyed. We are told by Hindu philosophy that it is the end of the "Kali Yuga" (the dark Age of Iron). The question facing us is how do we transform our current world into a future nurturer. When I speak of our world, I am encompassing the environmental and the economic realities of people working to feed ourselves and heal our earth in order to feed our descendants. I mean by this, food for the body and the mind (education) and spirit (arts) and spirituality (the realm of high ideals) in the broadest sense.

Environmental concerns are not dealt with directly in this work. It is mentioned as a clear strong ethic of the research group. It is a basis of our context in how we see and work towards transforming the workplace so that as well as causing no harm to people, our work also incorporates causing no harm to this earth.

*Applying the Active - Feminine Principle*

Our stories in myriad ways, reflect what I call the active-feminine principle at play in the workplace. I use the term active-feminine principle to identify the Ways we work when acting out of 'our ethic of care'. Our ethic comes from a base assumption (stated several times in this thesis), that what is good for women and children is good for everyone. Acting in a way that aims to incorporate the needs and input of every stakeholder, includes collective decision-making, collaborative work practice, and working with a holistic approach which takes into account all involved. Indeed whole-systems thinking and acting are "soft" systems Ways of Working. Singular acts too, can stem from the active-feminine: pro-active advocating for others as well as acting in ways which are Conscious Psychological Self-Nurturing (Vivien 1991). The suffragettes for example, could be described as operating out of the active-feminine as the root source of their motivation.

In original Jungian psychology, the term 'animus' is used to describe unconscious masculinity in aspects of a woman's psyche. Similarly, *anima* was used to describe unconscious femininity in a male psyche (Luke 1972 161, C. Jung 1973 7 1979, Emma Jung 1981). Indeed this 'bridge to the unconscious' was their value. Through dialoguing with a man's anima or a woman dialoguing with her animus, images of the unconscious would arise. In this way they are acting as channels and are fueled by the imagery we collect into our own lifescrpts (Byrne 1964).
I note that qualities of the 'other' gender have become overt in some of us, rather than unconscious. Because women particularly, have been considering issues of gender equality, these aspects are no longer as hidden as they were. We have addressed them directly, thus making it a conscious issue. Jungian psychotherapists, especially women, are claiming further dimensions to these concepts (Estes 1992 Harding 1986 Young-Eisendrath & Wiedemann 1987). Let me state clearly that I am not in opposition to the use of the Jungian terms. I have taken the ideas, and further worked with them to develop our own words to describe who we perceive we are. In this context, I see the need to use the term 'active' feminine. This is because most women today are more active in the public sphere than Jung perceived in his own time.

Women who apply Jungian psychotherapy to their writings (Harding 1971, Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann 1987 Estes 1992 and Koltuv 1990 amongst others), have developed their own notions of women's psyche. I believe it is important to recognise that Jung himself, was most markedly influenced by the constructs of Victorian, white, middle class nineteenth century notions of women. Carl Jung wrote in 1927 of the dangers of women developing

"...a kind of rigid intellectuality based on so called principles, and backs them up with a whole host of arguments which always just miss the mark in the most irritating way, and always inject a little something that is not really there. Unconscious assumptions or opinions are the worst enemy of a woman; they can grow into a positively demonic passion that exasperates and disgusts men, and does the woman herself the greatest injury by gradually smothering the charm and meaning of her femininity and driving it into the background. Such a development naturally ends in a profound psychological disunion, in short, in a neurosis."

Jung 1927 cited in Koltuv 1990 84

Jungian analyst Barbara Black Koltuv (1990) expresses her anger at such a projection of women turning hysterical if they attempt careers. What is useful here to our inquiry, is the extreme psychological danger that women were perceived to risk, if we dared to develop a professional persona. Worth noting as well, is Jung's projection of men's reaction to such women: men are expected to be irritated, exasperated and disgusted. Such stereotyped assumptions would unjustly describe men in the 1990's. Harding wrote in 1933

"In the beginning of their struggle for independence women were obliged to identify themselves without reservation with their masculine adaptation and for the most part they sacrificed love life to it completely."

Harding 1933 cited in Koltuv 1990 86

Such was perceived to be the price of success in masculine terms. Clearly we see ourselves differently and by our own lives have refuted this sacrificial notion, that a 'successful' professional life sacrifices a 'fulfilled' family life. I would question Harding's statement in the 1930's too, as surely there were family women managing professional lives as well.

So I struggle to develop our own analysis of what it is in our human psyches that has been clearly socially influenced and yet is able to strive for humanistic principles at play within, that we strive to attain in our social and work lives. The 'active feminine' principle endeavors to encompass actions of an enabling and emancipatory nature which rise out of these feminist identified concerns.
In using the word ‘active’, I more accurately describe what women do in this mode of doing, as pro-active and working towards positive change. It is women working to make a difference. In using the term ‘feminine’ we are claiming this behaviour as definitely coming from a female source. It is important to claim this, as historically the political and public spheres have been (and still are) dominated by ideas and actions arising from masculine sources.

The term animus is not useful to us here. Jungian psychotherapists whose work focus is women, Estes (1992) and Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987), recognise its limitations. The classical Jungian view does not apply to women today.

"...the revivifying source in women is not masculine and alien to her, but feminine and familiar"  
Estes 1992 310

Many women have grappled with this aspect of our psyches, and tried to name the quality. Estes describes the animus soul-force as the creative spirit within women which manifests as art in the outer world. She uses the metaphor of the animus as the artist’s arm -without it she cannot create (Estes 1992 311). Applying the term ‘active-feminine’ to this metaphor, demonstrates a better fit for my purpose.

I believe Mary Daly may use the term gynocentric for the overall woman-centred world-view or even

"Gynergy - the female energy which both comprehends and creates who we are; that impulse in ourselves that has never been possessed by the patriarchy nor by any male; woman identified be-ing."

Daly 1992 43

For the activity generated from the active-feminine gynergy she would use many words: spinning, weaving, spiralling, all of them active and creative. I want to use a noun for the strength that naming brings and I want to use a term that also allows me to bring together in the big picture, feminine and masculine Ways of working, as balanced and as integrated as the yin-yang symbol and concept (see below).

Diagram 5.1

I strive to go beyond perceptions of an essentialist position which may be triggered by these descriptions of Daly’s philosophy. While still acknowledging the value of gynergy as ‘essentially’ female in origin, I see the importance of emphasising qualities which enrich humanity in the public sphere and promote their use by both women and men.
Passive Feminine

This term is to identify and honour the quiet, reflective, waiting, meditating Way of being. The best example I can give here is the 'mother-in-waiting'. Once the process of pregnancy has started, we cannot hurry it up. Well... maybe medical technology offers the means which are indeed useful when either mother's or babe's life is at stake. However, for a healthy full-term birth - we can only wait.

There are other times in women's cycles where this quality is nurtured in cultures such as American Indians' moon-time. In this example a women's hut, tepee or sweat-lodge is used by women to retreat quietly for three days of every month. (Mariechild 1987).

In the workplace this passive feminine aspect may be said to be in effect when we are just watching and waiting to see how it all plays out. In this aspect, it could be claimed that men watch and wait too, especially the patient hunter, fisherman or fisherwoman, and so they do. However I want to call it a feminine aspect because of its quiet, reflective and passive nature. Women can be likened to the moon. We may be considered invisible at times, but the moon and women still exist!

Active Masculine, Shadow-Masculine, Shadow-Feminine ...Definitions:

Active-Masculine - These Ways of doing and being are active, pro-active, advocating, protecting even, with an ethic of care which operates in a directive approach. Combining the active feminine and the active masculine leads us to holistic systems thinking with an active approach such as bravery etc. Indeed, it can come out in women, as 'mother tiger' when a mother fights aggressively on behalf of her young. A female example of this masculine approach may be exemplified historically by the military activities of Joan of Arc.

The English suffragettes' initial drive arose from the active-feminine. As their battle became one of survival against the stronger patriarchal forces, they needed to change and operate out of the active-masculine to survive. Thus the active-feminine and the active masculine are seen working side by side. The complexity of the psyche (the inner-world) and the realities of the outside world is such, that the suffragettes in honouring their feminine, had to act aggressively to have their feminine needs met. I refer to their need to have their political voice heard and counted. They actively called attention to the issue of female suffrage by marching on parliament, chaining themselves to railings and pronouncing at public meetings the need to have women's political rights written into legislation. All this, I would call active masculine behaviour. Women today still struggle with this complexity. In honouring the active-feminine to be creative and innovative at work, we often use active-masculine strategies. Clearly, we can use these very well. And it is a stretch - a paradox of paradigms as we experience thinking and being in one mode and perceiving a need to act in another mode.

Shadow Feminine could be said to emerge in ways which manipulate using feminine wiles, sexuality and pleas for protection. Anything of the shadow, is usually hidden agenda. Many times women will operate out of the shadow feminine because of a lack of confidence and self-esteem; lack of confidence in accessing any part of her active - confronting aspect. The outcome is created by not confronting, we unconsciously or consciously find a back-door. We may slide in a
power "whammy" of manipulation and hope any backlash won't be directed at us. It doesn't always work! The French film *Dangerous Liaisons* shows an eighteenth century version of feminine manipulative power. The central character has no power other than her sexuality to plot and contrive to achieve her ends, because of the social constructs around her and her experience of being undervalued.

Another fictional character, Ayesha, the original *She-who-must-be obeyed* tyrant/goddess created by H. Rider Haggard, is a literary projection of an anima. She is a truly manipulative shadow feminine. She who has manipulated death to remain eternally young, she who waits for the reincarnation of her lover whom she slayed in a frenzy of jealousy to join her in immortality. Once reunited they will rule the world together till the end of time. Keeping in mind the myriad distortions of meanings we see projected in parallel walls of mirrors, Ayesha provides in one female/goddess character, the projected anima of a male character via a male author. Ayesha also mirrors for women, aspects of the shadow feminine in her actions, in her being. She provides for me a fiercely beautiful Way to integrate my terminologies with Jung's and reminds me of the terrifying power to destroy within the unconscious shadow aspects. (Jung himself praised Haggard for his portrayal of the anima in *Ayesha*.)

The image of Ayesha, reminds me of Kali in her destroyer mode. However Kali would be closer to a personification of the shadow masculine. Thus these invented terms are invested with multiple textures of meaning.

Literature gives us another shadow-feminine character in Cathy of *Wuthering Heights*. Cathy uses her feminine power over Heathcliff mercilessly, until she destroys both of them. Cathy however, is responding to her psyche's call to integrate her own masculine aspect by union with Heathcliff. The taboos in nineteenth century genteel English society were forceful; she is bound by social constructions that prescribe her limitations like iron bars around her soul. So she resorts to acting out of the shadow-feminine. If she could have acted out of her active-feminine she would have united with Heathcliff or challenged his cruel behaviour in a pro-active Way rather than her manipulating ways. Then we would not have such a powerful story that cries out to us across the moors and the centuries of women's nature so bound and corseted that Cathy could no longer breathe. (*She dies of consumption.*)

*Shadow Masculine* - One way to describe the patriarch is in a controlling mode. The 'Do-what-I-say-or-else!' without listening to the woman, girl or child, subordinate worker or colleague. A powerful stance that has ego firmly attached to positional and coercive power. The term could be used to describe the ego-state of a violent man, also possibly coming from a fear of being in a position of powerlessness (out-of-control) as does the shadow-feminine. Hence a man may violently respond to family members whom he perceives as going against his wishes.

The Hindu goddess Kali - acts to destroy. There is no compassion. Obviously, women and men can act in this mode.

When I think of Kali, the destroyer, I am also reminded of her position as transformer. Women, or men, acting out of anger, can transform that which goes against life. Thus ecofeminists fight to nurture our world (Saleh 1984a) or a mother would fight to save her baby from an attacking dog. In modern times we have seen the late Golda Meier when Prime Minister of Israel, authorising military action to protect her beloved Israel.

Chapter 5 - Virginia Kaufman Hall - *Women Transforming the Workplace* - 112
Ecofeminist perspectives such as Salleh (1984a), interrelate with my Jungian-influenced notions of the feminine (in the active feminine aspect). "Fighting for a nurturant world" Salleh (1984a), requires an ethic of care (Gilligan 1984). In my view, such an activist response places ecofeminists in symbiotic relationship with the environment. Macy’s (1993) notion of ‘co-dependent co- ARISING’ synchronously describes the relationship of responsibility that is my understanding of an ecofeminist paradigm.

These explanations of terminologies, in no way aim to explain away violent actions. They are put forward as a way to understand how violence possibly originates. As well as the social constructions of our roles, I am acknowledging the inner constructions, the pulls of the psyche.

Emily Bronte again gives us Heathcliff, as an embodiment of the shadow-masculine. Bronte explores for us the shadow side of ourselves by creating such a tour de force. Bronte through her ‘mistresspiece’ of storytelling, gives us archetypal characters in which we can explore our own shadows. In describing the ‘shadows’ I do not want to put a negative cast upon them. In my understanding, just as we need male and female integration of energies, we also need to acknowledge the shadow in all our psyches. Without acknowledging the shadow, we are tossed about by events. We may well experience being out of control. By aiming to understand the shadow’s influence, we can bring it out of shadow, into the light. There we can deal with past experiences that may now be creating difficulties by emerging as shadows (in Jungian terms; unconscious forces).

Shadow - an explanation

Women novelists of the nineteenth century present us with archetypal shadow characters. As well as Bronte’s Heathcliff and Cathy, Mary Shelley told us the story of Frankenstein - or the Modern Prometheus (full original title) where everyone’s monster nightmare appears in the light of day. Shelley confronts the shadow cast by our fears about man-made constructions and conversely our fears about ‘less-than’ human people masquerading as humans. Women know this fear very well. Popular fascinations continue with this story. A 1994 release of the film Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein is a box-office success.

The work of acquainting us with the shadow aspect of ourselves is continued by Estes in her role as cantadora - storyteller. Her book, Women Who Run with the Wolves was very popular with women when it was released, with reprint runs for the Australian market (Estes 1992).

Even in the title, Estes acknowledges the shadow. In our culture, little girls were brought up to fear wolves from European story traditions such as Little Red Riding Hood. Estes’ stories which explore aspects of women’s psyche, deal with shadows, such as Bluebeard manifesting our fears of the ‘dark man’ in women’s dreams. The last story in her book, The Handless Maiden deals outwardly with our fears of mutilation. Inwardly Estes explains it deals with our fears of loss, grief and letting go. Our fears of loss of loved ones, or home are always part of our shadow. Here we recognise our basic survival needs for shelter, security and love as recognised by Maslow (1954) and discussed further in a later chapter.

Stories speak metaphorically and these archetypal stories plumb the depths of our psyche that go beyond words. Our fears of mutilation are not limited to the
body and the threat and/or reality of physical violence. Women’s bodies every day are mutilated by fashion (Wolf *The Beauty Myth* 1993 and Lakoff and Scherr’s chapter on *The Pathology of Beauty* in their book *Face Value - The Politics of Beauty* 1984). Our creative spirit is mutilated by convention, rules and procedures.

My song is to sing the creative spirit of *Wild Woman* at work with us. We can dance her dance across the desks, the machinery, the ‘bore-ocracy’ (Daly 1987). We can introduce flavour, colour and options into workplaces that are transforming and enrich all (employer and worker). Women can thus feel fulfilled at work and at play, and even at home. This is the vision of what we would like it to be. It is not yet the reality, hence we need to do this basic re-education work, to tell our stories, to explore the meanings and to transform - ourselves, our society, our workplaces. It is said increasingly that a workplace’s greatest asset is its workforce not only the plant and capital equipment.

Robert Johnson provides us with an excellent explanation of the shadow in his clear and concise book *Owning Your Shadow - Understanding the Dark Side of the Psyche* (1991). Beyond explaining our individual need to acknowledge and work/play with our own shadows, Johnson points to the construction of our modern culture which denies dark, black things like shadows. He says this construct puts all advances we have made at risk, in danger of being destroyed by that which we most fear - the shadow which *must* arise.

Estes (1993) too, has shown women the value of exploring the shadow through stories. The ‘woman who runs with the wolves’ is the woman who is brave enough to not only look at her shadows, but to run wild with them as well! Here the transformational aspect is demonstrated. When we know and understand the shadow, we are strengthened by our psyche and can truly change and transform ourselves, so that we can create change outside ourselves.

Kali lives!

Most of us have experienced damaging results if we do not allow an outlet for anger. It can exponentially build-up until it erupts like a volcano. If we ignore what the shadow is trying to tell us, in my experience, at the very least we leak energy because of the strain. Over time or when brought to a crisis, the shadow takes a huge energy toll in my experience and understanding. It is more efficient, more effective if we face it and deal with it creatively. Anger has transformed many of women’s frustrations into improved situations - consider the suffragettes; they were angry! Now in some countries women have the vote!

*Right - Wrong; Masculine - Feminine; Light - Dark*

Just as womanly qualities were put on one side of the culture balancing see-saw, so are shadow characteristics. The concept of the shadow means something hidden, not obvious, not out in the light. There is and was much of women’s experience and knowledge which was never addressed: it was kept in the shadow of our existence. Menstruation was until very recently, part of the ‘shadow’ of women’s life. We weren’t supposed to talk about it - especially with men. Menopause socially, is still commonly dealt with by a state of denial. As a Jungian, Robert Johnson (as mentioned) has written many books about these different (opposing) aspects of our personalities. While I call them opposing, Johnson, along with other Jungians, brings these aspects of personality out into the light to be able to incorporate all aspects by being aware of their existence; and influence upon us. It is making the sub-conscious, conscious. Johnson doesn’t
advocate indulging these impulses, but does warn we must “never try to hide it from ourselves” (Johnson 1991 14).

“The balance of light and dark is ultimately possible - and bearable. All nature lives in polarity - light and dark, creation and destruction, up and down, male and female.”

Johnson 1991 15

I prefer to work with the notion of integration rather than that of balancing. The thought of women doing their super-woman balancing act is too much like a juggle of the many different realities we have to deal with day-to-day.

Johnson goes on to comment by footnote:

“Our language has lost the ability to speak of the latter (female) in very noble terms. Our philosophy is unbalanced by the very language we use. How do we speak of dark and give it the same dignity and value as light?”

Johnson 1991 15

Our language has habitually denied the shadow side and the distaff (female) side.

A language that thinks in polarities develops a philosophy that speaks for itself in polarities.

How do we speak of the female without connecting it only to the dark, the left, the distaff side? In our Women's Ways of Working, Thinking and Speaking we want to use enfolding language. Our desire for an all-encompassing language that acknowledges other realities and does not make moral judgement via vocabulary, is a language that integrates the female into the norm. When the norm is male then everything that is instinctively female is suspect. Success in our work lives means doing it “as it is usually done”. It is my observation that for a woman to be successful in the male construct of work, it’s necessary for her to suppress a large amount of her female energy. This modality however is being changed by many women - there are 12 in this research who explore how we do it.

Because our language cannot express understanding that is not there, Mary Daly as previously noted, had to invent a new gynocentric language to balance the androcentric language that thinks in black-and-white terms; literally thinks in good-and-evil polarities. To develop a philosophy that speaks of women, we have to step out of our own culture. The Judeo-Christian/ Graeco-Roman cultures, while being the source of our archetypal images, has lost the sense of integration that consistently, willingly walks in the shadow. Johnson gives a see-saw explanation to explain the concept of balance, with masculine and feminine aspects at opposite ends. I would like to present a spiralling symbolic pattern that moves in more integrated Ways.
The spiralling maze pattern is significant as to exit, one has to follow the spiral to the centre before being able to spiral out.

Ever-spiralling, the psyche starts from centre and returns constantly. At one time originating from the active feminine, another from the shadow feminine. The same psyche operates from the active-masculine and even the shadow-masculine. Also able to operate from the child-personality and that of the parent (as in Transactional Analysis of Berne 1975). Ever-spiralling to keep balance the fulcrum being our own life experiences, tilting us this way then that. Of course, when we are truly at centre, truly integrated, we are at peace. That can be a fleeting moment or long stretches in the psyche.

I understand the pull which calls a woman inward to 'herSelf' after the children leave the family home. Or, the call to leave the nest and find her own Self beyond the home. This is the holistic (holy), need for the psyche to be integrated. If we ignore it, then we can have breakthroughs (breakdowns) where we spin out, going the opposite way we had been living; the way which we had been denying. I see women who have been everything to everybody, serving all their families and workplace demands, breakthrough and for a time become completely selfish and self-serving. Thus they become 'Self-attending' women, until they attain their balance, their centre again. This is one way that a woman may work towards her wholeness in 'rational passionate self-hood' (Porter 1991).

Many Women Instinctively Know the Shadow

We women became involved in this project to make a statement for Ways of working as Women. Our Ways of working include the recognition and use of intuition (the instinctive or our tacit knowing, Belenky et al 1986, Polyani 1967).

Etymologically, the word instinct derives from the Latin instinguere, meaning "impulse", also instinctus, meaning "instigation," to incite or impel an innate prompting. The idea of instinct can be valued positively as an inner something that when blended with forethought and consciousness guides humans to integral behaviour."

Estes 1992 232
Estes term: 'integral' behaviour, refers to an integrated Way of working.
This term satisfied my search for an appropriate term. I found the term 'instinct'
raises difficulties for many women.

Estes holds a strong belief that women know instinctively what lies within
their shadow aspects. "A woman is born with instinct intact" (Estes 1992 232).

If this is so, then by the same reasoning, men would be too.

She says that we are out of touch with this state when we are 'captured by
'over-domestication'. This
"is like forbidding the vital essence to dance... The instinct-injured
woman has no choice. She just stays stuck."

Similarly, I believe that men (and women too of course) are
captured by the competitive workplace culture which
exhorts them to be 'supermen' - 'bringing home the
bacon' and supplying his polarity of the equation: the
myth of financial security.

In the reality of every-day worklife and family life, we know that both
women and men may be trapped into socially constructed roles which do not allow
for creativity, flexibility or the possibility of mixing these roles up at different
times to suit different needs. Such are the present economic and emotional
imperatives.

Ethically, we choose to work with integrity, with "integral behaviour",
bringing our whole selves to work. This means that our Ways of working include
and enfold this instinct. As I developed previously, an essential part of that
instinct is awareness of the shadow. It is this intuitive 'wildness' that may be a
source of much creativity.

How does awareness of the shadow aspect affect how we do our work? When
we feel a sense of 'all is not right here'. It may be a 'gut' feeling, it may creep up on
us as we lie in bed at night. It may bound upon us like a caged tiger suddenly let
free by a colleague's angry or abrupt behaviour. The shadow is that which is
unknown at first. In this context, when there is an unpleasant, uncomfortable
feeling or experience, it is a signal that there is something there to consider. For
us, the group meetings became a safe place to look at our shadows. We chose not
to let the shadow stalk us. The shadow may presents itself not only at work but at
home, daring us to take notice of it.

Observing fears and hidden concerns emerging from out of the shadows, we
also found aspects of light and creativity. Julie was being stalked by a shadow. In
reality, it was overwork. Constant, unrealistic demands were made so that she felt
that she could not complete her work or even feel on top of it. Through the focus
session we called specifically for her to look at the whole situation. Julie met her
own shadow in many forms. These included her fear of asking for help, of
appearing to be inadequate, and of losing touch with her family. Un-addressed,
these fears became dark stalking terrors. Addressed, they became useful and
helpful guideposts to creative strategies to turn an impossible situation into
creative opportunities and possible solutions.
"For women especially, the shadow almost always contains very fine aspects of being that are forbidden or give little support by her culture. At the bottom of the well in the psyches of too many women lies the visionary creator, the astute truth-teller, the far-seer, the one who can speak well of herself without denigration, who can face herself without cringing, who works to perfect her craft. The positive impulses in shadow for women in our culture most often revolve around permission for the creation of a handmade life."

Estes 1992 236

The “hand-made life” is the opportunity for a woman to create her own life, rather than to have another’s interpretation of what her life should be, and then imposed upon her.

Simply by allowing the focus group to meet and address Julie’s issues, she gave herself permission to create her own work-life. At the meeting Julie moved from a feeling and position of hopelessness and impossibility to a position of strategic management and feelings of being capable and able to apply creative responses. Later Julie spoke of the gift she received: acknowledgment of her situation and her feelings; being heard and taken seriously; the personal gifts from each woman of time and focus. These 3 gifts describe in microcosm, gifts received by each member of the group.

*By ‘Naming’ We Accept Who We Are*

I want to acknowledge that any of us, women or men, can operate in any mode described by my terms. In fact, we would all have experienced operating out of any of these modes at different times in our lives. For example, the shadow feminine could be brought into play by a male child, or a male adult can use his ‘child persona’ to manipulate a situation to his advantage.

The active-feminine and the active-masculine share certain qualities; as indicated previously one such commonality is taking action because of an ‘ethic of care’. These 2 aspects should ideally operate in synchronicity in a balanced community, family or organisational system.

Our focus, goal and mode of operation in this research is primarily the active-feminine, because of its rarely acknowledged devaluing. We work towards the integration of all positive human qualities. We show how ordinary “special” women operate in this mode today. Our mothers certainly did not have our opportunity to be pro-active in the active-feminine sphere.

I recall my mother used her power more in the shadow-feminine mode, than the active-feminine. This is especially so because the social constructions my Mum knew, gave her little opportunity to exercise the active-feminine. She certainly tapped into her active-feminine strength, when she saw her children needed an advocate at school. She did it for herself when her children were grown and she became the first president of a country women’s bowling club. The club had been set up by my parents, with a community of women and men working together to meet their own needs. A fine example of “soft” systems working with all energies in balance. The active-masculine needed to be operating to confront local council restrictions and legislate to allow operations. The active-feminine needed to operate to work with the community and the environment. One without the other, would not have achieved the desired goal.
Like any construct we place upon our experience of the world, the terminology does not hold meaning in itself. Neither does it provide us with answers. Just as paradigms are constructions we build in order to understand the world as we experience it within our own world view, so these terms are manipulated to create a dialogue around a concept. The chosen terminology is merely a construction of my mind.

I am constructing models, (shapes, shadows and spells), in order to cast light, life and different shapes upon the world we experience. This is called *shapeshifting* in Mary Daly’s language and *re-framing* in Neuro-Linguistic Programming. I also call it *re-search* - taking another look at things in order to understand further.

I tell our stories to recognise feminine energy and align it with a balance of the active-masculine and the nurturing-masculine (which could be described as the other side of ‘mother tiger’). The negative-feminine is not dealt with greatly, being an aspect that we each managed individually and preferred not to draw out in group situations. However, throughout our discussions, there is clear acknowledgment of its play in our lives. Through the trust built up in the group, we were able to directly confront shadow aspects, which unacknowledged, could trigger negative feminine responses. Further, we have developed together a range of options. These strategies provide us with choices, giving us other transformational Ways of working which were not I suspect, as available to our mothers.

Our stories tell how we deal with the negative-masculine energy. In fact in many ways this is a major stimulus to the work because of our intimate knowledge of the negative-masculine aspects in the patriarchal workplace. The old work adage of the ‘mushroom strategy’ reflects a negative-masculine workplace attitude: “Keep them in the dark and feed them manure.”

We want to claim space for stories with a feminine viewpoint. Because of our intimate knowledge of active-feminine Ways of working and being, we create the space to talk up the active-feminine. We created space to nurture the energy of the active-feminine and now we are putting this energy out to the world of work in an effort to integrate the energies we experience there. Every day, the ‘mortar and pestle’ are working together, transforming old materials into new Ways being activated by some of the research group.

**Our Beliefs about the Nature of Our Research: Epistemology**

How what we know and believe leads us to do what we do - Ontology

The research process in the group, the Way we do the research, I name as feminine energy in action (active-feminine). I explained in the previous chapter how our research is characterised by subjective involvement. As the prime researcher, I take responsibility for the process and the outcomes including recording, and reporting upon our deliberations.
Rather than writing up a research report, my role is more like the storyteller of the tribe. I tell the story of the group; of each woman in it; of the context, the environment of the stories, the story of the collection of our story. I am fulfilling the role of elder responsible for story-telling in her tribe at the same time as writing a thesis to meet academic requirements. Is this problematic? Certainly there are inherent tensions in the dual role of story-teller and social analyst. Yet my purpose for the research is to integrate such dualities and make meanings understandable. Hence the importance of writing in everyday language and speaking in a range of different voices.

Like the late Oodgeroo (Kath Walker 1982) this elder (myself) has the privilege and the responsibility to make meaning from the stories. Oodgeroo took on this name (meaning the “paper-bark woman”), after a story about the old woman who walked about looking for her lost tribe. She did not find the tribe, but she was given the paperbark from the trees, and charcoal from the great spirit Biami. This spirit (Biami) told her to draw on the bark with the coals from her tribe’s fires. In this way she collected the stories of her tribe. The full story is told in the concluding chapter.

Our ‘lost’ tribe is the knowledge of the elder women, de-valued and not attended to by our society. We are in a new country where women are making fresh tracks. It is in talking to each other we find out the songlines - which pass on maps by singing pathways created by other women (Chatwin 1987).

Making Meaning from Stories · Our Heuristic Inquiry

It is in the making of meaning from our stories that we discover our research results. In the reflection upon our reflections, we catch a glimpse of understandings that may have eluded us before. In the words of Gloria from the research group:

\[ I \text{ felt the privilege to be privy to so much that is personal and } \] 
\[ \text{precious. To hear the stories of the other women and the depth of } \] 
\[ \text{their experience is awesome.} \]

Thus we learn to acknowledge our own way of being, to recognise there may be some things we want to learn more about (rather than labelling ourselves as ‘deficient’) and then to go about the business of learning.

\[ \text{Involvement has affected my own work. I focus on my own style } \] 
\[ \text{and compare and contrast that with the other women. When we } \] 
\[ \text{discuss various strategies focussed around an issue, there is } \] 
\[ \text{always at least one I haven’t thought of. I may not use that but } \] 
\[ \text{I’m getting in touch with others’ ways of doing things. I am } \] 
\[ \text{changing work strategies in that I’m getting more aware of what I } \] 
\[ \text{can do (Isobel).} \]

These preceding words show the reflective process and willingness to hear new ways of tackling problems. There is subtlety in the space between doing things one way and getting more aware of what I can do. There lies power of choice arising from learning.
"It is difficult to describe the heartbeat of heuristic inquiry in words alone - so much of the process lurks in the tacit dimension, in mystery, in the wild promptings of imagination, and in edgings of subtlety. The opportunity for heuristic searching inherent in every moment needs only to be blown into flame by one who is ready to surrender to the pursuit of meaning via the inspirations of the self, the complexities of human experience, and the challenge of the reflective process.

Douglass and Moustakas 1985 53

As the storyteller's purpose is also to gather the stories, it is essential that I develop a relationship with each woman. How could I collect stories from people without first deserving their trust? As the women knew this was 'public' research, available to anyone who may wish to read it on completion, they have power of veto over the content. Hence...

✉️ The women are the first to examine the research.
   It is the women who are the research who are empowered to say whether the stories and interpretations are true for them. ✉️

The previous chapter more fully explored the nature of our research as feminist and subjective, relational, contextual and action-oriented. From the process of gathering the research, we individually and collectively made changes in our operations, Ways of working and our beliefs about ourselves. We transformed ourselves in order to transform our workplaces.

So our research process binds all the elements of our lives and the inquiry together.

"Building a meaningful framework of ideas can be a slow process. Powerful concepts are not easy to formulate: they may require intense community effort over long periods of time."

Bowen 1985

By meeting together and by distributing writings, we slowly built a system of meaning and a community of knowledge. Indeed, we could call it an ecology of knowledge (Bowen 1985) where the researcher/observer and co-researchers cannot be regarded as being separate from our society -we all can be considered as part of the system we are striving to understand. In contextualising our experience as co-researchers, we are examining our whole eco-system. An eco-system which includes ourselves, our significant relationships, our workplaces as whole systems including our community, society and political realities, all within the larger context of an earth 'at-risk'.

Our Ways of Knowing - Underlying Assumptions about the nature of the research we collect together.

Now, I pull together the essence of the qualities of knowing which emerged from the doing of the research. This includes drawing the essence out of the mechanics of researching; such as determining what the interviews and meetings meant to the participants.

I have already given the theoretical placement of the work. Now I am
positioning the research process within the experience of the women: what is their thinking behind the process? They checked these interpretations at a meeting, providing another level of reflection.

The major processes, of storytelling, listening, working with multiple realities, language and our commitment to action are again considered. This time, it is from the lived experience and frameworks of the group, rather than 'other' theorists.

As one of the group stated:

*It is so useful to be in our research group. We are able to discuss 'soft' research as hard experience. It is only 'soft' as women's Ways of working. In data, information and value it is very rich, detailed and useful. It is exciting watching Virginia work with multi-faceted strategies, methodologies and processes. I picked up strategies of interviewing, for example, which I didn't know about before, such as open-ended questioning, semi-structured direction, and allowing the interview to go with what came up. This led to far more 'true' data collection than giving everyone the same questions exactly (Isobel).*

Our research meetings were group discussions; our 'interviews' were more like conversations. The interview process occurred in the first third of the research project and women during the interview, sometimes asked: 'Is this useful to you? Are you getting what you need?' Once re-assured, they would return to discussion of their lived experience in a reflexive Way. Later at meetings, various members of the group (including the trained journalist and two professional report writers) genuinely queried how I would make sense of it all (at that stage I wondered too). However, I implicitly trusted the research process and expected it would prove successful because of the built-in progressive review and verification by all participants.

Why did I have this trust? I had previously experienced 'soft' research inside 'hard' systems and came up with results that made a difference to all the women involved in the process (Kaufman 1990). I knew that woman-to-woman talk was in process, deliberately constructed into a co-researching and co-learning framework. It was a consciousness-raising activity. An unknown factor lay in different women participating from so many varied backgrounds and working within diverse organisations.

"Women who are positioned differently learn to speak and hear quite different versions of 'woman talk,' adapting to distinctive blends of power and oppression."

DeVault 1990 98

Given the range of participants, I realised that as long as we all kept inter-acting, it was inevitable that shifts and changes would occur. This was, to us, synonymous with learning. The whole process then was destined and indeed consciously constructed, to create a collection of interesting stories. Interesting to us and other women who are battling the dragons of patriarchal oppression and habit within hierarchical organisations which exist inside a social construction.
DeVault also mentions the “messiness of talking and listening together” and suggests that the many feminist researchers who are focussing on this complexity (e.g. Joseph & Lewis 1981, Lugones & Spelman 1983, Bulkin, Pratt & Smith 1984 - DeVault’s references)

"... hold promise that, with careful attention, we can learn from each other about our differences as well as our common experiences."

DeVault 1990 98

This certainly was one of the major outcomes for the participants.

In ‘discussing soft research as hard experience’, we had to be sure of a focus that is relevant to all those in the group. Therefore the methodology is more accurately described as an organic process. It is a process which, with permission and co-operation, was entered into by all present at the time of designing this research. So in good faith, analysis, reporting, reflecting and drawing meaning from findings, are intrinsically part of the processes.

Processing in this case includes:

- focus - taking time and energy to look at the whole situation, feel it, notice how our bodies feel about it, notice where the discomfort or recognition lies, being willing and deciding to give permission for the group to further investigate (as in Gendlin’s Focussing 1981).

Investigation takes many forms too:

Investigation for us means:

- Investigate - to play with a situation, see its absurdities, angst over any anger, sadness, powerlessness stupidity, irony, time-wasting, boredom; getting the ‘felt sense’ (as named in Gendlin’s Focusing 1981); using strategic questions (Peavey 1992 and 1993) to fully explore the experience.
We look at the context of the situation. We consider the *whole system* in which it lies. Perhaps we even draw a focus map, systems diagram, collage of elements, or abstract drawing of where we see ourselves fitting into the situation.

To do these processes in a group, allows for multi-faceted analysis. Our research is indeed always *our* research. I get to write it up, yet every woman involved creates the data, the outcomes, the findings, the stories and the actions.

Diagram 5.4

### Influence of Stories, Information and Strategies

Because every woman involved has input, every woman present at meetings had her dynamic involved in the results of that meeting. Diagram 5.4 shows that the mix is something quite different from the parts. For *our* research, holistic considerations must be applied. Reductionist analysis just doesn't fit. Like imposing the square upon the circle, it hurts, pushes us out of shape, and doesn't let me move.

So *our* Ways of Knowing, - epistemology, emerge when we ask “What is there that can be known” (Guba & Lincoln 1990)? We must all be in the answer. That is not a Zen Koan. It means that for every researching woman, only *she* can know what it is she knows. So only she can frame the questions to be asked. As a researcher, I need a working, trusting, exploring relationship with each woman to find out the questions that she wants to explore. In our group, while we investigated the same questions together, each question was for the individual woman, a different search. The multi-faceted responses to the interviews as well as the variety of views in meeting discussions, shows the individual knowing, that developed and grew through the co-learning process (Section 2).

From our ways of knowing we also discover the nature of the relationship between the knower and the known (Guba & Lincoln 1990). In discovering this aspect of our epistemology, each woman asks herself the question: “how do I know what I know?”

How we go about finding out what there is to be known is the question that brings us to the methods we use to design our research process. Our ways of transforming work are not only the research question, but also integrally, must be the Ways of working the research itself.

For us to research with integrity, we have to do the things we do in Ways that model the philosophies and practices we want to see.
Other Ways of Knowing - The tension of Living in Multiple Realities

What I am describing then, comes from a very definite paradigm. This paradigm is a framework, a way of seeing the world that encompasses many realities. Clearly, it can be recognised as post-modernist in flavour, but I want to proclaim: our Ways of Doing, Thinking and Being are firmly feminist developments.

When I talk about paradigms, I recognise that there are particular frames we place around our thinking and this affects our speaking and writing. Our thoughts are framed by our personal world-view. When I talk about feminist paradigms, I recognise that there are many different feminisms. Just as every woman does not think, feel or look the same as other women, so every feminist is as varied in her thinking and way of being.

Kuhn (1970) discussed the concept of paradigms around scientific world-views. Paradigm shifts have been said to occur when new knowledge opens doors to different ways of thinking. (We see another way of looking at things, hence, looking through a different window, we see different things.) A paradigm shift means a shift in the kinds of answers being sought and the questions asked. This involves looking for contextual understanding through post-modernist-based research as opposed to using a positivist research paradigm to develop causal explanations.

Wittgenstein (1968), applies the metaphor of games and rules to the problem of paradigms. In this context then I propose that:

Researching women from the positivist paradigm,

can be like refereeing a game of netball

by the rules of football.

The women's Ways of working described in this work, are not the patriarchy's ways of working and cannot be examined under the structures and rules of the patriarchy, just as in the previous metaphor, we couldn't play a game of netball with a football referee. Some of the games we get caught up in at work can feel like that mismatch. Especially when we are playing along, then the 'guys' up-top change the rules mid-stream.

Working from our emancipatory feminist framework, the ideas put forward in this work, aim to improve the workplace for everyone. This includes even the kids who are not yet in the workplace, but whose carers are there now. Therefore the frameworks which are operational in their carer's workplaces can have a flow-on effect to the kids at home. An hierarchical workplace which de-values Dad, can lead him to wield possibly abusive power at home. A workplace which values and honours Dad, could influence him to similarly value and honour his children's efforts to learn about work at home. Anyway, it is a contextual possibility.
When we consider other ways of knowing, we are (as I’ve indicated) acknowledging that there are as many world-views, frameworks, paradigms, as there are people interacting. If I only see from one paradigm, my world-view is very two-dimensional. There you are walking around in our frame. I cannot see your frame unless we stand opposite each other, parallel in the *en face* position.

Diagram 5.5

From any other position all I see is uni-dimensional lines. I cannot get a full picture of your reality. That reality of yours that I see, is only my representation of your framework. This view is also affected by any internalised realities that may be happening inside me.

So there we are. All walking around in our frameworks, seeing only a vertical line of this person’s world and a horizontal line of that person’s world. We could stand at opposite sides of a curved frame and argue to eternity that what you see and what I see is a convex or a concave line, depending upon our view of it. We need to get off our point of view and establish a space-time viewing point that gives us the whole picture (Crumm 1987).

Once we take on board the concept of multiple realities, we can then elevate ourselves to an all-encompassing vision of the world. From a higher viewing-point, I can see the many different frameworks and see the clashes that are likely to occur. I can see where people are crashing into each others’ frameworks, chipping a frame here, and cracking another there. It is no wonder our egos get a beating at work! We are all operating out of individual windows of reality.

So this leads to a feminist (and post-modernist) world-view that recognises multiple realities - not just feminist viewpoints. I hear the Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems and many other belief systems, claim philosophical paradigms that include many realities. Just as the Muslim wise-fool Nasr-ed-Din (Downing 1964) mistook the rope for a snake, we mistake our own experience of reality for others, without an understanding of multiple realities of many dimensions. In ‘reality’ we can only communicate a sense of our experience to others, and perceive a sense of the other’s experience in our communications.

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* en face - an anthropological term describing a relational position where people bond by looking at each other face to face, in parallel alignment and at the same level. e.g. in bonding with a newborn baby a parent will align their face with that of the infant (Liedloff 1975).
I also add that it is a feminist viewpoint to include and consult other realities, other cultures, others’ life experiences than our own. Particularly now in the nineties when we have clearly heard the message from our black sisters, that we do not know what the battle is like for them, or for that matter, for a lot of other women (Gunew & Yeatman 1993).

“If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time.
If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then
we can work together”

Lila Watson - Aboriginal woman quoted in Collaborative Inquiry No 3 1990 10

Research by Listening

A question arises around research: how do we research and incorporate multiple realities, many-faceted frameworks, and place poly-paradigms into the research focus and process?

Because there are many feminisms, as the researcher I need to accept others’ realities. As the researcher I need to ask “Tell me how it is for you,” and listen... and listen... and listen.

Perhaps listening is the prime skill of researching in this framework. Listening, to hear the whole story of each woman; listening to hear the whole interaction of women sharing their stories, and listening to me inside - to ensure I listen carefully to my observations, my intuition, my ‘gut-feelings’ about each session, each chapter and each reflection.

Listening and Watching and Storytelling.
Diagram 5.6

We have two ears, two eyes and one mouth. When I use my words to express observations and to extend the story to others, I must check this out with those of whom I speak. Respect for her life, respect for her beliefs, and respect for her language must be evident at all times.

If my actions deviate from this total commitment to integrity, I can and will be challenged. In interactive, pro-active collaborative and emancipatory research, as long as the story is being told, there will be challenges as we are all speaking out of different realities. The challenge is to give a sense of the research reality in a way that bridges with others' realities.

Speaking our Knowing Through Our Language

Does she speak with her voice if she uses their words?

The following chapters are integrated with each women's voice. Rather than reading that as the researcher speaking her findings, it is meant to be heard as the women speaking their stories.
It is a very important operational ethic that I set from the beginning. Clear voices singing their own songs, with an interweaving harmony, occasionally with a light bridging accompaniment.

Because our language is deficient in active-feminine expression, I also invent, coin and connect or disconnect words, (as inspired by Mary Daly), to present the words from this woman's framework. As well as words, the use of diagrams, cartoons and pictures are occasionally incorporated with the work, to interweave visual expression, which is more closely embodied than abstract words on a page. It is an intent of this work to demonstrate a woman's Way of working by creating a 'newstream' (Kanter 1989 203) which is not of the mainstream of conventional academic 'research' papers.

I undertake to speak with our voices. This does not mean that we reject academic rigour. Far from it. There is much intellectual stretching, talking-up, pondering and philosophising around explaining complex concepts and systems in clear every-woman language - simply Plain English. In fact it is my belief that using academic jargon not only obfuscates but also intentionally creates and upholds entrenched privilege.

"Jargon serves to police the boundaries of disciplines and specialities. It's like a toll collected from those who attempt to cross an intellectual border, a toll collected in the currency of intellectual labour. Jargon, on top of credentials, ensure that migration between disciplines is kept low."

Martin 1992

To understand the issues we are researching, we have to look (as I've said) through many different viewpoints, frameworks and disciplinary paradigms. This work is then necessarily trans-disciplinary -a position that post-modernists, many feminists and social ecologists clearly take. Furthermore, it can be argued that to be totally objective we, as women, should recognise and transcend our own backgrounds: white/Caucasian, middle class aspirants, Australian-based, reasonably educated, members of or born into established religions.

Our biases may be identified and defined, yet are also infinite and indeterminate in our collective and individual unconscious.

Rather than a privileged few understanding our work, we want to talk with all women who may find comfort and inspiration in seeing and listening to stories of special yet ordinary women of recognised limited ethnicity.

We are also, as indicated previously, changing the language. I want language to be as flexible as clay under our fingers on the wheel. I want to create new words to colour-in new experiences, new pathWays on the maps. In creating new words, I also want to clearly tell our stories. New words are to build bridges and weave hammocks of respite from the patriarchal language that dares to define for us what is our experience.
"They sing a mother’s song, but it does not lull. They sing in new languages the song of the self. For them, it is the song of the sex that unfurls like a flower, the song of the mouth that brings forth. They speak out of silence. They will not be still... They will not tell the lie of hierarchy. Male and female as we have been taught them are a false opposition: one may shift its form into the other. Both may be embraced within the one. In this embrace, the fathers’ old language dies. Its rigid dualities, its unquestionable answers, are dissolved at grammar’s bourn. Syntax may break and words unravel; still, the voice is borne, not stillborn, but not of stillness, born."

Larsen 1993 259 speaking of women novelists

In telling our stories as mothers and in honouring our mothers, we sing a song ‘that does not lull’ or dull us into apraxia - inability to act (Daly 1993 8). The active-feminine is as pro-active as the force which unfurls the bud unto full bloom. None can stop it, unless our emerging bud is consumed by a slug (the creeping apathy and apraxia engendered in a sick institution). Where our mothers may have been silenced without words to speak their pain and frustration, we will not be still nor will we be silenced. Nor will we tell the tale of the hierarchy to further promote patriarchal (and possibly) “sick” systems (Schaef 1985).

We will no longer operate in false opposition to our brothers. In fact, we believe that their liberation is bound up with ours; as is our children’s and other people’s liberation from rigid workplaces. In integration the feminine principle is not consumed, it serves as the active balancing force which nurtures and actively promotes other options, in a language that creates meaning for all peoples. The old dualities are dissolved in new/old chemical solutions that activate and transform. It is like salt added to water makes not salt plus water, but a melded solution with different properties.

What We Do Because of What We Know - Knowledge in Action

It would not be possible to chronicle one way of knowing for this group of women, or to draw extensions to all women’s ways of knowing. What we can speak of is the knowing that arises out of the doing of our Ways in the group. A knowing that invites safe exploration. It is knowing that acknowledges the shadow, be it of negative-feminine behaviour and feelings of our own, or negative-masculine behaviours of the organisational system we work within.

The active-feminine Way of Knowing in the group, operated like a strong mother living her life, modelling for her strong child a way she could be. Friends share stories, offer suggestions when they are asked for and give support for the hard bits. Friends, colleagues who may have no contact between meetings, know that the trust is there so that even after many months apart, we meet again and take up where we are at right now, just as do friends of many years.

"One of the most critical cornerstones in developing a body of study about the psychology of women is that women themselves observe and describe what takes place in their own lives. A women’s ethnic affiliations, her race, her religious practice, her values are all of a piece, and must all be taken into account for together they constitute her soul sense."

Estes 1992 472
So I observe and watch (doing a Search for the re-Search). I describe, finding the words to expand the meanings we observe from the events of our own lives. We reflect with each other, finding the mirrors which others hold up to reveal other facets than the mirror on the wall in our own private bathrooms. We also learn from each others’ values, about the many, many windows that look down upon our many, many worlds.

Our Community of Knowers - Value Added Knowledge

There are values that guide our way of knowing; qualities that we must be able to experience in our Ways of finding out. These adverbs describe the nature of many methodologies that may have been brought in as tools for our research process. These tools must be:

empathic, validating, affirming, emancipatory, enabling, empowering, ethical, opening, expansive. There is and must be shared control over designing, the doing and the outcomes of any process used, and whatever we do together must then be a useful change tool that can be taken away and applied elsewhere - either for our internal Selves or for the workplace and others.

Empathy - We build trust together by learning and sharing together. We started as a co-learning group while we were developing our research focus. Certainly, the early meetings were not an empathic experience for every woman. Empathy is a quality we have to work at to build up and keep on working upon. Particularly effective in doing this, is the willingness of these women to carefully describe how life is for them in ‘their bag-of-skin’. We use words that will build bridges, weave understanding for connection.

Validating - We all want to feel accepted, acknowledged and valued; this is the outcome of validation. Like empathy it takes time to grow the experience of validation coming from a group; gradually growing from a place of uneasiness, to a place where we felt safe enough to take risks. So a safe haven took time to develop and certainly could not be rushed.

Affirming - The experiences of being validated and accepted, arise out of affirming. To be affirmed in my Way of seeing the world and my Way of being in the world, I need to feel accepted. Acceptance from a diverse group of successful professional women most of whom did not know each other previously, was the risk and the goal. The early co-learning and the long interviews, led to very affirming experiences. Especially at the first release of the women’s stories in print. There is huge risk-taking exhibited here, and at one and the same time, affirming that my Way of Working must be OK because my story is in here along with all the others.

Emancipatory - To experience emancipation is to know the knowing of past limitations being removed from our life. To know the expansiveness of seeing the horizon after knowing the restriction of seeing only walls around me is not just a metaphor. That is an embodied knowing: the difference between tension and relaxation.

The limitations we focus upon are particularly those we experience in the workplace. Given tools and strategies by colleagues, friends, other women, gives us a range of tools/options with which to remove restrictions for ourselves.
**Enabling** - I am enabled with a tool-kit full of tools/choices I know how to use and when. Enabling puts me in control. If I can't immediately think of which one of these tools/choices to use I can network and talk about my problem with another woman. I can even imagine what Grace, for example, may do in a similar situation. Is this a time she would 'duck' or is this a situation where she may plan a campaign and rally support for her to succeed at finding a solution they can all work with?

**Empowering** - To be at home with my own power, know it, feel it and use it. Involves enabling along with being in touch with spirit, the intuition, the 'acting as if' I know what to do all along.

**Ethical** - How do we 'do' ethics? By open agendas, designing processes together with no 'nasty' surprises, spreading our work ethics in the workplace by our own doing/modelling, checking in with all co-researchers before work is published, and ensuring the process continues building our safe, risk-taking environment.

**Shared control over design, process and outcomes** - This Way of doing arises from ethics. If the ethics is our philosophy, then our epistemology is expressed in our underpinning values of shared control. This process-oriented methodology also models and creates an heuristic inquiry as we inquire into our Ways of finding things out and our Ways of solving problems.

**Opening and Expansive** - For each of us, we leave the group each time with more than we originally brought with us. *This is why most members of the group want to meet once a year forever.* The activity of meeting feeds our minds, hearts and souls and equips us with quite a few useful strategies as well!

**Provide us with tools for change** - We are developing together "the art, skills and theory of interpretation which leads us to understand the significance of human actions, utterances, products and institutions" (Bullock et al 1988 380). We are discovering the hermeneutics which equips us with all of the preceding qualities, to operate not only successfully but fully and completely working in our women's Ways.

**The Research Process - Processing through Stories**

We have collected, never-ending stories. At some point I stop writing the stories down, but I believe we will never stop telling and living our stories.

Storytelling is the major research process as in listening to other women's stories and having our own stories listened to, we experience all those things listed earlier in this chapter -Our Ways of Knowing. The stories are *herstories* as they chronicle experiences and perceptions in these women's lives at this time.

They are not *herstories* in the full historical sense, as they only capture our perceptions at this time. We certainly contextualise them in our making of meaning and understanding drawn from them. But we don't map the roots of the stories fully, keeping the focus on the integration of our Selves and our workplaces.
The Research Process
Who’s Driving the Bus? - Steering with Collective Control

Doing it my way... and her way... and her way... may better describe the planning and doing. As the researcher I certainly take responsibility for the initial framing of the area of research. An invitation was extended from me to women, to personally inquire into our Ways of Working. Where and when we would meet was a collective decision. Occasionally meetings were planned at times I thought may not be helpful to my process, yet I went with them and found not one meeting could be called a waste of time.

Many times I wondered (particularly early in the process), if we would meet again. Meetings clearly provide nurture, knowledge and know-how... we know that now. As tour director I could only go where the group wanted to go. This did not mean a lack of direction. It simply ensured active response to current issues.

There were a few meetings where the agenda had been previously agreed, and when we met we realised that an agenda was no longer relevant. This happened particularly when a woman came with a burning issue and used the group to help her process it, look at it, focus upon it and go away with strategies to handle her situation.

Writing is my cart to drive. I write, and feedback many drafts to the group, receiving collective editing responses that not only check for accuracy of reporting, perception and interpretation, but also critique language use, structure and style. This is a scary experience each time. What if they want to throw it out says my "Madam Critic" sub-personality? What if they don't like it says my friendship-needy child within? More and more as the work goes on, the women respond to my writing and are themselves fascinated as am I, by the change in the writing as we go. I believed there is now too much writing to expect everyone to have read every word. (When the group met, to discuss this chapter, many assured me they read it assiduously.) The ethical understanding is that in order to veto, disagree, add or delete any part of the writings, each woman is herself responsible to let me know.

As we drew closer to the final document it was back to me driving the bus with 12- plus navigators. I just hoped we all had the same map, (which of course was questionable)!

Research Process - Learning as long and short term outcomes

Grace said at the second meeting (her first) that we should have clear agendas and stay with them. Jess was clear about wanting to learn management strategies. Julie wanted to make sure we used the time effectively. Everyone wanted to go away learning something from every meeting. So each activity had to have individual learning as a short-term goal.

The composite, multi-skilled and multi-layered learning that became the long-term outcome is a richness that we could not have foreseen.

More than the extant learnings, there are the access tools we have, to acquire others' learnings that mean the learning is indeed unlimited. Our Way of Knowing as collective knowledge is many-faceted in its richness and multi-skills. This knowledge that is created by a community of knowers, spreads like ripples in the pond. We have shown how it spreads beyond the research group members to
others in our workplaces. By modelling integrated whole-system strategies we
teach them to others. This may not happen so directly. In our own modelling
demonstration of other Ways of Being and Doing, the operational processing levels
are often subtle, intuitional.

**Ethical Congruence**

The research process has to be congruent with our ethics. That is, as stated:
her ethics, and her ethics... and her ethics... and my ethics. Being a group of
women from mixed backgrounds we did not come together with the same values,
yet we came to grow together. This is a Way of operating that carries our work
ethic with it. Our work ethic is not the Protestant (or "protest"-ant) work ethic. It
is we women who protest against everyday work ethics (or lack of them) that
de-value people and all the richness of character and culture people bring into the
workplace.

As previously mentioned Gilligan’s ‘ethic -of care’ and Porter’s ‘self-in-
relations’ are central to the work (Gilligan 1983 Porter 1991). I am adding to the
literature which explores the qualities of women’s ethics. I am particularly looking
at the impact of these ethics in the workplace and the transformations triggered
by applications.

Our re-Search process, as it grows and develops, by its very nature, has to
be seamless with these ethics. This is why we do the work. The valuing of people
in the workplace is an essential ethic and everything else springs from that. (As
identified in an earlier section of this chapter, “Value-Added Knowledge.”)

**An Elegant Ethical Outcome**

I have shown in this chapter the combination of many disciplines. Discipline
comes from a Greek root, meaning ‘to follow’. Our styles of researching, our Ways
of knowing follow many who have gone before us. We acknowledge the *lived*
experience of our mothers, their mothers’ mothers and all women who have gone
before.

By walking Our Ways of working, we are still finding new paths to walk
with other Changing women and watch and listen as they walk their new
pathWays. There are men we work alongside and live with who are facing and
forging new pathWays too. We want to show them that there are pathWays which
are different as an encouragement to find their own. We have already shown that
we can work in Ways that acknowledge and use the strengths and Ways of
working of many peoples (especially indigenous peoples throughout the planet).

As Changing Women (women who transform) we know there is not much
time left to make the changes which can save the earth with a reasonable quality
of life for our children and children’s children. Changing the Workplace to a
people-friendly place is not only a possibility, we are making it happen.
"We must not think of our powers to change the world merely my 'summing up' our numbers... Rather, we should focus upon our enormous Diversity within our Unity. We are merely four thousand, or forty thousand, or even forty million. We cannot think that way, because of the enormous variations among us. We are merely saying, one hundred thousand members within the same 'species.' We are more like a hundred thousand species. And the more we recognize and develop our unique Elemental power, the more powerfully we can communicate with each other and Act in the world.

Mary Daly 1992 414

In the growth of strength and effectiveness experienced in our research group, we want to tell the story to other Changing Women so that any woman can collect around her the same supportive group of friends that enabled us to grow. 
And this is only the beginning...

Summary

The purpose of this chapter articulated my thinking from which this research developed. The tale of The Peasant’s Wise Daughter led me into an exploration of the meanings inherent in the gender labels we all wear - masculine or feminine. I develop the notion that we all have access to these human qualities (rather than biological gender attributes).

I discuss Ways that we are creating and developing our use of language so that it sings our song, and truthfully (for each one) tell our epistemology. I use the women’s voices sporadically to source the development of our learning processes through multiple realities.

By enriching the thinking behind our actions, I am tracing the development of our learning community.
Chapter 6

What We Did

Growing the Research Process
Seeding, Composting, Harvesting

Overview

This chapter answers the question: What did you do together?

There are two sections to this chapter which serve to briefly describe the research process. First, there is an overview of the mechanics of the research with briefly-noted major events and turning points. Second, to understand the process in its linear time frame I give a note-form summary of the meetings. Finally, some brief comments on the process of spinning an inquiry spiral.

The reader may wish to refer to chapter 4 -the marked summary of the women when clarification of researchers' identities would assist.

The Doing of Our Research

We met for 15 research sessions, including 3 weekend residential. These took place over 4 years (October 1990 - September 1994).

The period of data gathering was most intense in the second and third years. The group continues as a support network and most definitely as a co-learning group. Friendships bond the 10 most active members of the group.

The first 2 meetings served to introduce the women, and at the second meeting we began to identify issues that were important to us. We also shared briefly our areas of skill and expertise. Women then identified specifically what they wanted to learn and from whom. This was not pre-determined. Once we heard the richness in the gathering, it was a matter of grab the opportunity while we are all together.

The following 3 meetings were specifically programmed workshops structured as co-learning situations. Different women with expertise in particular areas lead the participants.

After the first residential weekend, (the fifth meeting) stronger connections were made with genuine trust developing. The weekend also identified political considerations around power issues. As the prime researcher, the 'politicking' of the group was definitely on my agenda. I felt this was important for several reasons. Earlier, some participants considered work politics as 'game-playing' and as such did not want to be associated with such strategies. It became important to us all to name the issues called 'power games'. We clearly identified our own values (at meeting 6), thus enabling us to positively state our own work ethics. Tools to deal with value clashes were offered from each woman: "What do you do when your values conflict with workplace directions?"" We listened to stories of the strength of direct confrontation with follow-up skills such as Conflict Resolution and campaigns to strengthen and increase the 'early adopters' (Kotler & Roberto 1989).
Interviews, took around 3 hours each over 4 months. These interviews revealed intimate biographical and professional details along with individual concerns and goals. Such processes involved much risk-taking, and the timing of in-depth interviews taking place after many meetings, was crucial to enriching the information. Responses from interviews were circulated amongst the group only. If any participant was not totally comfortable about further exposure, this was discussed and resolved.

*Keeping Safe and (mostly) Comfortable - Ethics of This Research*

I constantly check with the women to ensure accuracy and obtain permission to work with their data. Holding the interviews was a precious trust. The content of the interviews could be abused, not by intent, but by misunderstanding. As women considered the implications of intimate details of their struggles at work being published, some views changed as the process developed. Pseudonyms were to be used, with well-disguised workplace environments.

Complete write-ups of the interviews were circulated for possible adjustments, deletions or additions.

The seventh meeting occurred after the interviews. Further sharing of each others’ information deepened connections, leading the group to plan another weekend meeting and a purely social dinner.

The dinner was a ‘hoot’. Eight women gathered in a public restaurant. No professional or work issues were examined at all. Talk was all about love life and personal relationships and learnings. It was hilarious, deeply touching, including grief and absurdities. In fact, the whole agony and ecstasy of being “messy, diffuse and alive” (Pinn 1991). There was no chance that night of women being invisible or not heard! The often-quoted hetero-reality of women in restaurants being overlooked, “not seen” by waiters, was not the case this time. There was a strength of presence with these women friends.

That strength of presence carried over to our next (second) weekend. On the Saturday morning we sat at a sidewalk cafe, after a wild swim in the surf on a deserted beach: eight women in a circle around a table in a small coastal town. The coffee shop owner-waiter greeted us with: “I heard there was a group of women in town. Are you a witches coven or what?”

The statement was shouted over the roar of motor bikes as a group of 20 or more male bikies, rode through the town, attracting no comment.

What was it that was noticeable about this bunch of changing women? We had just come from an early morning frolic on the wild, untouched beach. Dancing wild women, who ran naked laughing and screaming into the sparkling surf. Did we identify with the power of the sun and the sea? As friends together, we were enjoying our own company. It was a weekend away from the kids (and for the child-free women, away from their partners).
This weekend provided time for detailed sharing and analysis of the compiled interview data. Reflections on the research so far were focussed on each meeting and the interviews. These overview reflections follow the summary of each meeting.

The last few meetings often focussed upon the writings coming out after each chapter. There were times when we sat around with coloured pens and print-outs and I listened while they edited for accuracy, each woman reflecting her own truth.

Other times, new issues or work situations arose and were discussed. Every woman keeps coming to gain support for what she does in the workplace.

I greatly respect the privilege of women sharing intensive processes together. The final aim is that each woman willingly releases the whole document to publication, if not in total comfort, then with her well-considered permission.

So in the future... a lifelong commitment with women friends. As Mary Wollstonecraft observed:

"I like the word affection, because it signifies something habitual." Raymond 1986 1

Now - a short chronology

**Summaries of Meetings**

The following has been extracted from notes taken during the meeting by Virginia and usually one other woman. Occasionally, several women shared the task as well as hearing selections from audio recordings of whole meetings. Virginia’s summaries written soon after that meeting and the group reflections of the experience recorded at the ninth (second weekend) meeting, were also sources.

The group reflections appear as centre headings at the start and end of each meeting.

The titles given to each meeting arose from these group reflections and chart a course for the group dynamics.

This summary is skeletal as the essence is extracted to other chapters. However, I have ensured that trigger points are included here, to communicate a sense of the dynamics within the group. For this reason, I have placed this section in the main body of the text, rather than including it as an Appendix. I believe the process of group development and friendship growth, is observable in this summary.

I have noted in meta-dialogue format (right margin, avant-garde typeface), the significant observations.
An Invitation to Research Our Issues

Seven continuing research group members started together. Two others responded to this first invitation and chose not to be involved.

I gave a brief overview of the intent of the research, making it quite clear that the goal and means were open to input from all the participants.

The women started to share their stories, by a brief overview of their personal and professional background.

Why am I here? Why are all these women here?

The tone of the meeting was very tentative. Very much a feeling of "I'm not sure why I am here, or even if I want to be ". Gloria began the meeting very open and frank, revealing herself to unknown women in an attitude of trust and great enthusiasm about the proposed project.

Chris continued that frank tone. There was an interpretation made by another member of the group, that offended her sense of morality and did the opposite to celebrating her coming out as a lesbian in an unknown group of mostly hetero women.

The other women's stories followed, with a sense of insecurity in the telling, I believe. This is reflected in the group overview given below.

Valuing Women's Stories

Like others there, I loved hearing the women's stories. I knew the value of this deeply. I also knew that many of the women at the first meeting also had a great respect for women's stories. It seemed then, a strong and sound starting point.

Group Reflection in Overview
- hetero biased
- competitive
- voyeuristic
- two lesbians threatened by negative comment to one.
- respect for women's sharing
- checking out - Who is this mob? Why am I here?
- I dare them to work with me (from Chris feeling fearful)
- exposure

It was a tentative start that immediately raised issues. I was surprised when a further meeting was agreed. Chris suggested a full-day meeting, for more time to connect with each other. It took much discussion to commit to a date and place. Later meetings were much quicker in settling arrangements as we got to know our own levels of commitment.
Meeting 2
Electra's house
December 9 1991

Treading Water -
Forming and Norming

Eight women met, two of whom had not been at the first meeting. We noticed at the time that there were:
  2 from the commercial sector
  2 from unions/politics/community
  2 practising the 'new' social sciences
  2 emerging from traditional female occupations to demand more of life
Later details refined their differences much more, as will be seen in the next chapter.

I include this observation to note the process of categorising and connections we try to make at first meetings. Always looking for connection; always trying to decide how does this woman fit into what I know.

There was an overall tone of 'let's get down to business'. The tentativeness of the first meeting evaporated.

Content
There was quick reconnection with the women who had been to the first meeting. This served to inform the new women: who we were, where we worked, what were important issues to us.

Because it was the first meeting for Grace, Jess and Julie, they gave full background stories. This was a more exposing experience for them as they had not heard others' full introductions, and were mostly speaking to strangers.

Risk Taking
As the research went on, risk-taking became less of an issue. Intriguingly, in the first year, members reported coming to meetings feeling quite nervous, but still wanting to come. It was almost as if we didn't know what we were likely to uncover. We knew that some of the material we had already revealed, was difficult to confront, yet rewarding to do so. So we came back for more -again.

At the second meeting Virginia put forward the question (first raised during a car trip to the meeting): "Do management styles relate to childcare styles?" Here we were playing with the idea that if management approaches are patriarchal, do they then reflect their preferred parenting mode? Thus an authoritarian manager/parent might want to give all the orders; a nurturing one may "spoon-feed" their staff and a collaborative manager/parent may problem-solve with all parties equally participating and responsible for the solutions.

(This notion is discussed both by Senge 1990 and Covey 1990 in discussing management motivations and preferred styles.)
Researching On-the-Run

Discussions during trips to and from research meetings were very much a part of the process, and were not recorded in detail. However, the connections and the purpose for travelling together caused us to focus very quickly. The conversations that dealt with pressing issues while travelling were numerous and significant. Often we would summarise the discussion to other members at the meeting.

It became quite common for connections and research data collection to go on, whenever 2 or more were gathered together. Or via phone and fax. Connections would grow organically. If someone saw something another, may be interested in, the network was activated.

For me, it was rich and rewarding and demanding. It was like having 12 research assistants and 12 supervisors. From the start there was equal power in vetoing information, evaluation, re-shaping or adding to the research. I had a concern that there would be too much material to process usefully. There seemed to be so many issues to address; so much that needed to change!

After each woman was introduced and questions answered about her work area, the group brainstormed to identify issues that we wanted to inquire into. This also revealed what people were hoping to get from the group.

Issues and Outcomes for Inquiry

This list was developed collectively at the second meeting. I include it to show the range of subjects. These are the issues the co-researchers wanted to consider.

Personal / Professional Development
- sharing workable ideas
- managing the personal and political
- balancing ‘male and ‘female’ qualities
- career and life-style and children
- identifying strengths and weaknesses
- blocks and barriers
- personal skills
- fears and feelings
- handling conflict
- emotional and intellectual approaches
- handling and hearing the inner critic
- handling and hearing outer critics
- handling emotions for positive ends
- finding support
- finding the balance

Power & Leadership
- definitions
- feminism; balancing ‘male’ and ‘female’ energies in the workplace
- using power: for and against
- creating and putting in place visions, getting others to see them
- being allowed to be powerful
- ambition and self- fulfillment
- managing the political and personal
Management Skills
- team building
- feminist approaches
- handling conflict
- working with people
  - skills
  - ideas
  - process vs outcomes
- setting goals and evaluation
- training needs
- creating strategies for getting things done
- systems/structures approaches vs people approaches
- delegating
  - power
  - responsibility
  - tasks

Social Change
- social justice
- introducing a feminist approach
- challenging fundamental ideas; removing bricks in the walls
- achieving change
- working inside and outside structures; independence
- working out politics, positions, values
- language
- theory behind strategy

Co-Learning Agendas
After identifying the range of issues we wanted to address, women decided how to work on them. There were many offers: "I know about team building" and "I can do a workshop on our inner critic." So we started to program the next session.

It started to sound like a training session rather than a research group. I initially had a concern that I was staying inside a familiar comfort zone of leading and designing training and development sessions.

However, I felt that women learning together about issues that concerned them would also reveal how these issues impacted on them and call up a range of strategies for managing the addressed situations. In a research methodology document, written months before, it sounded perfect. This met the group's need for structure and purpose, and it met my intention of getting the group working together, while learning about each other.

Some of the group were quite vocal about ensuring that our time together was productive. There was definitely a feeling that we were all busy women, and the meta-message for me, was that each woman's time spent in the group, had to have a take-away outcome for her.

Reflections from Group in Overview:
Brief retelling of stories of women who had been to the first meeting, served to reconnect and introduce them to the 3 new women (Grace, Jess and Julie) These newcomers felt more exposed as they revealed more in depth to people they did not know yet.
In identifying areas of concern for research, connections of sharing and learning developed.

_Treading Water - Norming_

**Meeting 3**  
Jess's apartment  
February 2 1991

**Stripping Off**  

**Putting in Our Toes**  

**First Tentative Steps**

In the morning session Margaret led the group through a Psychosynthesis process for removing blocks and fears. The concept of shadow “sub-personalities’ was explored. Margaret and Virginia gave examples of two sub-personalities of theirs, _Super-Marg_ and _Madame Critic_. This activity extended after lunch as everyone found the experience valuable.

Electra brought some samples of her work: published articles about her clients. Electra spoke about _how_ her work is done. This involved journalist contacts and talking with clients to feel out their sense of direction. The purpose is often to raise the profile of her client to help their career along.

We planned the next meeting as a workshop weekend away. The focus was to be professional development with women in areas of expertise, agreeing to lead the group through structured learning situations.

_Story - Overcoming Self-Criticism_

Grace told a story of Jocelyn Scutt at a labor conference who felt a failure for not achieving the 10 goals she set herself for a particular meeting. In fact she achieved 6 out of the 10. She phoned her sister. “I'm a failure. I can't do it.” Her sister replied “OK, at your next meeting set your 10 and if you only get 8 at the next meeting, you'll have achieved 2 more than you planned for originally.”

This triggered a discussion between Margaret and Gloria on how men blame externals, women blame internal factors: men are in the jails, women get onto pills/psychiatric problems.

This meeting felt like there was a strong preference towards learning from each other. There was definite affirmation in this preference for co-learning, if we were all learning something together, (not just me learning “how do they do it”), then the long-term life of the group was more likely. This proved true.
Group Overview Reflection

The value of Margaret’s Psychosynthesis activity was re-affirmed. Electra’s area of expertise was received with fascination and learning about how a marketing woman with journalism skills, can publicise her clients.
We said what we wanted to learn and from whom. These sessions were planned for the weekend away.

This was a foundation meeting that prepared us for the weekend by starting us looking into the deeper issues.

It was the first work-applied activity that started to challenge.

There was a strong focus of wanting to learn from each other.

Women left the meeting feeling excited, and starting to process our own issues about our work.

At the end of the third meeting reflections on the day were written individually, on one large sheet of paper:
Focussing, clarifying, expanding, Renewing, Centering, bonding, Exploring deep down - slowly clambering up - and back up a little higher each time, Leaping over other people’s barriers.

Stripping Off - Putting in the First Toes - First Tentative Steps

Meeting 4

Friday night, Saturday Sunday 15-17 March 1991
Coastal wilderness

Into the white water rapids -

Where’s the canoe?

Risk - movement- adrenaline - terror.

Theme - careers and relationships
- our role in patriarchal organisations, our perceptions and others

Story - Staying in Character
Grace told a story of the Emperor and the nice person from the book: One Minute Manager (Blanchard and Johnson 1983 88-89): An emperor appointed a second in command and suggested that he do all the punishing and the emperor would do all the rewarding. After some time they talked:
The Emperor: Everyone likes me but I’m not getting things done.

Other: I’m getting things done but nobody likes me.

So the emperor decided to swap roles. Within a month the emperor was thrown out. People couldn’t cope with a nice person turning hard. They had noticed the other was ‘coming around’ and put him in as emperor.

Moral: First tough on the behaviour, then supportive of the person.
Grace likened this to people needing to know where they stand with you as a manager. She used the story to help her say at staff meetings, "this is what needs to be done and this is what I expect." Being firm from the start, means people know where you’re coming from.

She also pointed out that as she had been promoted within her original organisation, she had to re-educate people to deal with her now as the Union Negotiator, not as ‘Ms Nice person’ as she was previously known in her former department.

Spiralling discussion led us to target some very specific inquiry areas.

• What does it mean to work in a feminist way in organisations? How do we achieve a feminist outcome?

• How to keep our vision ...How to bring the vision in to reality... How to keep the vision when all around us are operating in a different world view (such as patriarchal).

• Power relationships that we need to change into feminist frameworks.

• One of the dilemmas of feminism - caretaker versus political (as feminists we take on a change-agent role but we are still being the main caretakers, and it is this that creates the dilemma).

• Identifying political strategies for change.

• Identifying critical issues/decisions (for us) in organisations and institutions we interact with... through our stories... and how we could deal with these differently... in a feminist way... in a political way balanced with the caretaker.

• How to create a political network/support base for effectiveness.

• Why are we doing what we are doing... and in the way that we do it?

I felt a political focus and understanding was essential for direct action and change agent work.

The weekend was very bonding, enabling the group to work together deeper than before.

We were expanding into being able to examine epistemology, the philosophy behind our knowledge. We were starting to ask why do we know what we know? Why is it important to us? E.g., this group had an epistemology that informs ethical and equitable work practices. To justify and inform our preference for fair practice, we have learned the theory of our knowledge. We have observed that co-operation is beneficial to the outcomes; that co-operation performs well over competition. We’ve learned this after naming our preference for co-operative work practices.
Groups Overview Reflections

Spending a weekend together away from our usual home and work responsibilities, enabled us to open up new ground. The time and focus allowed us to find our place in the group; until then we were all still unsure and tentative. We were now validating ourselves as individuals; accepting and valuing our differences. We experienced a definite move to political consciousness and an awareness that the social stuff (phenomenological and heuristic focus) was very important.

"I had been terrified at the first. I knew the tension of unknown personalities thrown together would occur, and also was open and "excited" (the other side of terrified) to that happening. I was taking personal and professional risks, and also trusting to the integrity of the women that were there, and my knowledge and experience of women working together."  
-from my journal

Clearly at this weekend the group became a forum for exploring individual and private issues, as well as work-based issues. And these were often one and the same.

Into the white water rapids -
Where's the canoe?
Risk - movement - adrenaline - terror.

Into the waist of the egg timer.

The narrow gorge.

Meeting 5:
Julie's house 11 May 1991

We reflected upon the close focus session that ended the weekend, and emphasised the importance of political awareness and action.

Previously we had named issues that were important to us. We had shared aspects of our work and built respect and trust. Now, we were able to stand back and look at the forces that drove these issues. Now, we were able to name the oppressions and in doing so understand a great deal more about the forces that drive our society. This was learned by applying what we knew about our own beliefs to extend our understanding of how we operate. From there we continued to share strategies to widen options.

This meeting was structured around our personal answers to questions about power, which also extracted statements about our values. The question had been adapted by Chris from an ACOSS (Australian Council of Social Services) publication.

Out of this meeting came the ontology of the group.
"The assumptions about existence underlying any conceptual scheme of any theory or system of ideas." ¹

¹ Flew 1983 256
We worked outside in Julie's garden, overlooking the mountains. One comment was that we lost focus working outside. While we enjoyed it, we never worked outside again.

These were thoughtful questions. They enabled us to focus on less-feeling issues.

It is like having to pass an exam. A reaction (pendulum swing) from the personal/emotional into head/rational work.

*Into the waist of the egg timer. The narrow gorge.*

Free-flow

Meeting 6

Margaret's house August 3 1991

Initial discussion of economic issues. How to link them with the personal issues?

The plan was to focus on language. What *really* happened was a lively discussion on economics. Our understanding of it was linked in with the previous meeting on power. Language then was seen as an element of the power structure.

Grace brought a pressing issue at work to the group for problem-solving. Stories around conflicts for Jess, Margaret, Isobel and Kate, were shared. Initial plans for the interview process begun. Grace told her story and found it clarifying to need to explain situations.

Grace found the group problem-solving very helpful and a key reason for her bringing this problem to the meeting.

Group Reflection Overview:
Good meeting, stimulating, full-on, really busy, fast, really flowed, all on same wave length, dealt with issues (from individuals) as a group, co-learning, trust, barriers down, integrated, *didn't need to test people out any more.*

Free-flow

Diving Deeper

Interviews:

Each woman was interviewed with questions based upon the interview schedule (Appendix A2). Most interviews took around 3 hours and were one-to-one. Jess was interviewed by myself and Julie. My interview was done by Julie and Margaret. The 2 women who had not yet met with the group were interviewed in person, not by correspondence.
The interviews gave me a highly privileged view of each woman's way of operating in the world and the essential values that formed those ways of being. I felt nervous too, that precious and sensitive information was in my flies. As I collected the data together and sent it out to the group in huge mailings, it was a relief and a further risk to reveal all.

Would I be revealing bits that women may not want revealed to others? I spoke and wrote about my concern for an ethical process that would leave everyone comfortable. Maybe I over-addressed it, as no-one really took it up directly although many commented on their appreciation of the ethical process. There was of course, some correction, refinement and clarification.

Overview Reflections on Interview Experience:
Valuing, gift from group process, incredible luxury, exposure, is what I say good enough? Process of interview OK, but the sharing with the group needed a revisit of trust. The interviews led to a deepening of trust in the group because everybody risked the exposure.

Diving Deeper

Taking stock

Meet and re-group

Round the campfire

Meeting 7:
Electra's house

All the interviews were completed by this meeting. The notes from the interviews were discussed and each woman was able to check my recording. During the meeting responses to particular questions in the interviews were shared, as well as reflections on the interview experience.

A commitment was made to two major events for 1992. A dinner meeting for no other purpose than to meet together socially, and a second weekend in April.

Overview Reflections on Meeting 7:
Relaxing, not challenged, low energy, what next? Sense of connection, but for social other than work, validation of working mother (hostess had been having difficulties with nanny and new born. She was supported by the group.) Trust, functional, organising, consolidation.

Taking stock - Meet and re-group - Round the campfire

Where to next?
A Banquet
February 1992

Dinner Meeting

The first meeting in 1992 was designed to be social only, so we met at a restaurant. Before the dinner meeting, the first batch of interview data was compiled and delivered. No reading was done there.

One woman came with relationship issues in crisis, as she was preparing to make a major decision around her choice of a partner. Because of her sharing these concerns, the entire evening was one of very powerful and intimate sharing. The stories were those of learnings arising from love, loss, ecstasies and agonies. It was the first time the major focus had been personal, rather than professional. As the woman who triggered it off, reflecting a few days later quipped, in laughter: "It was a night of extensive interrogation, called intimate sharing".

So the night was full of laughter, tears, sweet wine and vinegar: a significant event because of the nature and the depth of the stories told and listened to with great enthusiasm.

Although stories were not collected at this evening, it is included here as a turning point in group dynamics.

Meeting 9
coastal wilderness weekend
April 3 to Sunday 5th 1992

The last of the collective data arising from the interviews was given out. People were reading their own responses first. Later there were others.

What are we trying to do together?

We recall the story of inviting people into the group and the story of the making of the group.

Grace: named it a project on looking at learning issues and group activities.

Kate: When we started, I thought we were exploring research. It is now very much an ACTION project. I now see it as ongoing.

There was commitment made to group for the rest of life. (Chris voiced, all agreed)

Same time, same place next year!

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The later meetings were focussed around the writings, so specific issues were not put forward as agenda items. However, every meeting saw women coming together in a forum of safety and therefore brought her current issues, knowing she was going to have support in working through her concerns.
Meeting 10
Margaret's
24 July 1993

Reading and editing (then) Changing Women revised Introduction to thesis.

Meeting 11
Electra's house
19 September 1993

Reading and editing (then) Chapter 9 Atalanta Syndrome

Reflection on Research Process:

- Jess frustrated early because meetings were not so outcome oriented.
- Gloria is always happy with the process, ready to work with whatever comes up at the time.

There remains a strong sense of on-going co-learning. By doing things together. We share the task of team-building in an on-going way, re-creating it at every meeting, by connecting with where each woman is at, and addressing current issues for individuals and the group. Strong sense of value on seeing each others' skills in action.

Electra: voluntary work goes on... currently organising a charity auction for rape victims of Bosnia, as well as her continuing work on the executive of a major professional women's support group.

Jess is about to join the board of ACOSS (Australian Council for Social Services) a non-government regulating and advocacy group.

Electra tackled her issue around public speaking by working with causes that are important to her: e.g. women's portrayal in the media, she spoke on Radio National with Andrew Ollie for 40 minutes, then television, later addressing business on women's response to their advertising and advise improvements, as well as public forums.

When I've got a cause that's bigger than me, the personal gets out of the way, and I just do it.

Meeting 12
6 November 1993
Margaret's

Reflections and Writing Reviews

Meeting 13
Weekend 18-20 April
weekend residential
current individual issues - each woman in turn,
Margaret's ageing research development
discussion of power chapter writings in progress
Meeting 14
Ariadne's home
23 July 1994

Ariadne particularly wanted us to come to her house so that she could participate. Her second meeting. She has always kept active participating by correspondence and phone.

Jess went home that day with an 8-day-old baby. We visited her after the meeting.

Power chapter distributed before the meeting.

Meeting 15
at Gloria's home
September 17 1994

Margaret used the meeting as a focus group on her masters research:
attitudes to aging
Our group was one of her focus groups.

So our group transforms its focus and purpose, to enable another member to do research.

It's tricky deciding where to stop writing it all down. The connections, the learning, the women meeting goes on. At some point the writing stops!

End of meetings - so far...

To comment on this process of researching by lived experience, I co-opt Mary Daly's language to describe what we have done. The following is adapted from a statement by Daly which I freely apply to the phenomenon of our research. Those terms with capital letters are Daly's preference.

Notes on Spinning an Inquiry Spiral

The course of this discovery of our Ways is far from a 'straight line' in the usual sense; it is not 'linear', but Spiralling. Its moments of knowing are usually unpredictable. However there is implied a Sense of Direction. Thus, despite seeming deviations and sidetracks and peripheral excursions, seeming inconsistencies and changes of direction, there is a kind of Metastraight Line. That is in a wide view, a Fierce Focus to this inquiry track. Implied in our research project is a Ferocious Refusal to be sidetracked from the final Cause of the Voyager, that is, her indwelling, always unfolding goal or purpose, perceived as Ethics and attracting her to Act, to realize her own participation in Being.

*Inspired and misquoted (only a little) from Daly 1992*

What did we do? Mary Daly inspires me to describe our research process, using her terms which enrich and enliven our chronology.
Spiralling Process - rather than linear progress

I can report that we had this meeting before that one and I can say we dealt with formal learning before building confidence together. I also need to tell of the rather 'organic' growth of the work. And so it goes on. To work with process can mean abandoning an agreed agenda, and spending a whole group session focussing on one woman; working with her individual issues.

There were times we tended to 'spin around' an issue, returning to it again and again; as we did with the issue of power, watching how our views and understanding around it changed. Yet a particularly obvious issue like childcare, did not develop into a close focus issue for the whole group. Certainly, it was always there on the periphery and quite probably was mentioned at every meeting.

Group process requires special consideration - hence the women wanted to learn from each other first (trust develops); only then do we start to identify issues (focus of inquiry). Next, in exploring them I integrated processes offered by different group members to explore issues. I also deliberately built-in the weekends away - knowing these experiences offer opportunities which build connections, trust and friendship.

Do we plan the growth of friendship? Certainly we nurture it as a gardener will feed and water her plants. Eventually we are open and willing to admit the development of friendship which will affect and perchance change our lives; spiralling, spinning, dancing together. It takes us time to decide upon the music and type of dance. We may be cautious and unsure if we can trust to opening up parts of our inner-self to a stranger: we don't: we wait until they are friends. It takes us time to co-ordinate a dance where each one needs her own steps incorporated.

Unpredictable Moments of Knowing

"Virginia Woolf suggests that 'moments of being' are experiences of seeing beyond the 'cotton wool of everyday life' and understanding context.

Daly 1992 3

While we worked and played at researching together, there were times of re-cognition; of remembering what I knew, what each individual woman knew. While we worked and played at researching together we had 'moments of being' when we laughed/ cried or were angry together. These are indeed 'moments' of Gyn / affection (Daly 1978), when we were women being as women, among women, among men (Raymond 1986 232).

A Sense of Direction - our meta-straight line (to walk beside and talk about?)

We had our own sense of direction, even though it did not spin out as a straight thread. I held a strong belief / observation that (many) women work in Ways which enrich others workers, themselves and their workplaces. I observed a strong ethic around this enabling and emancipatory Way of being and knowing.

We also knew many workplaces were too rigid to serve this vision. As workplaces are social situations constructed by people, we also knew that the vision could be served by the workplace structure. Thus I looked for varieties of structure to consciously construct access to full possibilities of human potential.
These areas of concern were the reason for our Fierce Focus and subsequent Ferocious refusal to be sidetracked from our quest; - the quest of enabling all workers to access their full creativity; to transform workplaces into learning organisations where people have a fertile field to develop to their fullest human potential.

Start - Middle and End?

In our case, setting up a pre-determined timetable was an inappropriate way to go.

Did we 'make it up as we went along'? Yes, and this was done with awareness and consciousness of what has gone before. At each meeting then, the context defined the agenda in the following Way:

1. What had we done before that we wanted to develop?
2. Women's issues at the time.
3. Influences of other research projects and workplace investigations.
4. An ongoing consciousness of the process, both as group process and the learning process of each participant.
5. An ongoing awareness of the ethical goal to improve workplaces for all workers.

Review and Preview

In this chapter I briefly described the mechanics of the research - what we did and when. The summarised overview of all the meetings serve to give the framework which defines the space within which our research happens. Some notes on Spinning an Inquiry Spiral reflect upon the experience as an emerging phenomenon.

Now the frame is built, I go ahead and colour-in the picture with details about issues and concerns in following chapters.
Chapter 7

Why Do We Do What We Do?

'Whatever Being is, that formula
it dies as we pursue it past the word.
We have not asked the meaning but the use.
...
To sing of Being, its escaping wing,
to utter absence in a human chord
and recreate the meaning as we sing.

Wright 1973 26

Judith Wright quoted Wittgenstein at the beginning of her poem entitled
Lament for Passenger Pigeons:
"Don't ask for the meaning, ask for the use"

What's the Use?

"Work is living and living is work."

said Ariadne.

Ariadne's view expresses others' reasons for working, whether we are paid or not for the effort.

With this group of women, the motivation for working was intrinsically positive. We work primarily from economic compulsion yet the work itself is a vehicle for self-actualizing needs (Maslow 1954). Work to us means interacting with our community where we live, locally, nationally and globally (both voluntarily and/or for money). It is also important to experience creative expression and on-going learning and development.

Even though we work for money we often work for love without money (as well as working for love and money). All of the women are involved in voluntary activities for their community, for social change and/or politics. Sometimes these activities are so closely connected with our paid work that there exists

"... a blurred line between work and service."

(Ariadne again.)

We play out our ethics and integrity through this activity of service.

When our politics, our ethics and our job are compatible, there are many opportunities to exercise this service and to consecutively fulfill our own needs: ego, learning, creativity, all that contributes to self-actualization (Maslow 1954).

Chapter Overview

By looking at why we work, I am drawing out the Ways we play out our ethics; how we operate day-to-day with integrity. This part of our stories confronts a major issue, a core reason for our involvement in the research, listed in chapter 5, What does it mean to work in a feminist Way in organisations? How do we achieve a feminist outcome?

The information in this chapter is presented by interweaving individual women's stories with particular issues.
I begin by addressing the combined motivations for work, of financial and self-actualizing goals (Maslow 1954). Ariadne speaks eloquently here, describing her way of working; because she lives - she cares and so does her work.

Many individual expressions of how we work with integrity follow. Porter’s moral theory serves to explain our actions. Jess, Grace and Chris apply political influence; Electra and Ariadne use positions of power to raise consciousness as well as influence towards egalitarian politics. Further stories of integrity are told of specific work from all of the women.

This chapter closes with a snapshot highlighting the Ways we walk our paths: past, present and perceived future directions.

Working for Economic Necessity

The 12 women depend upon income from their jobs, to sustain themselves and in most cases, their families. There were brief times when partners supported a few of us through infant care. When Jess gave birth right at the end of this project, her own maternity leave was fully paid.

Margaret and Kay are the sole support for their families. For Kay this is a recent reality and to leave her violent marriage meant accepting a much poorer life-style, including a significant change in housing quality.

Chris shared the support of her blended family equally with her female partner. Gloria shares both the support and the structure of part-time work with her husband as they have always done, to facilitate childcare.

Electra shares financial responsibility for their family with her husband / business partner. Their nannies’ wages are very much a cost of doing business. This fact of paid childcare in order to earn a living is known to working mothers in Australia.

Kate, Virginia and Julie are the major breadwinners of their families while acknowledging the value of partners’ shared fiscal and childcare responsibility. Julie quite definitely, has had little childcare support.

But there was more than money involved in these women’s motivations for work. Self-actualization was always an important factor, and often a major consideration.

How we work for love, the sense of commitment to “making a difference” wherever we are, was mentioned often by the group. Going to work in itself holds a purpose greater to us, than working for financial reward alone.

Working with Integrity

Integrity is an essential element of our investigation into bringing our whole selves to work. ‘Integrity’ comes from the Latin for ‘wholeness’. We see this ‘wholeness’ used in the mathematical sense of integer - a whole number and in integration - including all aspects (Partridge 1983).
Genie Laborde describes in the Preface to her book *Influencing with Integrity*: the use of the term *integrity* is -

"...the difference between influence and manipulation... Once you know how to clarify your own desires (or outcomes...) you can use the same techniques to clarify the outcomes of any other party involved in the communication. Achieving that party's outcome while you achieve your own is what I call influencing with integrity."

Laborde 1987 xvii

The major ethical positions which determine how we act, are based on the following:

- Advocacy for what is fair and just
- A world where inter-relationship of all peoples and nature must be acknowledged.
- All people have a right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of what they have done and how I feel.
- Try not to judge others / be objective / nor inflict myself on others.
- Respect the ability of people to solve their own problems and offer support for that.
- Honour the other person and their world.

There was a range of expressions of how we individually worked with integrity, a value shared by all.

Isobel described what it meant to her:

... to be a really good practitioner, you have to be a practitioner of yourself first... You can't distinguish being excellent in your field and being really connected as a person.

Isobel is connecting who we are with what we do. To be able to operate as genuine and congruent people we need to know our selves, adds Electra:

*The idea of having a clear idea of self had become a very important issue for me, mainly because I've come to the realisation that I have very little idea of self, outside my working identity. This 'invisibility' in a largely male-dominated world, I suspect exists for other women, and is probably the major reason why so many of us feel we 'should have to' work today.*

Electra is naming the sense of identity of 'wholeness' we want and possibly need to get, from any work we do, both paid and voluntary. This is the other side of the cycle. Electra's previous experience as a successful advertising executive in big multi-national companies, is that she has had to deny part of herself to do it. She turned that around and took control of her own work by running her own business.

Feminist philosopher Elisabeth Porter states there is a need for character-narratives "where moral goodness is visible in practical, concrete examples, developed through habit" (Porter 1991 20). She goes on to explain her concept of human interdependence (which is also identified by Covey 1990). The first step in a moral identity is 'to know thyself'; only then can social interaction via our groups (families, society and work) lead to the 'authoritative being' - "a character who by her example, commands respect" (Porter 1991 21).
Porter's work is relevant to our project in two ways. First, by the collection of women's stories around our work, we have developed our own character-narratives. Second, our act of bringing our whole selves to work personifies and manifests Porters' human interdependence.

Inter-dependence as Covey maps it is the mature end of a continuum, where we move from initial dependence, to independence and finally - interdependence. We recognise our need for others and others' needs for ourselves. In an interdependent relationship we work together effectively. I get on with my own work independently and when needed will connect with you to develop team approaches where appropriate. I do not need you to do my work, but we need each other to do effective team work (concept displayed as diagram 7.1 on page 180).

This approach to the management of work teams contrasts with earlier authoritarian management such as the Taylorist technique where work was closely supervised and each task separated from the whole system (Taylor 1919). More of this in a later chapter.

What follows is a collection of expressions of integrity. There are many facets to the Ways we express our wholeness: various qualities emerge.

Electra is quite clear that her
... work needs to be honest and above board. I have to believe in what we are doing. If a client is offering a service which isn't good, we'll show them through market research, what is good service.

She acts as a professional advisory channel to influence ethical improvements in clients' services. Electra uses sound business practice to promote ethical results, simply give the customer what they need with open, clear agendas.

Ariadne is also working directly to improve ethical work practices. When asked why she did the Conflict Resolution work Ariadne answered:
It is my chosen work. No-one asked me. There are no shoulds. It is a very conscious choice and it chose me too. It had a personality called Ariadne. I can do that. I have management skills, good health, economic sufficiency. It feels normal to be doing it as if the tallest person in the room was asked to put a cup on a hook.

Ariadne's sense of wholeness / integrity feels very 'normal' in its expression through her work. It was Ariadne, after all who said that
Living is work and work is living"
My obsession is work. I don't hold a very narrow concept of work; rather the Hopi Indian idea of 'doing things' but not thinking of work as separate."

My work is purposeful and I can drop things to pick up a homeopathic remedy from the Doctor for one of my grandchildren. I can also switch off when all is clear. What sustains me is my work.
Work Colleagues

It is essential for Ariadne to

...not work with destructive people

Over the more than fifty years of working with many people, Ariadne has observed that

... I don't always insist that people are truthful around me. I prefer people that are open, frank and with an inner self confidence. I have worked happily with people who are working because they need the money. I prefer they deliver an agreed task on time, and I can work with someone who needs to be nurtured or nagged. I like to work with people with vision.

Ariadne’s work practice is as she describes it

...twenty-eight hours a day, nine days a week. It suits me. Not doing so creates tensions. I plan my work and use my diary and the telephone creatively. As far as time allows, I like to use the telephone to enrich working relationships.

With some concern that it may sound presumptuous, Ariadne was genuine and honest in the underlying beliefs affecting her way of working.

Anywhere in the world, what is happening is my responsibility and concern. It is as though I were an Earth mother and they are my kids. Such as my heartbreak for Iraqi kids (spoken during the Gulf war) and everybody else caught in a violence trap. The perpetrators are just as much part of the trap. It's my business. I cannot step aside. “For whom the bell tolls, the bell tolls for me” I still do the best I can.

Bringing Ethics into Politics - and Politics into Ethics

The wholeness involved in working with integrity, for this group also described how we work our ethics.

Jess has a work agenda which is politically motivated as she wants to integrate access to power and subsequent choices for all, through every part of society. In bringing about this access to any group or individual, she is working her Way of integrity.

Margaret sees a richness in her day-to-day work-life that she recognises is not the common experience. She integrates her love for nature into the richness of her daily life.

I feel very grateful for my work - the people and a life-style with nature around me. I like to contribute by offering sessions to people who are ready to work on themselves, but can’t afford it. There are also those who have plenty of money, but are very poor emotionally. I’d rather be poor financially.

Margaret regularly donates Psychosynthesis sessions to Virginia; this research project was often processed in this way.

Grace has people-oriented work practices based on her values of:

...treating others with respect while also treating myself with respect. I believe in being open to what other’s needs are and having honesty in communications. There needs to be equal opportunity for people to achieve what they want to achieve.
Which resonates with Jess’ views. These women integrate their work practices with others’ needs. This does not deny that they get their own needs met. They use their political power to operate as advocates for others. They must learn to survive, so that their work can thrive.

Kay has a sense of:

... if I am going to do a job, to do it well. It’s the Protestant work ethic from way back. I have to be true to my way of being in the world. To help students learn better, is true to my integrity and honesty of where I am.

Most issues discussed in meetings, were around integrity and ethics. It became so that if our workplace required us to operate in conflicting ways, then we brought the issue to the group. With clear common values of emancipatory and enabling work practices, we were able to learn from each other, different approaches, strategies and techniques for handling our different situations.

**Paid or Unpaid? · Work or Service?**

When we integrate our work with service, receiving monies becomes secondary - or does it? We all feed our families and our ideals don’t buy the groceries. The reality is, whatever our work, we have to support ourselves and others. There are few workers in Australia who have the privilege of choosing voluntary work for no income. So how do we walk that blurry line between work and service when it comes to money?

**Voluntary Work**

Ariadne’s work with the Conflict Resolution Network gives her no monetary reward. Her economic freedom to devote most of her professional time to her CR work, is sustained by her ongoing management efficiency and success of her small property company. During the economic recession in Australia in the 1990’s, she commented how she needed to devote more time on the property company, to ‘mind the firm’.

For ten years Julie has supported The Zig-Zag Railway - a group of steam train enthusiasts who have been very diligent and clever about getting government, community and tourist development moneys to develop and extend this nonprofit, short railway line. Her involvement was extensive (for the previous six years, as she was club secretary for 450 members). Additionally, she prepared many meals for weekend resident teams of 30 to 40 people, as well as being rostered for any task necessary to operate the railway. She is involved because of her husband’s enthusiasm. Says Julie:

I partly believe that money is not the only way of judging what is of value. That is something to do with my anglo-saxon Protestant work ethic that we all have a role to play in our community in voluntarily giving something of ourselves.

When a group of humans live together its more than just the economic interaction. There’s something about contributing in a nurturing way, contributing over and beyond the economic thing that is important for the quality of the life we have. And I think that should be offered without any notion of measuring it. That there is no compunction for people to contribute.

Chapter 7 – Virginia Kaufman Hall – Women Transforming the Workplace – 158
For Love not Money

When asked about voluntary activities, Kay mentioned school committees then spoke of looking after a lot of kids at home much of the time.

*It looked like the Youth Refuge at times. At one time we had eight living in the house. My kids bring home stray kids asking “could they stay, ’cause they can’t go home - Dad had kicked them out?” I’ve got a soft heart.*

For the love of it, Kay leads weekly dance classes -folk and circle dances. *I enjoy that so much, enjoy the sharing and people centering themselves. In my area of computing, students are so unaware of this stuff. I know for myself how much better you feel after a night’s dancing.*

As we discussed this “blurred line between work and service” we found that all of the women put time and energy into issues which are important to us. It became one of the major ethical themes of our findings.

Using Position to Support Others

Electra’s organisation did the marketing and PR for World Vision in 1991.

*We do this because we’re good at marketing and we wanted to do something.*

When asked *why* they do this Electra replied:

*... because we’re in a powerful position. A lot of people never see the sources of power and we have such easy access to it. So for very little effort we can make a big contribution. We appreciate that we’re very lucky and others aren’t so lucky so we feel a moral responsibility to help others. Not a huge one, otherwise we’d do more.*

With her partner, they decided to continuously use their skills and position of power via the media. In 1994, they were doing the marketing for Amnesty International (Australia).

Her work values are

*... people oriented. I never engage in anything denigrating to people.*

Electra has very clear ways of *selecting* her own clients. It is essential that

*... people are honest, and that we like them or we can’t market them.*

Isobel had a period of not *needing* to work for economic survival when her children were very little. Then her husband was the major income earner and like Ariadne, she had a community commitment to her work. As CEO of a national human resource company, she worked for love more than for the stipend she received which was calculated on a percentage of national sales of training materials. This commitment arises from a life’s work view, similar to Ariadne’s...

*I see so many people who need the HR (human resource) skills, so it’s a case of whatever I can do to get the skills out there.*
Whatever she could do, involved steering the ship through unchartered waters, as she tried to introduce a more business-oriented basis for a community organisation that had grown like topsy.

*Much of the community and restructuring work for the HR company is really unpaid. I put in about 60 hours a month. It’s an incredibly responsible job, as I’m responsible for the financial side as well. ...It’s one of those jobs where when you get someone who is competent and able to do the task, often what occurs is that person is left to almost become a bottle-neck for the organisation.*

Isobel resigned after nearly 2 years in the job. The reader will find more on this part of the story in chapter 9 on Power.

*Spreading People Skills*

Isobel has a strong ethical commitment to spreading communication skills which increase self-confidence and open up choices to people. That commitment kept her in there when she found out there was more hard work than kudos.

*Originally there was some status attached to the job, (of CEO) until you (do it and) realise it’s just a lot of hard work. You get higher up the ladder and the harder the work is. But there are rewards from that; there’s rewards like I can write for a parenting magazine because I’m CEO of a company running parenting courses. So there are benefits like that for me - allowing me to get into areas that I might not be able to under different circumstances.*

When Isobel did not need to work, she said that she could be more selective about structures within which she worked. She feels she has more freedom in how she interacts with people within an organisation that she consults in or teaches on a part-time/casual basis. Isobel resigned her CEO position, because of threatened legal action from a member of her committee. Isobel made it quite clear that it was because of her economic independence from that position, that she could decide

... *not to take this kind of shit from him anymore*.

While she feels she resigned with her integrity intact, the recognition that she left the management committee of an association she has loved and nurtured over many years took some adjustment; not the least of which was coping with a perceived personal sense of failure. She is, as she described herself, a powerful woman and that this in itself attracted the flak she received.

Ironically, not long after this Isobel’s husband was re-trenched. She increased her teaching and as we complete this research, she is working full-time in a major tertiary training college.

*Influencing with Integrity*

Chris, as a political player in social change work, always had an eye open for opportunities to bring about change. There is no clear differentiation between her paid position and her voluntary involvements on committees as she does not separate her paid work from what she sees needs to be done.
A lot of my voluntary work has been mixed in with my paid work. A lot of it is what I've done extra to make the job I'm doing better.

Not related to my paid work, is developing women's services. More recently I've been a volunteer on a community management committee.

Her voluntary efforts usually link with her work. Such as working on state-wide bodies such as the Social Welfare Union, women's services and youth. Her experience and knowledge of funding requirements, was always useful to these agencies.

I've had the cover of my job always to do that, for support and legitimacy.

A Woman Active in Politics

Politics is a major core of Chris' work to develop support for areas of social need. She is a strong advocate who has an astute understanding of power processes and political reality.

My political work has always been through my work. They go together for me. That's why I have been always overworked. I didn't see it as overwork. I just saw it as the nature of change and my commitment to social change, that I had to be heavily involved in creating frameworks so that decisions could happen and people would listen.

Feminist Work Ethics

Chris has slowly and surely, strengthened her 'coming-out' as a lesbian, working for social change for all oppressed peoples. I'm clearly feminist about my ethics and values, more than I used to be. I'm much more lesbian than I used to be. I'm very conscious about gender bias in teaching and management interactions at work. I'm always trying to do that in such a way that it doesn't put the other down. I'm happy to be the advocate, activist, the one expected to do things, but want it in a spirit of participation.

Her management style is one that models and encourages participation from all involved. It is not unusual for her to organise specific team-building sessions, and include students as organisers, or participants.

I'm very participatory in my team, above and with me. I'm working hard at making meetings, classrooms, as participatory as possible. My biggest value is the commitment to empowering others as a teacher, feminist and community worker.

Such an ethical base is essential for Chris. If any of these are not operating she is

...very very anxious, almost immobilized, then I get sick....

Because a lot of these things are important, I have to work hard at it and I get tired. I wish they came easily for me. It's important I am challenged in that way.
Political Activists

I expected from the start, that because we were in a group of social activists with a commitment to integrity and equity, we would be dealing with politically active women. Chris, Grace and Jess were deliberately included to provide their direct political action perspective. When these three eventually met (at the fourth meeting - the first weekend away) there was a shift from structured co-learning sessions to directly focussing on political issues and how they affect us at work. This was initiated at the following meeting where we questioned our own beliefs about power.

Teaching the 'Unteachable'

In England, Gloria taught drawing and ceramics to mothers and children and proudly tells the story of successfully teaching a fourteen-year-old boy in North London, who had been wiped off as 'unteachable'. Gloria has a strong commitment to working with disadvantaged learners and sharing herself genuinely with them.

Talking with Gloria is to hear a strong Australian bush accent and lots of laughter. It is easy to recognise how many people of diverse backgrounds would feel comfortable with her. She is a very supportive person, and has the knowledge and wisdom to let go as people start to feel their own strength.

All Children are My Responsibility

Gloria supports 2 children in an overseas foster parents plan, a girl in India and a boy in Bolivia to whom she writes letters and gets responses.

I try to be very sensitive to what is appropriate in communications with them. I keep in mind their third world experience from the perspective of my affluent life compared with theirs.

I believe deep down that we are all utterly lonely even though I am an optimist and rarely feel the loneliness. I get an enormous satisfaction out of sharing with people. There's a quote in the Bible "if you give them one drop of water you give it to Me". That is linked up with Mother Theresa's thing of God being in everybody. I wanted to embrace it and that's why I did lifeline telephone counselling.

Ariadne has the same perspective:

What happens to children in Somalia is just as much my responsibility as my own family.

Teaching as if People Matter

An important aspect of Gloria's teaching is her use of reflection with students, even younger ones in their later teenage years. She uses reflection as a learning tool, structuring time in sessions for quiet reflection and discussion on "what did you learn from this?" A learning strategy stressed by Kolb (1984) and Mezirow (1991) and other educators advocating adult learning principles.

My values are tied up with adult learning principles. To me the person is vital and the student must effect the learning rather than have it imposed upon them. This encourages their own confidence, choices and power.
If the environment is not conducive to this style of operating Gloria starts agitating with students and colleagues. As another Changing Woman, Gloria will advocate to improve the learning situations for oppressed groups.

I've never hung back from doing that. I like to get everybody sharing. I use student evaluations often and really like doing so, even though I can get kicked in the teeth by some of them every time.

Solving Problems Together

I really love it when students and teachers sort out problems together. Often I'll get up teachers' noses (and students' noses too). Because dealing with issues openly is often strange for students and teachers to do together, but it is vital if real confidence and personal power are to grow in the learning environment. It's important to deal with conflicts in open and positive ways.

Margaret, Julie, Virginia and Kate, are the major income supporters for their families. Margaret, as a sole parent does this alone, while the other three, have double income situations at varying levels of assistance from the other partner.

Margaret was the one who said she had no choice about interfering to create change. When Margaret hears anyone challenging or struggling with situations, she questions - starting a process that may offer different ways of viewing the situation.

She describes her work as being a stress therapist. Her work is in a major city psychiatric clinic where she operates as a behavioural therapist and stress management consultant.

I get referrals from psychiatrists. I work on a one-to-one basis. I usually see people 3 or 4 times. Which is very different to the way I work in my practice. However what I do is apply the principles of psychosynthesis to my behavioural work which I find very inadequate but suits a certain type of person who is not willing to delve any deeper. A lot of people aren't.

I work a lot with obsessive-compulsive behaviour and the psychiatrists... often hand me cases where they can't do anymore. saying: "Give it a go. See what you can do with her". They don't know quite what I do. They don't realise I use my other work. I have to keep that really mum, because I am working in a very traditional environment.

But I really enjoy that. It's like I'm *infiltrating* in a way.

One woman referred to me, had an intense fear of thunderstorms to the extent it controlled her whole life. I was working with her in a psychosynthesis way. I actually said to her, behaviouralist approaches won't work. You need to delve deeper and she was willing to work deeper and in 6 weeks she was walking out in thunderstorms. She's had this phobia for 10 years.
I told the psychiatrist. “I worked with her inner-child.” I really quite enjoyed telling him because he would take years to work on the behavioural model just with the symptoms. It struck home to me how ineffective a lot of their work is but they are very very protective of it.

It seems that this group of “change agents”, consciously work toward collecting together the ground-swell of change-thinking, which is more effective than the numbers-only element of the critical mass. When a shift in thinking occurs it starts to change established practice and recognition of social and organisational possibilities for relieving oppression (Kotler and Roberto 1989).

Therapy to Go

One outstanding quality of Margaret’s style of therapy, is her ability to hand over control to the client. All techniques she employs can be taken away and used by her clients. That is, I can take the technique home and use it for myself, or explore relationships with family and friends by its use. There is no holding control over practices.

My private clients are mostly middle class, professionals, self-motivated, mostly women and more spiritually orientated. At the clinic my clients are across the board. Unemployed, professionals, pensioners, an even male/female mix, top management in business, men and women. All sorts of fields, from acting, creative, business; a wide variety. They come via GPs or psychiatrists to me. So that’s why there’s such a wide variety.

Margaret is very aware of the richness in her life and the things that are very precious to her.

I feel I have an abundance. I also want to see how other people live. Working with all sorts of people has added tremendously to my life.

Margaret has been a friend and support to the researcher for over 19 years. So I wanted her support in this venture too. Apart from some workshop planning together, we have not worked professionally together. Knowing the extent of her psychosynthesis skills and the value of that for processing through issues, I feel her inclusion in the group has proved most valuable.

Building Group Trust by Learning Together

Early in the life of the group, Margaret was called upon by group members to lead workshop sessions for co-learning and personally process work issues. This was very effective in providing early rewards to group members and supported a structured learning forum for the sharing of issues and concerns with the resulting development of trust.
Kate’s Ethical Dilemmas

Kate expects medical practitioners to conduct themselves professionally.

I get angry if colleagues don’t practice what I see as good medicine. I’m angry if I see overcharging especially if I’ve referred. It’s an issue for me that people may not be able to get services if they’ve not paid for them. It’s a personal conflict to charge people or just take the Medicare rebate.

It’s a problem to me dealing with issues where my morality and beliefs are involved. Its hard to be impartial when I may have an argument with another colleague over something like a young patient wanting to be sterilised and I have to fight for them.

Being Fair and Responsive Takes Time

Kate needs

...adequate time to deal with people’s problems in a rush-free manner. It’s important for me to try to be available for urgent problems. I feel very upset if I haven’t been available when they needed me urgently. Where a practice patient feels they have an urgent problem, I like to deal with it immediately. My partner feels differently: if she’s full up, she’s full up. So very often I won’t be practicing in a way I want to practice. If someone says they’re urgent, I want to see them; even if there is conflict of keeping others waiting.

Working with Expert Power

Kate is acutely aware that people see their doctor as someone who can make their medical decisions for them. Further, some patients are greatly influenced by their doctor, in making personal decisions. She does not like being put into this position and tries to give people enough information so they can make their own decisions.

I’ve realised a practitioner can influence personal decisions of patients. I became very aware of this when I saw whatever form of contraception I used, I had a big demand for.

I’m occasionally aware of someone’s morality or ethics if it’s affecting other people. I’m mostly accepting of people’s personal value’s decisions. Occasionally I’ve dealt with someone I feel is really bad. That’s hard.

During the writing-up phase of the research Kate and Margaret were the ones who were most disturbed by ‘jargon’ language such as the use of ‘epistemology’ or ‘ontology’. This is interesting when the language of medicos is experienced as befogging to most of us. For Kate, it is essential that people be given information about themselves in words they can understand. This is what she does in her practice. She is asking only that the same standards are applied to her understanding, and that I as the researcher, use words that she can understand.

Grace noted we were experiencing the phenomenon of changing paradigms as reported by Thomas Kuhn (1970).
...which is about changing paradigms of theory and bodies of thought. How in any system the framework is there to protect the system and if there is a new idea it is argued against. And it’s not until there is a body of thought around a new idea that it has any impact on the old order.

Margaret was able to connect this idea with her experience of quietly going along with her Ways of working, that are markedly different to the traditional behaviouralist approaches. She described how she saw the Way she worked in the organisation. It takes time to build up acceptance to new ideas. While wanting to work with these different Ways then, we quietly prove their effectiveness to add to the evidence. Margaret explains...

I used to fight it and get so upset and furious and it just didn’t work. So what I just recognised I do is go quietly about working in the way I need to work and I know they say “Look I don’t know what you do but whatever you do works”. They actually say that to me, the psychiatrists. And I just keep mum about it. It’s very patriarchal and patronising.

I really feel that they actually see me as a colleague. I’ve spent 8 years calling them by their first name which is a bit jarring for them. But I feel very comfortable there now. It’s like me keeping true to myself and working quietly. No point in trying to tell them.

It was very important for me to say to that psychiatrist (and he asked me) about what is happening with the woman with the thunderstorm phobia. When I said, “by the way I didn’t just work behaviourally I worked with the inner child.” He scratched his head, and was shaking his head looking at the ground. I just walked off.

Margaret referred to the importance of her learning that it wasn’t safe to let them know how she was working. She just quietly went on working in her Way. Even though it is known at the clinic that she “cracks” long-term difficult cases, the psychiatrists do not inquire into what she does. Yet clearly they know it is ‘something different’ to what they do.

Isobel noted

That’s a very feminine way of working, to do what you do and do it quietly whereas a man would go around saying how wonderful he is.

And what a missed opportunity! To have someone in an organisation who can solve difficult problems yet the processes she uses do not fit the dominant paradigm. So, rather than inquiring into the methods, they are ignored. Some organisations, perhaps more often in big business than the more traditional medical organisation, can expand the model to permit lateral thinking and alternate problem-solving strategies; such as Sculley’s Odyssey story when he was CEO of Apple Computers (Sculley 1987).
Fairness and Justice

What drives Jess are the values of fairness and justice. While in Gloria's work similar concerns lead to empowering others with skills and knowledge, Jess takes a more directly political approach, as does Grace.

So it is essential for Jess' work environment to be in a political arena and be a positive people-climate.

The physical environment doesn’t worry me very much. Everyone else at work thinks its the pits.

A year after this statement, Jess moved her offices to a much more pleasant environment. She notices the difference in her workers and herself. It is an improvement to enjoy where one works.

She likes her colleagues to be

... supportive, positive, hard working, committed and competent.

During the research, Jess constantly worked at Ways to improve team spirit with her staff. She tried more than once to bring in a training consultant for team-development activities. Finally, she convinced her workers to try it out. Afterwards all were quite positive about the training, although one staff member did not attend.

Jess has worked consistently to develop a co-operative climate and feels after 2 years she started to break through. The team works well together now.

Jess' Needs and Staff Team Needs

It is essential for Jess to have

... independence and autonomy in my work.

This does not always sit comfortably with her preference for co-operative styles of team working. As co-ordinator of a co-operative organisation and answerable to a management committee, Jess manages to operate both collaboratively and hold her own independence and autonomy at work using her analytical and reflective style. Many of her concerns have been around other's perceptions of this: the nitty-gritty details of communicating information to co-workers and ethically influencing the management committee with campaign strategies. Jess' position must be seen as being effective politically, therefore campaign strategies are essential to keep constantly high on the agenda.

Jess likes her team to operate with

... reasonableness from people who act with consideration and respect for one another with logic and rationality.

If this is not so she is at first

... really discouraged and disappointed, then I find solutions.

Jess is an effective manager with a fine balance between administration skills and people-awareness. She is outstanding at organizing procedures and combines this with creativity such as in designing campaigns which is her particular strength. She is open to learning skills that will help her in her goals; such as training herself in media presentation, radio interviews, press release preparation, etc. She has particularly well-honed writing skills.

I am quite quick and logical and so I can't understand why others can't see the logical way to go. I can see it's not others' world view.
And Jess is opening more and more to listening and learning from others. Electra formed a small professional group to look at different styles of management. Jess and her partner (who as stated earlier, worked for Greenpeace) was invited to join. Similar to our research group, this is a particularly enjoyable way for Jess to learn. These activities include talking to others about other ways of getting things done, sharing current reading that is found useful, and having a forum for addressing current concerns.

**Politically Promoting Social Change**

Grace at 33, was a full-time union official, the Branch Secretary of a large public union. This is a job that is in the area of not only managing social change, but actively promoting it.

*We are trying to give people a tiny bit of control over their lives in the workplace. It is both incredibly rewarding and totally frustrating. It involves work with different people. My work is very demanding and it defines a huge part of how I feel.*

**Work**

As previously reported, Grace worked with Jess 11 years ago in a Rape Crisis Centre and working on women's issues generally. Most of her current voluntary work is still in the area of women's concerns. She participates on government bodies monitoring activities directed toward women's status.

*My areas of interest focus upon women's employment because that makes the greatest difference in women's economic security and independence. Most of my attention on advisory bodies is directed at improving women's access to the workforce. It takes a great deal of time; more than attending formal meetings. Advisory bodies can be frustrating but really I have found it mostly satisfying.*

Like Chris, Grace finds that her committee work and her paid work overlap and feed upon each other. Also like Chris, she can be in the right place at the right time, to advocate and provide information on women's needs for services, training, union representation and other like situations.

**Working with Women**

Grace does this extra voluntary work because she likes to be in a committed group of women working together.

*It can take longer getting somewhere but its much more consultative as a group and we aim to make consensus decisions.*

I'd known of, and admired Grace's work for many years. I thought of Grace when I pondered around the question, 'what women's work strategies do I want to know more about?' I had often listened to her talk about an issue she was dealing with, and would think. "I want to know more about how she handled that."

**People - the First Priority**

The psychological environment of the workplace is more important to Grace than the physical environment.
People are the most important aspect of the professional environment. If the people climate is ratshit, then the physical environment doesn't work. The environment needs to be ordered so that it flows with the people and doesn't get in the way.

Because of this emphasis on people, it is essential for Grace to have a team approach with colleagues.

I have a desire and capacity for people to work together with honesty. They need to be competent at what they do and own their own responsibilities so that they can communicate between colleagues: be able to say when something is going wrong or right for them; and open to new learning experiences. In particular a preparedness to be open to new ideas, not rigidly stuck in one way of thinking. This can take a lot of energy and hold back a whole organisation.

Her preferred work practices also reflect the people emphasis.

I prefer an open style of work where people have clear responsibilities and tasks and can look to colleagues for assistance and pitch in. There needs to be good communication about the goals of the organisation, how they're being achieved and the individuals in it.

Such people-oriented work practices are based on Grace's values of treating others with respect and treating myself with respect; being open to what others' needs are; and honesty in communications. There needs to be equal opportunity for people to achieve what they want to achieve.

If Grace finds herself in a situation where the people-oriented maxim is not working well, she has divided her response into past and current ways of operating.

At first I had a difficult group of staff who were politically opposed to me. Quite frankly, it was a waste of time to try to introduce more open ways of work. This meant that in the past I avoided issues of work practices and people's way of operating in an organisation as I felt that had little control over it. Now I try to identify the problem, talk with people and try to find out whose problem or responsibility it is. I'm letting go of my responsibility for it all.

**Learnings from the Group**

This change came about by Grace taking the opportunity to build a team around the people I can work with well. This came from my own experiences, learning and working with this research group and finding how others deal with their problems.

This was a benefit felt by all those who regularly came to group meetings. A climate was developed where any woman could bring up an immediate issue, have it listened to, and with creative support, develop strategies for management. She would then go away well equipped to deal with the problem.
As the lead-researcher, I critically analysed our collected materials and often questioned myself: do I look for the good bits - the ethical stories in this case? The answer is yes I do. I investigated their Ways of working, so that I could find out ‘HOW’ they practice their ethics in a variety of workplace situations. My ethics too were scrutinised by the group.

*My ethics are based on “do no harm to people”; everyone is of value and everyone is capable of valuable input. For me it is important that work structures and organisations are structured to facilitate that treasure in people. I need to believe in the ethics of the organisation I work for.*

*If any of these are not operating I get migraines or get sick. The migraines are saying ‘stop: you are going the wrong way’ In this way I’ll brick-wall myself.*

**How We Tread Our Paths:**

To conclude this chapter I include a reflection for the group, in the form of a metaphor for each woman’s path, summarising her Ways of working. Final adjustments of changes in position and circumstance are included at this point.

**Gloria** walks a garden path which winds around many different types of plants that are nurtured with care and concern, time and patience. She particularly nurtures the weaker plants (people) in her courses to assist the disadvantaged to learn work skills. She sees some beauty in all. Her acceptance that this person is wherever they are at, seems boundless in my observations. Her art is now providing her with creative expression and income as she paints scarves, ties and hangings for sale at various markets.

**Julie’s path is more of a zigzag.** Her career moved from administration to education and on to managing a tertiary education department. Julie has a life-long commitment to gender equity in education. As an executive administrator, she strives to create participatory work practices in her oasis-office within a large patriarchal bureaucracy. As well as the education and administration work focus, Julie’s voluntary work continues with the non-profit Zig-Zag railway. . . .

**Ariadne**, has told us how her work chose her and that...

*...living is work and work is living.*

Her path now, is one of an elder. She joked about being the old wise woman of the group, the only grandmother. Ariadne is an application of both definitions of the term *matriarch* given by the Macquarie Dictionary at the start of Susan Mitchell’s (1987) book where she is described as a “peace-worker and businesswoman”.

“**matriarch** 1. A woman holding a position of leadership in a family or tribe.

2. A woman who dominates any group or field of activity.”

Ariadne does this in two major Ways: by direct action often in setting up mechanisms through which effective work towards peace can be done. Also, by influence - by being herself, talking with people and modelling effective Ways of changing our social and work structures.
Kay treads a non-traditional path for women in our society, carving footsteps in stone. The rocky path is the male-dominated area of computer technology. The hardness of that role is reflected in the past violence experienced in her home situation. She is breaking through and the going is hard, exhausting and rich with learning for her. As she describes in her paper, The Gentle Way (1990) she takes a gentle approach to teaching her style of information technology.

_The key to better Informations Systems education is through developing human potential. The rate of change in information technology outstrips human endeavour to incorporate this change in new system development. If we are going to educate systems designers and analysts to cope with the rate of change, then there is a need to encourage inventiveness and creativity within the existing curricula._

_Adopting a 'soft systems' approach to learning about information systems, participating in action research and viewing the learning process as a social system which admits to the whole person, not just their intellectual needs, are ways of encouraging inventiveness within the existing system._

Grace accredits the roots of her political activity to her father who installed the "fair-go" principle and taught Grace to "never let the bastards get away with it". He never wanted any of his 4 children to forget or deny a strong working class alignment. So Grace's path is along a cliff edge, where she has effectively learnt to develop her support before leading out to risky places. She is a risk-taker, and a fast learner; essential attributes for a political career. She leaps off the cliff only after building a strong network of support and checking all the ropes, harnesses and carrabineas. In the final year Grace left her union position, returning to the role of public servant, and now looks forward to enjoying maternity leave.

Jess too, comes with a heritage of workers and battlers combined with her mother's strong commitment to education. She has walked with the power-makers in parliament and now builds bridges between government policy makers, service providers and service users. As she continues designing and building the path before her, she battles with inner dragons of ill-health and it's subsequent sapping of strength. She goes out to do battle, such as running two major campaigns at a time, then her body causes her to retreat. Perhaps this is a fail-safe, a way of dealing with fear of success?

In the last years of our project, Jess' health improved dramatically. At the same time her personal angst over work situations declined. She seems to be far less disturbed by workers' criticism and indeed experiences much less conflict and stress as her team now works in more collaborative Ways. Jess too, left her position to spend more time with her baby and at the same time, develop consultancies where she advises and lobbies for childcare, environment and other issues.

Electra's path has led her to cross the world, spanning her current life with her very large family. As a player in the corporate field, and now operating more independently in her public relations partnership she has like Jess, learned where to influence the power players to make the differences that are important to her.
Electra does not like to be identified as a feminist. As a skilled player in the media she knows the walls that the 'F' word can create for some people. Electra says instead that she works for the women's movement.

Isobel weaves her path crisscrossing corporate training, government-funded adult training and community parent training support. Driven by her commitment to get the skills out there, she consciously works via a human-centred approach to improving our society. Her premise is that if people have the communication and problem-solving skills, they will no longer need to dump their bags of shit. Not too different to Ariadne's peace work really (or to any of the rest of us!).

Virginia at 3 years old would play with her dolls by teaching them. My path has been one of life-long learning, co-learning and teaching. We teach best what we most need to learn. I enjoy contact with students, often energised by learning interactions. I want my path now to inter-relate between facilitating learning, research and writing. This may be through researching with public participation so that the 'people's' voice can feed into policy making. My path is becoming more integrated with inner and outer energies.

Kate too, finds her path turning to teaching and lately more to learning. As these writings come to a close, she has just started a Masters degree, newly designed for General Practitioners in Psychology, with a strong emphasis on pragmatic applications such as counselling in the surgery. She still wants to weave stronger links with women in medicine. Kate walks a high ridge bush track. She can see the constructions of the medical establishment she works within on one side. Along the track she meets women practitioners and works at strengthening their networks. On the other side, she works at building connections with the community, the users of the medical system.

Margaret strikes out now more into her own practice. With a move to the city she is now able to build up more clientele. On of the rocky paths she meets is the effect upon her practice of not being within the Medicare system as an alternative practitioner. Fall back income earners like casual nursing, as well as leading occasional workshops, keeps her afloat.

Chris seems to walk many paths all at once! She has tread the direct political action path somewhat less often over recent years. She eases people through change by teaching, leading and applying direct action in her community; for example immediate support was offered by Chris and a few other neighbours for an elderly couple whose uninsured house burnt down. As well as fund raising, she negotiated with a builder who wants to break into the local market, to build a home (without profit) as well as negotiating with a range of major suppliers to donate materials.

Chris' path is very much guided by her sense of moral justice. If she sees a wrong, a social injustice in front of her, she cannot, will not turn away. She must do something that makes a difference. In a word that is often used by others, her actions inspire others to similarly strive. 'Inspire' quite literally as sparking the inner spirit to burn brighter and lead to outer community activism.
These ‘snapshot pictures’ serve to offer a view of where we leave our research with these women. The next chapter tells what the research experience meant to each of these women.

“Everything we do is a structural dance in the choreography of coexistence... a source for understanding our human-ness. We have delved into social dynamics which points up a basic ontological feature of our human condition that is no longer a mere assumption, that is, we have only the world that we bring forth with others, and only love helps us bring it forth.”

Maturana and Varela 1987 248 (emphasis mine)

The women of this research group know what we know through our interactions with others. We learn more by exploring our own ethics in action. Our knowing is enriched by our ‘being’ with and ‘doing’ for others. This is why we do what we do.

Summary

By looking closely at our expressions of ethical integrity, I have demonstrated how we work in feminist ways: how we work with an ‘ethic of care’ (Gilligan 1982) and activate ‘our-self-in-relations’ (Porter 1991) in our communities and in our workplaces.
Chapter 8

Reflections on Researching

"Oh Mirror Mirror on the wall
What learning do you re-call?
What new sights did we see in our travels?
What old tangles did we unravel?"

Kaufman Hall 1993

Reflection as a Research Process

Overview of chapter

I drew on multiple research methods as well as multiple disciplines. The result was complex and the application of diverse methods created problematic situations. The ethical concerns have been discussed earlier but now I am critically examining the research methodology. I specifically address problems found by doing it! Then the women develop their meaning further and consider the values, import and actions arising from researching lived experience.

Evaluating Outcomes

At the beginning, many of my co-researchers asked how I was going to make use of such a wide range of stories? Questions arose: “What was central to pulling our findings together? How is this useful to your research? What are you going to do with it?” Working with open-ended questions (interviews); opening up to women’s current issues at meetings; looking for the actions which transformed women’s experiences, meant on-going and never-ending complexity. A common problem in qualitative research is how to present the findings coherently and within context. An important direction of this research was to clearly present the Ways of transformation.

“Feminist descriptions of multi-method research express the commitment to thoroughness, the desire to be open-ended, and to take risks. Multiple methods enable feminist researchers to link past and present, “data-gathering” and action, and individual behaviour with social frameworks. In addition, feminist researchers use multiple methods because of changes that occur to them and others in a project of long duration. Feminists describe such long projects as “journeys.” Sometimes multiple methods reflect the desire to be responsive to the people studied. By combining methods, feminist researchers are particularly able to illuminate previously unexamined or misunderstood experiences. Multiple methods increase the likelihood of obtaining scientific credibility and research unity.”

Reinharz 1992 197

We experienced all of the phases of long-term participatory research, described by Reinharz in the preceding quotation. Because I was committed to thoroughness, to finding the underlying feelings behind women’s stories, I insisted we stay open-ended and not define the outcomes before we experienced where we wanted to go. To take the risks that at times could look messy, complex and ‘fuzzy’ research is a gamble I was prepared to take. Some co-researchers found this initially frustrating. Surely this mirrors our lives. Our lived experiences deal with many things moment-to-moment. This is how life is - especially for women with family responsibilities.
A personal example of the continuum quality of life: while doing the research, I supported my eldest son while training in his chosen career area. I also worked with my siblings supporting our ailing mother and subsequently mourned her death and celebrated her life. I took risks changing my career base from tenured TAFE teaching with such benefits as sick pay, holidays and employer-contributed superannuation to casual university teaching and freelance researching. My daughter was occasionally sick, my middle son coped with changing from a kid to a young adult and my husband launched a long-delayed creative career for himself. A close friend gave full-term birth to a non-breathing baby and required long-term nurturing, and some friends and co-researchers made major changes in their career lives and so occasionally required co-counselling on occasion. A week after approving my final thesis draft, my friend, colleague and supervisor Dr Chris Wiencke died suddenly, leaving co-researchers, family and friends shocked, grieving and amazed at the multiple projects she was pursuing. She worked constantly at breaking down the structural inequities in our society.

In short, life went on. For me as with all women and men, work and our life priorities constantly mingle and interchange; there may be merely a blinking of an eye between agonies and ecstasies. At these difficult times, I remember Ariadne saying: what sustains me is my work and recognise that our belief in our work as our life work, may indeed support times of mourning, despair or confusion. Covey (1990) speaks of the importance of knowing our life's purpose and Roddick (1991) putting love where the work is.

*Researching real-life - complexities plus*

To handle such complexity at a research level, we used reflection as a meta-cognition - a process of considering the significance of our stories. My applied meanings:

*Meta-cognition: meta* - literally denoting 'about'; connotating standing aside from the situations and reflexively considering significance to us: what does this mean in the context of my life?

*Cognition* - literally denoting knowing; connotating the epistemological position: how do we know what we know?

Stanley and Wise perceive our problems and issues as a framework for 'feminist sociology' as a remake of the discipline in feminist terms. They see this as a distinct epistemological position which includes among other qualities:

"... a social constructionist and non-essentialist notion of 'the self', whether female or male, homosexual or heterosexual; and although traditional foundationalist views of 'reality' as single and unseamed, 'out there' and unproblematically available for experts, scientists, to discover the truth about are rejected, none the less it accepts that there is a social reality, one which members of society construct as having objective existence above and beyond competing constructions and interpretations of it; and it recognizes that social life is in good part composed of discussions, debates and controversies concerning precisely what this objective reality consists of."

Stanley and Wise 1993 9

We deliberately and subjectively consider our own discussions, debates and controversies concerning precisely what is our objective reality consists of. We were researching from an epistemological position which Stanley and Wise later called 'fractured foundationalism' (Stanley and Wise 1993 10). This term
helps to encompass the position I take around feminine and masculine qualities inherent in all people - not fundamentalist; but incorporating the complexity of all that constructs the foundations of our lives (fractured realities).

However, our research aimed to do more than to tell our stories of how it has been. We chose to take the process further into action that changes. We are, self-identified changing women. So our...

"Feminist participatory research would give explicit attention to how men and women, as a group, benefit from the participatory research project, including benefits from participation as well as benefits from the final product or action. If project benefits accrue to only one gender, what does that mean for the gender which does not directly benefit?"

Maguire 1987 107 (emphasis Maguire's)

I restate my ‘umbrella’ feminist goal: what’s good for women and children is good for everyone. Our concern to humanise workplaces for workers (and clients) more richly, benefits all people involved.

To understand the complexity of what it was that we uncovered; to pull together occasionally fuzzy findings; to draw action out of identifying a range of complex issues, we consciously reflected upon our findings. As previously described, this was done by re-visiting issues at meetings; considering writings at many different stages; and talking up ideas that had been taken away and tried out in individual women’s lives. Then, we stand aside and reflect upon the whole learning process in which we were involved. In these Ways, researching by individual lived experience, became learning from our collective lived experience.

**Reflection as a Learning Tool**

Reflection as a learning tool was used often and quite comfortably by the women of the research group. Meeting together gave us a vehicle for selecting an issue and in the re-telling of the story we reflected in depth on a situation.

Because this chapter focuses on reflection, some material is re-visited. This is not intended to simply repeat but accurately reflects the process of ‘looking again’ at issues, from the context of completion. Thus the process of researching is overviewed by the women, to extract their own meanings from findings which have been previously identified.

The following reflections were collected specifically to observe the research process at 3 different points in the life of the project. These were:

1. soon after the individual interviews (9 - 12 months into the life of the research)
   *Collected from the interviews and discussion upon that data*

2. midway - almost two years
   *Written responses collected from a questionnaire (in the Appendix)*

3. towards the closing of the writing-up (2 years and 9 months)
   *Meeting discussion focussing upon our experience*
Certain significant issues arose from the research process and the experience. This chapter covers those issues and gives the women's experiences of participation in this research. We reflect upon the experiences and then present in chronological order impressions and experiences. Observations are made from early in the project, then evolve through the mid-point and finally we deal with impressions and experiences during the final summaries.

The 10 central active members do not want to conceive closure. As a successfully-evolved group, we have consensually transformed the purpose of the group. We have no need to mourn its end. As indicated in earlier chapters we are now in the process of changing from a researching group to a networking support cluster. In fact, further data may arise from it as Margaret dives into her Masters research on ageing (this will involve men too) and Gloria continues to document the group via photographs each year at our weekend retreat. These photographs are not included because of confidentiality agreements.

Reflection necessarily involves looking back over what has gone before. So some of this chapter re-visits experiences, views and interpretations. Rather than give full repetitions, I have paraphrased and combined some quotations. It is still important that each woman's voice is heard so the intent has been preserved and the reader will notice some refrains from earlier chapters. Review of the research process is also given briefly to contextualise these reflections. A useful analogy may be to look again at the same view through another window; this one is a 'big-picture' frame which answers the question of: "So What?" After completing the research, what significance is this work for those involved?

*Group Formation - a brief review*

Fifteen women were invited initially. A Koori woman did not choose to participate after the first meeting. Both as a lesbian and a Koori she felt unsupported in the group. Thus proving again my belief, the learning: *a minority of one in a group is a very lonely position*. An industrial psychologist came to 2 meetings and led a workshop session on Myers Briggs Type Indicator at the first weekend meeting. She chose not to participate further than this.

The entire collaboration involved 12 women. We had a very active core of 10 attending nearly all of the meetings. Three others collaborated in varying Ways. Electra joined meetings mostly in the early stages and felt somewhat unbonded with the group as a following quote reveals. Electra's life over the time of this research, included two births, enrolment and completion of a Masters in Applied Science with Social Ecology, being appointed as executive officer of a professional women's association in the last 2 years and extending her business clientele, staff and premises as well as moving house. I think we were lucky to get her participation to the level of quality she was able to commit. She gave us what she could and it was substantial.

Ariadne is an active member by correspondence and came twice to connect with us as a group. She was curious to talk with these women she read about. She has participated actively by telephone and letter and is *always* the first to respond to the need for feedback upon part of the manuscript sent to the women. Virginia has met with Ariadne one-to one, 4 times during the life of the project.

Kay is our distance member participating by writing, telephone and 5 one-to-one meetings with Virginia.
Such flexibility with varying women’s life-styles has its effect on the group dynamics and individual’s experiences as will be noted in the following material.

The interview was the initial involvement by both Ariadne and Kay. It involved a great deal of trust and commitment on their part to reveal their answers to the rest of the group, whom they had not met.

For Virginia, it was an interesting tension to incorporate within the framework of collaborative research, 2 women who stayed outside the group meetings. The quality of their input I incorporated collaboratively because of the questions asked and the ethical understandings that the compiled data would be distributed amongst all members of the research. In this way it is still important to include their data, even though they have not been part of the group dynamics of the meetings themselves.

Many questions are raised by the difficulty of setting up collaborative research methods when distance and time preclude physical meetings. Here I am considering ‘collaborative’ as earlier defined, as co-labour: meaning we work together at researching. Is it just impossible to include distant members? Is it not truly collaborative? And yet these two women have added a dimension to our research, that extends the range of work areas and quality of experience. I felt a responsibility to design the research process so that those who wanted to be involved, could be involved in ways that accommodated their situations.

Why did Women Join?
The early phase of the group was for some, a bumpy road. The data is organised for each woman to keep intact her sense of the early experience and connect with ongoing motivations and learnings.

Isobel joined to

... have an opportunity to be with another group of people akin to what I was doing. At the outset I thought it would be quite homogenous but it's not. I expected I would learn a lot of theory about how women work.

The forming of the group was interesting and difficult. It seemed transient in the initial phase, because it wasn't homogenous. The storming part was very pronounced. There are quite a few strong personalities. They are all strong women, but not all strong personalities.

Isobel stayed with the group out of her insatiable desire to learn.

I enjoy being with women who are competent in their own areas. Mainly because I work in consulting... people comment on my competence. I like working and learning in groups and I wouldn't be there if I didn't like them. Adults have many time constraints.

At the time with 3 young children under 10, her CEO position performed from home and her university studies, that is an understatement!

I see my own input as sometimes a bit distracting. (I'm self-critical about that.) I bring another perspective. I am genuinely interested in other women talking: I'm fascinated by what they have to say.
Involvement has affected my own work. I focus on my own style, and compare and contrast that with the other women. When we discuss various strategies focussed around an issue, there is always at least one I haven’t thought of. I may not use that but I’m getting in touch with others’ Ways of doing things. I am changing work strategies by being more aware of other options.

**Jess** enjoyed the opportunity of meeting new people especially women. She was still new to a large city and had left most of her friends and old contacts behind.

I was facing new things in my own career and it offered so much about managing my life and my career. I wanted to learn how people manage their lives and what they face.

Jess found the first weekend away (her third meeting) very challenging as it opened up a lot of issues she had been sitting on.

It was a difficult time for me and I was depressed after it. I had been managing my life by suppressing a lot. Opening up my issues made it hard to manage. I talked with Grace and other friends. It brought me closer to the need to do personal counselling, by bringing issues to a head.

Jess had said at the time that the weekend needed more de-briefing. The place of de-briefing actually happened in the cars as women travelled back together. In smaller group or couples more intimate debriefing occurred than would have happened in the larger, still newly-formed group.

I always enjoy the meetings. It’s really fun - such a lot of nice people. I really enjoy the personal relationships. I had left behind a large network of supportive friends. Professionally I find the strategies that others use a personal support around professional issues. It’s enormously valuable and on the whole really supportive.

Many of the women at this stage said that they got a lot more out of it than they put in. Upon hearing this Jess said

We are girls aren’t we.

...stressing the habit of women to deny the value of their input as well as acknowledging the value of learning. Jess also wanted the sessions to be useful to her. It was a clear goal in the first phase of the group to have specific learning goals for each session. Such a pragmatic agenda allowed time for bonding before going more deeply into research issues.

When invited to join the group **Julie** was

... aware of a vacancy in my life that the group might fill and even if it didn’t, my second reason to join was that I expected to have experiences in the group that would give new Ways of thinking of the world, and myself in it. The vacancy was that I did not then have any person or group to challenge me intellectually like questions on human ethics, where am I and where am I going? At times I felt particularly inadequate.
There were times some women felt particularly inadequate; such as at the first weekend, doing the River of Life exercise. This was a Psychosynthesis technique which Margaret processed. Essentially it is to draw one's reflection of our lives (with a career focus in this case) considering the past, present and future. How the river is drawn, what type of country it passes through and any people, landscape features etc., serve to symbolically present the drawer's context. It also served as way to hear each woman's career story encapsulated by the drawing. Two women did not feel comfortable expressing themselves with drawing. Julie, however, found this exercise very insightful:

*I felt I had created something which communicated something to me. It was not just the value of the insight, but my own joy in drawing something communicable. Drawing has not been a successful medium for me in the past. My mother and sister are artists and that highlights my perception of inadequacy.*

Outcomes and Learnings

Julie is still in the group because all the original reasons are still being satisfied.

*I like to complete things - could not drop out half way. Her input, she sees as honest and open, not held back. Some rational part says what I contribute is of value because it is my viewpoint.*

The language and ideas of the group have given Julie a language
...with which to reflect upon things that happen at work which I didn't have before. There is particular value from Chris and Jess about what it is to be political in the workplace. That particularly changed the way I see things. I remember, recognise and use the strategies intuitively. Hearing others talk about it gave me the language to talk about it.

Like many of the women Electra joined to learn.

*When I joined the research group, I had applied to do the Masters degree (in Social Ecology) and I thought I would learn about the process. I rarely do anything with a lot of women. It was an opportunity to learn and I am learning from it.*

*It's difficult for me when I don't turn up. I feel I made a commitment I am not living up to.*

*I've never been in contact with people who work in other parts of the system; who get a raw deal and can't manipulate it or just can't see it is a system to play with. I never had a perception of powerless lesbians or a woman married to a minister as a victim of circumstance beyond her control.*

Like Isobel, Electra found the women came from different life-styles and backgrounds than she had known.

*I'm getting exposed to people I would never mix with, such as Grace in the union. It's a vital part of the public and private sector that I have not had a lot to do with.*
Kate joined as
... it sounded interesting, stimulating and I was ready to get involved in something stimulating. I was involved in a university women's study group and I enjoyed that.

While the women asked for structured learning and process activities, they did not all like everything we did.
I hated drawing things (the River of Life exercise) I found it threatening as a group activity; there were a few other things too.

The weekend away helped enormously with group bonding; which is exactly why Virginia suggested and organised it!
I felt more comfortable after the weekend away. I got to know people better and felt more relaxed.

I had also thought that if people did not find the group experience valuable, they would not continue to participate. I learned that these women were strong in following up an initial commitment and some were also quite loyal to me as a friend. They kept coming over the rocky times, because they told me they would. Kate continues:
I wasn’t given the option to not still participate in the group. I felt I had to come; I’d made a commitment. I enjoyed it too. I get a lot of support and interesting ideas. It is beneficial to be learning about other people and the way they function, particularly Grace and Jess in such different situations. I really enjoy that they’re so different from me.

Kate has learned skills and strategies from the other women, particularly:
Virginia helping with Conflict Resolution and assertiveness.
That’s where it has really been helping me. I’m looking at a lot of issues more confidently. It helps a lot.

Gloria
... was interested in working with other women. I was worried about the research side. I thought it would be more academic. The way its gone so far suits me - it’s my life’s blood. It’s fascinating the different types and diversity of the women; very rewarding.

It was difficult for me when the group pressed my buttons about my own independence. Hearing people working in their own area like Isobel, getting on and working in her own field. Virginia doing workshops and trainings and letting go a full time position. Also Margaret working in her own area. They are really good examples for me of women taking chances, by trusting and honouring their skills. It’s all been important.

Gloria felt her input was
... lame sometimes. I felt not sensitive enough to what people were saying.

Gloria is one of the ‘vibe-watchers’ of the group and fulfils this role very actively. She has often supported a woman through difficult issues and has always ensured the group do not ‘push’ any member where they are not ready to
go. In fact from the group as a whole there is a great deal of acceptance of individual Ways of being. Clearly this highlights another reason why we cannot say that this group is representative of all women’s Ways of working. We only demonstrate our own Ways.

Gloria found that re-doing the Myers-Briggs personality types, 
...underlines ... how different people work and why. It made me revalue the balance of structure and flexibility. I really felt the value of Chris and Julie’s focussing questions. Julie and Chris moved that along for the whole group.

This balance of structure and flexibility is a central way of working of this group. This integration is promoted extensively throughout this project. We are finding the way to flow with content. Changing Women find the pulls and pushes of structure and flexibility, process and content a constant challenge. When we get it to ebb and flow maybe we are getting closer to being able to respond to either energy in a spiralling Way rather than as a see-saw balancing act.

Anger as a Focussing Tool

Grace recognised her anger arising when she needed more focus. Gloria provided her awareness of processing issues thoroughly and the necessary flexibility to do that, while Grace highlighted the need to balance this with content and structure. Of course it is not that black and white. Both can flow in all directions. Grace reflected...

At times I play a facilitating role to get us back on track or allow someone else to speak if another dominates, or at times bringing a point to a head; asking where do we go from here.

I’ve had real frustration sometimes with my own anxiety and wanting to move on. Sometimes it’s process seeing someone else needs to say something.

When Grace was asked to join the research group she thought it was a good idea. I wanted to. I thought it would be useful for me, dealing with issues I wasn’t grappling with well. I really like these Ways of working and find it a more productive and positive learning experience than trying to do something as an individual.

Even so, Grace had to remind herself of the positive reasons.

Coming to the group was fairly anxiety producing. If I got out the nature of my problem it helped. Sometimes I was really burning/angry about time-wasting and needing to focus. And there are times when I need to be angry...

The first weekend residential brought Grace a sense of getting into the issues. She had been wanting several things.

I thought it was really successful on Sunday morning at the weekend. It really came together. Up ‘til then, talking to various individuals focussed Jess and I and so we were able to talk to other people. - seeing others as competent people and finding out that inside was a blithering mess.
The experience changed for many as trust developed and uncomfortable issues were dealt with respect. They also acknowledged as benefits, useful suggestions to provide choices where previously there was only stress, heartache, frustrations:

*It's fun now to be in the group. It provides a supportive group of people from different backgrounds to learn from others' experiences. It provides contacts in different areas that may be useful in our work, such as Chris, Margaret and Electra.*

*I am more aware about how I work; that there are alternatives and a range of things to think about. Strategies and approaches and a range of people to talk with. I recognise management issues are skills to be learned and I'm able to do my job better, rather than personally agonising over something.*

**Margaret** joined to support Virginia and came with no expectations

*I really enjoy women's company and hadn't been a member of a woman's group in a long time. It was an unknown and I felt something of worth would come out of it. It is a cross section of women and I'm fascinated by unions etc. Its really good I'm the only therapist there or I would project my own comments. I enjoy the diversity.*

**Language Issues**

The language used in business became an issue for Margaret.

*It was like another language dialoguing from the business women. I had trouble interpreting that and it was intimidating. I felt I did not have a lot to contribute consistently as in other groups. I loved the weekend away. That was the best - just relationships developing and women from different fields getting together, finding common grounds and discussing areas we would not normally discuss. It gave a lot of freedom to explore ideas.*

*I enjoy participating in the group. I never know what is going to happen next. They're all so different.*

Margaret sees her input into the group different to those earlier meetings where she was unsure of the business language.

*I lend a different perspective to the group - add a different dimension. I have an inner awareness of language; I ask questions to deepen emotional issues. I am curious.*

I invited Margaret into the research because of her skills in psychosynthesis; being able to question to find underlying motivations and having the skills to process issues. I knew the issues arising would indeed be disturbing for some. For me it was part of feminist process to support people through the letting go that new learning entails. It was deliberate to include a number of women in the group who have skills to support people through change. As well as Margaret there is Gloria with her vast experience working with oppressed peoples plus her Jungian understanding, Isobel and myself with skills to teach Conflict Resolution techniques and processes and Chris combining people skills with experience in political realities.
Inviting people with skills meant bringing our whole selves to the work of research. That meant putting ourselves at risk. When Chris joined the group she was

... a bit pre-occupied with my anxieties, to have hopes.

She was another friend who joined for Virginia, although she was nervous about the whole exercise.

I was particularly nervous about joining a heterosexual group. I did not enjoy the first group meeting at all. I was very unacknowledged telling my story and other women not valuing, trying to normalise my experience. Nobody helped me. I felt very alienated and lonely. I went back because of my relationship with Virginia. I don’t think I would have stayed in the group if Grace and Jess weren’t members. I was too different from everyone else there until they joined.

Chris had an experience where her ‘coming-out’ and openly addressing her life experiences as a lesbian, was met by a mishearing of her issues of loyalty and morality. The group, unbonded at the time, did not move to support her through this. As the researcher who invited these women together, my learnings from this are reported below. It seemed our ‘storming’ came early. The other potential group member involved in the misunderstanding, did not return to the group, neither did another lesbian invited to co-research who was present during the incident and did not then reveal herself as a lesbian. Chris returned to the group -out of loyalty -an important ethic to her.

I no longer feel alone and misunderstood. I feel a connection with most of the women in the group. Not all of them - I haven’t had enough time with Electra, to build a connection. With Isobel, I am not too sure of the space between her and I. There is some block preventing me hearing her as openly as I’d like to.

Isobel was not able to join us on the weekend, and Electra was there for part of one day only. So these 2 missed the bonding that occurred on Sunday morning. Those who were there at that time became the 10 core active members of the group. Clearly, that Sunday morning was a turning point in group dynamics. Chris continues:

I feel my contributions are valued. I’ve not always felt like that.
After the weekend away, there was a breakthrough, a joy and a pleasure. Before then, it was awful. I do not feel the need to name what I’ve contributed. It feels equal - there’s no sense of competitiveness.

Getting to Acceptance of Difference

We talked about our differences that weekend. The early sessions centred on our similarities - the woman inside all of us. A sense of allies on some issues developed. I didn’t feel so alone. I really liked everyone in the group. It certainly is not a group of women I would choose to be with.

I had a sense of missing out when I wasn’t there and I know it’s hard not having the same people every time. There are gaps in the group experience.
From the beginning Virginia recognised that these were busy women. To get them to one meeting was of value. I felt the meetings would be whatever they were, with whomever was there. When a woman was not there, her opinion was often wondered about, or even collected later on. Absent women then were often included by those present musing upon what they may have contributed as well as by contacts outside meetings.

Chris enjoyed

... being able to pick up on current issues. It’s time out for me to reflect on processes and hear other people’s processes. That’s reassuring and I have felt supported.

Chris at this stage did not feel she learned skills or strategies from other group members.

I learned an awful lot of awareness of my own stuff. I did not learn anything new but I appreciate myself better. Genuinely, I stopped giving myself a hard time and have been able to critique myself through other’s experiences. I took it on easier than I thought, to imagine myself being there in their situations and then how I would see it differently. It’s part of my need to try and hear others’ stories.

In this first phase of the research group Chris was unsure.

I’m not sure of my future involvement. I don’t need the group.
And yet, when I’m there, I don’t want to be anywhere else. It feels like the group has a future and I’d like to have a place in it. I’m not sure. I feel people act as a mirror of my own stuff and I can genuinely act as a mirror for others. There’s a safety in naming things in that group that feels good and safe now.

As it played out she was one of the core of 10 most active participants in the middle phase. In the last year, she has not been to any meetings.

Virginia - How the Researcher Saw it

Finally a look at the researcher’s reflection on the process. Like the others, this was recorded in the first phase and discussed with the whole group. For clearer understanding: *Italics* represent here recordings made at interview or meetings. Plain type indicates my later reflections as I synthesised meanings over a period of time.

Virginia’s reflections were initially recorded by Julie and Margaret by interview.

It seemed a good idea to invite a group of women to research together, our Ways of working. It gave me a justification to be a professional ‘sticky beak’, to find out what makes these women tick. I wanted to collect our stories.
I did expect a lot of collaborative learning to occur and at the start I didn’t know how our collaborations would turn into a thesis. Somehow I always trusted the process would bear fruit. My own determination is a factor of course; wanting to see the collective effort have its own creation.

The process of bringing all the recordings together and drawing out meaning and final documentation is summarised in Chapter 6 What We Did.
I found the first meeting hugely stressful. I actually had the 'flu at the time and felt unable to facilitate anything. Yet it was a very important meeting to me and of course, could not be postponed. When Chris was not heard or cared for I could see she was hurting, and did not know what the reason was. I did not know about the factual instance that she was being compared to and being ignorant, felt I could not comment. I learned from that, painfully for Chris and less agonisingly for me I think, that if someone is hurting and obviously hasn't been heard for themselves, I can intervene... and certainly should let them know that someone in the group is supporting them.

This was a major learning for the researcher and flagged early the ethics of ensuring a research process does not leave people overly exposed, or vulnerable and unsupported. I call it accelerated learning for researchers - a great pity it involved pain for a co-researcher.

Throughout the first 18 months I was nervous for a week before meetings and suffered quite high nervous strain during the meetings. This affected my perception and always fearful, wondering if we would meet again.

During this period I believed that women would come to the meetings if they found them valuable. Great emphasis was put on setting agendas and actually structuring time for different women to present or facilitate workshop type sessions.

I feel the group is successful when I observe the co-learning going on. I am sure the continuing functioning of the group is because people take away with them new and relevant learning from every meeting.

Even at this stage, it is was not all structured learning. As Chris has identified, it is valuable to reflect upon other's Ways of being and connecting that to our own. For me, these experiences give me more choices, more Ways of being, more possible directions for transformation when I feel stuck.

It was a surprise to find women who 'hung on' throughout the first phase because of a commitment to me personally or their own commitment to the project. It is an important ethic that was discovered during the first phase. As we moved into women reaping their own harvest of learning and group support, the need for that ethical strength of commitment to a person or a process, dropped away.

In this first phase of the group I then identified 3 major turning points in group dynamics and the research process.

1. The weekend: I hoped would make a difference to group bonding, as it does on residential workshops. We celebrated the turning point of the group on that residential weekend. I knew then that the group was OK to lead a useful life-cycle, whatever that may turn out to be.
2. Interviews: I also found the interviews a turning point in the research. I wanted them to provide each woman's story personally with the 'nitty gritty' to flesh out professional issues handled in the meetings. Such risk-taking by revealing so much, developed trust and the content of our stories provided much fuel for discussion.

3. A Dinner Out Just for Fun: The social dinner (held 15 months into the process) was another turning point, when we threw all the professional issues aside and focussed purely on personal, significant relationships, 'Gossip' or swapping stories of love and grief.

This was the only time we thoroughly shared relationship issues. It is notable there was no recording of this discussion. It was free, open and very very intimate. It was also lots of fun, a hoot. Tears of laughter mixed with tears of compassion as each woman's told the story of her love-life.

Obviously I am still working with the group because I want to complete my degree. There is a group identity that I want to be part of both personally and professionally. I am curious to see what develops as my thesis goal is attained. At this stage I would think the most likely outcome would be some networking and perhaps occasional meetings, even if annual.

This is indeed the status quo in the end phase of the research project.

My input has worried me. There have been times the group has said they would like to hear more from me, while I'm busy observing and trying to keep useful records of meetings. I don't feel successful at that. And I would hope that input need is met by my writings in this third stage of the research.

Here, I am identifying the steep learning curve. By mid-phase these skills are inherent and comfortable. As the writings came out, it gave us a basis for examining my input and deepening the initial observations.

The research has influenced my work. I confidently embarked upon researching Senior Women Managers for TAFE (see report in Appendix), knowing from my experiences with this group that I had the skills to pull it together. Also writing that report lead me to try this style of writing. I feel vastly enriched by the women's stories, strategies, techniques and concerns. It has lead me to ask at difficult times at work, 'How would Grace, Jess or any one of the other women handle this situation? In imagining a woman who I believe is competent at handling similar situations, I have a model I can observe and emulate.

This is where the group was at the end of the first phase with some connections to later on. At this stage we had 5 meetings including 1 weekend residential and each co-researcher had individually responded to a 3 hour face-to-face interview.
Mid Phase of Researching

We now move onto looking at the reflections that arose from the co-researchers towards the end of the second year after 9 meetings including another weekend residential and as a response to the first batch of writings circulated. This reflection was triggered by a questionnaire summarised as headings below. Women brought their responses to a meeting and discussed their own responses and asked questions of others.

What was valued:

Friendship
Margaret enjoyed
...the laughter, the stimulating discussion, the closeness -and space to be open and vulnerable; just to share without reserve.

Julie enjoyed
...the trust and the friendship - the time given to me and my problems, fears, hopes and experiences.

From Gloria
... the generosity of all the women in giving themselves with such honesty. She re-affirmed the privilege it is to be privy to so much that is personal and precious.

The Value of Women's Stories
Gloria also acknowledged the privilege experienced:
To hear the stories of other women and the depth of their experience is awesome.

Diversity
From Chris
I valued the immense diversity of our experiences and the willingness of everyone to hear each other.

Margaret learned
...how other careers worked and made me see mine could be different.

Kate found valuable
...the experience of meeting such a diverse group of enthusiastic, educated and knowledgeable women; the way we all fed on each other and strengths from one another; the positive reinforcement of ideas and the Ways of improving our working techniques and abilities

and Ariadne found she valued
...the opportunity to participate in this important research and to do so in the company of such fascinating women.

The Group Experience

Electra while an active member in the first year, after the birth of her second child, rarely made it to the meetings. Her comment:
I think bringing so many women together from such diverse backgrounds was a major stumbling block to developing group identity. That not spending time in the beginning just to develop this bond meant that would-be members dropped off. I only ever developed a sense of commitment to Virginia and not the group.
Although I particularly enjoyed meeting several of the group members, had I spent more social time with them I may well have developed a commitment to them. This was not the case and probably was one of the contributing factors to my poor attendance in the latter stages.

Social and bonding events were part of the women's experience which Electra missed. The group's response to missing Electra's keen observations from her range of industry experience, was the recognition of the time needed to handle one's own business and a young family as well as older blended family siblings. Electra was missed, and the group of women understood the difficulties and the reasons for the choices made.

One outcome of this situation was the interweaving of data from meetings with written input from Electra. Twice she responded to us in writing rather than her presence, and this input was not only accepted by the group but also highly valued. For me it was so much easier to extract information from the printed word than to sift through hours of tapes to find 'that' special comment.

Ariadne spoke of her realisation that not being at meetings meant...

I miss out on the fellowship.

And valued the sharing in the writings as well as her (then) single meeting with us

... the coverage and versatility of contemporary 'daughters'.

Maybe that is another experience of working together as 'sisters'.

Certainly it's an interesting relational bonding occurring on the whole via written communication.

Julie re-affirmed

... the intensity of sharing, the very different experience of being a member of a group. ('Being' in the sense of experiencing in-the-moment, with an integrated Self.)

Jess felt that

... all of us have matured through the group if maturity is seen as rising self-esteem, rising sense of personal power, expanding alternatives to deal with problems, extending communication skills and acceptance of diversity, people and attitudes.

Gloria noticed

... the importance of group intelligence where I always held the individual as supreme. Now I can appreciate the breadth of awareness and knowledge of the group and how much the individual can benefit from that. How much I benefitted from knowing their stories.

Discoveries and Changes of Mind

Ariadne noted she was changing her mind about

... my previously held ideas about the extent of the difficulties in homosexual relationships.

At different points in the project's life-span, other women including Electra noted they experienced a different view, one they had never before come across,
about the oppression of lesbians. Julie noted she was changing her mind about prostitutes in a major way. During discussions their role as ‘sex workers’ were mentioned. Expanding views on reasons for oppression and prejudice were experienced by many of the group.

Margaret found she was changing her mind about
...politics, business, management and myself.

Anger, Tears and Laughter

There was some anger and frustration in the early phase as people felt around the different ways of being that were emerging. As they were not given any guidelines by the researcher other than exploring ways to ensure the ethical research process there was an open agenda on finding what issues around our work we wanted to talk about and how we would do it.

It may well be because of this perceived ‘lack’ of guided agenda, that the group opted for structured learning sessions for the first four meetings. To develop truly collaborative issues arising from the group I deliberately held back from imposing mine. The learning sessions provided a forum for opening up to the issues from each member of the group.

As well as the frustrations of dealing with process, language continued as an issue. Of course, we addressed how language was an issue for women at work and everywhere else. Women often had to define their terms. Sometimes we found out way down the track that a woman or 3 were having difficulty with a certain realm of language.

As noted, Kate found it difficult to deal with the sociological and organisational jargon and Margaret felt angry
...In the beginning sessions I felt frustrated that I didn't seem to benefit from the groups and there was no clear direction.... At times I felt insecure that I was unable to understand the language of the group. I learnt to let go my expectations that everything would become clear and the language barriers disappear and see what would happen. I learnt to speak up when I felt frustrated.

Old systemic problems added to the frustrations. Ariadne felt angry when
...I see that many of the injustices that women addressed in the twenties and thirties of the century are still largely un-addressed.

Added to this was her frustration as she cried when
...I learn again that for most women the price of professionalism and personal success is to carry a double load.

Responses from the Writings

It is essential to building into the research process flexibility of data collection. I found it necessary to build composite research with results that reflect the experiences of a range of women, in their range of circumstances. So group researchers were willing to adapt and accommodate occasional members, and accept distance members with occasional input.
Not that this was so easily done. At the second weekend when we were reviewing the first draft of written data in the group, a member noted that she felt exposed and imposed upon by the information of our distance member being included. Others felt it enriched the group. Both responses are of course accepted, both are real and OK. It isn’t easy being flexible to meet the life-style needs of members in a qualitative-based research process. It just isn’t possible to please all of the people all of the time. One major motivation to do this research was because of the perceived need for more acceptance of difference and flexibility in responses which then encourages the richness of diversity.

Some members of the group were overwhelmed by the sheer amount of written material as it arrived. Before the thesis ended up in its final form, there was a great deal of ‘raw data’ drafts sent out to check accuracy of reporting. One of the major drawbacks of such a collaborative style of working is the amount of reading needed from each co-researcher to ensure the ethical process is complete. I have tried to alleviate this somewhat by alerting women to where they will find their bits. I have tried to stress to the group that once the research is published, any part could be used out of context. This is especially important for the political players to ensure safety around words in print which describe and quote them.

So far they have been comfortable with the ethical procedures.

Because the writing was to turn into a doctoral thesis some women felt intimidated by the academic nature of it’s intent. Julie who works in academia, noted that she had

...massive barriers against valuing anything even remotely academic in its purpose - and so I didn’t want to read the thesis, except at the very superficial level of correcting the typos. And then I read it because I owe it to the group’ and I find it recalling all the great times we have had together - and so I enjoy it and find it a vibrant piece of writing - and when I have finished, all my barriers fly up again.

An important issue was raised early on by Electra. Her response should be read keeping in mind Electra’s clearly emancipatory and enabling practices. She described herself as working with the women’s movement, rather than attracting the adverse responses she experienced triggered by the term feminist. Electra’s response to the first readings which were ‘raw data’ on the group:

I miss the positive contribution of men in reading through your documentation. They are as silent as we are in their literature. I would like to acknowledge a core belief of mine that this opportunity to be accepted for yourself alone be it from a partner in life or a mentor in business has been a cornerstone in my reclaiming the construction of my personal identity.

Electra wrote this after acknowledging that

My male partner has been a major catalyst in my life facilitating much of my own inner development. Until I met him I was mainly reacting to external situations in a socialised way. He sparked my search for the real me and my critical evaluation of where I had come from and where I was going.
Electra was highlighting early in our work, her preference for the partnership model (Eisler 1987). As the whole research project came together it became clear that this is on the whole, the group preference. As argued in the first section, there is also still a clear place for women's stories to be told separately. Perhaps it is like the fine balance needed for a multi-cultural society. There needs to be space for each culture to express its art and life-style (as long as it does no harm, I say thinking of foot-binding and female circumcision).

There are other stories to be told in mixed cultures that tell how we learn to be together. Right now in our society I believe we women are claiming a possibility to do just that. There is an opportunity to create a society that nurtures and promotes what is good for women and children because it is also good for everyone.

Margaret consistently felt that she could not give a critique on the writings. She could however, respond to its accuracy in giving a rich picture of the various women’s experiences and indeed, valued that.

Gloria's response was

... astonished at the wealth of detail and the scope which is covered from 10 to 12 perspectives on any one topic.

**Professional and Personal Applications of Learnings**

Margaret found she has

... a deeper confidence of my value as a woman and a deeper respect of women in general. I see all women have so much confidence, strength and complexity which I might not have acknowledged before.

She also found that at work she changed her Ways of being

... especially with the Doctors. I feel even less intimidated and am watchful of females deferring to male doctors, myself especially. I also feel I have more ambition and am inspired by the strength and determination of all the women.

Julie found that because of participating in the research she operated differently at this time by

... giving more attention to other women. I am more assertive about putting my point of view and more objective (less vulnerable) about having it rejected or accepted. I am more involved and hence get more tired. I allow more time for planning and reflecting.

My values have been strengthened by being articulated and affirmed. My way of working has changed subtly - my values always did come through in my body language - now I allow this to happen so that my values are consciously being contributed to what is happening in the workplace. Others may perceive that I have become a feminist lioness or they even have always seen me that way.
Ariadne has
... more confidence in the mutually supportive group.
along with an additional appreciation that
...the game is crook but it’s the only one in town.
Which just about sums up why we as a group of players, wanted to critically examine the game and our part in it!

Final Phase Evaluations
These responses evolved from a meeting after the majority of the writings had been distributed.

When we look back over our own changes during 3 years of working, learning, observing others we admire (and the reverse - the negative example), it is impossible to identify one source for change or development. So we also acknowledge that the areas of change do not claim that participation in this group alone caused these changes. We do claim that because we have identified the issues as connected to the group learning in some way, they have indeed been influenced by our participation in this research group.

The group and the learnings arising from it, have been identified where elements of the researching process clearly made a difference. It may be as many women acknowledged, that because issues had been raised in the group, we noticed more keenly how this played out in our own workplace. Certainly, references to books, journal articles, television and radio material were discussed and often shared around. In many ways we created for ourselves, our own ‘Business and Professional Women’s Association’, or ‘Women in Management’ group. However, there was and continues to build, an intimacy and trust within this group. I don’t believe it would be found easily in a large, mixed professional crowd.

Following, is a summary of views collected at meeting number 13, two years and nine months after the first meeting. (There was, as stated, 15 meetings.)

Where participation made a difference
Jess identified that
This group is psychological and social support for me. I get practical strategies and peer support which leads me to solve work problems.

By bringing issues to meetings, we are able to reflect upon situations and hear different ways of managing a situation. Sometimes this in itself is enough. More often women went away and tackled the problem head on, thus immediately bringing about changes that they were satisfied about.

Jess also identified a way of learning that enriched her.
Enormous areas of reading opened up.
I often brought books I was currently reading to meetings. In the early phase I would prepare photo-copies of articles which enriched the learning areas we were focusing upon. Meeting at different women’s houses meant that we could review their bookshelves too!

Margaret flagged different ways of learning and thinking.
The way of thinking was very different for me. I need to develop a more analytical and critical way of thinking. I hadn’t realised how much I wanted to learn that.
A typical Way of re-framing language (and thus attempting to re-frame ways we were thinking to more positive and open-to-learning thoughts) was then demonstrated by Chris’ interruption.

Margaret’s’s original language was limiting: ‘I had not realised I was deficient…” Chris changed it to the positive, ‘I had not realised how much I wanted to learn that.”

This intervention served to demonstrate the way we build confidence with each other. Noting how we may limit or belittle ourselves, and creating more positive and stronger language use about ourselves.

Chris found her confidence developing too.

I found that confidence developed to allow me to actually do what I felt I should do and wanted to do. Instead of acting just as a manager. I am feeling free of fears of failing.

Support developed through being listened to and being acknowledged for one’s own Way of being. Therefore we are strengthening Ways we could operate which more truly reflected our inner beings. Outside ourselves, there was always women everywhere, demonstrating their own Ways of being that worked effectively. Being able to see this as closely as we did, allowed for great expansions in choices of Ways of doing things.

Gloria felt like she was coming out.

The group I was sharing with at work was split up by changes in jobs. I missed that. I feel this group is a possibility for ongoing workplace sharing.

Grace probably knew all along that confidence is essential to getting things done. But she experienced with the group a vast expansion in confidence as a manager and her own leadership capacity. Grace is, like all the research group, now a transformational leader as described by Betty Friedan (1993) and Mary Robinson (in the SBS film of Not A Bedroom War). Here Grace puts it into her own words.

Women’s responsibilities make us more prepared to look at and solve problems. I've gained a broader world view. I was being more careful about wielding ‘self’ power.

Isobel identified this direction.

It was the right group at that point of time. I wanted to be a strong manager with strong ethics and uncompromising in my ethics.

For Isobel, she experienced other types of people she would not have previously have been exposed to.

I would not have come across any of you except Virginia without the group. It is a rich cross-weaving. I am 3 years stronger, 3 years more knowledgeable. I've given up my whole life to get here and now have the confidence to quietly go about doing this.

I've also been exposed to feminist literature which I would not have been without involvement in this group.
Her style is noticed as something different.
I've lately had 2 bosses say 'I like the way you work.' They notice my presentation is different to what they usually see. So they ask: Why do I do it that way?
Kate too, found she would not have mixed with such diversity. She also found...
friendship and diversity. I would not have met or worked with this group of people. Getting to know people I would not have mixed with, helps me to get to know all other people.

There was a carefully considered professional value to this for Kate.
It's a testing ground. I can talk through problems with someone totally removed from the situation I am in.

I get new ideas, new references. I valued Jess's talk on Covey's Seven Habits of Highly Effective People at the weekend residential. I talked about it to my masters' group and we all went out and bought the book. The Myers' Briggs info. was valuable. I spread that information to others.

So the effects spread far beyond the members of the group to other people with whom we learn and or work.

Gloria revelled in the achievements of women.
I increase my pride in being a woman, seeing the women in this group.

Margaret too found...
...I have a deeper understanding of women. My range of knowledge of women was very limited. Because some of us are involved with feminism, and have been for a long time, opens up that way of being for me hearing you talk about it and seeing you all being feminists in action.

Just what being a feminist-in-action meant for Grace was relaxed and made much more workable.
I experienced validation in sorting out ideas, testing things out. I climbed out of the feminist straitjacket, which I knew too well. Particularly after being involved in many feminist (Mafia) collectives. My view of the world from that perspective was that one is not allowed to wield power oneself.

Chris agreed that this is very disempowering.

Grace continued to describe her learning process.
I had to reconstruct power to realise it is OK to be powerful. It can be seen as an anti-feminist stand in itself. Not just being in a position of power, but what you do. It meant I could rest easier in my position and act in a more pro-active way.

Grace describes the unpacking and rebuilding of beliefs around power that infiltrated the whole project. For this reason, a chapter is devoted to this issue in the following section.
Jess shared that this Way is being less self-conscious. Chris observed that she is having less concern about being called subversive.

Isobel noted that It's about authority not power and Jess saw it as being able to have power without power being at the expense of someone else.

Chris noted how she used coercive power in an emancipatory Way;
   I do practice it in a way that does not disempower people
   I wielded my power by calling people to come to meetings,
   saying they must come to meetings to go through the process and
   so those people went through the experience and the
   organisation's management is better.
Jess called that leadership.

All of the above seems to portray the development of Transformational Leadership. It is a fine integration of recognising needs, having the knowledge to make a difference, using positional and coercive power to push it along and integrating all of that with other's needs and capacities. All of this to support the work of change.

**Language to Name What we Believe**

Julie noticed that
   Listening to other people talk gave me language and thoughts
   were brought to my consciousness. Things I knew intuitively. It
   made me stronger in the way I work.

Julie has named a great strength tapped into by women discussing problems together. In the naming of the difficulties we allow ourselves to acknowledge and deal with the realities. Julie took this further and used the language to name her own intuitive responses. Thus the focus via the research, enabled her to name, strengthen and put into practice her own values.

   Its wonderful to learn strategies congruent with my ethical
   values. Where else would I learn them? I've grown heaps in Ways
   I would not have had opportunities to do in other ways.

Not only did it strengthen Julie's inner values. She also opened up to other Ways of being that previously she did not value.
   I listened to Chris, Grace and Jess talk about unionism. It
   shifted my view on unions and on workplace colleagues.

Julie then joined her workplace union and became active within the organisation. She also supported the local Labor woman candidate who won her Federal seat in 1993.

**What the Researcher Learned**

Learning for the researcher has been vast. With collaborative research I believe it would be impossible to be untouched by the findings. When we are in co-researching situations we are also in co-learning situations. We discover and try to make meaning of our findings together. Being voluntary research that is unfunded I have held the 'power' of the writing up. Others in the group do not need to write, to achieve what they already have: learning that is relevant to them. However, all co-researchers have had many opportunities to scrutinise all of the writings. Their response had been by critiques of my interpretations either at meetings with the group or individually in response to writings distributed.
There have been at times inaccuracies and they have been amended through the critical reflection process in the group. There has also been different views of interpretations. In those cases I have endeavoured to present the range of views. It is this range of views that supplied diversity. The time it has taken to complete the writings (around 2 years) has also allowed for inclusion of changes wrought by changing times.

Although operational styles may differ, the intent of practice throughout the whole group remains strongly ethical. This has been modelled in the research processes which leaves equal power in the hands of every participant to veto or put forward another view.

The intrinsic interest and richness of this research lies in these very processes. It is in the complexity of the findings I "earth" my promotion of acceptance of difference. It is in the acceptance of difference in the workplace that leads to more flexibility. It is my experience that incorporating difference, results in greater flexibility in the workplace. I have found many more options in problem-solving and a greater diversity of workplace possibilities.

I experience us now as a vibrant group of friends in this final phase, giving support for work problems and thinking through things together. My confidence has grown to the extent where I see us now as peers; earlier I did not equate myself with the rest of the group. I was only the researcher. It's a huge leap all round. My competence and skills have grown extensively and along with that, my confidence. I particularly notice this when I deal with people in authority. In the not so distant past I was overawed by them. Now, my perception is different. I consider they are people with a range of needs just like the rest of us. So I feel on an equal negotiating position.

One of the things that has made a big difference with how I feel about my position, is pulling out of the hierarchical structure at my previous work. As a 'free' agent, I can pick and choose work. What I have found is that I've chosen the better-paying work as a time-saving strategy, and I am getting offered more of the higher-paying consultancies. It is very revealing to me that this is happening.

In the collaborative style of collecting information, it has been the input of energy from all of us that has kept feeding me - hence the project keeps going.

During this last year and just after the death of my mother, I felt it would help me symbolically if I changed my professional name to Kaufman Hall. I've had 22 single years as a Hall and 22 married years as a Kaufman. I want to acknowledge the importance of my family of origin in my education and development.

When I announced this at a meeting Chris acknowledged the

*Importance of naming and the symbolism of acting upon a decision.*

The group provides strength to face past issues. The group provides a basis for learning models. I then have increased trust in the process of getting to
the end of the doctorate. Things are now fun to do. I am enjoying my work and not being afraid of what others think because I have the confidence to change the way I work.

Jess added that she has

...shed a lot of male models and extended other Ways of working.
I am less self-conscious of using positional power.

Margaret further noticed her increased confidence.

...being involved in this group, expanded my horizons by doing a masters' degree based upon my research on ageing. Its unleashed my limitations.

Chris added a very personal dimension for her.

It is validating being with a group of predominantly heterosexuals. Although feeling out of it in some ways, over the years I moved into relationships and friendships as a lesbian. Once I defined myself as lesbian other heterosexuals dropped me from relationships and friendships.

So in this way it is healing. We would not have chosen to be together. Virginia chose us. When it's been tough -well, I've been here for Virginia.

Women will constantly choose to change their lives.

In this way it has been healing. Despite a rocky start, Chris has had a different experience with this group as a group of heterosexual women. There is still the uniqueness of her experience as a lesbian.

It's reminded me how powerful women have been in my life.
Powerful and confirming. I know there is a struggle for women, there is also a different struggle for lesbians.

This was point was clearly brought out in a documentary about the work of Dr Evelyn Hooker, particularly her early research on homosexual men in the 1950's. The documentary (showing on the next evening after the meeting where the above quotations were said) on ABC-TV, (25/7/93) stated what an important step this research was in starting to place homosexuals and lesbians accepted as OK psychologically. In other words as 'normal' human beings. The research provided a benchmark as well-tested research to demonstrate that same sex preference does not indicate an aberration. It is not a psychological disorder. Certainly it is an important base research to assist EEO legislation in the workplace.

Further healing and progress is described by Isobel.

Issues came up which were confronting. Only those buttons which needed to be pushed were pushed. Ten years of psychotherapy would not have got me this far, this quickly.

As a final statement on the group I believe what we have done here together is to create a structure and climate for 'Learned Optimism' (Seligman 1990). While I do not want to interpret all of our endeavors into Seligman's criteria, I want to use the concept.
We have learned from each other different Ways of looking at our difficulties. We have heard that different women approach similar problems in different Ways to us. In fully hearing each other and fully respecting our feelings (internal) and structural difficulties (external) we have learned that there are always options. We have learned to re-frame problems and to access different languages which enable rather than limit us.

We have not learned to solve all our work problems. We have learned to think about them differently, to talk about them differently and if we so choose, to operate at work differently. There are always options. We are after all - Changing Women.

As Isobel said

*I am changing work strategies by being more aware of other options.*

and Jess

*Professionally I find the strategies that others use act as a personal support around professional issues. It's enormously valuable and on the whole really supportive.*

and Grace

*I am more aware about how I work; that there are alternatives and a range of things to think about. Strategies and approaches and a range of people to talk with. I recognise management issues are skills to be learned and I'm able to do my job better, rather than personally agonising over something.*

We all learned together.
Section 3

Women Present:
Changing the Constructs
of Workplaces
for
Future Women
and Men
Chapter 9  

Women at Work  

Issues for Change

**Overview**

This chapter gives the focal points for change and learning which emerged from the research.

The Navaho story of *Changing Woman* describes why we believe we need change in our workplaces and lived experience.

Most of Section 3 (chapters 9, 10 and 11) deals with a range of issues which arose out of the meetings and the interviews. I start from the women’s voices (this chapter) and make connections with our concerns and the wider world of work, organisations and society. I look particularly at power relations (chapter 10) and organisational structures and cultures especially those who are changing to more 'people-friendly' practices (chapter 11).

**Changing Woman - A Navaho Creation Story**

"It is Changing Woman who teaches the flow of life, the restlessness of the sand as it flies with the wind, the wisdom of the ancient rocks that never leave their home, the pleasure of the tiny sapling that has risen through them. So it is into the House of the Changing Woman that each young girl enters, as her blood begins to flow with the moon, as she passes into womanhood.

It is Changing Woman who teaches the cycles, the constant round of hot and cold, of birth and dying, of youth and ageing, of seedling to corn, of corn to seedling kernel, of day to night, of night to day, of waxing moon to waning moon - and thus She gave the sacred songs to ease all in their passage.

It is to Changing Woman that we look as we search for the wisdom of life. While some may believe they can defy Changing Woman’s patterns to make their own, wise people know that this cannot be done, for to change the ways of Changing Woman, is to destroy all life. Those who understand the ways of Changing Woman, forever walk the Trail of Beauty."

Merlin Stone 1984 in Mariechild 1987 167


e We are the now generation
e

of Changing Women.

While not all women working in Australia want change, my observations seems to indicate that many are ready for change. Our research group do not hesitate to join that category. My experience with learning groups, results from consulting with organisations and undertakings of social research reveals to me
the dynamic of a vast range of social and life-style changes, as well as workplace transformations. Whether people initiate it themselves or not, most are constantly dealing with these changes. Our pro-active response is to have a collective hand in creating the basic nature of that change.

I use statements from the Navaho story, to explore how we may accomplish this.

*It is Changing Woman who teaches the flow of life.*

To survive in these times, women have learned to cope with many things at once: changes in family needs and caring about conflicting issues. We have learned the *flow* of life, (and are still learning) and then are sharing that learning as teachers, as role models and with friends.

*It is Changing Woman who teaches the cycles...*

To live through these changing times, we had to flow with cycles. We were girls, then young women learning about life, or later (maybe) mothers. And *always* workers - in and outside our homes. We sat with the sick child and the dying parent, we weathered the storms of panic and crises in the workplace. We learn “it all passes”, the seasons come around in their full time.

The ways of Changing Woman, are Ways that sustain life. The Changing Women of this research are committed to action for change. We see that the predominant ways of the workplace do not generally sustain all life. When we see a division between principle and practice we refuse to support that divisive energy. A bunch of subversives? Not really. We are ordinary women, and yet we are special women, just as all women are.

We are at a stage in our planet’s management where, if we are *all* to survive, ways of acknowledging life must be incorporated into business planning. I believe systems thinking, planning and management must include all stakeholders’ needs in sustainable agriculture and resource management. To neglect those stakeholders because they have no voice, or express themselves with different voices, speaks death for the *whole* system. Women, speak for the earth and its children, for all our relations (Medicine Eagle 1991).

I have mentioned that this research group is *not* working in related environmental areas. Yet, we are looking at the environment now in terms of “this is where we work and live”. The concerns of these women is to look closely at our work environment; the *whole* social construction that affects our experience of our work.

*Why are these women working for change?*

We all know that the last decade of this century brings us into a period of rapid and massive change. We are facing social, environmental, technological and organisational change that could put some of us into a state of “future shock” (as Alvin Toffler 1971 identified the overload reaction or ‘head-in-the-sand response’). In his latest work, *Power Shift*, Toffler speaks of the need to consider these changes systemically - to look at the holistic impact upon life.

“... to make sense of today’s great changes, to think strategically, we need more than bits, blips, and lists. We need to see how the different changes relate to one another.”

Toffler 1990 xvii
So, “Change” occurs faster than many people can comprehend. Changes in our day-to-day life, often are inspired by powerful enterprises using the media to support their short-term profit-making goals that are not ‘planet-friendly’. Our environment is changing in response to our impact upon the earth; scientists (especially the social scientists) cannot even agree on the nature and future effects of these changes let alone define the processes.

Largely by accident, Australians in the last quarter of the 20th century have become a nation of pioneers; some heroically, some reluctantly, some painfully. We have been plunged into a period of unprecedented social, cultural, political, economic and technological change in which the Australian way of life is being radically redefined.

Mackay 1993 8

For many of us, these constant changes create tensions and stresses that severely complicate our daily lives. Consider the evident and all-pervading stress of working mothers. They experience complications and dysfunctions that were unknown to many of our mothers (especially those whose work was predominantly inside the family home).

We are committed to constructing ‘different’ frameworks. This is in order to model by our different ways of acting, the possibilities of political and ideological constructions of “reality” that serve all. Put simply, we want to see a more humane workplace.

Thus, I present our issues in which we work towards change. This is the essentially optimistic approach of social ecology in action where:

“... optimism about the future combine(s) with concern about the developing environmental community and organisational dilemmas confronting human society.”

Pinn and Russell 1989

In this collaborative research we put social ecology into action.

**Issues for Change**

*Matters of Consequence*

At this point we discuss what is important to us. I look more deeply at what lies behind our ethics, and examine our Ways of working. We reveal that there is often a tension between our preferences and the accepted Ways of ‘being’ in the workplace.

*Shapeshifters* - women who want to change our own and others’ experiences of the workplace, transforming the shapes of ideas, relations, actions, words and emotions (Daly 1987).

As shapeshifters we are acting as change-agents. It is the desire to recognise that we come to work as whole people; not just ‘hands’- providing services or ‘brains’ to solve problems for those who hire us (whether as employers or clients). The change dynamic means taking opportunities and/or creating them and using holistic work practices, rather than separating work from the rest of our lives. A simple and relevant example of this dynamic is adjusting work hours to suit childcare needs.
Acceptance of Difference

Although I write about us as a group, like any group, there are differences. The nature of those differences has a big impact on the interplay of a group.

Clearly we needed to be
"... able to deal with differences among women without losing the impetus that derives from being a coherent movement for social change."

Gunew and Yeatman 1993 xiii

Some common ground in the group was around the ethical base that underpinned preferred ways of operating. In early meetings, many women commented on how different they found the other women. Such diverse backgrounds and work arenas made quite a demand on each of us in relating to our own experiences.

Acceptance of difference means there is no one voice of authority or authenticity (Stasiulis 1993). We say we are different yet hold a political awareness that some form of identity is a personal strategy of resistance (Jeffreys 1991). If we claim to want change, then our aim to destabilize the core, the 'malestream' of things, needs a resistance strategy. The notion of difference in Feminism creates a tension between the two positions of claiming difference as biological women (essentialist) who are constructed by society into particular positions (constructivist). Claiming we are all different, can trap the possibility of collective political action in an ennui of multiplicity (Luke 1992, Soper 1990).

This group from disparate working areas, may have individual stories and personally-identified issues, yet we still hold a strong sense of commonality with other women. The issues we discuss are not idiosyncratic. The issues that worry us, are those issues which also seem to worry other women. Our personal is indeed political on a wider sphere.

Sources and Ways of Putting Together Herstories and the Group Story

So what were the Ways of Working that we explored together? How did we find out information that led us to solve problems? In other words, what heuristics were employed?

Issues were first identified in the second meeting by brainstorming. We agreed on what we would like to investigate together. Our stories include our beliefs and values which underpin our Ways of working (epistemology and ontology); our experiences of these issues at play in our work (hermeneutics - understanding the significance of our actions); and our own pro-active strategies for addressing these matters of consequence (political implications).

These stories are collected from many meetings mostly in the second year as well as individual information gathered from one-to-one interviews pursued in the second half of the first year. The compilation of the information has been up-dated by circulation of a number of drafts as they changed. These draft chapters often became the centerpiece of discussions at meetings in the third year.

As we explored deeper, I found it problematic extracting meaning around many different issues. In the interests of exploring deeply rather than variously,
some material in this chapter has been dealt with before where it offers insights to another issue, or in another context, reflects a different meaning.

Gradually the patchworks come together. We collect individual pieces at different times in the life of the group and re-arrange these pieces, guided by group input as we look at the larger pattern of the research emerging.

Overview of Issues

Two major issues that emerged repeatedly, deserve attention and have their own chapters.

Specifically, these were our understandings and experiences around power (chapter 10) and our preferences and resulting designs for working with integrity (chapter 7).

Other issues of concern dealt with in this chapter are:
1. Co-operation and collaboration
2. Change for emancipation and opportunity for learning for all
3. Conflict approaches
4. Opportunities others don't want
5. Structured and perceived limitations
6. Parents or not
7. Success
8. Support, relationships, friendship and the role of mentors
9. Gender issues in the workplace

Co-operation and collaboration form the basis of our preferred styles and we find out how we do it.

With equity and co-operative styles preferred, the approach to conflict is one of 'Ah- What an Opportunity' We see the naming and confronting of difficulties as opening doorways to the possibilities of improving a situation. We acted because a situation was either not good for us, or we were advocating change for others. We explore and acknowledge milestones along our pathWays. By looking at what some women did with Opportunities Others Don't Want, we thus see some alternative approaches to turn threats into opportunities.

We look at situations we have experienced as blocks in our pathWays, and consider what we did about them. Then, we considered what we learned from those experiences and often apply those problem-solving techniques to present situations. We optimistically share what were our major achievements, satisfactions and how we construct our ambitions and visions to build our construct of success.

When we are parents, there are of course, continuing issues concerning us. This includes the very real limitations that caring for children places on our capacity for professional (paid) work.

Therefore whether we are parents or not, support and where we find it, as Conscious Psychological Self-Nurturing - is an area of ongoing intense co-learning. We always want to know when a concern is aired: “How do you survive that?” In this context we consider our relationships: families, partners and children and their impact on our work. We particularly focus on the role of friendship. This includes our relationship with self, referred to above as the need for Conscious Psychological Self-Nurturing. The value of mentors is also relevant here.
Finally, gender issues stay focussed on the workplace by considering how we experience working in teams of separate or mixed gender.

**What Does this collection of Stories Mean?**

In critical social research it is important to identify issues. Reporting upon these issues even within context, can separate us from the complexity of the individual human (who is also a human-becoming). One report from Electra, with the first raw data derived from only the interviews, stated it was the...

> snapshot rather than the moving picture. One only gets a glimpse of my situation and attitudes at a moment in time. That is not to say that I do not identify with that person or that time or that I react negatively to the description, only that it belies a more complex character and belief system.

Electra named this difficulty so clearly. A summary of research over a limited period of time, does limit our perceptions of those researched. The intention is of integrating our lives - and is represented only in a collection of stills - a montage of the whole woman. My goal is one of exploration within the group context over the finite period of time. Together, we see and understand the living of our Ways and why we do things in these Ways of working.

So why bother researching and thoroughly working with the collected findings? It is my researching experience with groups of people at the analysis stage, that we get a rare picture of the depth of people’s state of being. We are usually able to recognise patterns of behaviour which may or may not be serving those involved. This group had pointed collective and personal responses. The work was useful - to varying degrees, for all the participants of so-varied backgrounds ... and (I considered) wasn’t that also the fun of it?

It is my experience and privilege when working with continuing groups over a period of time, that much deeper meanings and stronger relationships develop bringing about more effective strategies. This is possible through deeper reflections supported by extensive deliberations over the less restricted time frames.

I cultivate a climate of respect in my interpretations. Initially, I was quite nervous when exposing my analyses to the group. I wondered if I was giving a ‘true and fair view’. The feedback I received indicated that they saw the research writings much more as learning, than as judgements. Because I voiced my observations more acutely, each woman learned about different Ways of seeing and doing.

I was aware of the possible tyranny of the collective ‘we’ in the sense of claiming to speak for others without their voice being heard (Luke 1992). Yet, the collective ‘we’ is much stronger politically than that of the individual. These tensions are part of the richness of social analysis. Herein lies the excitement of stepping between the spaces constructed by the generalised ‘we’ and the specificity of ‘I’. The following pages are constructed by all the voices of the research group, with OUR Ways of Working...
1. Co-operation and collaboration

A basic premise I identified early was that co-operation and collaboration form the basis of our preferred styles. From previous research I did with 2 separate groups of Women in Management, there had been a definite preference amongst most women for co-operative work practices. Even those who were aware that they were not team players, still prefer to work in more relational styles rather than the purely directive (Kaufman 1991).

Why this is so is an interesting question. Much is made of the 'nurture' constructivist notion that women are socially indoctrinated to work collaboratively. The essentialist / biological side of the argument says women are 'made' that way. Quite clearly, not all women are.

Hegelsen's study (like Rosener's 1990) described women who work pro-actively in their own Ways, rather than adapting to the masculine culture of the pre-dominant business world. These women succeeded by

"... expressing, not rejecting, 'female' strengths such as supporting, encouraging and teaching, open communications, soliciting input, and in general, creating a positive, collegial work environment.

Hegelsen in Aburdene and Naisbitt 1990 69

While recognising that this presents a traditional framework through which to view women's work practices, I also want to draw attention to current management theory which promotes these same practices for all managers. (This is from a different framework and for different reasons which are articulated in chapter 11.)

My meaning of collaboration and cooperation simply describes work practices which enable and encourage all workers involved in a task. To co-labour means working together. In most situations it is an efficient and effective Way of getting a job done. Following, is a selection of the multiple Ways the women of the research group collaborate in their various workplaces and addressed are some problems arising from that preference.

Virginia prefers collaborative styles of working:

_I need to see the big picture. Need to be alone for getting down the creative work and also get stimulated by and enjoy the collective creative process. I like to be a facilitator of learning, rather than a teacher, and provide a rich learning environment. When managing, I like to consider the big picture, find out others' views and preferences, then design a collective strategy which incorporates much of others' ideas._

There are, of course, women who identify as Directors (using the 'DISC' categories as preferred working styles 1). Such women like Jess find a tension in her stated preference to direct in a collaborative way. She has a

_...frustration of being with other people bumbling along and they don't have the vision._

Isobel had another view.

_We all have the same visions, but some have shutters closed, others have blinds drawn - so they don't get the same view._

1 DISC initiated by Performax as part of their Personal Profile system. CR Manual
And Chris was able to draw out the value and the tension of working collaboratively when we have different views.

That's what I get from the group. My view is valid but I also value all others' view.

While I have enormous respect for everyone here, your style is different from mine and I think that's why I still find it hard to make that connection. We've struggled with issues between ourselves, about understanding the way we work and what matters to each of us and the constraints. A lot of it is just starting to feel all right, because I am just starting to understand and respect the way you are different.

These comments were made by Chris when reflecting upon the group process around the middle of our project. Chris is acknowledging and valuing the range of different Ways of working and alerting us to the time it takes to become familiar with and accept a co-workers style.

Working collaboratively and co-operatively can create many difficulties and tensions. These were often discussed amongst the group. There was a general consensus of: yes it's harder to work this way, and it is also better. We confront the issues as they arise and so save time down the track. We also have that commitment to the outcome when everyone involved has a stake in it.

Meeting colleagues', workers' or client needs
Julie reported her difficulty in empathising with other people.

I can be intellectually aware of others' needs but find it so hard to really understand their feelings towards a situation. My very rational mind can make decisions and steam roller over others.

Julie reminds us very forcefully that being a woman, does not mean she has 'natural' empathy. Empathy, like mothering, has to be learned. If we care enough, we will learn from the 'other' what it is they need us to know. This is true of infants, as well as work colleagues. Empathy takes time and focussed energy; and if we care we will put in that effort.

Chris often lets people who work with her know that she is aware of her inability to hear others, to really listen. She attributes that tendency partly to fear.

I am very intense and think and worry in my head a lot.

Sometimes I think I've worried about people when I haven't.

There's a genuine thing in my head where I am not sure if I've spoken to people about an issue or not.

Chris and Virginia had a revealing event around this issue. When starting to work together on a collaborative women's management project, it was Chris who pointed out to Virginia that "You're not hearing me." The issue involved designing and enacting collaborative ways of working and it was Chris with her awareness of her own tendency to rush ahead, that alerted Virginia she was doing the same thing.

So co-operative learning flows...

Jess too, had the commitment and position that supports co-operative working styles. She noted that for a long time her co-workers had the attitude: "Well you're
the one who is supposed to worry about that!" On the other hand she noticed at times that she did not tell her people all the information they needed. It can be a hard balance, being ‘boss’ and effecting co-operative styles of working throughout an organisation. Paradigms can be mixed, frameworks clash against each other and different team realities and pressures get all tangled up in it as well.

In this example we have a case of people choosing themselves out if they do not agree with changes in the workplace. The team spirit developed to the point that Jess felt comfortable about delegating her job while she was absent on maternity leave. Working half-time for a few weeks while pregnant, made it easier for Jess to let go and fully allow others to take over.

*Time for processing through the issues and time to build effective working relationships - it takes tenacity, commitment and trust to keep with it.*

Her learning hasn’t stopped. She is now pursuing her PhD investigating Learning Organisations (Senge 1990) practices in Australian workplaces. Off she went with her 6-week-old baby to hear Senge’s Australian seminar. Her seminar experience included the complexity of caring for an infant. As she breast-fed her baby she was sitting amongst all the ‘suits’ in the auditorium (feeding her mind at the same time).

2. An emancipatory viewpoint with a commitment to change.

Margaret has dedicated her psychotherapy work to change and to freeing people from their own imposed limitations. She learned her psychosynthesis skills to provide people with tools for change.

 *My work is about change. I have faith in change happening. Everybody is changing always. So I intervene because I don’t have any choice. It’s just a natural process.*

 *My style is processing - a natural style, intuitive.*

Like many women, Margaret took an *intuitive* preference and enriched it with many *learned* skills to build her store of knowledge and understanding. Because of her commitment to on-going learning she can provide a range of strategies to support people through change.

When Margaret was asked by a member of the group, why do you do what you do? She replied:

*I just find it fascinating. I really care about human beings. I have a really inquisitive nature. I find it a very enriching experience.*

Margaret’s inquisitiveness can lead her to probing areas that people may not be ready to investigate by themselves. Margaret allows people to work in their own frames. However, my experience as a friend and client has been different. Margaret ‘probes’ my psyche in everyday conversations. The occasional professional sessions have alerted me to identify issues to work on and so my psyche works away at these issues in its own time. Enlightenment arises, new visions, options and possibilities can occur. So, I usually end up doing something about the issue or become able to let it go. In this Way, I have experienced Margaret’s bringing about change through her psychosynthesis intervention methods. As a friend, she intervenes more with me, than she would with clients who would only consult with her for an hour a week.
Chris, reflecting upon her tendency to workaholism pondered upon:

*The many levels of change... Why do I feel that I have to be involved at all levels?*

Chris' style has changed from the awareness which led her to pose this question early in our project. While she is also breaking new trails, she is now more often described as being the supporter of other path-forgers and early-adaptors. It is as if at a broader level, she touches more people. The ripple effect creates more change, more effects, more activism than one leader can make alone. By teaching others how to use the tools, more things get fixed!

Chris recognised that:

> *My style is changing. I liked cooperative ways, but I am a loner. I build my own pictures, and I am learning to be better at facilitating others' change.*

**Why are We So Committed to Change?**

In general terms, group members saw the major causes of social problems in our society to be related to:

- fear
- capitalism
- patriarchy
- unequal distribution of power and resources
- 'buying' the myths
- too few formulating and applying power
- lack of awareness of choices / education

A simplistic list perhaps - which serves to reveal concerns of this group of women.

There was agreement that there are often further problems created by lack of recognition of the problems (or even direct denial). These are the shadows, the things that we tend to hide from ourselves. This type of avoidance is necessary to name because it stops change from occurring. If we pretend the problem is not there, or worse, that we can do nothing about it, then we are not doing anything to change the situation.

These approaches were summarised as:

1. There is no problem (*denial*).
2. Diminishing or trivialising the problem.
3. No solutions. (*We can't do anything because it's problematic*).

In naming these shadows, we are looking at an aspect of disempowerment. This is contrary to what we are working to achieve and is indeed often cited as the reason why *change cannot be brought about*.

As *Changing Women* we wanted to transform any practices which disabled, belittled or in any way, limited people's possibilities. Emancipatory change means freeing all of humanity from imposed limitations. It means food and education for all. Not a small job for *'Changing Woman who teaches the flow of life'*. Given such a global view, Fran Peavey's notion of 'changeview' (Peavey 1986) advocates a worldview that embodies critical social inquiry. The view that can see oppression and asks critical questions which move towards changes.
(strategic questions Peavey 1992). Questions like 'Why is this so?' 'How would the people like their situation to be?' 'What would it take to support their vision?'

To engender change means to challenge the status quo. Such challenges are likely to trigger conflict. So Changing Women need to learn how to process conflict when it arises.

3. Processing Conflict

Our approach to conflict is that of welcoming the opportunity for change. Conflict signals that there is a situation that may support change. This does not mean that it is easy. It seems most of us had to learn how to expand our options, so that we could actually deal with conflict. Learning skills and accepting processes helped us all greatly.

Certainly, the process and learning opportunities offered by the research meetings were eagerly accessed. By the fifth meeting, women were relating their issues and consulting with the group about possible options. Clearly, this had now become a place to process our conflicts.

The issue of 'caring too much' came up with Jess. For her personal conflict at work was particularly difficult with women.

*I don't have it with men, because I don't care enough.*

This observation helped her to understand the detachment found in professional groups. Of course we are not attached to 'people problems' if we don't care!

Grace noticed that avoiding confrontation, can lead to bigger problems further down the track.

*I noticed a weakness for avoiding issues I didn't know how to resolve. When that happens I didn't include other people in problem-solving enough. I know now that if more are involved in a decision, everyone is culpable and everyone enjoys the benefits.*

Kate also considered very carefully, her usual way of handling conflict in the past—that of avoidance. Throughout the process of the research, Kate was actively learning about other choices for conflict management.

*I find it very hard to be confrontationist with male colleagues. As soon as I'm insecure I can't be confrontationist. When talking with male colleagues I have a lot of problems expressing myself because I feel insecure.*

*For example, one of the specialists came to me and asked why hadn't he had any referrals lately? He actually asked had he offended me? I had a funny feeling that it was because one of my patients died after he had done a procedure; I don't believe the procedure has anything to do with her death, but I think the death may have prompted his query.
But I couldn't confront him and say is that why you've come? Are you worried that I am holding it against you? I feel as if I should have confronted him and he probably needed me to. I'm just not up-front enough to say something like that.*
Kate is not alone in avoiding confrontation. Talking about our conflicts in the
group, increased our confidence to do something about issues which disturbed us.
There are numerous examples of this through this work such as Grace directly
confronting members she knew did not vote in union elections (especially because the
outcome pushed her team out of power) and Julie addressing her impossible work
load with her Dean.

4. Opportunities others don't want: turning a conflict into a
breakthrough.

It was Kate who turned a desperate no-income situation, into the right time to
start her own practice. After being effectively dismissed from a small-town practice
because the partners did not approve of her working when she had young children of
her own, she 'bit-the-bitter-bullet' they shot at her and with the strong
encouragement of her husband, opened her own practice. At the time her husband
was a student again, changing careers. Kate was then the only bread-winner.

Grace's response to identifying opportunities led her to notice that she had
taken up positions that were vacant at what for her felt like the wrong time:

There are a number of times when I have taken up positions when
no one else is prepared to do it. ... my involvement in other things
meant I was one of the most obvious people to be pushed into one
of those harder positions.

She laughed at using the term 'pushed':

It was like that! One of the most crucial steps was when I became
Assistant Secretary in a politically hostile environment.

I was to nominate a secretary. After eight months and feeling very
insecure it was a painful decision-making process and I made the
decision not to and to do so, several times, and really experienced
how I felt about that each time. Especially when I actually made
the decision which was filled with fear and trepidation and lack of
confidence in my ability.

It was only when I had a talk with a friend of mine who is a very
strong feminist when I was very upset, that I became very clear
about these sorts of personal issues. She has a strategy which is
very useful which is:

"Don't think the boys know any better"

Which was of course true and which was why I had criticisms
about the previous secretary.

"But its all bluff," continued my friend. "You can do that too and
you can do it better because you'd be interested in doing more
than bluff. That is why you are so self-critical anyway. In any
case you can treat it as a game or as a practice run, then it doesn't
matter if you lose."

Of course that is all about taking risks and not worrying about
what the outcome is. Not worrying if you're losing. And its a
funny contradiction the boys have. Despite the fact that they are
often so personally bound up with what they're doing, they're
often prepared to take risks too. And maybe not so bound up in
the outcome. So I jumped in feet first.
So we hear a story of recognising the risk-taking involved, the bluffing; the bravado of “acting-as-if” we know what we are doing all along. The same technique stumbled upon by Isobel and Virginia, where we ‘act-as-if’ we are confident; act-as-if we know what we are doing, until we are confident and we are sure of our knowledge; a strategic game play which can carry us through.

Jess too, gained her position as Coordinator of a national childcare co-operative because no-one else wanted that difficult position. She was in Sydney at the time, wanting to become a full-time student (Masters in Economics) and didn’t have a job. She was encouraged (perhaps even persuaded) to apply for the job as her colleagues recognised the need for a strong political player in that position.

Jess also notes that it was a different opportunity she grabbed when she moved away from her city of origin (originally accompanying a male partner who was to do a PhD). Like many of us, Jess left to strike out on her own, away from her family in another city. She believed this was an important part of her own development.

5. Structured and perceived limitations - Threats.

Grace in her first position as a full-time union official found herself in a very hostile environment. She represented what the city newspaper labelled as the ‘new wave’ of the union. So all those around her were not her people. She faced an office full of opposition people and had no ally. After returning from a week’s leave to act as Branch Secretary, her key would not work. In her absence the locks had been changed!

She could not access a telephone, her files, or anything that was her own working materials. To handle such a dangerous situation Grace talked with a friend experienced in political confrontation.

_I rehearsed with her the whole confrontation. It took some work to move my voice from a squeak to a strong assertion. It was terribly important that I worked with a woman on this. It was only by being a woman that my friend could recognise the personal responses in handling a strategy. Men will talk about strategies without the personal outcomes being handled._

Grace gave the story to the media. At the next election her team moved from being a new wave, to becoming the tidal wave. Grace was elected as Branch Secretary and held this position for five years. She chose not to stand for re-election a third time, once she saw that her team was well established.

Isobel described a set-up in a new job. A very young woman, she took the position of Personnel Manager in a large commercial retailing firm. Interviewed by the General Manager she was however responsible to the Store Manager.

_The GM told me to use my feminine wiles if I had difficulties, yet the Store Manager told me I was abrasive. This ‘abrasive’ label stuck with me. The outcome was that I shut down on stuff that I was really good at doing. I felt if only I could do it better, there wouldn’t be this problem. I can see now that I was working from the personal model when others were working from the political model. I stuck it out for 6 to 12 months and left when I was pregnant._
There is a tendency for women to interpret such difficult situations arising because of their own personal style. Yet many of these situations are political set-ups when an innocent walks straight in and faces the wild leopard. This leopard (the organisation) does not (at that time) care whom it is threatening to chew up and consume. We just look like easy bait. This is a victim's viewpoint and I believe it must be changed with knowledge and strategies if we are to be effective political players (Wolf 1993a).

One of the first shifts we can make is realising the organisation is not an entity; that official procedures and 'the way things are done around here' are all constructed by people. These people can change the 'culture'. As a member of the organisation we are some of those people who can change the organisational leopard's spots.

Many workers in their naive years, will recognise such situations. As indicated, women will often blame themselves (internalise), where men will tend to blame the situation itself (externalise) (Schaef 1985, Tannen 1992, Elgin 1993). Grace recognised the imminent danger of her situation and looked for personal support. She needed to handle the political situation professionally and successfully. These issues are taken up and developed further in the next two chapters.

Jess' work capacity has been affected by poor health at times, and she works at keeping up her strength, both physically and psychologically. This strength is also fed by work itself.

*I have to work on social change stuff. I feel I don't do enough with the constituency, too much with government and not enough with "the great unwashed", the powerless.*

Jess's political views are active on the 'left of left'. Her very tenacity with her politics has at times threatened her career. This characteristic has also been an asset as it gave her the opportunity to work inside Parliament with a senior member for 2 years.

Electra emphasises her loyalty to people rather than to systems.

*I have sacrificed success.*

Her preferred style of success does not sacrifice other people to achieve it. She recognises that

*unless motivated by or admiring a person, I can't operate in a system.*

When Electra was confronted with just this situation she

*walked away. It was not a sacrifice. I always felt I had choices.*

What Electra has done since she 'walked away' is set up a work system that honours the people in it. As an equal partner in her own business, she has surrounded herself with work colleagues with whom she wants to work and also selects her clients to ensure she works with or for people she respects. Her response is pro-active in creating change by leaving a 'sick' system (Schaef 1985) and developing a 'Learning Organisation' (Senge 1990).

Sexuality in the workplace is a complex issue and not a straightforward one for lesbians. There was a lot of personal and professional emotion caught up in Chris's experience when she was demoted from a local government position.
I thought it would mean that I was a failure and that people would perceive I was a failure. It was the most growing experience. I had to think of what went wrong? What was my fault? Why I became a victim?

The biggest thing was that people had different perceptions because of me. I always could convince people that the way I saw things was right. I had a loss of power and learnt about losing control. This was some years ago and it significantly changed me. I had a genuine loss of faith in myself.

In the past Chris feared exposure of her sexuality. Yet when the above situation occurred;

...everybody involved knew I was a lesbian. When I walked out of the local government job, a senior supervisor rang my partner, concerned that she should be around to look after me while I was so upset.

The outcome of such a potentially devastating experience was that Chris had a breakdown and worked through a lot of issues. The employers supported 3 months stress leave while she took time to look after herself. I worked through a lot of personal stuff in the workplace. If I hadn't had 3 years previously in therapy I was enough of a manic-depressive personality that it could have broken me. It gave me a chance to act out stuff that I had dealt with in therapy.

Learnings around loss-of-control are never easy. My own career turning points have been in response to 1) being sacked and then going on to further studies and 2) being stuck (denied opportunities over and over again) so that I stepped side ways, at first on study leave and then resigned my position. The outcome was a job that supported my research: creating my own career without anyone above me saying 'no, you can't do that'. I have learned that feeling a 'loss-of-control' can lead me to take control and exercise options that I would not have initiated without feeling pushed. For me when it is consistently not going the Way I think it should, then maybe there is another Way. It has only taken me about 25 years to learn that one. It sounds like Chris had accelerated learning. She is now very philosophical about experiencing blocks being able to melt down her perception of the block until it becomes liquid. She has supported me in being able to do that too.

Kate spoke of her way of using casual language. It has been a difficulty for others at times. To a patient diagnosed with hepatitis, she commented on possible causes with:

It must be the company you keep.

And she worried about the possible impact of her off-the-cuff comment.

How often it seems that as women, we worry about the impact of our words upon each other. It is possibly symptomatic of our tendency to internalize our concerns. Clearly the awareness of possible sensitivities, leads us to improve our relationships and this flows on into improved working situations.
6. Being Parents or Child-free

How did being a parent or not, impact on our work practices and possibilities?

Grace was very aware that not being a parent:

...makes my work life bloody easier. It makes it easier for me to
do my job. It means I can stay back to attend meetings after work.
I have a greater freedom on how I spend my time. I'm not
exhausted from home life and it doesn't affect my paid work

I am having thoughts about having or not having children. I
have to plan it between elections for example. I would have to
structure my work more, to have less responsibility. That would
be good. It could be very stressful too.

It's still an open question.

A year after stating this, Grace is planning to create the time and space for
motherhood. She chose to not stand for re-election and is in a work position that
would be more flexible in supporting parenting.

Jess is clear that having her own children was very much a part of her
life-script.

I really want to have children I've wanted to for 5 years and
would have had 5 years ago, but the relationship was not there.

Even now, I think of what jobs can I stay in, or go to, to ensure
maternity leave. I'm now thinking of more stability. I never
thought I would think like that.

Every journalist asks me if I have kids.
(This is of course, because Jess heads up a childcare organisation.)
...then, they share their own experience with childcare.

It should be possible. I would work less to make it possible. The
personal relationships are the most important in my life. Work
gives me self-esteem, status and satisfaction that I am doing
something useful.

I have a higher priority now at 33 than 5 years ago. I'd prefer to
have a child in the next couple of years. It's amazing I want
children, as my mother spent her whole life regretting having
children and not having a career. She is a trained primary school
teacher, has a gallery, designs herb gardens, is a journalist (in
ITA and the AGE) and has taught Art in secondary school and
TAFE.

Jess articulates the dilemma of the professional woman who is biologically,
emotionally and in relationship ready to have children. The big-no, the huge,
question is: “How does pregnancy and childcare fit into my professional life?”
Jess is clearly aware of the effects having children had on her own mother's career prospects. The reality is, even with maternity leave and access to quality childcare, having a baby has an enormous impact on a woman's capacity for work, flexibility in professional possibilities and her own energy level. We all know that if we are not in the workplace it goes on without us. It is never easy to pick up the pieces somewhere down the track.

The shift could be phrasing the question so it says: "How does my professional life fit into pregnancy and childcare?" If we look at women and their whole life situations as the norm for work structures, we would be working with a very different and more appropriate reality.

"It is time to reverse these roles, to start with the woman worker, and design regulations around their pattern of work."

Bacchi et al 1992 11

All the women responding as mothers, every one of them, marked motherhood as a major issue.

A few months after the birth of her first child, Julie was prevented from continuing her job because of inflexible work hours.

*Having my first child meant I could not continue in a job I enjoyed, under the conditions necessary to manage an infant and work.*

Julie was the office manager of a school. She applied to the management committee to create a job-share position, permanent part-time. It was decided that one person only should hold the job. After Julie left one person was appointed and within 6 months the job extended to one and a half positions. Julie was the first appointment to the office position and set up all the accounting and filing systems. There were many advantages to the running of the school, to keep her in the office. The management committee was male dominated, and very rigid in its outlook at the time.

Virginia is commenting here as a member of the school. My husband was on the management committee arguing for the flexibility that Julie needed. Julie has noted the political and assertive learnings that arose from that experience. She would be in there battling now. At the time she was requested to leave the meeting while it was discussed. She had no opportunity to put forward her case.

*The only strategy I allowed myself, was to accept the situation, instead of being upset.*

*I was conscious that I wanted to minimise the distress and potential for destruction that the issue was causing in the workplace. It polarised a group of supporters and opposers. I felt it was destructive to the institution. The choice I had was to leave the job or work full-time. I had NO childcare support. So the outcome was, I left the job.*

Observing this injustice along with others, led me to launch this research. There are thousands of stories like this that are never told. Julie turned to a more flexible (and more tenuous) work situation after resignation.
I found teaching adults part-time a more supportive situation. The hours were flexible enough. I found emotional support from colleagues and practical paid support from family day-care and emotional support from the Nursing Mothers Association of Australia (NMAA).

In my present position, the major problems arise with school holidays. I have (paid) support from friends’ older children or family or vacation care. Even when childcare was offered at work, they would not take pre-schoolers and I did not want to split brother and sister. When there is illness, I feel very unsupported by my spouse and grandparents.

Julie has commented that the extended family do not see her career as important. There is an assumption that she has primary and probably sole responsibility for the children, whether she works or not.

Julie wasn’t the only one who had direct and immediate barriers to working, because she became a mother. Kate’s story began earlier in this chapter when she was first told she had to stop work, because she was pregnant. She was working for a general practitioners’ practice in a western country town at the time. She left, and joined another practice, in a mountain town.

I had lots of childcare problems. There was often conflict between motherhood and work. My kids spent countless hours in hospital waiting for me. There is conflict with time as my hours are so erratic.

Their father is the stable person in their life. It’s a classic reversal of parenting roles. Fathers parent differently. Other things are important to them. Now there are problems with homework.

My mother-in-law has been a big help with childcare. There are problems when the kids are sick. I don’t know the answers for childcare. I’m not sure big centres are the answer. The best childcare for me, has been by personal arrangement.

I’ve tried all sorts of childcare, including a private Nanny. Continuity is difficult. In day care they get a lot more infections.

Gloria has ensured flexible jobs so that someone is at home when her son is there. She shares this arrangement with her husband.

We totally share the responsibility and did not need other support. Neither of us ever had a job where the flexibility did not support childcare needs. So it has affected both of us in the choice of our jobs.

A value arising from that is that the job has kept in proportion with the needs of both my husband and I as individuals and the child.

My husband says, “The best thing we ever created is our son.”
Kay speaks of this need for flexibility too. While Gloria and her husband have managed childcare through part-time work, Kay has pursued a full-time career with little support from her husband. An academic position can allow for some flexibility with time.

*I have to be organised. I have to be flexible enough to drop things at a moment’s notice if a kid is sick. Being an academic, except for class times, I can drop things and go.*

*I allow myself not to feel guilty anymore if I have to go home for the kids. That is very recent.*

Kay has described her home as the one that all the kids on the street tend to hang out in. She has also had some stray kids staying at different times. Now she is separated from her husband, the children are a support to her too.

Among this group there are varying models of childcare responsibility. Julie and Kay have struggled with the traditional view of other family members, that childcare is primarily the mother’s responsibility and therefore her problem! And/or no other support was available. Virginia, as major bread-winner with husband working from home, has always had home-based childcare including family day care as well as a husband providing care. Gloria and her husband co-parent equally, which is the case with Chris and her partner.

*My parenting has always been a priority. It limits where I work and what work I do. Because I’ve been a co-parent, for many years I let my partner carry the load. I acted in a male way, without acting properly for the responsibility of primary parenting. The first 10 years were like that. The last 10 years we reversed the roles, but my partner would never abuse me, as I abused her.*

The issue of the adult relationships needing time-out away from the kids was raised by Chris.

*There’s a hell of a need for childcare support, formal and informal. It’s a primary issue for all families. For any relationship to be growing, there needs to be a mutual exchange between parenting, to give people a break. The most significant area of reconditioning that needs to happen, is how to share the responsibility.*

Chris advocates a shared family response, to give carers a regular break. What worked for their situation was the children going to their fathers on fortnightly weekends. This changed as the children get older, and it became more difficult for Chris and her partner to have ‘alone’ weekends together.

*It really matters that the kids are in a nurturing environment. It’s always been a priority in our lives. That they have a quality school and care; that we have quality time with them ourselves and occasionally, good birthdays.*

Margaret as a sole parent has always had childcare struggles.

*I couldn’t go to work without the support of friends and my partner by caring for my son. I need childcare in the evenings, overnight (when nursing on night duty, often in the city). The idea of creches are wonderful yet all we tried did not suit my son.*
I would not use it as he has had so much after-school care when younger and would not use it now. I’d like to see big companies and public institutions subsidise childcare. And the costs should be fully tax deductible.

I’d like a baby-sitting system where I could be a member of an agency, like barter or LETS. ²

I always feel awkward asking friends for childcare. Fortunately just now, my son likes being on his own. But I do need to organise companionship for an only child. Its easier to ask single parents, than others who don’t need return favours so much.

Once a fortnight from Friday 3 PM to Sunday 4 PM he goes to his father. It takes time for me to adjust to him gone, especially when he goes on a long holiday out of the country, with his father.

A year later her son left to live in the city with his Dad. She has had huge adjustments to make to cope emotionally with his departure. Margaret also accepts it is a step in her son’s personal maturity to want it and act upon it.

Jess gave a different view to the idea of tax-deductible childcare payments. She advocates and lobbies for direct payments as a more efficient and effective method of supporting childcare as taxation deductions favour the more well-off and don’t support the poor. Childcare is seen as a service provided for the children, rather than for the parents. Direct payments also ensure an avenue to monitor and promote quality childcare.

Back in the 1950’s. childcare was a big problem for women contending with both work and children. Our group’s grandmother, Ariadne, knew this well.

I am more strongly a parent, than any other role. Parenting has added many difficulties to working life and I wouldn’t have traded any of that.

I noticed the present tense here. Ariadne works with her daughter in the Conflict Resolution Network. She is usually her daughter’s childcare for trips overseas and to other cities, etc.

Childcare meant financial sacrifices, for quality. I don’t believe others should sacrifice like that today. Deductible.

The problems of how to balance (paid) work with childcare and quality relationship needs, was another motivation for this research. I would often look at a woman (a mother) operating at a higher level than me. I observed she had great energy and commitment to the job and wondered how she balanced that with her kids at home. The reason for developing this concern arises from my own struggle with this issue. The following is my response during interview.

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² Local Exchange Trading System - a co-operative trading system developed in Courteney, Canada by Michael Linton in 1982. Several LETS systems now operate in Australia. Margaret lived where there is the largest group in Australia, over one thousand members.
My childcare needs have been simplified with my husband working from home. He has always been the major carer, except for the earliest infant years. Because I wanted to stay home with my children I had no permanent position until after 3 children passed the infant stage. This meant that child-rearing delayed my career by 10 to 15 years. I have always felt it was fortunate that I did get my base qualifications before and during child-raising, so that after, I had my degrees to use.

I also learnt a great deal of my professional skills from my voluntary involvement in Nursing Mothers Association of Australia (NMAA). I learnt group leadership, teamwork and management, training and counselling skills here, as well as a great deal about politics. I greatly appreciate the professional value of all of these.

I do limit myself in my work, because I want to work near my kids and have time to be with them. Promotions have always meant travel and the time travel takes as well as the cost. So I haven't gone for any likely promotions.

I felt quite stuck at this time

I do have a huge tension about my beliefs and enjoyment in quality interaction with the kids and wanting to develop my career further. It also limits the time I can spend on work projects.

I keep thinking, if I didn't have kids, I could support myself through a PhD. But I wouldn't trade them in and I would have them again. I have enjoyed every stage of parenting, even though all the ecstasies probably are balanced with agonies. Somehow I tend to forget the pain of the agonies after they're over.

Isobel is passionate too, about being a parent.

Its affected anything I have done. I cannot live and breathe without being a parent.

Isobel finds her support in three main areas.

1) My husband at first sort of supported me in letting me know that he thinks its OK. He now actively encourages me to do my work and study by doing things around the house.

2) There are support systems such as Daycare and Occasional Care and our au pair. I opted for an au pair. Daycare was really difficult to manage with 3 kids. I used it after school for one boy. I tried all the childcare schemes.

3) My mother provides an enormous amount of support, if I ask her. Overall, that is not very often. When I am away, Mum will stay with the kids at her house. Mum doesn't think I should work. She can't understand it. My aunt discusses it with her and she can't understand it either.
Isobel raises the issues of support through our own families. Fathers, even the most loving and thoughtful ones, can take time to realise the amount of work and focussed attention children need. Bittman's report on *How Australian Families Use Time* (Bittman 1992) showed the greater amount of the load being carried by mother, whether she was working outside the home or not.

For our mothers, those who did not work outside home, our different life-style can be confronting. My Mum thought my teaching school was great because I would be 'off' when the kids were, after school and holidays. She did not understand the pressures of work outside these times, whether I was teaching adults, doing corporate training at weekends, or running workshops at night.

For us to live our lives fully, we need a whole system shift; a 'change-view' (Peavey 1986). One where the whole of society sees a collective responsibility for all people: children, frail-aged, anyone who at anytime in their life may need care. This is a big shift from the cocoon of nuclear families. Yet there are changes occurring. Our households are now made up of different combinations than Mum, Dad and the kids. The official definition of family promoted for the International Year of the Family (1994) is given as *generations of caring*:

> "The National Council for the International Year of the Family prefers an inclusive definition of family life, because it recognises the functions of care, nurturing, intimacy and support, particularly for dependent family members, which Australian families have in common. To do otherwise will exacerbate social division, marginality and disadvantage. The concept of family involved *generations of caring*; it includes two parents with dependent and older children, sole parent families, step-families, blended families, siblings caring for each other, spouse/partners caring for each other, those with disability, families whose structures and relationships may differ according to race, ethnicity, religious faith and cultural background.
>
> National Council for the International Year of the Family 1994

From 1986 to 1992, there was a 23.7% increase in the number of families where there were neither couples, nor single parents with or without children (ABS 1993 18). These 'other' families would have included Chris and her female partner and 'blended' kids from past marriages.

Clearly, child-related complications impact enormously on these women's careers. Even those who were child-free at the start of this project, were strategically planning and manoeuvring their work positions to a place that supported maternity leave and allowed enough flexibility for quality care.

For those of us who provide care,

*workplace flexibility is essential.*

Most workplaces neither support nor encourage flexibility. These issues are taken up and developed further in chapter 11. At this point I will stay focussed on the lived experience of these women.
Julie, Isobel, Fran, Virginia and Margaret supported pregnancy and infant care by part-time/casual work to ensure their ability to respond to infant needs: Electra and Ariadne were working in their own businesses. Electra paid a full-time nanny, Ariadne juggled infants and work—not easy. Chris was not working for paid work, yet worked as the supportive wife of a religious minister. She describes this as a very demanding time in her life. As stated, Kate was dismissed from a country practice for daring to juggle professional and family life. Only Grace in full-time public sector employment and Jess contracted to a political lobby group for childcare have the base support of maternity leave and possible flexibility for caring needs.

Our work, social and political systems have not and do not yet support child-rearing as a priority of their workers. We have a long way to go. Meanwhile it is by far mostly women who literally carry the baby and for many, we work with no security of tenure, sick pay or holidays.


There are many rewards we experience from birthing. Kate’s greatest achievements and satisfaction comes from delivering people’s babies. Especially in cases where it is really sick, being able to:

stabilize them, do everything right and give them optimum care.

I speak personally, as well as for my community, when I say it is a great loss to birthing mothers and babies that Kate has given up obstetrics. This is not because she doesn’t still love it but her partner in the practice chooses not to continue because of the cost of medical negligence insurance. Without a partner to stand-in when she is away, Kate cannot support the service. Insurance covering obstetrics for a General Practitioner at the time of writing costs over $7,000 a year. In Kate, we are losing a GP who accepts and supports home-birth in low risk cases and provides a quality holistic service to all mothers.

Kate has a particular love for her elderly patients.
I have an incredibly important role. I do little for them, but it is important to them and it keeps them well. I add to their dignity. It is both worthwhile and a pleasure. Its preventative medicine even though to me its trivial.
Kate regularly visits many elderly people in their home.
I might tell them to buy a new bed or a heater rather than administer direct medical care. It takes so little and adds so much to their lives.

Like many people in the group Kate’s work also encompasses a teaching role.
I enjoy teaching. I find it satisfying running programs for the resident Doctors. I run a forum for all the GPs in the area and it is satisfying when they turn up and we have a good speaker.

Kate very much enjoys a sense of community around her.
I am satisfied when I take my 2 kids to school and all the little kids will run up and say hello. Its nice being their doctor and they feel positive enough about themselves to say hello.
There are personal satisfactions in her long-term relationship.

There is satisfaction too in staying married after 17 years despite it all.

Kate enjoys her music playing, she finds it is very satisfying to join with others in a small chamber orchestra.

When we spoke of ambition at first she was not sure if she wanted to continue what she is doing or go on to something else in medicine.

To do something else may involve more commitment than I'm prepared to give. In medicine anything is challenging. For more training I would need to put in an eighty-hour-week and I'm only prepared to do fifty-five-hour weeks. There are other things in my life.

When I get out of General Practice I will probably do some form of teaching / specialist training that requires a lot of hours. I would have liked to have done Obstetrics and Gynecology. Philosophically I don't agree with the general holding of medical status; that the specialist is better than the generalist. I don't agree. Although many things need specialists to fix.

Kate was concerned about what would happen to her current patients if she switched to specialist training.

My little old ladies would miss me. Women tend to use medical services more and amongst the older population there are a lot more single women than men and they need reassurance that they are healthy.

Kate regularly joins her bushwalking group into the wilderness, on short or long trips.

I don't want to become a total workaholic. I prefer to not work harder and have more space.

Then followed a rather concerned afterthought;

...If I have any stamina left.
I've modified my professional ambitions because I do have my personal ambitions.

I have mentioned earlier that Kate completed a Masters in Psychological Medicine for GPs during this project. A big inducement was that she could do this one day a week in the city and so it accommodated her current work schedule. This meant she did not have to give up anything, but she certainly took on a fair work load to succeed in it! Because the program is designed for GPs and so was planned to fit into their work schedules, she is able to develop her professional learning without stopping current commitments.

As part of her thesis Kate developed and trialled a workbook to assist other GPs manage psychological problems within their practice.

Margaret, a Registered Nurse, has for more than 25 years loved the medical side of her career. Bringing up her son was her first response to identifying her achievements.
Margaret wanted a career change after nursing. In a range of professional activities, nursing has been continual.

All my jobs are an achievement because they're a challenge and satisfying.

When referring to personal relationships Margaret emphasised that she gains:
…enormous satisfaction from friends and keeping relationships.
And there can be hard work in that.
Male relationships don't rate as highly as female friends. They're different and absolutely vital to me. I really love and enjoy living with my male partner. My women friends are particular; there is a level of intimacy, openness and support …and fun.

Margaret's ambition is to continue developing as a therapist.
Perhaps in 5 or 10 years widen or deepen my therapy through training or reading or experience,

She noticed she is nervous about considering this.
I feel intellectually inhibited. I would like to develop new thinking through the therapy I do. I had no idea I was so ambitious. I want to develop so my mind is a sharp instrument I use.

Because I'm a human being, it's essential for me not to waste my time on this planet. I have a duty and need to use whatever talents or gifts I've been given to the best of my ability. Otherwise it's a hedonistic experience. Part of me does not want to challenge myself because it's scary and hard work. I need a push; there's a bit of fear in stretching myself.

Margaret has since taken on further personal analysis with a Jungian-trained analyst. She sees this as professional development and is training herself so that she can use dreamwork much more with her own clients. It is interesting to consider that psychology demands personal development for professional practitioners. She is undertaking a Master's degree and continues to learn from workshops on therapeutic concerns such as Trauma Counselling.

Margaret's personal and professional visions are:
...integrated -if I'm able to develop in a way I want to, it has enormous benefits to my work. If I'm falling apart I can't help other people. I need understanding to teach and I would like to feel I can inspire just as teachers have inspired me.

Professional recognition of the value of one's own skills is something that women particularly, often deny or belittle. Margaret at first said this was her ego speaking.

Her ambitions don't stop with the professional.
Spiritually I want to become a goddess. I don't apply myself as much as I could or maybe I apply myself in a different way.

Integrating the inner world with the outer is very important to Margaret and Gloria, too. Gloria considers:
...working on my own psyche; understanding who I am... has been the foundation for everything.

Relationships too are listed as achievements.
Lasting 22 years with one person... It's constantly a challenge.
And for Gloria:

*Birth was an incredible experience - absolutely primeval. I just can't say how astonishing it was for me.*

Gloria's ambitions:

*...are four-fold: to keep working with disadvantaged women basically. I like working with others too, but women are my main interest.*

*I am a teacher and I really relish sharing and learning. I want to earn enough not to worry about paying the bills. I have a very unrealistic view about money - a poor person's view. As soon as I get anything I spend it I don't have the put-aside-for-the-future, mentality.*

Gloria's Way of preparing for the future is more pragmatic by 'doing things' rather than putting away money.

*My deep love of gardening, will be translated into a Permaculture system.*

She has a practical goal she is working towards; to have a:

*...largely self-supporting life-style before I'm 50, when my son will be more or less, independent.*

Gloria has good reason to create a self-supporting life-style. She has always been an artist (her degree is in Fine Arts) and although at times the practice of pottery and other arts and crafts has been put aside, her interest, learning and collection of skills and materials continues. A recent achievement was learning to do bead-work and successfully selling her silk paintings and dyed scarves, ties and hangings.

*I look forward to developing the courage to leap into my own work with no other person's deadlines. There's a huge well of fear and uncertainty about that. The other aim is inner peace.*

Learning to think and act as a business women to sell her silks, is a step toward her goal of living from her own art work. She aims to integrate working with disadvantaged students and working on her self-development.

*The two make a balance of the outer and the inner.*

Gloria often talked about the need for this integration. At meetings she would address 'shadow' issues. She wanted to understand the inner drives that we did not always want to look at.

As previously noted, the same sort of integration is inherent in the world of Ariadne who quite simply says that her greatest achievements are...

*First that of raising 2 fine kids*

These 'kids' are now 'middle-aged' adults. She raised her own daughter and a nephew and calls them fine adults because they are:

*...warm, caring contributing human beings; two people of good will.*

A number of times when I was with Ariadne, she boasted that she kept her husband alive for 35 years. When they married, he had a prognosis of life for only 2 years. She proudly announced:

*...of course he had to die overseas; I wouldn't let him here!*
Professionally she sees her achievements in:

- the Peace and Conflict Resolution program of the United Nations Association of Australia.
  
  *I believe it matters and that it makes a difference.*
- the Media Peace Awards which she instigated
- her launch of the “Employment as if People Matters” program
- and programs and lobbying to change the nature of the UN itself

Ariadne will take risks in trying to do something and in relationships to get something important done.

*You can’t do this and win popularity polls.*
*I was asking the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gareth Evans if he would take a leading role in the establishment of the Asian Pacific Conflict Prevention Centre. He is an impatient man and he was not inclined to hear me. It would have been so easy to withdraw, I felt this is more important than making things more comfortable for Gareth, and therefore more comfortable for me, so I just hung in there. I didn’t respond with anger as anger is something that doesn’t work for me. My first concern was not his esteem for me as a consultant.*

*I was very proud to persuade Bill Hayden to establish a National Consultative Committee on Peace and Disarmament -through all the cuts in budgeting and the change of minister, it has survived. I wouldn’t say its fulfilled my vision for it, but we hang in there. We say our piece and it acknowledges the fact that community organisations and the non-government stream has a right to be heard.*

At 70-plus Ariadne has achieved much effective change and continues to do so. When the question was put about future ambitions -she certainly hasn’t run out yet! The question is indeed relevant.

*I want to see my small property company running more smoothly and taking less of my time for emergencies. I want to see the (CONFLICT RESOLUTION) network expanding so that it is more influential internationally. I’d like to see its funding problems solved. Most of all I’d like to be building globally a CR community of which local community is a part.*

These ambitions are important to Ariadne because:

*We do live in a global village and we had better talk with each other. This is a small and endangered planet.*

As we spoke, this statement had a sense of urgency about it for her. We were then talking during the anti-communist Russian coup of August 1991. She had spent some days trying to get in touch with Pyotr who was working for CR network. Given the revolutionary concept of CR work, his position could have been considered dangerous. She did find him a few days later and he was OK.

Personally Ariadne wants to have good friends around and keep her good health. She has extraordinary energy and normally puts in long work days. *(Work is living and living is work.)*
After a few days with my back out I appreciate good health.

Another personal ambition is to learn computer skills...
... so that truth can run out of my fingers. In computers I see enormous potential for better communication.

For Ariadne too, the personal and the professional visions do both work.
I was never the type who wants the impossible.

A good thought when we see the whole CR Network is working toward global peace.

Grace sees work and personal life inter-related.
My personal happiness is related to my working life. I would like to have more control over my working life so that I could expand areas of personal life - creativity and personal relationships.

Enormously satisfying for Grace is the Women's Conferences her branch of the union runs every year.
I really enjoy them, they're great fun. It's also work that is not reacting to a crisis. We set out to do it for ourselves. We have a lot of fun preparing for them and running the conferences.

An achievement is:
...being able to get groups of members taking action when otherwise they wouldn't have been prepared to stand up for themselves. It is especially satisfying where it is a group who previously were not able to take action before.
Various union disputes have changed people because they have been involved; because they worked together and looked after each other and achieved a positive outcome.
In a small way they might see they can change the circumstances that affect them.
Of course that's not always guaranteed and that's where it's very difficult.

Enabling people to act for themselves is a strong emancipatory ethic with Grace. Later we leave her being able to hand continuity of the team over to a new Branch Secretary. She is into a new phase in her career.

Before Grace became a full-time union official she thought that she was prepared to work with anyone. Now she knows she's not prepared to work with some of them. So she believes it is better to do something to change things.
I can do something more effective in pushing the boundaries I want to push. I would only go into politics as a team.

She recognises the power inherent in being inside the policy-making bureaucracy, and this is the area she has entered on her return to the public service.

I am in a key position to learn lots about what is done and how. In lots of ways to achieve the things I want to achieve would be a snack because the government is manipulated by the bureaucracy all the time. The bureaucracy has tremendous power because there is such a work force there.
Federal Treasury for example has captured a line and managed to push that to the government.
These issues are important to Grace because...

Access to employment is a keystone to issues of social justice. Having access to adequate salary and the ability to have power in the workplace is critical to self-esteem and the ability to make choices about their life-style. It's a critical area to work in and that's why I am so angry about what is happening about employment at the moment. It is extremely important to address unemployment and unions must take on this responsibility.

Jess initially found it difficult to identify what were her greatest achievements as she said:

I am never satisfied.

She is pleased with a great range of political policy and services development listed here:

- working with Rape Crisis
- producing volumes of reports and the long-term benefit of getting material to publication
- working with a Member for Parliament
  I think that I was good at it. I'm a good minder because I've learned to anticipate needs from working with my Dad.
- The work I did on the ALP women's policy. I wrote the policy for the 1987/88 Women's Conference policy.

Jess' professional ambitions are:

- economic independence to give me less dependence on political views of an employer
- personal strength to continue
- to expand my management skills
- to increase the level of political change

And a long-term goal to work towards is...

to be director of ACOSS (Australian Councils of Social Services) or to have my own consultancy for political change. Note: In the final stage of this research she became a member of the ACOSS board and began her own consultancy work.

This is important to Jess because she sees that...

we are put on this earth to change it, to make it better.

She has achieved her ambition/desire to have a child and wants personal relationships that are a meeting of minds at an intellectual, emotional and political level. Can the professional and personal visions both work?

Yes. I'll just make them work. I'll just change things if they don't. There are lots of really threatened men about. I would temper ambition for a relationship. I find I put relationship needs first.

I found this an interesting revelation from a very successful career woman. It turns out that Jess's current relationship is very important to her. Her male partner is even more ambitious than Jess for environmental as well as social change. He clearly supports Jess' work areas. Together they make a formidable political team and often help each other with strategic, practical and tactical support during campaigns.
Isobel’s children came first chronologically, before her career stepped off the ground. She makes very clear distinctions:

I’ve prioritised what is important in my life. I’ve got very clear that No. 1 is to be successful in my own right. That’s very important to me and goes along with allowing those close to me to be as they are. No. 2 is my relationship with my husband. That is a great achievement in my life and has taken a hell of a lot of work and adjustment. It’s not a dependent relationship but one that is reciprocal and empowering. No. 3 is the children. I had 3 children in four and a half years and I’m still balancing kids with other things.

Isobel wants to do more but she doesn’t know what yet.

I could imagine that now at the top job in my organisation there is nowhere else to go, but I know skills I’ve gathered are really valuable for the next step, I don’t know what it is yet. I don’t want to be in an organisation where I am just a training puppet.

The next step turned out to be a full-time job in psychology education at tertiary level.

I have vague meanderings to write and the CEO title is useful - it gets me into parenting magazines. I enjoy writing books and articles about interpersonal skills and beyond. The way I write invites people to read. It’s important to me not to be locked in. I’m like the story of the caged canary who stopped singing.

Isobel’s personal visions are firmly based upon her professional area:

When I walk along the street I don’t want to keep bumping into people carrying bags of shit. For myself, the goal is to unravel the last bastions of my own personal development. I’ve done all the easy bits and there are some hard bits I’d still like to get to.

So it is easy for Isobel to work in the personal and professional visions together.

The more disconnected the less productive one is.

Isobel is clearly working towards integration and on-going personal/professional development.

Electra is satisfied whenever she does a job well. At the beginning of her career that would include developing the first newsletter for the American Embassy at the age of 21. More recently she enjoyed a hugely successful cocktail party she ran:

Clients’ faxes say it was the best in years.

For Electra to be consciously developing personal strengths is a new starting point.

I’m starting to turn around and look at who the real person is. I started this process after reading in 1988, one of Shirley Maclaine’s books and realised that others were questioning.

Amongst her ambitions she would like to establish with her husband a small company so the business does not have to revolve around them personally.

A more personal ambition highlighted early in the research that would also help professionally is to:

...get more confidence to speak in public. I feel like I cut off part of myself to not do it. It is limiting.
A year after this she had plenty of practice. From her position as executive officer in a professional business women's organisation, she started to comment on advertising that denigrated women. She 'hit' the media. She complained about a Toyota advertisement citing 'there is nothing more comfortable than inside a wide body' text written over a very pregnant naked torso. The next morning at 7.30 am, she was telephoned by Andrew Ollie and asked to be at the ABC studios by 8.30. Well, it's only a few kilometres, but the childcare had to be arranged. However, Electra made it, and from then on was called to do television a number of times; interviews for newspapers and radio soon became comfortable.

How did she do it when she was nervous about public speaking?

_The issue was greater than me._

This simple approach combined with specific training, lifted the inhibiting restrictions off Electra. Once she decided to work on the issue, she participated in an experiential public speaking training workshop and so equipped herself with skills and knowledge for the task. She handled the rest of it very effectively, very politically and ended up advising Toyota on meeting women's needs in advertising. Her skills in handling campaigns no doubt were put to good use.

The media respond to her skills. She is frequently called upon to comment on issues that affect women. Electra is effectively using media opportunities to put forward clear, concise and market-effective arguments for listening and responding to women's needs. She is acting to bring about emancipatory changes.

For Electra, economic security is a pre-requisite to everything else.

_My professional work demands so much time it leaves little to develop personally. This is because I have the economic security bias as a strong first, and so the personal comes in second._

Still, her personal vision is to have a holistic life. When first interviewed, she felt her life was in two separate boxes - family and work, there was little room for Electra. Now with the children a little older, office moved out of home and more people in the work team, Electra has developed a number of opportunities to meet her own personal needs.

With her partner she gathered together a professional support group with like-minded managers to look at current developments and practices in leadership. Jess and her partner were in this group.

_In creating a culture of empowerment I think a leader does create the spirit of the organisation; that like the invisible group's processes the spirit's impact is an important source of power that must be recognised and cultivated. That it can challenge the drift towards conformity when it seeks to empower individuals as individuals._

Electra is seeking to support and build opportunities to empower and enable individuals. By offering structures to support change as she does in her own workplace, as well as within her women's professional organisation, the ripples have an effect far and wide.

Kay spreads enabling skills by her approach to technical education and supporting people learning about new technology.
The way I see the technical education (i.e. technical as in computing) focus is on content, not how people learn better. The key is in improving the quality of how people learn.

She would like:

...a male companion of some sort. I know I have to learn more about myself, changing the patterns of how I get sucked into these relationships and get hurt. I'm pretty hard on myself.

Personally, I'll just have to wait and see what happens. The intent is there to change myself. I've learned as I change, I attract others to me. I have the support of my children, especially my youngest son (seventeen years old).

There is a sense of order around Julie's administrative achievements.

While administering the school I enjoyed getting the money side under control. I did a stocktake of the library (when there was no librarian). I enjoy being very precise.

Is this the mathematician speaking?

During the teaching side of Julie's career she was greatly satisfied teaching Maths to adults, especially to women returning to studies.

Like Kate, Julie gains a lot of satisfaction from music. She sings with a deep and mystical alto voice and plays recorder and piano, and enjoys going to the opera occasionally.

Her ambitions are still somewhat uncertain, although she would like to become the principal of her old primary school in Victoria! Her old principal still in the position at 83, heard she was interested and asked her not to wait. She wants her there now!

Her current work has provided rich opportunities for learning through difficult systemic situations.

Professional life is very important in terms of my own self-esteem and more importantly my own feelings about contributing to society that supports me. It's essential that my career is congruent with my values about work.

Julie's university position was re-structured, her work up-graded and her job was advertised. She succeeded at winning the higher executive officer position which has again been upgraded following job evaluation. Over 3 years Julie learned a great deal about managing people and her own work situation.

I would like to achieve a position where I can recommend overtly (not covertly). I am still nervous about being the one who has the final say, whose butt could be kicked. I don't know what is holding (me) back there.

Julie can see herself in the future in:

...a very elegant tailored suit with a position to match. My own secretary (I have to learn to pass on work) decision making, in the education industry somewhere. I want my children's increasing independence and my partner's professional life to fit in with what I want to do.

My personal vision is my professional vision. The issue of paid employment is tied up with who I see I am.
Virginia's achievements were first identified with her children. Whenever I identify great achievements or great satisfactions in my life, the first response is my 3 childbirthing experiences. The first was in a hospital, and was good and drug-free despite interferences (episiotomy). The other 2 were at home. They were combined spiritual and personal/physical experiences. There was management, research, planning and much negotiation with team members over these memorable occasions.

The other period of great fulfillment was the time of my dying father. He asked his three daughters and one son to help him to die at home. It was as if while caring for infants, and my dying Dad, I felt I was doing exactly the right thing at the right time. Professionally I do occasionally feel that, but there are many more doubts. Where I do feel it, is in a workshop, the classroom or when a planning meeting is alive with creative energy, or when I am researching and writing really powerful stuff (which is many times throughout this project).

I am very pleased we created the mountain community life-style for ourselves and our kids. I am pleased with surviving and lots of times thriving in 22 years with my husband. There have been some dangerously rocky times.

When it comes to focussing on my ambitions, I am still very unsure about specific direction. I keep wanting that special position to be offered to me or to work independently as a research and / or training consultant. I know I enjoy what I am doing now, a mix of teaching / facilitating learning, leading workshops planning, designing researching and writing programs, all using my people skills.

It is important to me that I use my skills to change educational practices. (In schools and in the workplace). In 1966 when at Teacher's College, I was shocked at the lack of teaching skills. I believe I have a lot of valuable input for teacher trainees. Once an educator has these skills, learning opportunities are unlimited on both sides. I am very concerned about the continuing right wing political push for basic skills only. This means that content forces out humanising process from curriculum.

My personal and professional visions correlate. I think globally and have a visionary ideal about humanity working towards a position of honoring all life and Way of being. Ways of working that use and honour both male and female ways of being, including processing needs and content appropriately, and balancing left and right brain thinking and skills. With this I believe we have a chance for peace, and enough creative thinking to feed the world with the resources we have now.

It is essential that the professional and the personal work together for me. One of my greatest frustrations is when the professional needs / pressures, sacrifices the personal needs and
pressures in relationships. The result of this for me is exhaustion and poor health. This is why my work goals include being able to pace myself to meet my physical and psychic needs.

(This last addition is written right at the end of this project:)
I want to develop research for public participation into policy making. While there is a great deal of rhetoric from the range of political parties, I would like to set up systems that take the people's voice into the formation of policy. Further, to generate a feedback loop whereby the effects of the policies are also heard. It would be a fascinating and potentially very powerful area for social change.

Chris' achievements include:
... learning to feel OK about being a mother; learning to feel OK about being a lover; learning to feel OK about being a lesbian. And learning to let go blaming the other in what is not OK for me.

It's been greatly satisfying:
... seeing it safe for other women to come out safely as lesbians. I knew other women saw me as a role model. It used to frighten the shit out of me. Enough women came and said to me "well, you were the first person I knew of."

Over time in my local area, there's been an increasing sense of community with other women and more recently other lesbians. It's a really difficult journey to feel safe in a woman's community in general and to feel OK in a lesbian community as well.

We've worked hard at experiencing some sense of safety with some hetero couples as well. We make sure we do not isolate ourselves and our children in hetero coupling. I'm happy to put energy into relationships with men and male co-workers and energy with male students plus my partners' two sons. I grew up with four brothers in a dominant male environment.

When asked to identify ambitions she offers:
I feel OK about not having any, genuinely. I fight a battle of a conflict of tension in my relationship with my partner and my need to work and be pre-occupied with anything but 'being'.

So much of our energy has been around earning enough money to keep the life-style and main215 aim choices for the kids as well as doing something for ourselves.

The personal and professional vision have to match. I can't accommodate conflicts between them. The issue is how much of a priority I make of my relationship.

A year or so after this was recorded, the kids became independent and were no longer at school. It was Chris' partner who made the break for independence. So, like many households, this one is changing its make-up totally as separate members of a once blended family, now walk their own paths.
8. Support - external and internal as Conscious Psychological Self-Nurturing.

Conscious Psychological Self-Nurturing (CPSN) is an important issue as we want to learn from other women 'How do you survive that?' A more pro-active question is 'How do you thrive?' This was an area of intense co-learning.

Many times we find a level of support we had not previously looked for when a crisis hits. Chris found at a time of intense personal and professional crisis that...

_There was a lot of love and support offered me. "It's not because you're not good at what you do" people kept telling me._

Grace knows how essential it is to her survival to have the support of others. An overwhelmingly successful election outcome demonstrated that level of support when Grace was voted into the position of Branch Secretary over the man she opposed. She experienced that support and political success many times. This occurred via campaigns as well as in elections, during her work as a union official. Indeed, in Grace's position, she would not be in that position without the numbers - a hard fact of political life, which translates into practical and psychological support.

Grace feels that need for personal support too. Indeed, the hardest thing for her to face is criticism from supporters.

Electra turned to professionally skilled support when she needed it a few weeks after the birth of her second child.

_I see a psychologist once a week because I got post-natal depression, probably because I went straight back to work a week after birth. She's helping me balance my time so I have some for myself. I'm a workaholic, so I need someone who will help me plan things. I don't tend to allow time to pamper myself. I've put a lid on any new business and I'm keeping a holding pattern._

Ariadne supports herself most effectively with CPSN:

_I have inner support with health and high energy level; naturally blessed but I nurture it. I have support in the sense of a responsible inner voice saying "Well, Ariadne, you chose it. You're not usually a silly woman; give yourself a vote of confidence." Then I can re-examine a situation and feel supported by my own choice. So I am supported by a sort of self-confidence._

Margaret will do nice things for her self.

_I will sit all morning in the sun and read when I need it. I say no and put limits on what I do. I look at my limitations and identify symptoms of stress. I'll look at what is happening next week and decide what can I pull out of:_

_I talk with my self; love myself; encourage myself, treat myself like my best pal most of the time. I dialogue a lot with myself and isolate the sub-personality and reason with it._

---

3 Conscious Psychological self-nurturing was a term devised by Vicki Vivian, educator and social ecologist.
Mentors:

At her first workplace in a government department, Jess acknowledged that at the beginning of her career she had an inspirational supervisor who collected around him public servants who were doers.

He taught me or made me as a bureaucrat and promoted me.
Most of my mentors were men, some women.

Electra also acknowledged that

In every situation (4 jobs in her career) I have had an older male mentor who has helped me focus on what to get out of an organisation. I always realised this as an opportunity. Ironically when I left the system, I had a female boss for the first time and I left because I knew more than she did.

Many may find the mentor paternalistic but I felt if these people are so successful I want to know why. Many men in business would allow a woman to see what they wouldn't let a man see. I was quick to realise this.

It is not unusual for successful professional women to acknowledge the value of male mentors (Still 1993a and 1990). Clearly it is of great value to have someone in a position of power teach us the ropes, alert us to political plays to which we may be naively, blissfully unaware and to offer practical support such as introductions and recommendations, etc. The support is more often identified as male simply because there are more men in these positions of power. Where women do exist in senior positions in enough numbers to support younger women, as in the Australian public service, mentoring programs have been built in as EEO policy (Still 1993a, Halfway to Equal 1992).

There are women who make it known that they do not want to help other women. This could well be in response to the competitive framework a senior woman professional may have experienced. Some do not want to be contaminated by the 'F' word i.e. 'feminist'. Research into this area includes an Amacom (American Management Association) publication: Women vs Women - The Uncivil Business War by Tara Roth Madden 1987. In response to questionnaires and personal contact, women reported their experiences. Roth's findings are that "rivalry, not cooperation is the the spirit among most women in today's corporate world" (Madden 1987 1).

That has not been our experience, although we have met women who are clearly competitive and 'masculine' in their aggressive approach. Both Jess and Electra found that they benefitted from male mentors. They were male because the executive positions they held, were not at the time, occupied by women.

The word 'mentor' has its origins in the Odyssey as an old wise man who helped Odysseus, Telemachus and others, out of many a scrap with wise words, knowledge, strategies and tactics. Mentor appears in a number of other guises as well. What I found with a little more digging, is that ...

"Mentor was the goddess Athena in disguise... Athena, the goddess, is 'dressed' as a human, and in this form provides instruction. Athena also plays the part here of the mystagogos, who in the Mystery tradition serves as a guide and initiator to a deeper life."

Houston 1993 276-7
I see many useful connections in this archetypal metaphor when we put it into the context of bringing our whole selves to the workplace where we learn at many levels. Mentor means teacher, so anyone we see in that role we perceive as a teacher and a guide.

Athena as Mentor in the Odyssey does many practical things such as fitting out the ship and procuring the groceries for Telemachus. Above and beyond the practical assistance a mentor may offer us, is moral and psychological support. Just as the Odyssey is a journey of initiation; of moral and spiritual development; so too our forays into corporate politics or institutional life, can be guided by an older wiser mentor/ goddess, acting as the initiate's guide.

At the close of the Odyssey, Athena/Mentor plays the role of mediator.

“Athena, appearing again as Mentor, teaches the contending forces how to achieve a new peace. The warrior goddess at Troy has now evolved into the goddess of peaceful persuasion at Ithaca, and her human partner has also grown immeasurably in the course of the Mysteries and initiations she has laid out for him.

What began with tears of yearning ends in peaceful persuasion, linked by a movement of consciousness into its deeper possibilities, and with it, the impetus for a new creation of consciousness and society. The Hero and the Goddess have come far together, and in succeeding centuries will travel further still.”

Houston 1993 364

The reality now for most mentoring situations, is that the mentoring relationship is based upon an unequal distribution of power. The mentor is usually higher up the hierarchy, than the apprentice of the mentor. If we are to achieve Jean Houston’s vision, the mentoring may be one of co-operative learning; and openly acknowledged as such. Instead of giving advice, the mentor may offer suggestions when asked. Instead of always receiving, the mentor’s apprentices may have their own skill and knowledge to offer in the relationship. Certainly, the more experienced one may have more to give in organisational politics; the less experienced member of the relationship may have new, fresh observations and ‘other’ Ways of working to contribute.

This vision of peaceful partnerships is the reality that the women of this research group are creating. Any woman or man could play the role of a mentor in supporting others towards effective partnership societies. Anyone acting in the mentor mode, I see as operating out of the active-feminine as one intervening to nurture and facilitate change.

Our workplaces too, can evolve from places dedicated to warring competition, to centres of energy working in a systemic way for an ecologically sustainable world. If we can create effective pro-active systems in the workplace, we will also be creating models and practices for our communities, local and global.

Mentoring in the workplace offers us such opportunities for learning to work together. Whether receiving or giving, it can be a co-learning opportunity. Networking too, invites similar co-learning possibilities.

*Networking Up*
Jess moved up quickly and a lot of people were really threatened by a particularly young woman achieving so much so early. When in a 'stuck' position in a Public Service department, where policy went against what she was working on, Jess was again recommended for another position (as stated earlier). This time she was appointed to a left-wing senior Member of Parliament. She acted as his assistant for two years. This was a powerful experience for her.

I got rescued from a terrible job, by being appointed to work with this MP. I was recommended because of my activities in the ALP left and because of 3 years in Labour Market Programs as a controversial area. (Here I put out publications, worked in a charged political climate and was promoted very young). This was a steep learning curve that completely ruined my career because one was supposed to be seen as someone who didn’t care, but could be rational. I cared.

In Parliament at 28 years old. I enjoyed working with this MP who liked people with opinions. I spent two years there, which was wonderful, but it wrecked my private life because I changed so much.

After those 2 years I was incredibly burnt out, disillusioned with government, split up from my major relationship. So I decided to move to Sydney to study and before that went around the world for 3 months.

I have a very wide network of very strong friendships.

Jess alerts us to the issue of sacrifice (discussed further in a later chapter). A quantum opportunity which she followed with enthusiasm, cost her a social life, a major relationship and good health. Because of the richness of this learning, over the 3 years of this research, she was much more balanced about work and the rest of life. This was not always easy as her present partner, is very much a workaholic. He is committed to issues, as Jess is, but never lets them go. Jess doesn’t stop caring, but realises now to care effectively, she must care for herself and her family. This is a balancing act and a struggle that doesn’t resolve easily.

Ariadne lives a life of opportunity. The CRN philosophy of seeing conflict as an opportunity for emancipatory change is a basic truth for Ariadne. She made the most of a strong political opportunity when appointed as Director for the International Year of Peace 1986 by Bill Hayden, the then Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I had very little power but an opportunity to really understand how much and how little governments can do. I met directors of International Year of Peace from all over the world. I took limited resources and made every dollar act like $10. I took every crackpot idea and extracted from it a gem of truth.

Of course that appointment did not come out of the blue. Nor did similar opportunities occur completely by surprise for Jess or Grace. In 1973 Ariadne established the Peace and Conflict Association of the United Nations within the United Nations Association of Australia. Ariadne’s aim then was to have Conflict Resolution taught at universities and was knocking on university doors from 1973 onwards. (The Conflict Resolution Centre at Macquarie University opened in 1991,
running academically accredited programs to PhD status). From 1983 Ariadne led a national campaign to teach CR skills, when:

"...we were getting lip service, wonderful support but nothing happened."

In 1978 Ariadne launched the now well-established Media Peace Awards.

"At the end of 1985 I went to my daughter saying that CR skills are the basis of the peace process and invited her to come with me and teach. Helena thought about this carefully. Its not easy to work full time with Mum and to see her mother's vision leading her work."

One who has chosen to not take up opportunities to enter political life in public office is Chris. She still has public office fantasies and plays around the edge of that. One way she has done this is her founding and continuing collective activity in a WOMEN IN GOVERNMENT (WIG) group which is a lobby and support group for women wanting to enter politics.

"I have had oodles of opportunities and taken those I've wanted to. I've not taken up higher level policy and bureaucratic jobs. I said no as I did not want to work at that level. I knew from local government that it becomes your life. I have a family and relationship priority. I also really like working with people at the coal face. I'm a resource person more than anything else. I love teaching."

Isobel draws her support from:

"...my ability to network. I draw on this frequently. With a widely scattered network I can deal with issues and get different answers, by ringing people and talking with them."

Friendship as a Career Aid

For Virginia

"Overall my greatest opportunities came through friends. When those doors are open my career advances well. Such situations as friends recommending my skills to people who do not know of my work researching and developing women's training programs. When it's me alone applying for a job I don't seem to do well. I am not strong at selling myself to people who don't know my work."

For Margaret too, many jobs have been suggested by friends.

"I don't have any part in it. I have enormous help from friends who recommend me. When a position falls into my lap I grab it and take full advantage. So I follow up on suggestions."

Friendship, Relationships and Support

Most women referred to their friends, particularly women friends for direct support. Often the friends were colleagues too, but not always.

For Virginia, the support came from my friends, first, then my partner and family.

Isobel's husband too, provided support as she talks a lot with him.

Kate too, found a certain amount of support from her husband,
Kate too, found a certain amount of support from her husband, particularly issues around home life and dealing with stress so I can sleep or get on with work. Basically my support comes from my women friends. This group has been really valuable.

In her practice Kate meets with her medical partner weekly for support with different cases where things go wrong. This one hour a week is structured and very focussed.

She meets with another female medical colleague at least once fortnightly, to also discuss a lot of issues.

Chris first turns to her partner.

I am essentially learning to widen my circle of people I can trust; people who can see me struggling with keeping my ethics and values. I am a little bit more willing (especially in the last few years), to let others see how hard it is for me, rather than projecting effectiveness all the time. I don’t have a wide circle of friends. In this community there are a lot of people I’d be there for and know they would be there for me.

Ariadne acknowledges she gains her support from colleagues and goes on to note that her daughter is her closest colleague.

Gloria turns to her colleagues to: talk things through. She finds some support from her husband; not always in the way I expect. He often comes up with a little insight that is important. I have a woman analyst who I see once a year.

Support comes from friends not so much. I will talk to them, but I usually work out things, through my own gnawing. I use my dreams to give me the final word or pointer.

Jess turns to her friends for support - first and foremost. Then my lover and family. I could manage without my lover, but I couldn’t manage without my friends. In the end my family is always there for me.

Margaret’s support is from her friends - both male and female.

Grace finds her support - from other people. Sometimes I don’t actively seek it out enough. Probably as a result of working with this group, I have developed more confidence to talk about problems when I am in a state of great anxiety. Support comes from other women who may be workers in the office, other officials in branches and at the National level. I look for those who I will trust because they accept me and my way of working through issues. Usually women are better able to do that.

Who I go to, depends on the problem and the range of people available to me.

For all of us, relationships with partners, family and friends provide essentials for survival and enrichment. Some of us are learning to use this resource more than we have done in the past. Everyone acknowledged the value of
require others who care about them. A truism, maybe, yet one that can be all too easily not acknowledged. With the notion of CPSN being a conscious and aware activity, we are also learning to make overtly conscious, the ‘investment’ required for flourishing friendships. As I write this, I think of the comment I have made to close friends:

*If I still have friends by the time this thesis is finished, they will be very good friends.*

Such a comment arises from the consciousness of missing certain events, not keeping up contacts and virtually hibernating with my computer. Anything left over after work and thesis writing, goes to my family and my eleven-year-old daughter isn’t too happy with me either! With women as the traditional social secretaries of a family group, when she doesn’t do it, no-one does. Friendships slip away, relationships of years’ investment may be lost. A radical result of too many women writing PhD theses may even threaten our whole culture.

Yet this work has been one of female friendship (Raymond 1986). Was it not Conscious Psychological Self-Nurturing that led me to invite a group of women to inquire together into our workplace issues? The result is a handful of lifetime friendships. What price could be put upon that?


In the workplace there are not only groups of mixed gender, but also for many of us, the situation of working with all-women groups. Occasionally one of us is the only woman in an otherwise all-male group. While there are those we meet through work whose company we would not choose, the issue of working with friends, and/or developing friendships through work, arose as significant. Whether these friendships are with women or men, these relationships too, impact upon our work.

While some women enjoyed and preferred all-women groups, there was also comment about difficulties that arose when it is all women, working together. Julie finds great difficulty in all-women groups in the social context.

*In all professional groups, I find the work very stimulating; it flows easily and I don’t have to justify or explain myself. There feels a common ethos, even with women from different cultures or races I still feel a massive degree of commonality. I find women’s professional groups very productive and I am satisfied with the achievements that arise.*

*However, put me in a social group of women and I often feel a fish out of water, nil in common and I despise some values such as ‘women’s place is in the home; work is a hobby. I have to take care not to offend.*

*In all-men groups, I am not comfortable. I get cynical about the decision making process and expect them to play games with hidden meanings or agendas. I usually don’t participate and rather observe. It’s not so much intimidation, it’s more that I am not a part of the group. Fortunately, I don’t often find myself in groups where I am the only woman. Even one other woman in the group makes a difference. This is partly because in faculty*
group makes a difference. This is partly because in faculty management there is one other woman who is a strong feminist and understands men's games and can show them up in a pleasant way without putting them down.

In mixed gender groups, Julie is not aware of gender being an issue in her current work place.

Perhaps its fortunate there is a fairly even split in the faculty of 60% female students, and there is now a lot of gender equality. This was not always so.

Kay in her non-traditional technical field, has not worked in all-female groups for some time. Occasionally she will lead a tutorial of men only. She commented upon a mixed gender group discussion in a tutorial:

The men were dominating the group. Three women did not speak at all. ...I noticed myself in a discussion this morning being torn between not wanting to interrupt and wanting to say my bit. I was not well and my energy was down and I just didn't speak. One woman taking part was operating in her masculine. The academic environment does this to women.

Virginia finds all-women groups:

...fascinating: when it is good it is very very good; when it is difficult, it is difficult. It's worth hanging in there and wading through the confronting stuff, to really hear what the other women are saying, so that I can link up with their needs and get my message, changed, adapted to suit what they can hear too.

I love the creations that come out of women working together. In my experience, we create something much greater together, than we could do separately. Or I create personally, programs, learning materials, research etc., later alone, that has its roots and inspiration in the women working together previously. This always raises an ethical point for me. How to acknowledge the roots, when the original stimulus material springs from collective energy?

At the time of collecting this information I could recall little experience (if any) with all-male groups.

That sent me asking questions: Why?
I enjoy mixed gender groups, both professional and social, especially when the men involved are those who can stand back a little and let women sort issues through without over-riding. I do get very tense when I can see a woman is trying to sort things through and the guys are being noisy and impatient. In learning groups I will challenge and usually control that. In meetings, I don't often intervene, when I see this occurring. As I get off the bottom rung, I would hope that will change.

Indeed this is already changing. I have taken on-board a much greater sense of personal authority and do now speak up when I see this type of inequity happening in groups. I will not always identify it as a gender issue, but will usually alert a group to difficulties some members may be having with the structure of the discussion and offer suggestions for more appropriate participation.
I care more, suffer more. When its good it's very good, when it's bad its terrible. I find all men groups easier. There's more emotional distance and they are more predictable, more transparent. The boys' games are easy.

In mixed gender groups it's quite difficult at times. Women and men respond quite differently: the men assume they are all bastards, the women assume they are all good... until proved differently. It's an emotional response. Then I impose different standards. I expect less from the women and more from the men.

Chris too, recognises the excitement and the challenge when women are working together. She also adds the perspective of a lesbian, raising issues that include a wider world-view than the hetero-reality which the rest of us assumed. Chris taught us to be aware of these assumptions.

Working with all-women groups is the most exciting potential and the most threatening for some reason. I've always had to deal with my sexuality issues in any group of women so that it is safe for me and them. It's not an issue at all, in a group of lesbians. Also I have avoided the scenario of being in all -women groups. This year for the first time in many years I am in two women groups; this one and a lesbian discussion group. Both are incredibly confronting and liberating for different reasons.

Being in all -men groups is my family experience; with four brothers I was in the middle. My Father is a very powerful person. Even today, at my sister's wedding he said “Let's get a photo of all the boys.” I said “Fuck you” and walked away. I had to compete to be one of them. I was always an outsider -I was a girl.

Chris reflected upon working in an all-male situations; the feeling of being constantly under threat because of her sexuality.

It wasn't very safe. I sensed myself playing games so I wasn't a safe person either. But I'm still strong, competitive from my family experience. Its natural for me to play games, but I don't like that.

Like the rest of us, it takes time to be clear enough inside to act as ourselves, rather than acting as expected within the culture of the workplace.

In mixed gender groups Chris finds it...
...easy, very easy. I have no trouble feeling equal to the men, feeling comfortable with the men. But I am very clear that I have to negotiate more straightforwardly, work early at setting up ground rules for interaction about getting it together. Its easier to work in mixed groups, than all women, more straightforward. I would not enter a mixed gender personal growth group. Women will not look after lesbians in mixed groups; the dominant culture is reflected.

Clearly that was Chris' experience at our first meeting, where in a group of
Clearly that was Chris' experience at our first meeting, where in a group of dominantly hetero women, her needs were not met. The very reason I invited her into the group, became the reason for her oppression. Her loyalty and tenacity in returning to the group 3 meetings later at our first residential weekend, had an impact upon shifting the focus of the group from co-learning to addressing political concerns.

Gloria finds all-women groups in the classroom—
...just wonderful; just so whole. No groups of personalities, all women.
Her experience working with all men groups is with students only—
...young men who are seriously disadvantaged socially and educationally. I found it very difficult some time back. I had a lot of issues about men and they were testing me out. I learned a much more open attitude and realised they were terribly vulnerable.
Mixed gender groups I enjoy.

Gloria went on to describe her:
...spiritual experiences with Rugby League. Football is where I can get involved in a very masculine thing. It’s probably the only really male pursuit I’ve been involved in.
The interest in Rugby League originally began to connect with her son’s interests.
It’s one way of relating to the masses. Women can get into the position of rejecting aggression out of hand. Yet I would not be driving if it wasn’t for football. I related to the players individually and what they were confronting through my son’s researching footballers’ lives and making collages of them.

Gloria developed further her archetypal relationship with the game.
Some games are supreme - really embody deeply psychological understanding, circumstances in growth and development. Its gives me a metaphor for life. Involvement with sport or anything, is connected with the soul. The adversity of these creative and brave men, what they are confronting all the time is incredible. It’s an imaging of our own aspects moving through life. When in a game where there is great competition, its uplifting. Thomas Keneally calls football "Opera for the Masses."

Through learning about football to understand her son’s interest, Gloria found a way of connecting with her own active masculine aspect. This strengthened her ‘outer-doings’ in the world, such as giving her a symbolic stimulus to continue through the agonies of learning to drive.

Kate prefers all-women groups.
I feel more comfortable, less threatened. Women tend to be less critical and judgmental. Of course this depends which groups - some can be very judgmental. Conservative women groups can play games.

I used to find the feminist collective threatening. I don’t now. I’m more aware if someone comes across as a threat, what their problem may be.
of problems with being the “doctor”. It was a very big thing. If there was a doctor there, the doctor had to be put down. There was no way a doctor could ‘be another member’ of the collective. I had to work so hard to be equal. The anti-professional thing was really hard to deal with.

In all men and mixed groups, it depends what position I am in. As peers it can be fine; if I feel equal it’s OK; if my values are threatened its difficult.

Ariadne prefers all-women groups.

I feel I can cut through a lot of issues easily. I am more productive. I won't necessarily create an all woman team. Our employment policies would not discriminate against men.

The Conflict Resolution Network is predominantly women. Male consultants are welcome -there just are very few of them there. I originally invited Ariadne into the research because I perceived the CRN as an organisation whose structure and Ways of working, which from my definitions, are an active feminine organisation. This is because of their flat networking structure (diagram 9.1) and that CRN started with the passion of a mother and daughter who then expanded the network, from a purpose driven centre of world peace.

Conflict Resolution Network

CRN
Public
Workshops

Public
Training & Organisation Development

Professional
Facilitators

Training Support

Community-based
Projects

Diagram 9.1
Cartoon by Susan Owen and chart courtesy of CRN, Chatswood 2057 Australia

Frequently in her early years of management, Ariadne operated as the only woman in a group of male managers.

It didn't particularly worry me. I had little private joy in making it in a man’s world. It was not a big issue. I was accepted professionally and taken seriously.

At another time, Ariadne commented that her professional position was supported by her husband. There was deference offered to her by her husband's company because she was the managing directors' wife.

This may not be the way it should have been, but certainly the way it was.

Ariadne finds working in mixed gender groups satisfactory and commented
Ariadne finds working in mixed gender groups satisfactory and commented on sexual politics in the workplace, as not a pathway for her.

*I've never seen myself as a femme fatale. I was a little lacking in confidence in myself as sexual partner.*

Grace finds working in all-women groups-

...Usually good and much easier. Discussion usually flows more easily. Women don't hold themselves back. I feel more comfortable and less likely to be judged. I still want work groups to be quite prepared to take people on and argue. Working as a group, it works more easily; it is much more flowing. However I get frustrated if it is not focussed.

*I've learnt many of my political skills in women's groups.*

She has been the only woman in quite a few situations.

*In union caucus with other unions or in meetings with management, I can often be the only woman. The levels of competence are not great. I can find it really easy to dominate a meeting.*

*I find it easy to manipulate. I feel I can pretty readily control the situation and get what I want, within my own integrity. I don't need to be sexual about it. It isn't easy with all men though - it is a lot harder with those who are competent. Those who know their own agendas and are experienced.*

*In mixed gender groups it can be very different. I am very aware of who is speaking and will monitor the discussion at a meeting so that others (i.e. women) will get a chance to speak. In negotiations it is different. It's not a situation to be supporting women speakers. At members or delegate meetings I may comment upon whether women have spoken.*

*How the boys do dominate. They're terrible. They love to hear the sound of their own voices, or in some way act to enable them to do so.*

*I am amazed at the capacity of women to be patient. And yet when at last she does get to speak, a woman is so much more to the point.*

Grace brings together many of the linguistic differences that have been noted between women's and men's conversations. She has learned about typical power plays and how to apply them (Tannen 1986 & 1992 & Elgin 1993).

Margaret enjoys all-women groups as-

...supportive (but not always) and empathic generally. Sometimes power issues come up but not as a rule. Its easiest for me in women's groups.

*It is with psychiatrists groups where I am the only woman in a male group, staff meetings or at the Journalists Club giving professional talks. 'O Christ' I felt like a misfit most of the time. Psychiatrists are especially patriarchal. They're sometimes very friendly but in a patronising way. It left me indifferent. I knew I could not be understood. I'm not really taken seriously and treated very lightly. They see woman as lightweight.*
In my readings in psychology by women, I find by far those that are predominant are the Jungian practitioners. Margaret's colleagues are Freudians. Most books I have read about psychotherapy that deal with women are written by women who are Jungian psychotherapists as evident in my bibliography. It is my understanding that the Jungian framework works with a wider view. This is evident in the Jungian notion of the 'collective unconscious' which Jung includes in his construction of the collective consciousness. Another contemporary: Assagioli, the founder of Psychosynthesis, also takes a wider view where his notion of sub-personalities allows a client to 'play' with masculine and/or feminine aspects of our personalities (overt and shadow). I see that this results in treatment of women as whole people in themselves, while the Freudian style psychology treats women as deficient men (Young-Eisendrath & Wiedemann 1987 and Estes 1992 as well as others).

Margaret prefers mixed gender groups best of all.

*I like the input of the male energy on the whole (when it's not patronising). If men are open and willing to listen to everyone, I enjoy their contribution.*

Isobel had concerns about working in all-female groups with-

...initial fears that were based on stereotypes of the feminist

"hairy armpit brigade". I've since worked hard to counter that. I

see in a woman and a man and in men and women the yin and yang idea. In a female group what is allowed to surface is all. I've

worked in small groups of women like Labour Market Programs

teachers and led course like Effectiveness Training for Women.

The acceptance of me as a person, is higher in all-women groups,

as I think in mixed groups, I threaten the men.

Isobel is highlighting a difficulty that lucid and assertive women do meet in the corridors of our workplaces. While men with similar assertive conversational styles are seen as clear and directive, women alas (especially young women), are often perceived as 'pushy'. If our style does not fit the context of the listener which includes their expectations and assumptions about us, they will experience a mismatch. It is not themselves they will blame, but the other. When the other is a young professional woman working to get her needs met, there may indeed be a clash. Put the same words and meta-message from the lips of a young man and he will probably be rewarded for his go-get-itive-ness (Tannen 1986 & 1992 & Elgin 1993).

Isobel continues:

*I am comfortable in groups where I am the only woman. They are fewer. I have heightened awareness of men with threatened views, and I have the skills to deal with that. This is the greatest comfort for me in being really ready for stuff coming up in others.*

As a trainer in effective communications to all levels of professional and community groups, Isobel is highly skilled at handling different communication styles. She has a range of responses at her fingertips to apply to 'difficult people'. Isobel leads her professional life with a base value of clear effective communication and open agenda. Therefore in a business framework her 'teaching' of techniques which enable others to do this, is strong and congruent in presentation.

Early in our inquiry Isobel stated that;
Early in our inquiry Isobel stated that;

*In mixed groups I have a concern; because I like to talk. In a women’s group, people take turns. In mixed groups men dominate and I get caught in that competition. I’m very comfortable. And I am not clear on the game there.*

A couple of years on, after extensive experience in university research groups, she is clearer about the game play and may call attention to who is dominating the discussion.

Electra in our early years had never worked with an all-women team, although all current major clients were top women executives. Electra states also that she is not a group person. She prefers to work alone.

Her clients all operate in a men’s world.

* I like to work with successful people. I prefer to work with women now. Professional men are more ambitious than women.*

*In all-men groups I have no problem I know how men think.*

*In mixed groups there are too many dynamics. Women are more complicated than men. If a woman is very ambitious, I recognise where she is coming from with other women it is more difficult.*

 Later, as an executive of a women’s professional organisation, she found that many of the women involved were not very focussed on politically-effective action. Because of her experience with media and in strategic planning, she was able to see much of her agenda through to completion. She has a clear ethic of using these positions of power (specifically media power) to spread enabling strategies. She believes that...

*it’s powerlessness that corrupts in the end, not power*

Summary

This chapter looked at the research group of women at work and focussed upon areas of learning and change that are issues for us. As *Changing Woman*, like the Navaho story we believe there is much to change in our workplaces and lived experience. We have looked at a range of issues which arose out of the meetings and the interviews.

*To End as We Began with a story…*

These are Jean Houston’s words from her book *The Hero & The Goddess*. This book guides the reader through a journey with Homer’s *Odyssey*, using the archetypal story as a metaphor for our own lives. The story told here of parts of the lives of these women, like *The Odyssey*-

"... contains a remarkable element: It tells us what can happen in a life that includes a deep and committed friendship with an archetypal power, that is, a power that emanates from a reality deeper than our own and that can guide and sustain us. In this case, that power is the goddess Athena."

Houston 1992 38
emancipatory practices. Our Athena was a workplace goddess who brought the power of love into the workplace. The reality of working together in a mutual inquiry led us to also experience a bonding with female friendship:

"Female friendship has given us the experience of each other, and it has given us the gift of Self. It has given us a purpose, and it has shown us that we can be for women. It has demolished the facade of hetero-relations that draws us away from our Selves and each other. It has given us a history in which we learn that women have always loved other women. It has given us an understanding that a life of mere survival is insufficient for the spirit."

Raymond 1986 200

_The Odyssey_ starts with an inquiry into the Ways of working which lead us through the hero's journey.

"Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways..."

Houston 1992 38

Our Ways or working include many Ways of using emancipatory power and enabling practices. Jean Houston tells us of the ancient Greek language:

"The word in Greek for 'of many ways' is the descriptive _polytropous_. Other translations refer to the man of many devices, Many capacities, even many tunings in his character as well as in his journey."

Houston 1992 37

Our stories tell of women of many Ways and devices; the many far-reaching capacities we access; and the fine tunings of our character as we come up against ethical dilemmas as we tell about our journey.
Chapter 10

P. O. W. E. R.

P. O. W. E. R. = People who are seen as ‘Other’ - Women Enabling Reform

The sub-head above conveys a message from those who have experienced being constructed as ‘other’. This may include women, different ethnicities, workers (both paid and voluntary) and those who do not ‘normally’ exercise power as constructed by the mainstream. By including any who may be perceived as ‘others’, I intend to go beyond the divisive thinking of ‘othering’ which can be seen in most academic arguments as “... part of a way that academic discourse works by othering recent previous discourses” (Haraway 1988 96).

Rather than placing ourselves in the position of ‘other’, I see the women of the research group are now working with inclusion. If we refuse to accept another’s positioning of us as ‘other ’, then we build upon (while also moving beyond) Gilligan’s ‘ethic of care’ to our own construct and responsibility which I believe Porter espouses as ‘self-in-relations’. From that position of relationship we can access a range of ideas from different people with differing world-views, and so invite creative solutions. I aspire to build new Ways, not tear down people’s esteem; the intention is to go soft on the people and hard on the problems.

This expansive position, is not where we started within the research group. Once we collectively agreed to tackle the notion of power, our experiences of ‘power under’ or advocating for the oppressed began to surface. Not surprisingly, controlling power was the first category explored.

We struggled, spiralling around oppression and empowerment, wanting to acknowledge the realities of women’s lives who did not have the privileges we enjoyed. Such a way of being draws together feminist emancipatory framework and ‘other’ Ways of working as described by Covey (1990), Senge (1994, 1990), Roddick (1991, Semler (1993) and others. So I use the term “integrity” (Laborde 1987) to describe our Way of working - bringing our ‘whole selves to work’.

If we are indeed to acknowledge our whole selves then an inclusive position of accepting our oppressed and our privileged / empowered selves seems necessary. This is not a vacillating position. It is realistic and practical. Power-over is real, as many oppressed situations testify. There is also the constant empowering questions of ‘what is possible?’ and how may we support emancipatory positions and create change?

Because social and workplace changes are important issues to us, we had a need to understand power. This includes how we experience power, how we see others around us constructing their beliefs on power, and moving to the point of being able to use power as an energy. Working upon notions around power we moved past the notion of power as an entity in itself (Foucault 1979). Such a construct seems especially real to those who experience what I called ‘power under positions’. More about this later.
Overview - Organising our Power

In this chapter, I build our emergent understandings around power. It is contextualised with published views for the purpose of providing a richer picture of our understandings and investigations.

This chapter presents four main areas of investigation. After framing our need for this investigation into power, I first unpack the constructs, definitions and meanings around our notions of power - the Power of Constructs. as a clarification of my understanding of power as a construct (influenced by Foucault 1978, Bateson 1979, 1972, Starret 1976), and at the same time being mindful and inclusive of people and situations where dominating positional, systemic and physical power create danger for those under and/or excluded from that power. Secondly I look at the Power of Language, to impart these constructs and resulting social assumptions. By considering the Power of Knowledge, I question ‘whose’ knowledge constructs our day-to-day lived experience. Finally, we collectively consider the Power of Empowerment, the powerful ethic which underpins these women’s day-to-day choices in their uses of power.

There is another area of power not investigated separately in this chapter because it infiltrates through the whole work: the power of money. Social constructs of meaning around economics is clearly relevant and a base assumption to this work. So I have addressed our need to work for economic necessity and discussed fiscal artefacts of ‘success’ throughout the thesis. By doing so we lived out the different perspectives between mainstream economics and feminist politics. Social responsibility is a major tenet of our feminist politics. Success measured in terms of power and profit for a few is quite a different outcome.

*Power is a loaded term*” (Kanter 1977 260)

Before looking at these several elements, I need to answer the question: why did power arise as a major issue of this group of women looking at their work? The answer, as I see it, lies around our need to create a meta-dialogue by talking about power, so that we no longer unconsciously allow externally constructed power to work over us. In fact, our aim is to turn that around. Bateson saw that the idea of power corrupts those who believe in it and so want it the most. Conversely those who don’t want such power are “given every opportunity to avoid getting it” (Bateson 1972 486). I hold a different concern around such an opportunity to ‘avoid’ power. If people do not know ways they may have access to power they hardly have a choice. Bateson’s use of the term ‘avoid’ skews the experience. Bateson’s ‘myth’ of power is not so mythical unless one is informed! Our position was to inform ourselves and others of how there may be a choice.

Our epistemology then was sympathetic to but differed from Bateson’s ‘epistemological lunacy’ as a belief in power external to us. We knew that we had experienced times when we individually turned around our ideas about power. We strengthened that direction by joining together and looked for other Ways. So much so, that we had a running meta-dialogue which went something like this... (~ whether the situation was one we felt we could influence or we were concerned about social injustice that looked beyond our reach):

"Who is acting upon whom?"
"If we don’t like what is happening, what do we do about it?"
"Why do we believe we need to change anything?"
"How do we alter the direction of change?"
These and many other strategic and probing questions, drove our investigations around power. Through this pathway, we also discovered the basis of our ethics. When I named this as an ethic of empowerment, there was agreement and further narratives arose around how we do that in disempowering environments (as reported in section 2).

Acknowledgment - The Luxury of a Dialogue on Power!

This dialogue could seem very esoteric to a woman in an abusive situation. We recognise that her immediate needs are different to a philosophical dialogue. There are women in our group who have lived with domestic violence. At that point in their lives, this chapter would be of little help to them. Certainly there are more appropriate ways to support women in these situations, until the threat of violence is past. I acknowledge the good work that is done in this area. Only when the threat of violence is past can they see a possibility of grasping other ways to live. When battling to survive, most of us can see little else but that desperate contest. The luxury of philosophical dialogue and emancipatory theory is not appropriate in the immediate presence of violence.

It is hard to see the beauty of the wilderness when stuck in the mud.

While theoretical dialogue may not be appropriate for these affected women immediately, I see it as crucial to offer the opportunity to participate in bringing about emancipatory change. Then, it can be useful in my experience with oppressed groups of women, to engage with theory which may explain why things are as they are.

When working with women who were up-dating skills to return to the workforce after years of child-rearing, most responded with recognition and relief when they discovered the systemic nature of their day-to-day disempowering experiences. Until then, many thought they personally, were deficient and would often blame themselves for desperate situations in which they found themselves.

The concepts discussed here, have been developed for and with women who are coming into their own power. These are women who are trying out possibilities and alternatives in the world. These are Ways of being which are their own; these are women who are rejecting a culture of ‘this is how you must be’. While not forgetting there are women who do not have these choices, we move forward in our learning and test the enabling powers. We do this in the wish and with the clear design that more women may do this in ways that suit them and their situations.

This research group in 1990’s Australia experience events after 100 years of suffrage and 30 years of contemporary feminist activism impacting on the workplace. As well, they expect as a right, social and community supports (such as child care). Most of us are aware how valuable our opportunities are, especially through education. These educational opportunities are on the whole vastly more extensive and certainly more professionally oriented than that available to our mothers.

Power Training, Education and Knowledge -

Why we need to wrangle with the notion of power...

Clearly claiming power is not that simple. We were already using a lot of power tapping into our past experiences, education and by meeting together. To be
an activist, I clearly state that people are better equipped if they are educated in the use of power. In my opinion, without knowledge that there are choices in how we can use positional power for example, we are likely to apply it in the same ways that we experienced it as used upon us.

Our beliefs around power plus our experiences with power, add up to a strong basis of values for this group. These values include our ethic and preference for sharing and enabling power. This ethic is in itself, a Way of being that is part of our very essence -operating out of a place of integrity. Hence, I believe our epistemology (beliefs around power) is synchronous with our ontology -our Way of being which is living with personal and emancipatory empowerment. In such a Way, personal values are at one and the same time, our politics. We play out our personal beliefs by the way we act politically in the world. It is my observation that our values given to personal, everyday issues, usually interact and often become congruent with our political actions and beliefs.

At first I observed that some in the group did not feel comfortable with the word 'power'. So we addressed it directly, to see if it was worth unpacking the assumptions that we held around power, as well as observing how other people constructed meanings and thus their experiences of power.

"What am I aiming to do about power?"

This is the question Chris put forward to answer at the fifth meeting as a vehicle to:

...get us to share something about our responses to the question and start to see the language and concepts we use and start to see how that informs our way of seeing the world. This leads to what is our political framework. We then look past the language frameworks that are external, and see if they match the words and language we use.

I believe it is essential to find and use language that sits comfortably with our value set. For women or any oppressed group to speak with their own voice, we need to use our own words. By using our own words we are closer to speaking our truth. To parrot others' meaning via their words, presupposes that we experienced power the same way 'others' defined and constructed experience.

The word 'power' is something that many women in my experience don't want to use or know about. In this context it's considered a 'dirty thing', and in the way of shameful dark things, can often be unconscious (part of our shadows) in our avoidance of it. "Just sweep it under the carpet with other dirty things". I have particularly observed this resistance from people with very low self esteem. It has also been evident in people who perceive their own ability as minimal in acting upon their environment. When we are perceiving ourselves as oppressed, the 'victim' position comes from an experience of being acted upon; not a position where we can see that our actions could make a difference (Wolf 1993a). Because I have travelled this road myself, I recognise it!

For those of us who have been 'done over' by people who were in a position of wielding 'power-over' others, it was not uncommon to fear that "...if I touch it, I'll be contaminated." I use the colloquial term 'done-over' here to graphically express the feeling of being run over by a bull-dozer. It truly is the experience of being flattened. Another wields a power that is so much stronger than us at the time,
that we cannot budge it. We found however, that there were other strategies besides lying in the road and hoping the bull-dozer would stop. If it didn't stop, we often failed to see another day with that particular boss, perpetrator, or colleague.

One such strategy is to get out of the way of the irresistible force. Grace told us she ‘ducked a lot’ when the big guns were firing. Grace lived to fight many more battles, most of them in the latter part of her career as union leader. These battles were on her terms; i.e., how do we meet everyone’s needs here rather than negotiate with threats?

However, the bull-dozer power is real. We have known those who trundle down their path of destruction, annihilating those who dare to get in their way. It's not just men who can bull-doze (we know “dragon ladies” as well).

It is the nature of the power we want to re-design here, not the gender.

To survive and succeed in the given structures and practices we have to work in, we must learn to observe these power plays, even if we choose not to play by ‘their’ rules. The role that gender plays in power relations at work, is well defined by Anne Game and Rosemary Pringle in their book Gender at Work.

“Changes in the organisation of work frequently provoke anxiety in men about the loss of power or the gaining of power by women to which they are not entitled. Power and sexuality are integral to work relations. As with all power relations, gender is constantly renegotiated and recreated. This process is particularly visible at points when work is being reorganised and new technologies introduced. By focussing on these it also becomes clear that masculinity and femininity are not fixed essences. There are different masculinities and femininities. Gender identities, like the power relations they embody, take a range of different forms.

Game and Pringle 1983 [1993] 16 (bold emphasis mine)

We knew of the destructive power of overbearing strength, which although perceived generally as a masculine quality, is used by women as well. Some in the group, early in our research, held a view that power was dangerous and undesirable -being powerful meant emulating a bull-dozer. These women actively chose to not use this type of power. For them it served no purpose and was not part of them.

If our ethic and power is the enabling of others, we want to know how to get, use and share that power. We need to move from the state of constructing power as an external entity, to working from a powerful state inside ourselves. From there, we enable others to know their own power, too. Essentially, that is what our stories are all about.

These narratives were particularly useful to the development of trust within the group. In the telling of stories when we were ‘done-over’, we collected other Ways to handle the difficulties, heard other women’s stories of what they did, and thus were able to choose a range of options when we found ourselves in similar
positions again. The processing of the stories for our research in itself became a tool of empowerment.

The Power of Constructing Meaning

As I worked to unpack the term 'power', it became obvious that social constructions around power, have been defined by those who hold power. This can often result in perceiving power as an entity: as a limited resource available and manageable only by a few. This is a base assumption that leads to inequity.

So when previously we asked: "What is power?" we find that most women have experienced power as being 'done over'. This may or may not have been a physical 'doing over' however most of us can tell stories of experiencing power 'over' us. Sometimes the system can do it quietly, and we are left with a feeling of having missed out somehow. Just understanding how that happens requires some looking into power structures. The structures, procedures and practices which enshrine power within this context are worthy of a thesis by itself. In the structures of capitalism built upon patriarchal/hierarchical organisations which reward masculine values and uses workers as production tools, both women and men are often the losers.

It is reasonable to ask what are our Ways of being powerful and how do we use them to transform the use of power in workplaces? We find that many women use power in subtle Ways. These are Ways that work with other people rather than against them. They are Ways that bring issues out into the open so that agendas are clear. It is more subtle in not being directly (aggressively) confrontationist. But, neither do the research women advocate shying away from problems that our ethics call us to address. This is not to say that these Ways are not effective or less powerful than masculine domination. In fact we advocate that these Ways are more effective because of their inclusive qualities. Maybe because of this, some women may not want these Ways identified as power, because they fear then it might be taken away. These Ways may not appear to be overtly used in day-to-day actions yet can still be effective.

Wielding power by domination is the game of one-upmanship (Tannen 1990, Schaefer 1981, 1988). It is a game that is played daily in workplaces. The outcome is that an enormous amount of energy is wasted while people look for ways to 'get back' and be ahead of their perceived adversary.

We may hesitate to take on power if it means holding power over others. This hesitation has also been (mis)construed as a fear of success. If success means domination over our work team, we may not be attracted to that position. Many women in the research group hold 'positional-power' yet hold a definite preference for exercising that power within a more collaborative model than the 'power-over' mode. Judi Marshall reflects upon power in 4 dimensions. This model includes communal interpretations alongside more traditional concepts. Her power-descriptive aspects are: Power over other, structural factors, personal power and power through/with others (Marshall 1984 108). We found our explorations similar to Marshall's and of course we add our personal elaborations. The advantage of Marshall's model over more simplistic feminist views such as Wolf's (1993a) response to 'victim' feminism, is being able to operate within a multi-dimensional world-view. A pluralistic approach includes recognition and reality of power-over
alongside power-with experiences.

Sharing Power

The building of a synergistic team can only occur when each member of the team truly experiences a culture of shared power with shared vision (Senge 1990 208, Maddux 1988).

As the women of the research group discussed power, we coloured our deliberations with our clear preference for the use of enabling power. This is power shared rather than power over. Some mention was made of the French and Raven (1959) classic model of 5 basic types: reward, coercive, referent, expert and legitimate. In the stories the women told they had clearly experienced all of these.

I developed a simple classification of types of power based upon our own experiences: 1) Power over 2) Power under and 3) Power with...

1. Power Over

When one holds ‘positional’ power, as in a managerial position, this power falls within French & Raven’s categories. Power over, applies when we can wield the power that enforces. A parent does this when we resort to: “Do it because I say so.”

2. Power Under

A simple term which graphically explains the experience of disempowerment when the ‘other person is on top’. It is the ‘you win, I lose’ experience.

Women know this well. This is the ‘he wins, I lose’ model; or in many organisations the ubiquitous ‘they win I lose’. Using this model much oppression has been identified and in naming the oppression much has been accomplished to redress oppression. Not that all these battles are won. There are still many oppressed groups who have little expectation or experience of any option available to negotiate a ‘win-win’ strategy.

Power over has been called ‘victim feminism’ (Wolf 1993a). While we can control more of our lives when we step out of the victim mode, we must acknowledge that there are still many people who are able to see few if any options. Our research group acknowledges this and several of the women work in areas that actively intervene to remove evident oppressions.

3. Power With

In this context we consider co-operative power where people co-operate together because of the quality of the relationship or because of a common ideal or goal. This power can operate in situations where positional power does exist. It operates when the designated leader genuinely encourages enablement and empowerment amongst their (sometimes collegial) workers.

The reality is, that even egalitarian-oriented collectives and co-operatives move between the three states. We are living in times with paradigms shifting all around us. In a world as rich and complex as ours, would we ever want to live with people who all look through the same window and hold to the same views? I hope not.
Our Own Constructions of Power

In constructing our meanings around power, I consider different expressions both from the research group and other voices. Although each woman's expressions and experiences are different, I have made relevant associations and connections. The aim is to examine power as if it is a diamond with many facets. While a diamond is a gem of variable quality, it is seen and experienced differently depending on how the light reflects from a particular facet.

Julie put it clearly:

_ I want to feel empowered myself, without having to take it away from someone else. _

And Jess wants to:

_ ... equalise access to power - clarify power structures so that this is so. If there are clear rules, at least you can learn the rules. Overall I want to equalise society. We can clarify structures and give people equal access to lines of power. Let people know the rules. _

We are operating in a basic feminist framework here, of the personal being political. Grace believes the process of empowerment:

_ ...is about recognising the structural and personal use of power. Individual power is about how they are treated by others around them, as it's about their position in the structure. _

Margaret associated feeling powerful, with the status of working a job.

_Because I don't have as much work, I actually feel less powerful._
_I was identifying power with work. I want to be able to feel powerful, regardless of whether I am working._

Margaret is naming that feeling of having a reduced status in our society unless one can name the 'paid' job that one does. The effect upon the status of part-time workers in our society is such that their sense of value is diminished (HalfWay to Equal 1992 37-39)

Julie talked about her feelings around the words used to describe powerful women.

_It took me years to say and feel comfortable with "I am a strong woman", and now I am struggling to say "I am a powerful woman." What are the nuances that hold me back? I want to claim power. The confidence work gives me, often makes up for a feeling of power or for powerlessness. I want to feel powerful, not connected with work._

There was a recognition of the ethic here that was both a goal and a force that drove us to the goal; it's about emancipatory and enabling power. As Virginia said...

_I want to see people empowered so that they feel they have more choices. I respect others' perceptions of holding their own power, being responsible (able to respond) for themselves and this is my operating ethic. Even if I feel they are full of shit as long as they are not dumping their shit onto others (which is again being responsible)._ That co-relates with Isobel's statement on integrity, about us needing to be
practitioners of ourselves first. Isobel’s Ways of working with power are to:
...be responsive to empower those I have contact with, particularly my children.
I prefer to use ethical power (such as knowledge, experience, expertise) rather than punishment.
If I use my own personal power in an ethical way, then there is no issue with it.

Isobel is stating a clear preference here for the use of referential power rather than coercive power (French & Raven 1959). Referential power in this context depends upon a respectful quality in the relationship. Co-ercive power is simply taking advantage of the ‘power-over’ position - a relationship defined by one holding authority over the other. Isobel would be in a position to use Marshall’s structural power, however she prefers to integrate Personal power with power through/with others (Marshall 1983 108).

Isobel also spoke of her recognition of power games in everyday business and her preference for clear, open agendas.

Chris went on to comment upon her experience of living within a patriarchy:
Only a few benefit from it and so I get oppressed.

Thus patriarchal view of power is the zero sum. In this construct: “There is only so much to go around. If you have it, I don’t.” We are aiming to construct a much more expansive view of power. Chris continues:

Men also don’t know about other choices, and so they get stressed, have heart attacks, etc. They remain powerful however, because they don’t perceive this as powerlessness. But they turn to women for support, to put them back together.

Chris is addressing the phenomenon of power residing where power is perceived. I will discuss this later.

They know that we are there to look after them. This power is what perpetuates the patriarchy. They feel safe with women, because they feel safe with women’s powerlessness.

Here she names the ‘sick system’ syndrome (Schaef 1981 85). In our reconstruction of power, we refuse to support sick systems with our energy. We are claiming the right to be ‘life-ful’ and not to feed the ‘vampire’.

“When women energize the men who spend their lives operating the death machine, we energize the entire Vampire.”

Starrett 1976 192

This energy drain was identified early in the research group by Chris:

We can rationalise power structures. But what is harder is the role of women. We put in all the time that which perpetuates the status quo. E.g. nurturing - giving - allowing them to feel powerful. This allows men to get on with the game.

So we decided that we will no longer support systems that do not support all peoples. Therefore we challenge practices arising from structures which tear people apart from their life-force and the rest of their lives outside the workplace.

We need to do this because...

Patriarchy will not change until men choose to talk to each other. If men can support each other, there won’t be that resentment towards women. (Chris)
We are in a synchronous relationship. The research group directly advocates that men and women work towards interdependence - where people are strong and able within themselves, and aware and inter-active within their relationships - able to address their own interpersonal needs, ask for and receive their needs (Covey 1990). An understanding of empowerment as expanding possibilities with all peoples, offers us many more resources to face day-to-day and global problems, rather than the limited model of power held in just a few hands.

Clearly, many women are no longer constructing their meaning of power from a deficit world-view (Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann 1987). Feminists have re-written history and included herstories.

Formal definitions of the term support our empowering stance. Etymologically, 'power' is derived from the Latin posse meaning possibility (Partridge 1983) - what is able to be possible. It was originally a verb and was later used as a noun. Power for us today may be in the process of being reclaimed as just that. Working with the possible, sounds like empowerment and enablement to me.

It is the construction of absolute power invested in hierarchies which has turned its meaning into a dominating construct. Ianello in her enabling book Decision without Hierarchies (1992), focuses on dictionary and applied meanings (both contextual and defined). She quotes Kanter...

"Because the hierarchical form of the large organization tends to concentrate and monopolize official decision making prerogatives and the majority of workers are subject to 'command' from those above, it would be natural to assume that any use of the term power must refer to this sort of scarce, finite resource behind hierarchical domination."

Kanter 1977 260

Ianello includes Berenice Carol's observations that "a host of definitions of power that do not imply domination also exist within the literature" including activities where there is accomplishment, satisfaction of needs, ability (Ianello 1992, 44). Feminism has called attention to these empowering meanings. Day-to-day reality means a privileged few still hold the power which resides in most organisations.

As Kanter points out: "...the problem with absolute power is that it renders everyone else powerless". We work with Rosabeth Kanter's notions to actively turn that meaning around. So, are all women who take the power to construct meanings around power, such as Mary Daly and others reclaiming language, reclaiming the night and influencing the re-construction of our workplaces? "The powerful are the ones who have direct access to tools for action" (Kanter in Ianello 1992 44). Therefore we cannot be content just to re-construct our own meanings around power. We directly and openly challenge the existing power holders whenever their use of power clashes with our values. This, of course, requires moral courage and realistic assessment of risks involved. In the research group all the women had challenged and lost as well as challenged and won outcomes. This course of action does not necessarily require us to be independently wealthy. It does teach us that we need resources like friends and networks.
experience these choices. What I am proposing is actively looking for expanding options when we experience workplace oppression. Some women take the risks which are consequences of leaving a seemingly secure job. I can say this, because I did it too, and worried that I may sacrifice my family's survival, for my ideals.

So far we still eat, and there are more risks to come.

So when we decided that a certain workplace no longer enabled us, many of us left. This is where the research group of women found a common area. Our ethics demand that we intervene in unethical practices. We work towards transforming our society by the use of transformative practices. We experiment to find "new ways of exercising power that does not duplicate the oppressions of today. We must discover how women can build their own strengths, create these new forms, prepare for, and gain such power" (Bunch 1981,194 in Rowland 1988,180).

Our stories and our actions given in this research, is our concrete and theoretical Way of re-evaluating what is meant by power. Thus we show "new ways of exercising power that do not duplicate oppressions." In quiet, effective and at times direct and overt Ways, we challenge and change what we mean by power. We have discovered how we build our own strengths, create new forms, prepare for and gain such power (Bunch 1981).

We do this by working with our power which lies in our doing and being and the values and beliefs which underpin these. Our epistemology (what we know, believe and value) is the basis of our ontology (how we act in the world) and is what drives us. Herein lies the strength that is fuelled by passion and commitment. Herein lies the key to our effectiveness in changing that which we do not perceive as useful to community building. This is why it is so important to us to act in Ways which are true to ourselves.

If we recognise or accept congruency with Foucault that "power is where power is perceived" (Starrett 1976 192), we can then decide to apply the perception to ourselves. We are acting in our 'active feminine' mode when we perceive ourselves as powerful, act upon that which we believe is ethical, and empower others through these actions and beliefs.

"For power which is passion, always acts,
always finds a form"

Starrett 1976 190

As we reclaim our power to not support life-denying actions (business or policies), we generate an energy that finds form. The life-denying actions we will not tolerate are those which deny life beyond the workplace; which do not treat people as complete and whole human beings. The research group prefers to act for life-giving policies and working with whole human beings.

De-constructing non-life power bases

Thus, if we withdraw our support from 'sick' systems, patriarchies which do not recognise workers responsibilities outside the workplace, the vampire will wither from lack of blood (Starrett 1976 and Schaeff & Fassel 1988). The 'addictive
organisation' changes when there is a whole system shift (Houston 1993). A shift towards accessing whole human potential entails changing the way people in organisations perceive and experience power. Changing perceptions so that the practice of "...leadership is not control. It is, first and foremost, a model of self-responsibility" (Schaef & Fassel 1988 226).

This power clearly lies within the people whose collective consciousness creates the experience of power in organisations (as discussed earlier).

As a senior woman manager says

"...there is something very distorted about our typical perceptions of power. After many years of working with this company, I have come to realize that nobody gives you power. It resides within you. Corporations don't magically give power to individuals - individuals either assume it or they don't. Acquiring power is an option that is available to people who choose to take it. I don't think power belongs to institutions. It belongs to people."

Milwid 1990 130

So I perceive within the research group a powerful challenge in this construct around power. It throws us back upon ourselves. We can go beyond blaming the patriarchy for our oppression if we are in a position to own and exercise our personal power. This is a level of maturity (Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann 1987) and coming into our own personhood (Porter 1991) that the women of our research group are in the process of experiencing. We also recognise through our own experience, that the majority of women and men may not see this type of thinking as an option. When our experience is that of being ground into the swampy mud, it takes a rare person to see the beauty of the swamp. So, those of us experiencing the privilege and the challenge of the meta-thinking are able to see what is going on. Further, when we are able to see and understand what is going on, we believe there is a responsibility to call the game-play and address the sub-text.

Identifying and Naming a Position of Knowledge and Authority

If we consider the many terms used to describe a position of 'personal power' by different feminists, philosophers and psychologists we can develop connections and understandings amongst them.

Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann (1987), practicing Jungian psychologists, identify a final stage of personal development - Authority. They describe it as a knowing attained by very few of their women clients... 4 in fact. While this 'level of attainment' in Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann's terms is rare, I question if they were collecting data now in the mid-1990's in Australia beyond their client base, would they find more? Such personal authoritative qualities as they describe can be observed in more and more women today. The women who operate from a soundness of acting with integrity with a firm base of knowing from where they operate (epistemology); where each woman taps into her strength in action (ontology). Perhaps it is not so much an 'end' development, but an on-going learning. Many of us have known episodes and situations where we have felt that authority within ourselves... as described by the women of this research.

Mary Daly (1987), radical feminist, identifies this position of personal power as spiralling out of apraxia (unable to act; a state of apathy / neutral power
position, engendered by patriarchal notions of limited power), and leading us to act out of our hag (what I call our negative and/or active feminine aspect of our selves). Clearly we can associate the knowingness of Young-Eisendrath's and Wiedemann's Authority with such active feminine aspects. The authority of knowledge and understanding provides a clear basis for action.

Porter (1991), feminist philosopher, calls it attaining a full concept of self-in-relations. The stories of these women researched here, re-tell the integrity, the wholeness we find when we centre ourselves within the relationships of importance to us. There is another aspect, an exciting discovering of our 'authority'... when we stood alone and apart yet firmly within our understandings... such as when we chose to leave what we felt was an unethical work situation - or change the situation itself! There is a strengthening - a quickening for each woman when she acts for herself amongst others who may not support her. Here I am calling into the light the shadow side of the self-in-relations concept and acknowledge the strength needed to act for one's self when that is different to the preferences of colleagues.

Estes (1992) Jungian psychologist, feminist and cantadora (storyteller), calls this being in touch with our wild woman. The place where we understand our shadow-being and act in full knowledge of our intuitions. While all women in the group did not respond to the wild woman concept, all strengthened their access and response to intuitive knowing (Belenky et al 1986) during the research process. Clearly this enriched our authority as well.

If we now turn to look back at Gilligan's (1982) ethic of care - we have learned now that we cannot operate in this mode unless we have the strength; the power of acting from a place of response-ability, that is, being able to respond... a place of personal authority... and support. With developmental feminist psychology providing the ground work for much of the above (Belenky et al 1986, Gilligan 1982, Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann 1987) we have noticed how we have changed and developed over our careers as well. The research creates an interface with feminist theory in practice and Jungian psychology (fully developed in Chapter 5). In so doing this provides a thorough process for reflection and re-cognition - re-knowing of our own stages of development influenced by our social and historical context as well as a knowledge of such developmental theories.

Feminising Influence on Gender - 'free' Ethics

Many business texts recognise transformational leadership is underpinned by an 'ethic of care', intuitive knowing (gut feeling), contextual and related authority. In the writings of Covey (1990), Senge (1990, 1994) Semler (1993), Peters and Waterman (1982) to name just a few, I see the feminising influence of Gilligan's ethic of care and Porter's morality coming together with the previously male province of ethics. We see this in Stephen Covey's (1990) works his notion of inter-dependence, the final state of maturity after dependence and independence. Judi Marshall (1984, 82) calls it variously women's culture, and a wild spirit of womanhood and notes that personal power comes from relational identity. Marshall talks of "establishing a base of values - both personal and collective - from which women can accept and respect themselves without relying on others for approval". Marshall resonates a decade earlier with Porter in advocating that her profile of womanhood provides a framework through which to return to the notion of identity "as it has meaning for women." Porter (1991) refers to the state of rational passionate selfhood, which for me describes succinctly the state of
maturity (self-hood) from which we act through strong feeling (passion) integrated with reasoned and critical thinking (coming from the rational). Like Marshall, Joanna Macy (1993) draws together masculine and feminine 'ethics' to engender practices which integrate wholeness into our work and social lives in what she call a model of co-dependence which is in effect similar to Covey's interdependence.

Feminising Leadership

It is not just our group of women then, who are re-constructing our meanings around power. Many feminist theorists, philosophers, political leaders such as Mary Robinson, President of Ireland, work at empowering and enabling others as well as ourselves. It seems we are investing the term with the earlier dictionary meaning of power as able to perform, to do. Mary Robinson spoke of this when speaking to a gathering of women leaders.

"As women lead, they are changing leadership. As women organise, they are changing the organisation. As they re-state the skills of administration, of the law, of the arts, and the academy, women are handing them on, in a fresh and radicalised form."

SBS Television documentary Not a Bedroom War

Some women are influencing some of the systems that impact upon our lives in workplaces and governments. Betty Friedan however, perceives that women have now attained critical mass, and have empowered themselves to operate effectively in society. (I must acknowledge here, that these must be on the whole, white and privileged women.)

Friedan is another feminist who is conjoining feminist theory and practice with management theory and practice. She spoke of transformational leadership as a management movement in the US which is incorporating feminist ideals of consultation and equity (ABC radio 8/3/93).

Friedan and Robinson, are addressing a model of power that is different from that seen as right or wrong; black or white with no flexibility. This model is not a good model for responsiveness to the changing situations we are in right now. People can no longer be treated as underlings by barking orders at them. People are too well educated these days. Now we need transformative leadership. Management is changing around the world where everyone down the line takes responsibility and works for it said Friedan (on ABC Radio National [live] on International Women's Day 8/3/93). While this chapter in itself is supporting that change it is not that universal - yet. 'Everyone' may be taking on responsibilities, but I question whether ‘everyone’ is being rewarded equally for their efforts.

Transformative leadership is a way of creatively using the power that empowers. It is the other side of what Ann Oakley saw as: "A way of seeing is a way of not seeing" (Oakley 1974 27). If we refuse to 'see' the limited model of power which places power in the hands of very few, then we are seeing another reality. Our paradigm of empowerment shares power amongst all peoples.

In this work, I have given 12 examples in women’s everyday lives. Now that I have considered constructs around notions of power from the women of the research group and various writers views, I have presented a paradigm that is paradoxical to patriarchy. We have even shown in our stories how some of us created that paradox inside patriarchal institutions. By sharing power amongst us all, we influenced and worked to change that very power structure that created such dismembering beliefs.
We are in the process of changing our own constructs and influencing others' beliefs around power. We do this in day-to-day work practices. We tell the stories which enable and empower others.

Many women of course, have learned to successfully work the power plays to advance their career and may well be able to do so without compromising their 'ethic of care'. In fact, those who retain their integrity, may use their position to transform the workplace to a more empowering place.

Before we leave this dialogue around constructs of power, let me give you a story that embodies the paradox we are challenging. It may demonstrate how patriarchal power can disempower us and others and why we choose to influence these structures to enable others' beliefs in their own power.

The current head of South Australia's Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system, Kaye Schofield spoke soon after her appointment in 1991 to senior women managers in the NSW TAFE system. This was at a conference which I designed collectively (with Chris, of our research group) in consultation with participating women (see appendix A3). Kaye spoke of the importance to her of surviving through all the restructuring and the changes of ideologies of different governments, by ensuring she operated within her Ways of working: - she kept her sense of humour and she always operated with integrity. She was asked at the interview for the S.A. Directorship, "But are you tough enough?" After getting over the shock of the gender-unfairness of the question, she answered: "Tough enough for what? I don’t know if I’m tough enough. You could ask my referees if I am tough enough." She shared that afterwards at the airport, she cried in desperation and frustration. Incidentally, Kaye confided to her audience, that one of the things she would do once she started the job, would be to review EEO processes in the selection procedures.

For those women in her audience, Kaye provided a model of that 'ethic of care'. She was well known within the organisation as one who kept her high profile of femocrat, when it was definitely not the political flavour, and as a manager operated scrupulously with fairness, access and equity. She also told us that she cried to survive. She cried when she needed to let out anger and used humour over the ridiculousness of much bureaucratic bungling.

I tell this story, to show a 'successful' woman working the system to change the system; re-constructing what power can do and be alongside the paradoxes of such a position. A contender for the top job also suffers perceptions of traditional management around some subjective of 'toughness' with a not-so-hidden assumption that a woman may not well be 'tough enough'.

I will now shift our focus to consider language constructs and creations of power.

The Power of Language - the Language of Power

"Be-speaking: 1: Auguring, foretelling, Speaking of what will be
2: bringing about psychic and or/material change by means of words.
Daly 1987

Through what Daly calls be-speaking the women of the research group
dared to speak our dreams and hopes. There is an energy, a power created around
our times of be-speaking, that lead us to use the group meetings as a resource. A
resource in a sense of trying our ideas and collecting them from the women of the
group as well as a place to ‘tank-up’ to collect energies / power, along with
strategies, with which to go back into the fray.

I consider this issue of language from a very personal perspective - a
perspective which arises from a professional dilemma. It is a position I find myself
in as a woman who wants to consider the whole of things, rather than dissect and
examine the components of a problem.

The issue arises in writing a social ecology thesis. The stretch lies around
the question: how do I find / create a language which is able to impart the value,
the impact and the range of learnings that we women developed over 3 years of
working together? Underlying this is a pact, an ethic, which is concerned with
writing about the women in language all the women understand. To write about
people when they do not have access to the meanings is for me unethical, and I
would assert, not feminist research in the context which we chose to construct. If
we are about emancipation for all, then to discuss a person’s life in terms that they
cannot understand, is to me a form of arrogance.

Certainly, there are useful specific ‘jargon’ / technical’ terms which enable
our understandings. Terms like epistemology, ontology, heuristic and others, are
quite useful to describe what we do, and why we do them. These terms have been
explained in their context when used.

We also discussed the use of ‘professional’ language in business and
academic contexts. Our experience and observations of ‘professional’ language is
that much of it is sterile of sensory vocabulary and emotive terms. Thus it is hard
to carry passion, love and excitement into a work task, when it is considered
inappropriate to use such language. We are not the only ones to notice this.
Roddick speaks of putting love where the work is. Researchers and journalists
collecting stories from working women, speak of power being love (Szirom 1991,

The ‘cult’ of sterile professional language, detracts from what is possible.
Great energy is lost as any passionate and feeling being, translates an exciting
idea into ‘acceptable’ language of the organisation/establishment. Such is the task
of an Aboriginal woman, battling for funds via a government grant, to improve
health of young mothers and their babies in her district. Out of loving concern she
sees and hears the problem, translating that into a government submission, words
like love, compassion and agony are not appropriate. Words like justify,
demonstrate and evaluate, are the accepted norm (by the bureaucrats).

For similar reasons Spender (1980) and others tell the story of women
needing to translate from the language of the dominant hierarchy, to their own
(alive and feeling language ) back to sterile neutral words. Various terms have
been used to describe this stretching task; summarised by Marshall (1983, 51). She
language’ and Spender (1980) sums it up by stating that women ‘start by being in
the wrong’. Marshall goes on to further note that in mixed groups it is men who
dominate the topics of conversation, as well as directing the emotional tone - i.e. reducing it. This neutralising of our feeling text, removes energy, juice and passion from that which is of great concern to us.

In our research group time and again, women described situations where they were passionate and usually angry about unjust practices. They had tried to communicate their depth of feeling. Getting negative responses, they toned down their passion, neutralised their language, spoke in 'reasonable' tones using clear justifications for their point of view. One male colleague's response was: "Why didn't you say that in the first place, instead of coming on like a witch on a broom?" Certainly, strong emotion can get in the way of clear communication and we still need to communicate fully. The issue here is the incongruence of 'watering down' or neutralising our passion, just so we can be heard. But to lose the 'juice', the energy of the passion reduces the possibilities available to us.

"It is the attempt to separate the intellect from emotion that is monstrous." 

Bateson 1972 464

Bateson also recognises the monstrosity of separating ourselves from each other, the whole system of power that connects us. In his discussion of the theology of Alcoholics Anonymous, he discusses their base belief: 'the power that is greater that any of us,' as a relationship. A relationship where each individual "is best defined in the word is part of" (Bateson 1972 333), meaning any individual is seen as a 'part of' that greater power.

We are all 'part of' any system in which we participate. So at work within any organisation, we add to what makes that organisation. That leads me to ask: How do we work within that relationship and when do we feel powerful doing so?

Deborah Tannen refers to women's language use when operating from power.

"But it seems that having information, expertise, or skill at manipulating objects is not the primary measure of power for most women. Rather, they feel their power enhanced if they can be of help. Even more, if they are focussing on connection rather than independence and self-reliance, they feel stronger when the community is strong." 

Tannen, 1990, 68

For the women of the research group, we felt our own power enhanced when we worked with these connections. Team-building, community-building, even self empowering work, all add to this power and shapes the language we use when we are powerful. So Grace directs her team by reminding them about what was agreed collectively. Electra encourages her staff to work with her as a colleague, not a boss, and uses language to impart this meaning.

Challenging the Language of Academe

Given the ethic of care that says we speak in our voices, I extend beyond academic abstract language and write in the language of the everyday. Clearly I am writing the theory which makes meaning out of our actions which must be written with consent from all the researchers. Complexity is processed further to express the richness of diversity through clear everyday language. This means speaking in context, in the language of the culture of co-researchers.
Thus the writing (text) becomes a connecting bridge rather than an object in itself. In this Way, the sharing of our stories and my interpretations upon them, acts as a mediator and a channel for enabling power.

To make meaning in a language that is inclusive, has been a life-long professional aim of mine (as a teacher). I have consistently found that my deepest understanding of a topic comes when I teach it. To teach it I need to wrestle with the meanings of the theorists, the researchers, the analysts, the language of critique and current professional trends. To teach an idea, a concept, a theory, I need to be very clear about its meaning, use and applicability. This task in itself requires the same intellectual rigour as that which exudes theory in complex exegesis. The clarifying task is for emancipation of ideas. **Obfuscation is to limit power to those who can access the ideas through the fog;** (This last statement is an example of the language which withholds meaning).

Thus there is a constant questing for language that is not binary in nature, that talks about differences and specialities of women without dividing us into opposites; to talk of inclusion without dichotomies. There is an assumption in mainstream academia that rigour uses the language form of setting up an argument and meeting opposing views. Yet I propose that this is not appropriate.

My response is to name and challenge the dominant paradigm and approach the writing with methodologies of stories, with expressions of feelings, with evidence of growth and learnings and to extend that with patchwork quilts which contextualise our experiences.

I affirm that claiming feeling and inclusive language as our medium, does not deny rigour. There is consistent and ever-struggling rigour in researching with a group. This involves advocating de-centralisation of control by handing the language of the investigations over to the group. There is constant questioning around the process. Examining process while in the middle of it, offers us reflexive observations which guide our researching development. It is also highly strenuous, complex and messy and personally challenging. What we have done is to provide a meta-dialogue of our process and content. To address the feelings and the personal complexities arising from work commitments, is to contextualise and include a meta-text. In fact, through our inclusive language, I assert that we are investigating many levels of meaning. To use John Lennon’s words, we are “looking through a glass onion” to the inner core of meaning.

There is no “clean-room” laboratory testing here. No well-designed questionnaire sent out to hundreds of women, then analysed by using a statistician to derive conclusions. Indeed are there any findings? We are identifying unique personal perceptions and our own experiences. Beyond the group work, I read and write and theorise to link our experiences, beliefs and findings with the wider world. Always, language defines the aspect; constantly arising and constantly claiming our attention. And always, the words go back to the members of the group. The language I use, must make sense for them. I am writing group meaning and attempting to deliver a sense of each individual woman’s world view and her subsequent meaning-making; as well, her learnings about her work. What is this but meta-dialogue, meta-philosophy and meta-cognition as I stand aside and comment about her learnings from work?
This is Mary Daly’s bespeaking. If we speak our experiences, we speak our truth. This is not finding of truth in classical philosophical terms. This is post-modernism: i.e. delivering a cultural critique. This is post-structuralism, as I emphasize method and epistemological matters, deconstructing, examining language, discourse and meanings (Rosenau 1992:3).

The Language of Truth - Post-modernism, Feminism - Who or Which wields the Power?

Yet post-modernist approaches are problematic for our purpose. As they are articulated on the whole by a language seduction which denies understanding to many. As students struggle to understand post-modernist text people can lose their own meaning-making. The empowerment of language that we advocate instead empowers people with the freedom to de-construct other’s meanings which do not serve their world-view and then enables reconstruction of their own meanings in their own contexts, using their own stories.

What is useful to us from post-modernism is the process itself of de-constructing meaning. De-construction provides another perspective which includes social and political context. This has provided many realisations for women who were blaming themselves (and/or an ‘other’) for their lack of economic advancement, poor mothering, low level education and whatever else was perceived as ‘wrong’ with their lives. Through unpacking such contextual assumptions we can and have in many cases, overcome Wolf’s ‘victim-feminism’. An essential step towards a position of empowerment.

The dilemmas however walk with us at every step. As any healthily skeptical post-modernist or feminist would do, I refute the concept that there is one truth around power. I have addressed many times that while we advocate ‘empowerment’ there are still men and women who are social, political and economic ‘victims’. Quite clearly the women of the research group invested their time, energies, intellectual and emotional, into telling stories which give some measure of ‘truth’ for them including empowering and victimising outcomes. We live these dilemmas around post-modernism, feminism and power in our day-to-day worlds.

As well as telling stories in our own words, we researched into events, work structures and social and political constructions with the purpose of finding meaning. As we did this ourselves, using our own words, we examined possibilities of truth for us.

If there is any test of what is truth for us, it would lie in the validity of the experience. Certainly, bringing an experience to the group and having it listened to with respect and collecting possible avenues of managing the issues, allowed each of us to reflect and thus intuit, what may be one’s inner truth at that time. Thus we turned around the classical philosophical idea that truth implies an author to state that truth. Each of us were able to extract our own truth from one woman’s story. She held her truth for herself, in her own words, and each individual’s learning may or may not have included some of that truth.

I believe we acted upon the discourse, by recognising that “truth can never be independent of language” (Rosenau 1992:78). In fact, I claim that we were not satisfied with the idea of ‘one truth’ because we had all experienced being on the other side of another’s stated truth. Here we agree with the post-modernists who
understand truth claims to be a product of power games, serving the interests of only those who pronounce that one ‘truth’ (Rosenau 1992 78). So our truth is intricately bound into our discourse and can never be independent of our language (Flax 1990 35 in Rosenau 1993). This means quite simply that we have experienced being the ‘other’, the one for whom a statement is not true. Of course, that one ‘truth’, couched in the language of the power manipulator / distant observer, invalidates our experience, our knowing, our being. As Rosenau (1993 78) notes, skeptical post-modernists (Derrida, Graf & Ryan) see “the relationship between name and meaning, the signified and the signer is problematic”.

So, in our own construction of what is ‘real’ for us, we strengthened our own notions of our own truths, intuitions, feelings, interpretations and all responses following. We came out of a stronger state of knowing because we acknowledged, used and strengthened our own relationships between the knower (ourselves) and the known (our own experience).

_Languaging the Language of Truth_

_Differing views on the value of deconstructing the Meaning of Language_

It may be asked, particularly by positivists, or anyone seeing and experiencing mainly the dominant paradigm, what has language to do with the finding of truth? Surely it is purely a symbolic message system through which we communicate what is known?

Foucault calls us to

“...no longer treat(ing) discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as _practices_ that systematically form the objects of which they speak.”

_Foucault 1972 49 in Shotter 1993 37_

In our creation of Affirmative Inquiry we go beyond the thoughts and philosophies around language into practices Foucault (1972) and Böhm (1991). In practice we are ‘be-speaking’. We are indeed creating worlds of experiencing through speaking of the nature of the being. As Mary Daly inspires us to do, we spin a different world with our language that be-speaks the world as we would like it to be. In so doing, we call upon the world of which we do not approve, to be no more. Not for us anyway. Clearly there are many different worlds being ‘languaged’ each day. What we speak ‘truly’ from our own hearts, carries with it a power of _languaging worlds_ - _be-speaking_ in it’s manifest form!

So language is always biased, always presented from the context of the bespeaker and so problematically denying other realities while affirming the preferred world view. These many voices call forth the possibility of new forms of human beings - “...for to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life” (Wittgenstein 1953 in Shotter 199338).

Shotter believes that we each have the power via what he terms the social constructionist approach to use

“... new ways of talking to not merely describe what already exists, but to involve ourselves in genuine political struggles to do with bringing new forms of social life into existence.”

_Shotter 1993 38_

These words echo in my mind with Hilary Clinton’s given in chapter 5: “first create a language... and the policies would flow from the language” (Safire
So every politician, advertiser, journalist and teacher entices us to believe the new creations they call forth every day. The women of the research group also talk in Ways that call forth "new forms of social life". Further, by calling forth no more than which denies our ethics, we are de-constructing the old power.

Therein lies further contradictions, complexities, tensions and paradoxes. While we speak of empowering we do not want to empower that with which we do not agree. We aim to be inclusive and actively work to cut off power from the old forces which we see has dragged us down.

Language is as language does. We judge the language by the language used. How does the following critique of post-modernist discourse, apply to our affirmative inquiry?

"Post-modern theory, for the affirmatives, is unsystematic, heterological, de-centred, ever changing and local. Non-representational, it is personal in character and community-specific in focus. Their decentered theory is said to be valuable for its own sake and never to claim special authority for itself. It does not require the object-subject distinction of modern social science. It is "true" only in terms of its own discourse."

Rosenau 1992 83

All of these descriptors could be applied to our research if it is examined through an affirmative/ positivist paradigm.

At this point I am wrangling with that academic vocabulary that in itself creates exclusivity. This is where I hedge all bets, and demonstrate the use of this language, to argue for the place of our own language. What I am doing is translating from the language of the dominant paradigm, to the language of the 'other' in this case women, that Spender identifies in 'Man-Made Language' (Spender 1980).

By developing a contextualised work, I strongly assert that to clearly represent each woman's voice, the research needed to be constructed from all the qualities which Rosenau lists. Not that we did it the one right way. At any time, the direction of the work was open to influence from any member, and could have taken different directions, or applied different research methods and interpretations.

Our language was unsystematic - we would drop the agreed agenda if one woman's issue was (for her) more urgent (and we may well find the agenda and her issue coincided). We used the language of the emotions. We were heterological (meaning not applying to itself) perhaps in many ways; the most obvious is that we are a professional group investigating in very personal Ways. Individual meetings may be said to be de-centred (as in not sticking to agenda) and if that means multi-layered and multi-disciplinary, then this thesis certainly represents that. We are admittedly ever-changing, specific to our community and local in our orientations.

"It is true only in terms of its own discourse". Yes our work is true for us, true in the telling of its own story and making of meaning. We also find it is true for many other women and oppressed peoples who find that their stories are not heard by the dominant paradigm. However I strongly argue that if we were not all
these things, if we had tried to squeeze our spiralling shapes into a positivist square frame, we would certainly not be true to ourselves. Nor would we be true to building a feminist work.

The critique lifted from Rosenau above gives a many faceted argument of “the ways patriarchal order achieves women’s silence and invisibility” (Marshall 1983, 52). These are the ways Marshall points out that patriarchal order (positivism) acts as “boundary keepers to limit women’s participation in the construction and use of social meanings.” Truth is absolutely essential. Truth is personal, it is community-specific in focus. It is thus ‘true’ for us. Further, I have observed that other women respond powerfully when hearing, reading, being touched by another woman’s truth. It gives her permission to speak her own truth, in her own words.

Aside from all the contextualising that I see necessary, there has been enough linguistic interpretation to demonstrate that much is communicated beyond the choice of words. The essence of one’s own story, can only travel through one’s own voice. When we speak then of “the Language of Power” we deliberately de-construct the power that is claimed by those who decide the words of the workplace and market place. Instead, we reclaim the power of the everyday in our language and the passionate and abounding levels of energy on tap. This empowering truth is for those who will speak in their own voice and are willing and empowered to connect with others.

She speaks with her voice, if she uses her words.

The Power of Knowledge

“One cannot care for the self without knowledge. The care for self is of course knowledge of self... but it is also the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct or of principles which are at the same time truths and regulations. To care for self is to fit one’s self out with these truths. That is where ethics is linked to the game of truth.”

Foucault 1988 in McNay 1992 149

Feminism has brought out into open debate the placement of power. We have become aware of powers which were not in women’s hands. At that realisation there has often been a rise in anger. Anger carries with it a great deal of frustrated energy at last finding an outlet. We step beyond anger when we realise that ‘something needs to be done’. The action takes many forms through history. We see women like Edith Cowan, the first woman in an Australian parliament, Millicent Bryant, the first woman to obtain a flying licence, Roma Mitchell first female Queen’s Counsel and Supreme Court Judge and long-term campaigner for women, Edna Ryan who has been effectively working for human rights of women, workers, Aborigines on a political and social sphere for most of this century. I see all these women as acting out of their active-feminine aspect -fighting for a fair go for all.

Such action is theory turned into strategy; ideology turned into policy.

“...feminist theory should consider itself a form of strategy. Strategy involves recognizing the situation and alignments of power within and against which it operates. It needs to know its adversary intimately in order to strike at its most vulnerable points. It must also seek certain
When power is questioned in open debate, the knowledge arising can be shared and often generates further power (empowerment). Such was the experience of the women of the research group who came away more knowledgable and empowered with a range of powerful strategies we proved to be useful. Because we were informed, therefore we felt we were empowered. Knowledge, in my experience, combined with resources to support action, is even more powerful!

With open debate it becomes known where power is held. It becomes known, how power is obtained and held. The process of the getting of power is questioned. Knowledge of who, what, where and how expands. When more people know, there are more challenges to the holders of power. When we know about the construction of power, we are more able to work the system -to rebel if it doesn't suit our ethics.

"It is true, it seems to me, that power is 'always already there', that one is never 'outside', that there are no 'margins' in which those in rupture with the system may gambol. But this does not mean that it is necessary to admit an unavoidable form of domination or an absolute privilege of the law. That one can never be 'outside of power' does not mean that one is in every way trapped."

Foucault 1979 55 in Gunew 1990 22

If we are all within the power construct, then the ones who possess knowledge of this construct of power, along with the resources to drive it, are the ones who define the power relationship. In educational institutions, for example, this power is constructed by the rules and conventions which together make up the maze through which students run their course. Formal education can serve as a very reactionary form of informing. In this form it preserves the status quo, by not only defining who will enter the learning institution, but also deciding how they should achieve the getting of knowledge offered inside.

Research too, holds a control over the getting of knowledge. In traditional frameworks, the researcher does their research upon the researched, then decides what it all means. As Foucault says, the power to construct the research is always there. Theoretically any participant can endeavour to use that power. If as systems theory tells us, the most flexible part of a system rules the system (Senge 1994, Bateson 1979), then an educational institution or research centre which cannot respond flexibly to input from many sources, loses the opportunity for more knowledge.

"Power is not possessed, it acts in the very body and over the whole surface of the social field according to a system of relays, modes of connection, transmission, distribution etc. Power acts through the smallest elements: the family, sexual relations but also: residential relations, neighbourhoods, etc. As far as we go in the social network we always find power as something that 'runs' through it, that acts that brings about effects. It becomes effective or not, that is, power is always a definite form of momentary and constantly reproduced encounters among a definite number of individuals. Power is thus not possessed because it is 'in play'; because it risks itself."

Foucault. Interview with Lucette Finales' in Morris & Paton 1978 60
If I apply Foucault’s theory of power not being able to be possessed to a metaphor of electrical power, I see it can be generated but not possessed. It cannot like money or gold or the harvest fruits, be stored away until needed. In its pure generated form it is too powerful and needs to be disseminated - transformed - to be useful. I believe Foucault is naming this constant movement of power as being momentary and constantly reproduced. It is because of this volatile quality, that power can move from one to another.

This metaphor of power can be applied when women take on their full maturity (Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann 1987). Because electoral power in a democracy is continuously moving, power can be seen to move from one person to another. If we are to feel and operate powerfully, then we need to be constantly generating power. Similarly if we are to work with Foucault’s notion of power not being able to be possessed, do we keep dancing with it?

As well as knowledge about power, I also want to address the idea of power from possessing knowledge itself. In a truly emancipatory, empowering society, knowledge will not be possessed but shared. In management literature, it has been noted that leaders are no longer useful as directors who hold the knowledge of the system to themselves. In today’s ‘information age’, this knowledge has been disseminated via computers, faxes, emails etc. Leaders are better equipped then, as facilitators of teams. Many members of their team would know more about their specialist area than the manager/leader. It seems leadership itself is being re-defined.

“The Key to successful leadership today is influence not authority.”
Kenneth Blanchard in K & L Schatz 1986 Managing by Influence

and

“The new leader is a facilitator, not an order giver.”
John Naisbitt 1984 Megatrends

As hierarchies themselves move towards team-based, self-managing structures the role of boss and director is changing to coach and facilitator (Australian Institute of Management 1993).

So the question arises, where is the power base now? The logical answer, within a team structure, is from within the people themselves. For these structures to work effectively there must be a shift from directing power, to sharing power. When a team has a good facilitator as a leader, then the experience should be one of expanding the power.

Another question now must be answered. Is there no longer any power in possessing knowledge? A good facilitator does not always need to know specific information, however they are empowered if they have acquired the know-how to access information. Knowing how and where to ask for information is essential. That means that when we act as leaders/managers we need to be able to say: “I don’t know.” (And to be able to add... ) “Does anyone here know where we can access that?”

Further, we need to be able to recognise strategies and skills that are transferable to different situations. Women who work at practical things around their homes are often very good at applying successful strategies from one task to another, completely different task. Thus we test out old knowledge on new
situations. Neuro-Linguistic Programming learning theory uses this idea as an effective learning strategy-to take something that worked for learning in the past, and apply it to something new (Dilts et al 1980).

There is a necessary opposite side to this strategy. What happens when everything we have known before doesn’t fit the new situation? For example; a 45-year-old compositor can become de-skilled when a newspaper employer of 22 years changes to direct computer typesetting. When old habitual modes become dysfunctional we are in a state of ‘cognitive crisis’. In this state we experience a dark night of the soul - a confusion out of which we must find a way to survive. Joanna Macy claims that this state “motivates the system to self-organize in more inclusive ways, embracing and integrating data of which it has been previously unconscious” (Macy 1993,71). Macy combines Buddhist philosophy with general systems theory, to present an ‘objectless knowing’ where the knower and the known are intricately integrated, hence the language which personifies the system, when in reality, systems don’t do anything, people do. In this state of interdependence Macy sees a way we can work together. She suggests that there is no separation between the knower and the known, but that there is ‘just knowing’. Post-modernists suggest that what we look for and how we look for it, defines our knowing. Macy is about expanding the possibilities of our understandings so that we fully share the knowledge interdependently and thus know our interdependence.

As Grosz states at the start of this section; understanding about how things work is a power in itself. Grosz puts forward that feminist theory has in itself become a strategy for dealing with power. In understanding where and how power is formed, we are more able to challenge power that excludes us. It is the street-smart kid who knows where the free food is and which laneways and underground tunnels to avoid at certain times. Those who live on the edge, become more adept at maintaining survival on the edge.

“Living as we did - on the edge - we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside-in and from the inside-out. We focussed our attention upon the centre as well on the margin. We understood both. This mode of seeing reminded us of the existence of a whole universe, a main body made of both margin and centre. Our survival depended upon an ongoing public awareness of the separation between marginal and centre and an ongoing private acknowledgment that we were a necessary vital part of the whole.”

Hooks, 1984, ix

There is a power in the knowledge that is built up while we watch the power players and constantly translate into our own words, the consequences in our terms. The clearer we get in our own knowledge, because we are learning as we live ‘on the edge’, the more powerfully we be-speak. We speak out against that which is unjust, and ‘talk-up’ emancipatory notions until they become realities.

The Power of Knowledge exponentially distributed - Information Highways

The growth of knowledge / information available to us via the computer links with so-called ‘information highways’ means many people can access specific information very quickly, world-wide. So Kate can access medical research, Grace and Jess can check-out government policy, unions and childcare in any country and Electra and Stella can e-mail and network world-wide.
How do those without computers access these superhighways? Alison Crook, as then-CEO of NSW State Library and the Bulletin's Business Woman of the Year (1993), directed a policy that enabled anyone to access information from world-wide computer networks, even those with a limited ability to pay for information. Crook clearly holds a strong ethic about enabling information power to all peoples.

Knowledge is power and this power is enhanced and expanded by sharing. This is not only an ethic of the women of the research group, but also a way of being and a way of knowing. By overtly operating to convert controlling power to sharing empowerment, we expand our own knowledge and power, as Kate from our research group did in the following story.

The Power of Personal Knowledge

Kate seemed to have a breakthrough in her understanding about Ways of using power when she took on the position of the first doctor of a women's health centre, some years ago. She learned this knowledge from lesbians in the women's health collective where she was their first doctor.

The effect of meeting lesbians started changing my whole perspective and gave me power. They taught me something very good and powerful and taught me critical appraisal at the same time. It gave me the positive side of the women's movement. I call them my teachers.

I learnt to be constructively critical and learnt a lot more about people. I stopped being naive and that gave me power. Power over men as a woman; power not to feel intimidated as a woman.

Kate identifies here the "feminist theory that becomes strategy" as Grosz expresses it at the start of this section (Grosz 1990a 59). Through critical thinking about power and knowledge about what is happening, we claim our own power and so learn strategies to work with it.

Power of Empowerment

For the research group, power was enhanced by the knowledge of our contribution towards emancipatory change.

I want to equalise access to power. Clarify the power structures so that this is so. If there are clear rules, you can learn the rules and this gives people access to lines of power. (Jess)

I started this chapter saying that the women of the research group, looked at power and decided to re-define its meaning for ourselves as we had already re-constructed our own powerful actions.

Looking through a hierarchical world-view then our experience and therefore our definitions of power, saw power as imposed from above. Given our 'ethic of care' (as Jess has described it), this did not suit our Ways of working. It suits our ideologies better to see the power operating in natural systems, where interdependence relies upon flexibility and interaction with each other. Such a
Way of being requires openness and vulnerability to accept all types of information available to us. It also empowers us to use different responses and awaken to new possibilities and increases the capacity to effect change. The experience of the ensuing energy and creativity is a synergy which increases power beyond the sum total of our own individual resources (Macy 1993 35).

However much we want to work like this, in an open system that can be described as an effective ‘learning organisation’ (Senge 1990), we were all constantly aware that we live and work day-to-day in a predominantly hierarchical world-view which constructs power as limited to a few. Where do we find an inter-face? How do we survive given our ‘ ethic-of-care’ and our preference for sharing and creativity?

Thus we researched to answer these questions. There are complexities which we reveal, attempt to define and then re-construct to make it work for us and those around us: our work-teams, our families and our friends.

Macy sees that the roots of power lie in efforts to strengthen community and practice (Macy 1993 37). *It takes time to build community*. Jess took 2 to 3 years to build her work-team into a co-operative community. Some people may choose to leave when they see the community building in ways which they do not like. *It takes skills which need to be learned*. The timing of the training is quite important and yet it is a chicken-and-egg situation. Until the community learns processing and problem-solving skills they seldom access those options. However, until they experience being a community, and the day-to-day conflicts arising as people work together, they do not perceive the need for such skills. So there needs to be some experience of interdependent learning before the problem-solving strategies can be put to full use.

Many of us have experienced the tension of transition when we may be in a collective or co-operative structure but people in the system are not yet open and responsive. For women, these experiences may have been in feminist collectives as well as community action groups, peace or environmental-activities or school / childcare or parent support groups. These opportunities were part of the herstory of women in the research group.

The practice of these ways of being are nourished by work structures which enable. Given that most of us are still working within hierarchies, how do we practice that? I have spoken before of the Ways our researchers create a community work-team inside a hierarchy. In this way they endeavour to create an oasis of sanity in a desert. The reality is, that they are always under threat. It is hard to feel safe in a power structure which is defined by ‘power-over’ structures of procedures and lines of command described as ‘vertical differentiation’ (Dunphy 1993 276). It is in the practice of interdependent community awareness that we strengthen ourselves. With an armory of community, we have people to turn to when the system attacks our person or position. This is a situation where we learn as we are ‘living on the edge’ (Hooks 1984). In these situations, we are also strengthened by our knowledge around power. Now that we have de-constructed our own notions of power, we know that we can generate our own power with the variety of resources revealed in this chapter.

By empowering anyone to work with their whole selves and each other we
are building an open system. Just how do we do that inside hierarchical co-dependent systems and stay sane is the stretch, the risk and the challenge.

"...by challenging the patriarchal infrastructures women can undermine and withdraw the props that have sustained and given plausibility to the symbol system which, in turn, legitimates these social structures."

Daly 1993 135

In what Daly calls "the time of the tigers", she calls forth what I earlier referred to as the 'mother tiger syndrome', when women access their aggressive feminine aspect. This aspect will fight in order to nurture. We will also stretch into the paradoxical position of fighting to save a nurturant world (Salleh 1984). Yet another example of ideas arising from archetypal understandings (Jungian based) interacting with feminist psychology 'philosophy.

With our feminist theory we deconstruct and name the patriarchy as being not only anti-women but anti-human. By using organisational theory we can name the uselessness of the dysfunctional organisations with their sick systems (Schaef 1985, 1988, feminist psychologist) and work at creating humanistic work places which interact positively with their community (Senge 1990, 1994, Roddick 1991, Semler 1993, and Dunphy & Dick 1993).

By recognising the value of interrelating with the whole of our environment, we work towards structuring open-ended systems in our workplace structures and interdependently build our community of knowing. An interdependent community of knowers is, I claim, open-ended. It has comparatively unlimited access to knowledge with world-wide information highways (typified by the Internet) and the use of CD Rom computers available right now.

We launched this project to jointly gain knowledge and support. While we experience that amongst ourselves and within our own work teams, we remind each other that much current power is still held in these sick systems. As we cannot and will not buy into their style of fighting might against might, we must find another way. I believe many women and men have found other Ways. When feminist theory and organisational and systems theory converge (Kanter 1992, Macy 1993, 1991, Senge 1994, 1990, Ianello 1992) within the people, then work is never the same again.

Jess affirms that

"I will never again work for / with people who don't care."

Certainly there are many who tire of the stress of fighting the 'power over' system. They may quietly resign and leave to build a more creative and holistic work life for themselves. In doing this they are showing another Way. There are those who stay in the patriarchies, and build networks of open-ended system supports around them. They are showing another Way. Both avenues, I believe, serve to change the systems under which we are working.

Even those of us working voluntarily in our communities influence the change. Frances Hesselbein (former Girl Scout executive) proposes web-structure to replace the hierarchical model. Peter Drucker would choose Hesselbein to lead General Motors because he says her strong point is turning around bureaucracies. As Frances says, the great thing about a circle structure is that it doesn't box you in (Aburdene & Naibitt 1993a). Maybe she means we can bring our whole selves
to work and access all our creativity because our community needs are met!

Summary

So through these investigations of power, I have examined why looking at 'power' was a necessary part of formulating our research. The subject of power in feminist arenas of critical social science is an open-ended topic and so is necessarily covered briefly in the context of this research. *We need to know the nature of the oppression.* By exploring the Power of Constructs and Language *we took into our hands and our own words, the power of making-meaning.* The questions: Who knows? And what knowledge is considered important? leads us to frame our own knowledge and to *access that which informs our own power.* All this has a purpose of generating emancipatory Power of empowerment - *a fair go for all of us.*

The fair exercise of power presupposes that there is a political system: democratic, socialistic, collaborative-organisational or whatever, that will support this concept. The fact that we can even discuss the possibility of sharing gender equity in terms of power structures, benefits from the understandings and arising strategies from adopting Gilligan's *ethic of care* and live our work lives by Porter's *self-in-relations.*
Chapter 11

The Atalanta Syndrome
From Now Onward...
A More People-friendly Workplace

Overview

I use the Atalanta myth to question current workplace rewards. Her experiences serve as a metaphor of some common business practices in western capitalist society. In this chapter I pro-actively promote a pragmatic vision of integrative work practices and structures. Starting with Atalanta's critique of the shallowness of material and status rewards, I offer richer opportunities and wider possibilities.

I review workplace applications demonstrating more inclusive and flexible organisational cultures, including Roddick, Semler, Senge and others. These approaches recognise gains inherent in developing a culture of people-friendly workplaces. My discussion is realistically grounded giving reasons such practices are not more readily accepted including transformational management literature alongside Australian practices and current media reports.

This chapter concludes with systemic thinking and women's input into changing workplace practices. These approaches can lead to transforming workplaces where all involved may profit from an integrative and flexible workplace culture.

What holds an organisation together is its people.

It is the people, I believe, who construct the environment and maintain the organisational culture.

People are not rigid units of production, despite some rationalist economists' claim. Nor, are they a tool for chiselling at the coal face. People are variable, with different needs and they bring diverse tools of their own into the workplace environment. By their very diversity, people are fascinatingly whole beings - not just 'robotic hands' that produce things.

"The era of using people as production tools is coming to an end. Participation is infinitely more complex to practise than conventional corporate unilateralism, just as democracy is much more cumbersome than dictatorship. But there will be few companies that can afford to ignore either of them."

Semler 1993 86

Co-operative workplaces challenge and change traditional workplace cultures. People within organisations are finding they need to 'learn' to respond. Support for learning to cope with change (such as training and fully co-operative strategic meetings) can facilitate such enabling and emancipatory change.

Women's Ways of working as demonstrated by the co-researchers, lead the way in transformational leadership - that of the enabler. Power is viewed as a resource to be shared and a climate that encourages and provides structures for us to put love where our labour is-can be the creative paradigm of the future.

1 Ralph Waldo Emerson in Roddick 1991 161
The effective Learning Organization (Senge 1990/1994) uses systemic thinking for planning and procedural design. Systemic thinking in current organisational applications can reduce states of confusion in our workplaces and are opportunities for changing attitudes, expanding knowledge and improving ways of working.

**A Myth for Our Time**

Atalanta's story provides an archetypal view of our workplace. The distribution of this story amongst co-researchers stimulated discussion around preferred work practices beyond the initial critique of shallow status rewards.

Atalanta, the story of an Amazonian huntress is handed down to us from Greek Mythology (Grimal, 1965, Ions 1973, Walker 1983) and further adapted by me, as a metaphor for some 'modern' business practices.

**Atalanta - The myth as story**

Atalanta was a great athlete. She could run faster than anybody. She could run faster than any other woman or man. She could run faster than many animals, and she used this ability to develop her hunting skills. Atalanta was known as the Amazonian huntress and the best athlete in Calydon.

We know little of Atalanta's mother. We do know her father was Schoeneus from Arcadia. On finding the child was female, he exposed her on the side of Mount Parthenon leaving the helpless infant to die. But she was not so helpless. A bear suckled her until hunters found the child and taking pity upon her, reared her. The she-bear is a totemic form of the goddess Artemis herself.

Atalanta grew to be a woman who refused to marry. She was devoted to Artemis, a chaste goddess (also known as Diana or "Goddess-Anna").

As well as her devotion to Artemis, she rejected marriage because an oracle had told her that if indeed she did marry, she would be turned into an animal. Not surprisingly, she tried to avoid this fate.

Atalanta was invited to join the great Calydonian boar hunt. This is represented pictorially on many ancient vases, pots and other artefacts in museums around the world. During the hunt she paused to kill with her arrows, two centaurs who tried to rape her. Such was her skill that despite this sexual harassment in the field, she still was the first to wound the boar (again with her arrows).

Atalanta was further harassed by a lovestruck and persistent suitor. Melanion, like others before him, agreed to her harsh selection criteria to win her hand. Every suitor was challenged to race Atalanta. She would give him a start then as she caught up, as she always did, she would spear the unlucky suitor to death with her lance.

When Melanion ran the race, he was pre-armed with a strategy from Aphrodite who gave him 3 golden apples to drop in Atalanta's path. As she stopped each time to pick them up, Melanion gained the lead, winning the race and the great athlete for his bride.

And so lived Atalanta and Melanion, happy-ever-after? Not for long. While
hunting together after their marriage, they entered a temple of Cybele (sometimes cited as a temple of Zeus). Here they lay together. The goddess (or god) was so incensed about this act that the deity turned them into lions and it is said, they were yoked to the chariot of the Great Mother of the Gods: Phrygian Cybele.

It's not just Atalanta now who has been trapped into marriage. As a symbolic metaphor, Atalanta and Melanion are yoked to the organisation (the chariot that she and her partner pulls). He is trapped by his own desire to succeed in competition. She is trapped by bright, glittering prizes (the golden apples) which slowed her down. Atalanta may be enticed by promises such as 'first woman senior manager' and Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) affirmative action. Ah, the perks: superannuation packages, which the rumour purports, attracted her into management in the first place, along with the promise of maternity leave.

It could be asked though, how would she manage a child while she works 48 to 70 hours a week yoked to organizational demands that the job is the first priority before family?

"It's not surprising... to find that women who have achieved success often don't have children, or even a partner."

Bagwell Australian Financial Review 27/8/93

Place Atalanta into a business setting and we see her partner has been similarly yoked. They are pulling the corporate chariot side-by-side. Is this modern togetherness? That they were turned into lions is also significant. What strength and wisdom we attach to the lion as the monarch of the (business) jungle! What strength in the lioness' legs, able to traverse great distances and catch her prey! And what a limited existence bound to a chariot! Is this how we experience the workplace? Are we as trapped lions? Are those women with such powerful potential, limited by binding structures and procedures?

Women attracted by the perks, get trapped into the same harness, pulling the same chariot. They are trapped within the obsolete structure of a hierarchical organisation. Recently re-structured organisations may have been refined for higher productivity outcomes along economic rationalist lines (Pusey 1990). But, these restructures says Pusey, do not usually meet the needs of their people. The underlying patriarchal assumptions are still there, as we shall see.

I now apply this myth as a metaphor of women entering modern business. Picture Atalanta as an up-and-coming executive, a high flier. She won an award for fast-tracking her career path at such a speed that no-one, not even a man, could catch up with her performance.

Yet, after a number of attempts at the top job, Atalanta seems to give up. Or does she? Atalanta starts her own eco-marketing company Atalanta Fast-Tracks promoting only products and services which are earth-friendly. She sets up a small agency with a team initially comprising women only who work flexible hours to suit both their families and production schedules. The first office located in her own home. Atalanta joins the many women who pull out of corporate battles and decide to put their creative energy into work of their own choosing (Still 1994).

Most workplaces have the same patriarchal structures as the great sky-gods, headed by Zeus (see appendix A1 for that story). It is the same basic pattern,
organisational structures that work hierarchically. (In the Hermetic tradition: "As above so below"). As an archetypal structure from ancient Greek heaven, and further reduced in Christian myth, so do we reproduce it on Earth. The myths and archetypes are imprinted deep into our cultural consciousness (Jung 1967, Houston 1993a, Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann 1987 and many others).

We must remember (that is: re-member = re-connect forgotten bits!) this point: these gods were created (constructed) to impart and used to justify the 'divine' nature of hierarchical organisations.

In juxtaposition, we reconnect, remember that 'matriarchal' systems were not about domination; they were about shared power - partnership models of society (Eisler 1987). The usefulness and importance of revisiting these old myths, is to re-cognise (to know again) the roots of the constructs we experience around us. Then we can openly reconsider the structures that give form to our everyday lives with heightened consciousness.

Then, ask the strategic question:

“How does this serve us?”

Just as in ages past, the feminine (I term them 'egalitarian') principles of love, caring and creating better worlds for all peoples, was lost. (Was capitalism the culprit? Given the changing face of communism at the end of this twentieth century, this is too simplistic an answer.) Now, in our workplaces we are starting to re-vision. Many women in the workplace tell me anecdotally that they feel the difference. The research group of women discuss and actively work for change in their own places of work. As recounted several times in this paper, as individuals we believe and work with the concept that it could be different. We actively re-structure our own workplaces with internal-thinking structures followed by more formal external structures where possible. It doesn't take much imagination to understand that many men prefer a more people-friendly workplace, too. In fact there are signs (from international management publications included in this work among other references), that more men are pro- “people-friendly” in the workplace.

With what I have called ‘the feminine principle’ (Barrentine 1993, Eisler 1987) renewed, so much more is possible. Anita Roddick (of the Body Shop) for example, has never made any secret of her disdain for the traditional financial and business communities.

“What is contributing to the greater good? Why are businesses lauded for making money rather than making things? The business world is populated by tired executives working tired systems. Huge corporations are dying of boredom caused by the inertia of gigantism. I haven't come across a single company that provides a vision for its workers by incorporating the pursuit of honest profits with a sense of social awareness.

Roddick in Its magazine January 1992 35-37

It is clear from the research findings reported that the women of our research group also asked similar questions to Roddick. Yet we feel (mostly) optimistic about the nature of our changing times. This optimism is tempered by a realistic view that we still have a long way to go.
Why should we be optimistic? There is much evidence of shifts in current management thinking. Principles of ‘excellent leadership’ listed in a corporate training brochure include challenging the “old values around status, respect through position on the hierarchy and top-down decision-making”. A more relevant role for the 1990’s leader is to be “less directive and more supportive, less content based and more process based, less rules and systems dependent and more oriented towards flexibility, continuous change, innovation, self-management and lifelong learning.”

Women’s participation in management is contributing to this change. The same leaflet quotes Mary Robinson, President of Ireland:

“Women may well be establishing a new kind of leadership. One that does away with the traditional relationship between the individual and the group. One that is enabling and empowering of the individual and the group.”

From the preceding it could be observed that there is a body of (mostly female) belief that some women are capable of establishing a more humane working paradigm (at least in Western-oriented nations). But this is problematic. The exercise of power from the historic management viewpoint operates from contradictory pressures - whether the manager is a woman of a man:

(a) management must serve the shareholder by producing ever-greater profits and an increasing return on investment -worker welfare is often a secondary consideration and not necessarily complementary to this aim.

(b) women may be perceived as not prioritising profit-making imperatives and concerns may arise about long-term survival of an enterprise.

Clearly many women are highly successful at profitability and certainly not all women are concerned about a people-friendly workplace culture. Christine Wieneke warned if we perpetuate “the myth that women, by their nature, are somehow more humane when it comes to management then we will never overcome gender divisions with their inherent disparities in power and rewards.” I agree with her that we need to “reframe what we mean by leadership and management and seek, value and reward good practice at whatever level and by whoever it is practiced in the organisation” (Wieneke 1992b 9).

Atalanta and Melanion Running Free
- Towards a People-Friendly Workplace:

How would it be if Atalanta and Melanion unyoked themselves from their corporate chariot? Would the organisation operate at a profit? Would the staff (including our archetypal couple), be autonomous workers able to foresee opportunities and problems and lead their ‘learning’ organisation towards a bright future via an emancipatory and ethical present?

The women in the research group chose to transform their experience in the workplace. We dare to enjoy our work. We often set about transforming the workplace quite deliberately and we enjoy being ‘shapeshifters’ in action as well. We also question the wisdom of our vision especially when we are too tired to fight yet another social injustice.

As previously indicated, the paradoxes of feminising patriarchy are full of
paradoxical actions. I reported that research group member Chris, used her positional power to insist that all staff attend a strategic planning meeting, to ensure participative process. The experience of the staff during the meeting was the pleasing result that they felt consulted. This step towards collaborative team building may not have occurred if she had not assertively directed there be full attendance. This directive action may promote the obvious question: do the desired participatory ends excuse the 'dictatorial' means? Is a manager doing a job effectively sometimes required to be less than democratic and collaborative in making a direction to subordinates? The answer of course, is usually 'yes'. Remember Grace's story of the emperor who turned 'nice' and was thrown out reflecting her own experience of becoming the boss, then having to enforce directives with people who had known her previously as a 'nice' colleague!

There is no paradox, no clash of values where there is clarity of purpose and congruent participatory process with an open agenda and equally open processes operating.

Co-operative Workplaces

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We are using the system to change the system. –––––––

This isn't something so radical and new. Women sitting on committees; women elected to union executives or political representation - these are ethical and appropriate Ways of women's voices being heard. If systems don't work for the people in them, they are sick systems. A true 'learning organisation' moves pro-actively; the other end of the spectrum. Those of us already in 'sick' systems (or addictive organisations as Schae and Fassel 1988 identified them), need strategies to create changes. Leadership which is responsible to self and to others, is a leadership that is inclusive.

When all this has occurred, then it has transformed into a learning organization; a workplace where people are able to work together towards improving the structures and procedures, by learning from what has gone before.

Whole system change (Houston 1993 pers. com.) however, requires just this different quality of thinking.

"It is making a leap of faith out of the existing paradigm of addiction that leads to slow but certain death to an emerging paradigm that embraces and facilitates aliveness and full functioning."

Schae & Fassel 1988 226

The women of the research group refuse to be contaminated by the thinking that proliferates in a sick organisation. We re-frame our world-view so that the work we do and the culture of our immediate workplace environment is described in the following.

This vision sees a system that includes:

- co-operative decision-making instead of hierarchical power controls
- asking staff how could it be, not telling them how it will be
- acknowledgment of people's participation
- space to speak up and be heard when there are concerns
- respect for women and men and all cultures of people
• people taking responsibility for themselves and not blaming others for their own discomforts
• people exercising responsibility over their own areas of work, and working inter-dependently when teamwork is needed

Perhaps this defines a socially-just society, where women do not have to perform as super-woman just to ‘have-it-all’ - vis a family and a career. The Irish president Mary Robinson said on the TV program, Not a Bedroom War, “Women have to get power over themselves” which echoes the phrase - “leadership is a model of self-responsibility” (Schaef & Fassel 1988 226). I believe this style of power is what Riane Eisler and others refers to as

“... actualization power as distinguished from domination power
which obviously reflects a very different type of social organization
from the one we are accustomed to.

Eisler uses her perspective of Cultural Transformation theory to provide an alternative for human organization which she describes as

...a partnership society in which neither half of humanity is ranked over the other and diversity is not equated with inferiority or superiority.”

Eisler 1987 28

That's the power we are working with, according to the research group.

Transformational leadership' is intervening to carry old boreocracies (Daly 1987), out of their 'stultified' state seemingly frozen in time as Roddick (1991) called it. Many large workplaces are going through multiple re-structurings usually driven by economic rationalism (Pusey 1990) or equally, economic imperatives to compete successfully or disappear. Jobs are not secure today.

Because we don't know if our jobs will be there tomorrow, there is understandably, a great deal of uncertainty felt by workers at all levels. Organisational structures themselves are being forced to become 'shapeshifters' in the traditional sense of the word -transforming their shape into another creature. There is no longer any reassurance in knowing “that is the way things are done around here”. The procedure changed yesterday and will again tomorrow. The confusion is possibly deliberate, reflecting the experience of working within an agenda of continually changing systems. Change is also being imposed in many countries simultaneously, - a global phenomenon.

Organisational literature and management texts are naming this phenomenon, and advising that leaders adopt a shapeshifting strategy for themselves. The one who can dance lightly through a heavy issue, will be the survivor. How to thrive when the mainstream becomes 'uncharted waters', reinforces apparent views held by Roddick and others. Kanter calls these Newstreams as they are uncharted waters. Kanter notes the qualities needed to steer through such 'uncharted waters' include committed visionary leadership, the existence of “patient money” and a great deal of planning flexibility. She also warns that “these requirements can run counter to typical mainstream practice in established corporations that are organized to seek certainty for mainstream maintenance rather than support uncertainty” (Kanter 1989 203-205).
Organisational Cultures

If we experience the mainstream culture as limited and limiting, I need to clearly state my meaning and understanding of the term 'culture'. My use of the term refers to organisational culture consisting of whatever a member must know or believe, in order to operate in a manner understandable to members within it. Culture creates a shared set of assumptions, beliefs and values. It has been called a cognitive map. Culture is the web of significance; this is a shared set of assumptions and ways of operating that are considered valid. Thus, new people are taught to teach and carry on this 'valid' culture as the correct way to perceive, think and feel (Schein 1985 in Brownell 1989 198).

The workplace culture can be initially defined by senior management of an organisation, then re-constructed by the people who work in it. It is not a concrete 'reality'. Culture is a collective creation. Hence a country branch's culture may be quite different to that of the headquarters office. This reality is highlighted by Dalmau & Dick (1991 4) who warn against "the misconception that it is possible to create a unitary culture in a large organization." This view of culture sees it as a construct of ideas and values held in the minds of the players, those involved with working/playing within that culture.

Because it is not an external reality, the make-up of culture is a very messy or fuzzy thing. It involves people's values, attitudes developed from their own socio-cultural and family backgrounds, as well as their own ideals about work.

**Clashing Cultures:**

Clearly the members of our research group hold high ideals about the values we bring to the workplace. We advocate ideals about emancipation for all workers, on-going education and training opportunities as well as a workplace environment that respects each worker. Those who care for others outside their work for example, need some flexibility around work-times, when necessary. Zoe and Patricia are two professional women who work in the same organisation. They have worked together on and off in different projects for a few years. Recently they became partners, sharing weekdays in the city at Zoe's home and weekends at Patricia's bushland retreat. Zoe arises very early one Monday morning to prepare for the great commuting trek into the city. However, she finds her lesbian partner drastically ill. Does she ring in with the truth? Does she say she is caring for her partner, trying to find a doctor who will visit at home, clearly not able to leave her friend in the condition she was suffering? Or does she ring in saying they are both ill? Does she phone in a message only for herself and leave her partner at risk of being AWOL? What do they say when they return to work together half-way through the next day?

Such issues of course, become less of an issue if the work position is high enough to provide a certain amount of autonomy over their work practices, which is the case with Zoe. The issue is that all workers need such flexibility at times.

Bringing our whole selves to work is not an option for most lesbians. Neither should they need to reveal all, if they feel it is an invasion of privacy. Many people do not want to reveal the identities of their 'significant others' and/or intimate relationships in the workplace. Yet we are still left with a dilemma. Parents know that it is risky in most workplaces, to take time out for a sick child. Other caring responsibilities; elderly parents, homosexual partners, non-kin...
relationships are even harder to explain, yet if we care, the relationship still counts! It counts at work too. We cannot work effectively when our hearts and minds are beside some ‘significant other’s’ sick-bed.

It is essential that workplaces allow enough flexibility for workers to reconcile private and public needs.

The issue is not a small one, especially to women as the major care-givers of our society. When Roles Overlap: Workers with Family Responsibilities (Australian Institute of Family Studies 1993) reveals that 695 of the 2,642 working parents surveyed, took time off to look after a sick child. To do this parents often dip into their own sick leave with 125 using up to half their sick leave and 75 used all the leave they took for this reason. Other family members require care too. “...17% of workers surveyed took time off to care for their spouse or other family member” (Robinson SMH 4/3/1993).

It is socially acceptable for mothers to care, less so for fathers. It may even be OK to provide care for a sick parent or spouse. It seems single workers would perhaps need to cover up, as the two lesbians in the situation described previously. Most temporary and part-time workers still have no time-off allowance for their needs to care.

Indeed, anyone who is not a full-time worker is often seen as ‘fair-game’ to fulfil the role of carer. So, a neighbour passes judgement on a fifty-two-year-old diabetic invalid pensioner: “She doesn’t work. She can look after her frail-aged mother” - a ‘reasonable’ uninformed comment by a neighbour on a woman who makes a full-time voluntary job of supporting persecuted Baha'i refugees entering Australia. So much voluntary work is neither acknowledged or valued. Yet so many volunteers support every strata of our society. Again, the carers are mostly women.

We are in a time of flux. Some of these issues are being addressed in a few workplaces. In the NRMA (National Road Motorists Association of N.S.W., Australia) where 45% of managers are women they have created a different culture.

“It really is a family-friendly culture, less combative. It’s now OK for men to say they need to leave early to pick up their kids from child care. But it was a long process to get there, and there are still people who aren’t comfortable because they don’t like the change.”

Melanie O’Connor general manager of Human Resources in Horin 1994

Who Owns The Problem?

A management-oriented approach to such complexities of care, see the worker as the problem. Specifically, any worker not showing up for duty, however valid their reason for absence, certainly creates a problem for management. Many of these employers take the view that only the ‘hands’ that do the job count, yet here we encourage the view that a worker is a complete human being with relationships and a life beyond work. Indeed, most private enterprises are driven by short term profit goals and management may then consider they have no other choice.
Another side of this complex problem is occasionally brought forward. That is, we must compete with the rest of the world (or the labour force of a particular country). Our higher wage structure doesn’t allow for ‘frills’ such as time off for marginally compassionate reasons. In a weird kind of logic, some profit-oriented firms have their labour policies driven by competitive conditions in another (third or fourth world) country which can supply the market at lower prices because they have harsher working conditions than exist in Australia. Such countries with lower standards of living and harsh working conditions in the Pacific region such as mainland China, Viet Nam, The Philippines and Indonesia (among others) come to mind. Conversely, Australian companies may move their production offshore thus exporting the jobs that were once Australian workers’.

The approach that our research group took was more people-focussed. Based upon our various workplace experiences, we observed that workers were more productive when their ‘other’ lives were supported by flexible work practices. Successful businesses with this view are reviewed later in this chapter.

Moving from the world-view of management to that of the worker, co-researchers considered work not so much as a problem (remember, we enjoy our work) but as a complication in the relationships in our lives. Part of the richness of that complication is that we make and enjoy friends through the workplace. Friends, and work colleagues often alleviate stresses at home. Going to work gives us time-out from intense relationships. This of course, may be helpful or stressful depending upon the situation.

Autonomy in the workplace, independence that allows a worker to define their work and pace it at their own momentum, allows for flexibilities to occur. More flexible than flexi-time, is the worker who can take a day’s absence, and make it up in-lieu. (All the research group often take work home and do it in their own time.)

This “pound of female flesh” is worth a tonne. Knowing such flexibility is possible and that personal needs can be met, our women workers willingly give far more than we are paid for or asked.

Such an approach can also be problematic as Julie found. Her habit of completing work at night and weekends, meant she was supporting a system which did not support her. As previously reported, through calling upon some members of the research group, I designed a strategic questioning process (Peavey 1992). Out of this session, Julie developed an action plan, and set about changing the system which shackled her. She now does more managing and less direct administration work, while her team is now more informed and ‘able’.

An autonomous worker is a worker who can solve problems:

- their own and the employer’s.

There are of course, industrial relations implications here. What we are advocating is that both unions and employers extend and enable workers through
appropriate training and by offering flexible work structures. Is it sensible to throw untrained, disempowered workers with little or no negotiation skills into enterprise bargaining? It is my view that workers are able to negotiate and organise their own work once they are skilled within an enabling, empowering organisation. That is the interdependence that Covey advises managers to achieve in their work teams (Covey 1990). There is a continuing concern for workers thrown into enterprise bargaining situations without adequate training, or preparation in any form. This is an unfair contest, rather than an opportunity for solving problems with open agendas.

There is a dynamic down-side of workers taking work home, working over hours etc., (as do many dedicated workers). Thus, we are feeding a sick system. The outcome is often that the institution survives temporarily and continues its cancerous progression while the people drop out. Or, they drop through the cracks, give up their jobs or get sick - very sick. The sick system carries a contagion into lives beyond the organisation, if the fault is not identified as systemic. Women particularly will worry “what is wrong with me, if I can’t get the work done?” Such is the story of Julie, until she pro-actively intervened.

“Work is natural as play”

A managerial approach which encouraged autonomous work habits was identified in 1960 with McGregor’s theory of managers either seeing workers through the eyes of theory “X” or theory “Y”. Triggered from Maslow (1954), realising that workers can attain actualization (self realisation or self fulfilment) in the workplace, McGregor saw the effect that a managers’ attitude had over their workers. Briefly a manager who subscribes to theory “X” holds the belief that workers dislike work and do anything to avoid it. These managers are suspicious of any worker who does not look busy. They therefore set up systems to ensure workers are supervised at all times, work is checked and these managers rely upon threat and coercion to gain employee compliance.

Theory “Y” managers believe that work is “as natural as play”, (Daniels & Spiker 1987 58) enjoy their work and so are self-initiators in designing and succeeding at tasks. This theory relies upon a workplace to provide the right set of conditions to encourage this response from workers. Theory “Y” managers,

“... according to McGregor... are more likely to develop the climate of trust that is required for human resource development.”

Daniels & Spiker 1987 58

According to this theory, all the research group would be categorised as theory “Y” managers. All the women of the research group, want more flexibility in the work place, to enable us to be responsive to other parts of our lives and the lives of our colleagues/workers which may not always neatly stay outside work hours.

There are a myriad of items which claim our daily attention, energy and time as people who operate in a number of arenas and ‘work dimensions’. Even single workers have non-work commitments. While they may not have parent meetings at school, sport carnivals and music lessons for kids, they are still often involved in their communities as activists, or involved in their families of origin. As we saw, members of the research group have regular commitments involving unpaid work.
Learning to be Responsive: response-ability

How can our workplaces provide that 'ability to respond' and still work efficiently - making a profit and/or providing a service? How can workplaces meet the needs addressed in the International Labour Organization's Convention 156 which essentially covers the needs we are addressing here - supporting workers with family responsibilities (OSW 1990 67-68)?

While traditional organizations take a position that simply accepts there is a conflict between work and family or personal needs, a 'learning organization' would view it differently as "... the artificial boundary between work and family is an anathema to systems thinking (Senge 1990 307).

Our research group would applaud his approach summed up in the title of the chapter: Ending the War Between Work and Family. Senge's concept of the learning organization and application of systems thinking was raised at a number of group meetings. This holistic approach is what we have been striving for and working towards as change agents in our own workplaces.

The research group recognised that the archetype identified by Senge as "success to the successful" offers some understanding of the attraction and power that defines success in these limited ways. He argues that more time at work leads to greater success, greater success at work leads to wanting/need to spend more time at work. Time out from family tends to escalate. Our research identified this clearly as a price for success. A sacrifice we were not willing to make for the long haul. But every one of us willingly would give long hours and intense periods of work time on a project we saw as important, paid or unpaid. Hence our call for changing a structure that sets up work and family as two competing systems.

While we are not willing to sacrifice the rest of our lives to a job, during this discussion the research group highlighted that the type of work we do at home does not have the same feeling of productive, effective and let's face it - more creative work which emanates from the workplace. Said Isobel:

"I never think I'd love to have more ironing to do."

Our goal is to expand limits imposed by barriers we may place around our work to ensure that time and energy are put into the other areas of our lives. When the research group discussed the conflict between work and home responsibilities, there was a resonance with conclusions made by Senge.

PARAPHRASE "It may be one of the primary ways through which traditional organizations limit their effectiveness and ability to learn. By fostering such conflict, they distract and disempower their members - often to a far greater degree than they realize. Moreover, they fail to exploit a potential synergy that can exist between learning organizations, learning individuals, and learning families" (Senge 1990 310).

Women know about these conflicts. We have seen that some women will leave an organisation that demands this sacrifice beyond her capacity or willingness to deny her family or the quality of her relationships for her career. In
our research group we have two women who prefer to remain part-time workers, just so they can keep their life ‘time’ in their control. While another has developed her own business in partnership with her husband, which they design and create as a ‘learning organisation’ in Senge’s terms.

This preference also is being demonstrated by the increase in the number of small businesses run by women in Australia. “More than one third of small business enterprises are now owned by women.” The report (Small Business in Australia from the Department of Industry, Training and Commerce) suggests that women are particularly attracted to small business due to:

"...the need to have more flexible working hours to juggle family and professional life; discontent with career opportunities in corporate life, and that more women are becoming the prime source of income for themselves and their family"

Half Way to Equal 32

Such a flexibility in the workplace has many benefits for all involved; workers and bosses. Ricardo Semler talked about this on Life Matters with Geraldine Doogue about his company in Brazil which manufactures machinery (ABC Radio National 25/8/93). He inherited the company and over many years has transformed the leadership to a situation of interdependence (Covey 1990), extreme flexibility and democracy. Symbolic images of status (cultural artefacts) do not exist. One can’t immediately identify who is the boss and who is subordinate by clothes, work environment, parking space allocation or activity. This radical type of change can take time. Semler said it was 10 years from when he started, until all managers voluntarily gave up their preferential parking places. He would not impose that, but created a climate for that to ‘naturally’ happen. He spoke a lot about people ‘naturally’ preferring to feel good about work. He holds an underlying assumption that all need to feel they do a worthwhile days’ work.

Clearly Semler is a theory “Y” manager. More than that he is a co-operative rather than directive manager. The managing director’s position is rotated between 6 senior managers. Each one gets 6 months at the job creating stability in the company. Major changes requiring more than 6 months must be collectively managed.

Can workplaces afford to be People-Friendly?

Flexibility is the way of working in Semler’s plant. Work hours and times are set by workers themselves, along with salary. He claims that each does their fair hours of effective work, and has a fair idea of what their work is worth. People work over an average of 40 –41 hours a week. The minimum may be 35 and the maximum (including taking work home may be 55). It works for the workers; staff turnover is usually less than 15 personnel changes a year. They have gone 14 months without anyone leaving.

Such a working environment treats people as the most valuable asset and their concerns and well-being are given top priority. Other managers promote similar practices mainly because they pay off in productivity (Kerpan 1993 76). Some of these desirable practices are defined. For example: “…child care, parental leave, flexitime, first-class facilities and equitable compensation would be the natural concerns of corporations. Employees’ creativity would be encouraged and rewarded, and their personal growth would be cultivated (Kerpan 1993 76).
In Australia there are some movers in these directions and it is proving to be good for business.

"The NRMA was losing millions of dollars in business just because of staff turnover - 35% left in 1988, mostly women with family commitments. It costs money to replace them. The CEO said, "this is not good for business". So we looked at job sharing, more flexible work practices. We pay reservation fees at child-care centres, which costs us $70,000 a year - but that's peanuts compared to the return on investment. In the last 12 months, we've gone from 30% to a 60% return after maternity leave and saved $1.7 million."

Melanie O'Connor - General Manager of NRMA Human Resources in Horin SMH 1994

Roddick comments upon the lack of consideration for work-based childcare facilities in male-dominated companies. Her motivation seems to arise from a sense of encouraging workplace participation from young mothers. Hers is a political position which sees support of families as a basic for workplaces; "we see business as an integral part of family life". She advocates work-based childcare and designs them into their offices, and manufacturing plants. Her claim that: "...working mothers get no respect in (Britain) and nowhere is this archaic attitude more brutally exemplified than in ... lack of childcare facilities" (Roddick 1991 158) was reinforced by the ongoing experiences of the research group.

Transformational Leadership

Semler advocates interdependence among staff rather than dependence. Patronising approaches such as treating workers like children; bundy clocks (checking workers in and out), supervised breaks and similar practices disempower workers. His experience is that autonomous workers are better workers. There is also room for autocratic managers, who are few but present. One fellow likes to wear his three-piece suit and have staff to supervise. So those who like an autocratic style work in that department. If they don't like it they go to another area of work (Semler 1993).

Semler's style sounds closer to that which many women prefer; certainly Semler's staff - both women and men thrive in this work culture.

A study by Judy Rosener (1990) designed to reveal styles, matched 400 men and women in comparable jobs. She reports that the early women managers may well emulate Maggie Thatcher, playing it tough- needing to prove herself to be one of the boys. The second wave of women... "tries to re-write the rules" (Rosener 1990 120).

In Rosener's survey while the men described themselves in ways that have been called 'transactional' leadership, the women described themselves in Ways that characterise 'transformational' leadership. In this case, I concur with her definition that 'transformational' leadership can be described as: "... convincing subordinates to transform their own self-interest into the interests of the group through concern for the broader goal" (Rosener 1990 120).

Rosener's women are described in ways that are congruent with our research. We all make efforts to encourage participation and share power and
information. She also identifies a leadership style she calls 'interactive' with inclusive qualities of being able "to make their interactions with subordinates positive for everyone involved ... women encourage participation, share power and information, enhance other people's self-worth, and get others excited about their work" (Rosener 1990 120).

She addresses the phenomenon of leadership styles which come naturally. At an average age of 51, it means that her respondents are "old enough to have had experiences that differ because of gender". She speaks of women being allowed to be co-operative, emotional, supportive and vulnerable and that this may explain why more women are interactive leaders than men (Rosener 1990 125).

So my advocacy of more ‘feminine’ human attributes is here given a social constructionist cause. This certainly seems to apply to the women of our research group, where our preferences for enabling and emancipatory practices, seemed to come ‘naturally’.

Not wanting to take an essentialist position I contextualise this research with social analysis to de-construct what constitutes this preferred style. So the work grows out of Gilligan's ethic of care alongside and inclusive of feminist and Jungian psychology, organizational psychology, and post modernist views of social development. We also went beyond de-construct for the purposes of understanding and engendering change. We want to actively promote these approaches to work as better for all humans than those arising from masculine notions of dominance and superiority. This chapter, is proceeding to show why our pro-active stand is a preferred Way of working and I collect other voices, other work studies and commentators, to add to our voices.

Women know that to exercise such interactive power, is not a simple task. In fact it can be easier to be autocratic and directive. To just say "do it" - inferring it must be so because I say so. It's not different from styles of parenting. As indicated in an earlier chapter, no matter how democratic we want to be to raise interdependent human beings, we all find it easier at times to just utter a command. There are times when we just don't have time or energy to live up to our ideals and author a democratic gesture or be collaborative. In reality, at work, neither women or men can 'afford' to be democratic all of the time. In deadline situations, sometimes there is no option but to be directive.

We know that parenting skills are useful at work. We know that constructive criticism will be more productive than sarcasm. We know that supervisory skills require an ability to listen to another's learning needs and suggestions for work organisation. We know that a willing and satisfied worker is more productive than an unwilling, resentful one. These things our children have taught us.

The role of a manager as an enabler for those in their work team, is performed effectively by many women and they can feel quite comfortable with it. Both Grace and Jess, learning much of their political and team building skills through feminist collectives, initially felt some discomfort in their roles as bosses. Now, after a few years in their positions, they can quite comfortably say “Do it,”, they also operate in ways that enable and encourage solutions to problems and changes in the work structures to arise from their staff.
For women particularly, flexibility in the work place is important to allow us to respond to relationship needs involving responsibilities for young and aged members of our society. For women particularly flexibility can also connote expendability, particularly when she is a part-time worker. The alternatives are loaded. The choice of part-time work generally represents a choice for low pay, poor income security, no superannuation cover, and severely reduced prospects for promotion (National Women’s Consultative Council 1990 17)...(and Bittman 1992 16 - 17).

Australia’s continuing up-surge in numbers of women in part-time work raises the issue that the part-time mode suits many women - and increasingly more men, especially those who are taking on childcare responsibilities. It is to industry’s advantage at the same time, to ‘dip into’ a pool of surplus workers when it suits production schedules: - thus cutting back on costs and overheads incurred by full-time employees. Certainly, the ever-diminishing clothing manufacturing industry in Australia has used pools of part-time workers to this end as do the growing textile industries in third world countries. The fact that these women ‘outworkers’ are often exploited is a less than wholesome aspect of the situation. Adele Horin and other social commentators report “...many women have found full-time, year-long employment incompatible with the care of children and elderly parents” (Horin SMH 1993).

Mapping the Changes We are Walking

Re-structuring in the workplace activates and causes many of the changes we are experiencing. Ideally, it is an opportunity to improve upon old, segmented operations based on Taylor’s ideas of work organisation (Taylor 1919). McCreadie (1991) points out that today job design involves a wider range of tasks, re-integration of previously separated operations, renegotiation of working patterns with an emphasis on enterprise flexibility and worker participation in committees to oversee the transition process (McCreadie 1991 32).

McCreadie notes that the high segmentation of jobs and tasks which flows from Taylorist work organisation “are in themselves patriarchal and authoritarian and as such are defining features of Taylorism.” Thus leading to the systemic discrimination which patronises and prejudices women in the workplace (McCreadie 1991 33).

The same picture is repeated in administration areas where ‘women’s work’ has been highly segmented into the clerical area. Consider the sparsely examined area of General Staff in Australian Universities, where other than EEO reports to DEET, (Stanley 1990 & Wilson & Byrne 1987), the only in-depth and on-going work has been compiled by Christine Wiencke, who notes that:

“Over a third of general staff women (35.4% fill clerical/administrative positions), while a further 19.7% are located in keyboard and clerical assistant positions. This means that overall more than half (55.1%) of women are found in administration compared with only 22.6% of the men on general staff... (Women’s) concentration in these two socially constructed occupational categories, lends itself to senior staff - predominantly men - being able to narrowly circumscribe women’s role, status and remuneration.”

Wieneke 1992a 4
Ongoing Education and Training

One of the major theories put forward to explain women putting less time into the development of their careers, is ‘Human Capital’ theory (Bittman 1992). Of major concern to advocates of more flexible working conditions is the linking of education and experience to labour market attachment. A worker is considered to ‘invest’ in their future, building up a stock of skills and experiences that are valued, and increase their capacity to earn (Bittman 1992 17).

The notion interprets humans as ‘intelligence gathering’ production units who have an increased value to an employer as skills, education, etc., are added to that amorphous subjective ingredient of ‘experience’. Combined with another of his observations that human capital is not transferable unlike other capital, it is then not surprisingly predicted that “more educated groups will spend on average, more time in unpaid work than those with less education” (Bittman 1992 17).

The relevance of the diverse characteristics of ‘Human Capital Theory’ to the employment of women is the reality that ‘flexible’ work is mostly fulfilled by women; meaning they also have the flexible insecurities of casual work (no sick pay, pro rata or no holiday pay) and create the labour pools that employers can tap at will. All this of course is not counted when computing the gross national product by conventional statisticians (Waring 1988).

While in the past women have been less educated, we are at the cross-over point now, with women comprising 52% of university graduates in 1992 (ABS 1993). If this Human Capital theory is correct, women should then spend more time in the workforce in the future.

I suggest that this is already happening, and that the time women spend in the workplace will be variable both in weekly hours and in duration of positions. Current trends seem to indicate that male workers will also experience more flexibility of work hours and duration (IBIS 1992).

What ‘work’ will be like throughout our working years, is a question in itself. Clearly, there are not likely to be as many jobs around as there used to be (IBIS 1992). Entrepreneurial women are creating their own businesses. If that means noticing a window of opportunity in unorthodox ways, women are adaptable.

‘Human Capital’ is a concept developed further by the economic rationalists. We saw it in full flight in the Liberal Party of Australia’s now dismantled “Fightback Policy” (1992) promoting flexibility in Australian business. Congruently Martina Nightingale critiques the Institute of Manpower Studies in the United Kingdom which she says can be seen to underpin the Business Council of Australia’s literature and “Fightback” documents (Nightingale 1992 11).

In creating discourse towards alternative approaches to the workplace, the danger as Nightingale sees it is:

“...not ...that feminists have been pursuing the wrong strategies, but that by producing alternative discourses we cannot be in control of how they are used and incorporated within mainstream versions of reality.

This means we must be constantly alert to the contradictions produced by the clash of alternative and dominant discourses and
use these to reframe feminist demands.... women were still confronted with deeply embedded, gendered structure of work organisation and the continuing uneven distribution of unpaid labour to women.

Nightingale 1992 17

This leads to the interesting thought that if Nightingale is correct, and I believe she is, the verdict is still out (and will be for some considerable time) as to the form and direction, mainstream work structures will take as applied to working women.

If Human Capital Theory is to work for women, then acknowledgment and the use of "Women's Ways of Knowing", need to be counted as capital investment alongside formal education. The introduction of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL 1992) is marginally addressing areas of work where life-experience may be validated by acknowledging competencies equivalent to certain qualifications.

In the view which sees people as 'capital' I suspect has a very narrow range-finder which looks for the highest, short-term monetary profit. This view is anathema, the dark-side of the capitalist moon, to the women of the research group who see people as rich resources for themselves: rich in Ways that do not necessarily 'cash-in' and throw away the resource.

In her focus on the union movement, Nightingale acknowledges the history and patriarchal-based structure they are working within. She also sees the opportunities as does our research group members Grace and Jess.

"As always, women are confronted with the multi-dimensional nature of discourses imbued with patriarchal relations. Changing the dominant discourse away from individualism and towards flexibilities in the interests of women simultaneously requires challenging the male controlled and structured union movement. In an immediate sense, this results in large numbers of very tired women."

Nightingale 1992 18

Nightingale, with humour and a sense of reality, presents a picture of changing times, changing women. She also has a very clear view of the value of the opportunity that change offers us. That opportunity, in her view is "...to see disunities, fractures and contradictions as part of the process of change..." and she urges women to seek "Alternatives which shift power relations between men and women, within class relations and between women distinguished by class, race and ethnic divisions" (Nightingale 1992 18).

It is these alternatives which 'the Changing Women' are exploring and trying out everyday in their workplaces. Within this context many women become 'Changing Women'. Women who embrace the changes and see the shifting sands of re-structuring as replacing the dead, crumbling patriarchal structures. The solid brick walls are gone because the mortar has lost its 'juice' or useful energy. Forms are changing and the women are there to assist the births! (Alongside a realistic recognition that much re-structuring in the workplace, has simply replaced one hierarchy for another.)

Changing Workplace Structures

Chapter 11 - Virginia Kaufman Hall - Women Transforming the Workplace - 300
From her position at Harvard Business School, Rosabeth Moss Kanter had been assisting business in bringing about change. Like Mary Robinson and others, she speaks of leadership as spreading power. In discussing elements of effective participation in the workplace she notes that the sharing of power is more effective than hanging on to it (Kanter 1983 249).

The more common experience of restructuring in the workplace for ‘the troops’ the ‘ordinary workers’ is that of being reminded of their weak positional power, of “...making other people feel more dependent and less valued in the process” (Kanter 1990 64).

It all comes back to intent. If re-structuring is truly intended to consult with workers (manufacturers and service providers) and goods and service receivers (the ‘end-users’), then surely the opportunity is there to meet the needs of all stakeholders. The reality however, is that as Kanter points out, and Nightingale warns, those holding power in the past are not ready to give it up. Power again becomes, and always is, a central issue.

Choosing OUT Rather than Being Pushed...

The women of the research group make a clear commitment to an ethic of enabling others through their work. Many times they made decisions about the movement of their careers by realising they needed to enable themselves. Hence Chris chose not to lead the life of a femocrat in the public service, but as a trainer/educator in her local area. Isobel resigned her CEO job to retain her energy for her studies. Electra, left mainstream manufacturing and marketing and set up her own business in partnership. Virginia left her secure, tenured teaching position to investigate all of this. We ensure that we find our own flexibility. All of the cases cited, you will note, are choices that led us out of the organisations we were in, to create our own more flexible work practices.

The tension of the dialectic lies in the question of change.

Who Will Change? What Structures Will Change?  

The women believe we are already effective change agents. So much so, that we have tried out many ways of being and working, in our effort to be ‘all things to all people’. A great deal of focus is lost in that approach, we learned.

Sheryle Bagwell, in the Australian Financial Review, identifies all of the trends discussed above and collects together current views of women in the workplace and their responses to their situations. One of the most obvious moves is that of women out of corporate work and founding their own small businesses. She states: “According to the National Small Business Centre, the number of women with their own small business is increasing at three times the rate of men” (Bagwell Australian Financial Review 27/8/93).

Furthermore, women are doing this their own way!

“‘It’s not a question of whether women can make it in the corporate sector following the male rules, it’s just that they are electing not to,” says Rohan Squirechuk, executive director of the Business
Council of Australia.

Business which resists change is losing effective people - women! A forward looking organisation embraces open and flexible work practices which respect family responsibilities outside the work place as well as encouraging creative problem solving and flexibility inside the workplace. Apply these Ways of working to the whole workforce and we all are winners.

The trick could be, in the ability to 'hold that creative tension' (Senge 1990 150) - the space between the old and the possible new. It seems women by leaving corporate workplaces to start their own businesses, are doing just that.

The Movement for the Ordination of Women has a slogan:

*If you want something to happen you have to make space for it.*

So the small business sector is growing with women choosing to create their own workplaces. Women are creating the space and like the 'shapeshifters' of old, building the structures around them, that suit their vision.

Kate Ramsay who introduced herself to me in 1992 in Sydney as a ‘coach for women’s careers’ is quoted in the Australian Financial Review article commenting upon female business executives.

"... as pioneers in a male-dominated environment also felt 'isolated lonely and exhausted' by the role they were forced to play. They were forced to walk a 'fine-line' between not being seen as too hard, or male, or too soft, or female. The price they pay is very high. While the salary and perks might be good, they are asking some very deep questions about what it is all about".

Bagwell Australian Financial Review 27/8/93

It sounds like Kate Ramsay is describing the Atalanta Syndrome, where some women are picking up the glittering prizes but missing out on the whole "other" riches of their lives!

*Power to ALL People - the workers and the bosses:*

Just as there are men who will put their careers above all else, so there are and will continue to be women, whose main form of identification with a successful life is their work. In the Australian Financial Review article, Bagwell quotes Linda Bardo Nicholls (executive director or investment banker County NatWest and a member of the advisory board for BP Australia). She is reported to have 3 children and has crossed continents for new job opportunities.

"Women should be more flexible. They should be prepared to move to a workplace that suits their skills and attributes. Just as career minded men have to do. Women have to be prepared to accept trade-offs if they choose a career."

Research group member and management consultant Attracta Lagan (identification approved) believes:

"... that women should not so much lament their lack of
progress doing it the male way but capitalise on their 'female'
management skills such as their preference for managing co-
operatively and in teams.

Most successful women in business have adopted the male model
and culture. The more innovative ones are out there on their own,
doing it for themselves."

(1991) and Senge (1990, 1994), (3 male and 2 female business writers) find that
employees are not motivated by bread (money) alone. (Echoes of McGregor's
theory "Y" managers [1960]). To work for love and money is the ideal that the
women of our research group prove in our actions, our styles of working. Of course
it must be said, that many other women are creating new waves in their
workplaces, in their way of doing and being.

Commitment from workers is not won by big stick strategies. Dexter
Dunphy and Robert Dick state that it is vital to
"... create an organizational climate that supports self-esteem rather
than destroying it."
They stress methods of:
"... involving people who are affected by change in the change
processes so that they can influence those processes in their own
interests. Some managers may see this as a loss of control. It is a
redistribution of power. Our experience is, however, that systems of
mutual influence operate more effectively than situations of one-way
influence."

Dunphy and Dick 1993 309

Sure there are those who use the system and take their salary for work
of lesser value. My experience in the workplace, over 27 years, tells me that not
most, but nearly all people want to feel good about their days' work and give good
value. Semler believes his employees are adults and treat them as such. He does
not believe his "employees have an interest in coming in late, leaving early and
doing as little as possible for as much money as their union can wheedle out of
us... At Semco...we trust them. We don't make our employees ask permission to go
to the bathroom, or have security guards search them as they leave for the day.
We get out of their way and let them do their jobs" (Semler 1993 48).

Similarly staff involvement in strategic planning and day to-day
functions, is the preferred Way for the Body Shop. Security and trust grows with
experiences including that of being involved in the development process of
strategic planning.

"Democracy at Work - A Scary Thought?
Two general themes ran through all our education and
communication programmes when we set them up. The first was
that information was power. Staff were constantly invited to
challenge the rules, to question the status quo and things we took for
granted, and never to accept that a manager, simply because he or
she was a manager, necessarily knew better. We stressed the
importance of the individual and the fact that we wanted to hear
from anyone, no matter what their position in the organisation, if
they thought they had a better way of doing things, or if they had a
complaint. We were always saying to them: 'Tell us how we can
make things better, how we can ennable your lives, how we can
make your spirits sing.     Roddick 1991 148

Roddick claims that if there is a single motivation for what they do at the
Body Shop; it lies in these repeated words of Ralph Waldo Emerson:
"...to put love where our labour is."

Love in the workplace? The love that is openness (the Greeks agape) "has
everything to do with intentions - commitment to serve one another, and
willingness to be vulnerable in the context of that service" (Senge 1990 285). An
ideal that indeed allows the women of our research group 'to bring our whole
selves to work'.

Our preferred working place is one that is friendly where people work in
teams to get things done. Often there are many different over-lapping teams.
Women are often acknowledged for their ability to work in a team (Lagan 1993,
Rosener 1990, Szirom 1991,130, and many others). As with all the general
qualities associated with women or men, care must be taken to recognise it is not
all women who prefer teamwork. Electra in the research group prefers being a
lone player for example. Stereotyping is as blinkered in this instance as it is with
racism. When working with a team however, Electra provides a valuable
contribution; preference does not deny effectiveness.

Constructing Workplaces for Efficient and Effective Energy Flow

The value of a friendly workplace team, is the willingness to get down to
productive work, because we enjoy doing things together. Initially, this research
was intended to aid the understanding, valuing and usefulness of women's styles
(and Ways) of working as well as promoting our transformational aspect. We have
uncovered a central issue about the generation and creative output of energy in
the workplace. Not only is energy expended, but also, it is energy generated.

It has been my experience that de-valued and under-used people lose
their own personal energy at work, and dissipate the collective energy as well.
Over and over again, when we have seen an effective leader, it is one who can
empower, enable and trust their people to get the job done.

Clearly this happens with Roddick and Semler as leaders.

What factor exists in so many workplaces that loses this focus, and
leaks out individual and collective energy? Senge claims it is the "...relatively
unaligned team...when a team becomes more aligned, a commonality of direction
emerges, and individuals' energies harmonize. There is less wasted energy. In fact,
a resonance of synergy develops, like the 'coherent' light of a laser rather than the
incoherent and scattered light of a light bulb (Senge 1990 234). So when I speak
of creative energy not utilised in many workplaces, it is the availability of
synergistic creativity I want to access.

When we apply 'work' to the metaphor of generating electrical energy,
as I did earlier in this work, then Senge's explanation fits. Electrical energy must
be transformed into usable wattage (aligned energy in Senge's words). When there
is no sense of community in the workplace, much creative energy is wasted just
surviving.
For systems analysis to be turned into systems in action, the power with model needs to be operating, so that all workers have a stake in the full process: the planning and identifying of action areas, the who, how and what will be done and on-going evaluation of any strategic plan.

In Senge's works *The Fifth Discipline - The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation* (1990) and *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook - Strategies and Tools for Building a Learning Organization* (Senge et al. 1994), he bases his analysis of organisations and strategies for management, upon systemic thinking. Systems thinking is characterised by a holistic view of a system which includes all people affected by contact with the organisation and therefore encouraging participation at all levels. The systemic approach is particularly apt for the type of changes we women want to put into effect, because of the holistic nature of systems analysis and strategic planning based upon systemic thinking (Senge 1990 13).

Senge makes several cogent points in this regard: “A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their own reality. And how they can change it” (Senge 1990 13).

I want to flag that systemic thinking is simply a tool, a construct to help us understand and 'see' the complex effects of a system, such as a workplace organisation. As a tool, this construct is particularly useful for managers who are mindful of the many roles their workers play. It has been used in many organizations with useful results.

The Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is using systemic thinking and problem solving, by walking the staff of a location through what happens from when a tax return enters their office, to its final generative task (Bruce-Smith 1994). Before designing their software systems to meet the needs of that locality, staff draw up a work map of the 'system' incorporating all the possible effects.

Systems thinking is particularly useful to this chapter which examines our workplace structures and how women fit into them, because "systems thinking addresses the framework itself" (Fielden 1993 5). Systems thinking, also acknowledges pushes and pulls of energy in a structure, and encourages the use of intuition, visual and contextual thinking.

However, familiarity with the complexity of systems thinking takes time. It also requires a context which enables a manager to apply it if it is going to have any major effect as a tool for organisational change. A workplace where people are trained in systemic thinking and use it as a tool for understanding, is the ideal - the learning organisation that Senge talks about.

Kay Fielden, working at training people for business practice in systemic approach as well as applying it to systems in computers said: “A major attitude change, altering the predominant thinking framework, takes time, as does honouring process and learning new ways... an inflexible, historically-based thinking framework does not fit with this age, and there is a need for stability, security, a re-establishment of compassion and the nurturing qualities. These
are the qualities of the holistic approach. The materialism of the dominant cultural phenomenon does not support compassion."

Fielden 1993 6

Some Women’s Ways of Working

There is a perception that...“Women, in particular, bring new styles of management to the business world - at least when you get enough of them in an organisation for what’s been called a ‘critical mass’” (Sydney Morning Herald 11/9/91).

Rosener notes two different (stages of women leaders (parenthesis mine). The older more traditional ‘male’ standard group and younger women who like our research group are”... drawing on the skills and attitudes they developed from their shared experience as women” (Rosener 1990 119 in Aburdene & Naisbitt 1993).

A style of leadership often used by women and now being more generally identified empowers and enables all workers. Rosener also identifies the now familiar ‘glass ceiling’ as a real, tangible block to women executives advancement. She describes it as:

"... a bell jar, which clamped on American institutions, can kill not only the dreams of many talented individuals for advancement but can suffocate new ideas, perceptions and ways of thinking... When women’s ways of managing are locked out of the tower, change is barred as well."

Sydney Morning Herald 11/9/91; reprint from the Los Angeles Times

While it can be argued that many examples of men ‘doing it differently’ could be cited, the focus of this paper is to identify and note the impact of qualities and impacts which some women are bringing into their workplace. It is not all women. Rosener made a useful distinction noting that women, particularly the ground-breakers, have done and do manage in traditional ways. Ways that can be described as more ‘masculine’ in their use of power as an authoritative tool as opposed to these ‘interactive’ leaders who share power-as an enabling or empowering tool (Aburdene & Naisbitt 1993 68).

The women of the research group, and the women in Rosener’s study, as well as the women who contributed their perspectives on transforming business in Barrentine’s (editor 1993) book When the Canary Stops Singing are “prepared to break with business convention in order to get at the heart of the matter” (Aburdene and Naisbitt 1993b 1). When it doesn’t feel right to withhold information, or to be tough, to succeed at all costs; our first response was to think we were the problem. Now we have joined with other women to acknowledge that a penchant for self-reflection may indeed be an asset (Barrentine 1993 10).

“All of us) are women, and the new way of doing business that they present is a feminine way - feminine as Carl Jung defined the term, in that the characteristics of loving, nurturing, and compassion do not belong to women alone.”

Barrentine 1993 10

One Way of ‘doing it differently’

An atypical choice for Business Woman of the Year 1991, was Sarah Henderson - a woman who ‘does it differently’.
'In 1986 Sara Henderson's husband died leaving 500,000 acres of the Top End and an insurmountable pile of debts. Despite advice to sell the land, Sara stayed and turned the harsh, remote property into a successful and diverse business... Sara's isolation in a 'man's world' reflects that of many of the 1% of women in senior management."

The Bulletin 24/9/92

Sara Henderson certainly epitomises the lonely struggle of the woman in what is perceived as 'man's' business managing her property 'Bullaroo' in the harsh top-end of the Northern Territory. Her biography From Strength to Strength (Henderson 1992) is a story of adaptation, innovation, pure grit and determination. It is also a story of empowerment. The hardcover publication run of 40,000 extended into a paperback release of 50,000 - for Australian publishing, a very large print run. Henderson has her own style of managing, which reflects the philosophy of Roddick and Semler, in her belief about people.

"We've got to teach people that we have to work together, not kick the guy next to them. If they can see a way he can get a step higher, they have to help him because by him going a step higher, everyone succeeds."

Sydney Morning Herald 10/4/93

Henderson too, experienced the invisibility of women in business.

"Before, if I stood up as a woman and voiced my opinion, everybody would say: 'well, who is interested?' Now they say: she's on the land; she's a businesswoman; she's surviving; she must be all right."

Sydney Morning Herald 10/4/93

The women of the research group and the many women's comments collected together for this paper, are all selected with the empowerment ethic as a strong driving principle. Henderson sticks with her principles, throughout extraordinary hardship and complexities.

In the political arena of unionism, Jennie George is another. One of those women who is trail blazing for others following behind, Jennie George has been the first woman on the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) executive (1983), the first woman ACTU vice-president (1987) and the first woman to become general secretary and then president of the NSW Teachers' Federation. The article quoted below, had a catchy headline Ms George the First, and heralded her becoming the first woman to hold one of the 5 full-time posts in the ACTU executive. Her photograph covered the top third of the tabloid page with a caption quoting Jennie George:

"I'm impassioned about people who have a capacity and don't have the opportunities."

A baseline principle, which motivated many of the women in the research group.

"... the single biggest principle Jennie George stands for is penetration by women into men's domain with toughness and analysis."

Sydney Morning Herald 21/9/93
Although not directly stated, in many ways the article highlights Jennie George’s continuing battle for flexibility with security, for women in the workplace. She also speaks of the difficulty of combining children with a high-pressure career. Without children she says she can do what she does, involving long days, meetings at night etc. Recognising things are changing, she wants to see it easier, indeed more possible, for younger women to combine children with a career. George notes that Anna Booth (another ACTU vice-president and past National Secretary of the 40,000 member Textile Clothing and Footwear Union), brings her pre-schooler son to meetings. “A decade ago they would have been horrified at the notion of young kids going and disturbing the progress of their meeting.” In the same vein, she notes Bill Kelty (ACTU President) comes to work later in the morning because he likes to ensure he’s got time with his kids. “Men have changed as well” (Sydney Morning Herald 23/9/91).

**Organisation of Our Work**

The difficulty of creating attitudinal change underlying work practices, is deep and systemic. While we have legislation, the ‘glass ceiling or ‘bell jar’ previously referred to (Rosener 1991) is as real as a steel box. Although unions and legislation try to ensure that women workers are not discriminated against, the reality shows otherwise. An Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) study released in 1993, tell a story of vast discrimination in the workplace.

> “Women who participate in paid work, and there have been ever increasing numbers in the last 40 years, face the problem of juggling employment with family responsibilities. This may result in restrictions in their hours of paid work and thus in the amount of pay they receive, and in their career opportunities.”

**ABS Women in Australia 1993 117**

As I have been demonstrating the ABS study also found that despite legislation to end discrimination against women in the workplace, “women and men do not participate in employment in quite the same ways. Whether through choice, through combining work with other activities (education or family responsibilities, for example) or through educational or previous employment history, it is the case that women’s employment is more likely than men’s to be part-time or casual and that women exhibit different occupational and industrial patterns than men” (ABS Women in Australia 1993). 123

With Australia’s labour force consisting of 3.6 million women and 5.0 million men at August 1992 (ABS Women in Australia 1993 118), the reality is that men still hold by far the greater share of the powerful decision making positions. The Bulletin cites 1% of senior management are women, Australian Financial Review states 3% of business senior managers are women. ABS figures for 1992 were 1.3%. It is notable, that in the Public Sector women hold 10% of senior Management positions (ABS 1993). In the Public Sector, Affirmative Action programs for women are mandatory!

The workforce indeed seems to have been set up for men, by men. Its structures rarely take into account women’s lives, responsibilities, or preferences as identified by Chris Wienke:

> “Since the gendered (i.e. patriarchal) culture serves men’s interests, I would argue that they put significant effort and resources into ensuring that this dominant organisational culture is continually constructed and reproduced within the daily practices of

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*Chapter 11 ~ Virginia Kaufman Hall ~ Women Transforming the Workplace ~*
the workplace."

Wieneke 1992 8

Change and Confusion

It is not surprising that there is also significant confusion in our many work places, as this fact is being overtly and covertly recognised. Many men too, are uncomfortable with the status quo, whether it is because they see and feel the inherent inequity of the culture, or see the well-constructed bastion, being threatened by all this talk of EEO. Men who choose to be the primary caregivers for children, and want to combine that with a career experience structural difficulties just as many women do.

While our public institutions have well entrenched EEO policies, the reality of day-to-day life for many women working in them is not free of discrimination; whether this is called a bell jar or a glass ceiling, limiting the exercising of executive powers or preventing exploitation of casual workers (Wieneke 1992A 1992B & 1993). The climate of economic rationalism in the last 2 decades of the twentieth century, has weakened and limited outcomes of EEO policies. There is even greater concern about the private sector, particularly small business practices (Half Way to Equal 1992 83) Most complaints of sexual discrimination arise from small businesses, including harassment, pregnancy leave, and pay with the greatest concern for exploitation under enterprise bargaining (Sydney Morning Herald 15/4/93).

Confusion in the workforce is being compounded by the whole climate of change, both in the work place and in the whole of our social structures. Such immense change all around us, also threatens our personal roles and identities. At the same time, such upheaval provides a great opportunity for changing frameworks of beliefs and values. If what people have believed is ‘reality’ and the ‘way things are done’, is just not working, then there is a great opportunity to develop other Ways of working. This is what the women of the research group are doing; as well as a lot of other people of both genders and many different cultures.

Much sympathy has been conveyed, in the media and literature, to support men through such difficult times. Faludi’s Backlash (1993) reports and interprets a male response as ‘hitting back’. One of the ‘blokes’ who openly describes himself as a feminist, Phillip Adams -describes the situation:

"From Pankhurst to Greer, feminism has only nibbled at the edges of masculine privilege. The blokes cannot, will not be budged. It is their statues you see on pedestals, their faces that stare from portraits in national galleries, their voices that blast from radios, the pulpits, the cinema speakers. It’s men who still drive the trains, fly the planes and strike the attitudes. And as well as driving the trains, they drive the hard bargains, do the deals and pass the laws. With one admirable, honourable exception, it’s chaps, chaps, chaps on the High Court and all the other courts and boys, boys play with the million dollar toys of modern warfare."

Phillip Adams Weekend Review 23-24/1/93

Towards Working Together

A major premise of this work is to understand and look at ways we can
work together more effectively. Phillip Adams questions my egalitarianism:

“It’s a miracle that women haven’t risen up against men and murdered them in their millions.
But women press on, trying to be accepted by a gender who, deep down, have never really liked them. Because that I suspect, is at the heart of it. Men don’t like women.
The greatest mystery of the age is not the origin of the universe or the whereabouts of flies in wintertime. It is the answer to the question, why do women have anything to do with us? Women live in endless hope that men will learn to love women, as they claim to love their mums.”

Adams Weekend Review 23-24/1/93

While Adams, calls himself a feminist, there are many other ‘blokes’ out there who do not hold his vision. The loss of an old identity without full identification or even role models for new ones, creates a deep insecurity and confusion.

“Today there are broad indications that countless Australian men are deeply conscious of psychological bewilderment and a loss of traditional social power at all levels of society below the top stratum of the very rich or honoured.”

Ronald Conway, Melbourne psychologist, formerly senior lecturer at RMIT in The Australian 19/5/93

In the Australian Financial review the issue has been flagged and kept aloft by Sheryle Bagwell (reported earlier in this chapter). In one column (Australian Financial Review 2/6/93) she reported on the 1992 findings of the Clemengers advertising firm:

“... which claimed that men were confused about, even downright hostile towards, the changing role of women in the workplace. Men lamented women’s encroachment into their mateship network, they saw women as too aggressive and that they had an unfair advantage because of equal opportunity legislation, the survey said.”

Australian Financial Review 2/6/93

Bagwell points out that management training has up to now, not addressed gender issues in the workplace. My experience in corporate and public sector training, tells me that there is a great need for such programs. When training work groups in communication skills, particularly Conflict Resolution and negotiation strategies, I address different conversational and relational styles of many men and women. There is always a desire to know more.

Values are being challenged and shifted. Women are not the only ones saying “it could be different, it needs to be different”.

Attracta Lagan is quoted in the Bagwell article, in her position of executive director of Women in Management Inc.

“In fact the new theories in management with their emphasis on team work and nurturing peoples’ skills, supported the “feminine way of being”.

Some training has responded partly to this need by offering a variety of programs on ‘new’ leadership. Unfortunately many training programs are still only speaking to the women. It is ‘whole system shift’ (Houston) that is needed.
In a leaflet entitled *Developing your Image as a Successful Woman* promoted by the Institute for Professional Businesswomen—a division of Pryor Resources Inc., the ‘successful style’ is addressed by:

- How to blend feminine and masculine traits to define a successful, professional style
- Identify the masculine traits you already have, and find out how to use them for your advantage.
- Discover 9 masculine traits that are essential to the professional women’s success.” (Plus 9 feminine traits that men need).

The last item with men’s need for feminine traits is printed in parenthesis; not presented as the major issue and certainly not talking to the men, at a such a women-only program.

It is a significant trend in modern business practice to alert managers to these ‘transformational’ management practices via the range of training programs offered. Such programs as: “The Learning Organisation” (Senge) and Covey’s “Effective Habits” is included along with a range of programs which cover people skills.

When I speak of flexibility in the work place, my underlying vision is a workplace that has creative energy in balance. Energy that utilises work preferences able to flow equally in both yin and yang movements. Being either ‘passive’ or ‘active’ are Ways of being that are experienced and acted upon by both genders. In doing this we are already ‘shape-shifting’ our workplace with structures and systems which encourage and honour different cultures and different Ways of working. The outcomes are win-win for all those involved.

It is clear these influences are partly acknowledged in workplace psychology, sociology, social ecology and organisational psychology as demonstrated in the readings integrated into this chapter. In such changing times, we must also support workers experiencing such massive change in our social and work structures, by training and other opportunities, to acknowledge the effects, outcomes and possibilities of such change.

By acknowledging the range of influences and the varieties of possibilities for Ways of being in the workplace, we also acknowledge our fundamental oneness as the human-to-be. In recognition of our unity we have then a chance of going beyond difference to the richness of integration.

“... we grow toward integration, a balance in which we can work within our separateness while resting in the greater unity which lies beyond.”

Dass & Gorman 1985 229

**Summary**

This chapter provides a pro-active response to our research. We propose that changes in the workplace can and do already provide productive workplaces which are also people-friendly. I applied the Atalanta myth to question current workplace rewards.

Throughout the chapter I integrate the realism of why such practices are not more readily accepted with transformational management literature alongside Australian practices including current media reports. The benefits of transformational leadership to successful business practice are given by highly successful practitioners.
Systemic thinking is also suggested as a Way of managing the complexity of current work which would integrate women's input into changing workplace practices. I close with a brief review of the current situation in Australian workplaces for women, realistically demonstrating we have along way to go yet, before providing a culture which encourages integrative and transformational practices.
Section 4

Conclusion:
The Power of Story-Telling for Changing Women, and Changing Workplaces
Chapter 12

End Story / Never-Ending Story

Research Implications - Transforming this story into others’ stories

Oodgeroo

a story told by Oodgeroo of the Noonuccal Tribe (the late Kath Walker)

before she claimed back her tribal name

"In the new Dreamtime there lived a woman, an Aborigine, who longed for her lost tribe, and for the stories that had belonged to her people; for she could remember only the happenings of her own Dreamtime. But the old Dreamtime had stolen the stories and hidden them. The woman knew that she must search for the old stories - and through them she might find her tribe again.

Before she set off, she looked for her yam-stick and dilly bag, but Time had stolen these too. She found a sugar-bag that the ants had left and which Time had forgotten to destroy, and she picked it up and carried it with her wherever she went. Time laughed at her efforts; he thought her new dilly-bag was useless.

One day, as she searched, the woman came upon the ashes of a fire her own tribe had kindled long ago. Tears came to her eyes, for she yearned for her tribe, and felt lonely. She sat down by the ashes and ran her fingers through the remains of the fire that once glowed there. And as she looked at the ashes, she called to Biami the Good Spirit to help her find her tribe.

Biami told her to go to the paper-bark trees and ask them to give her some of their bark. The paper-bark trees loved this woman who had lost her tribe, and they gave her their bark. They knew she was not greedy and would not take more than she needed. She put the bark in her dilly bag.

Then Biami told the woman to return to the dead fire of her tribe, collect all the charred sticks, and place these too, in her bag - and to do this each time she came upon the dead fire of any lost tribe.

Time did not understand what the woman was doing, so he followed her.

She travelled far and wide over the earth, and each time she came upon the dead fire of a lost tribe, she would gather the charred sticks, and when at last her bag was filled with them she went to the secret dreaming-places of the old tribes. Here she rested again and called to Biami, and asked him to help her remember the old stories, so that through them she might find her tribe.
Biami loved this woman, and he put into her mind a new way in which she might find those stories and her tribe. The woman sat down and drew from her bag the charred pieces of stick she had taken from the dead fires, and placed the paperbark flat upon the ground. She drew the sticks across the paperbark, and saw that they made marks on its surface.

So she sat for many years, marking the paperbark with the stories of the long lost tribes, until she had used up all the charred remnants she had gathered and her bag was empty. In this way she recalled the stories of the old Dreamtimes, and through them entered into the old life of the tribes.

And when next the paperbark-trees filled the air with the scent of their sweet, honey-smelling flowers, they took her into their tribe as one of their own, so that she would never again be without the paperbark needed for her work. They called her Oodgeroo. And this is the story of how Oodgeroo found her way back into the old Dreamtime. Now she is happy, because she can always talk with the tribes whenever she wants to. Time had lost his power over her because Biami has made it so."

Walker 1982 56

Overview

Aboriginal storyteller Oodgeroo, introduces this final chapter telling of transformation of her tribe’s fireplace ashes, into stories for today’s tomorrows. In our new Dreamtime, we women work at transforming the ashes of old patriarchal work practices and structures, into more appropriate and less limiting constructs.

Rather than claiming findings or outcomes, I view growth and learning over the research period.

Then the co-researchers summarise major characteristics of our research process. From there we take outcomes and implications (and our ensuing convictions) out into the wider world by focussing briefly upon promoting empowerment and the basis of our operational effectiveness: building community.

Finally, I reflect upon the implications which have emerged from the building of a research community and conclude with evaluative and critical reflections upon the whole project approximately based upon Razack’s critique of Storytelling for Social Change (Razack 1993).

The Changing Women - Oodgeroo Connection

Oodgeroo tells a story which I suspect explains to us her role as storyteller. This story may also reveal meanings arising from our own story of women working together. In this section, I use Oodgeroo’s words to name an experience of knowing arising from our research. I interweave other women’s published voices to connect our experience with a wider world.
In the new Dreamtime...

The women of the research group are dreaming up a time when we bring our whole selves to work and transform work to people-friendly places. While we call it our ‘new’ Dreamtime, it is also a creation, a construct which we are in the process of delivering. Women’s Ways of working are proving effective for both genders in current corporate cultures:

“...studies show that women and men who have been successful in the traditionally male fields of business and science are not very competitive. Rather, they excel in “work competence” or “work mastery.” They simply do their jobs extremely well. Women’s inclination to seek agreement may even be an advantage in management. Many people feel that women make better managers because they are more inclined to consult others and involve employees in decision making, and everyone agrees that employees are more likely to implement a policy efficiently if they feel they have played a part in making it.”

Steinem 1992 181-2

Because our Ways of working are accepted more often than not as sound management practice, gives us ‘other’ reasons to claim such activities as community-building, creating and maintaining a learning organisation, encouraging consultative processes and the like are leading Ways of effective work and management practice.

...there lived a woman who longed for her lost tribe, and the stories that belonged to her people

I had felt a sense of looking for something lost: the wisdom of women past and connections with women present. In this work I engaged in research with many women who tell stories of community Ways of being that aim to enable and empower all who interact with our workplaces.

But the old Dreamtime had stolen the stories and hidden them.

The ‘old’ Dreamtime for us, was patriarchal organisation of the workplace. It is a pattern which we perceive as being appropriate no more. Therefore, we no longer support any structure and way of being that limits power by retaining it in a few privileged male hands (who may also conform to the present Australian power-elite paradigm: Caucasian, Protestant, of anglo background and often educated at one of a very few prestigious, private schools). Women’s stories and Ways of being were denied and hidden by a system dependent upon promoting fear to ensure that instructions were followed. The results can be somewhat uneven, especially today as more and more workers and clients, realise their own possibilities.

“... I realized that men are not playing with a full deck. Of course, women weren’t dealt all the cards either. Each gender got about two-thirds of a deck, and it is the cards we hold in common that make it possible for us to play together at all.”

Albino 1992 49 (emphasis mine)

The women knew that they must search for the old stories - and through them they might find their tribe again.

As well as searching for the old stories we told and heard new stories. Through these we re-connected with a tribe of women workers - those women workers who are creating changes in their workplaces, or even entirely new structures.
“We need to learn from these stories which at first glance are the stories of individuals precisely because there we can find echoes for our own lives. Those feelings and experiences ... portrayed tell me things I'd otherwise not know about myself and other women. They tell me about her, of course, but also about my place in the world, in history.”

Dowrick 1985 226 (emphases Dowrick’s)

And when next the paperbark-tress filled the air with the scent of their honey-smelling flower, they took her into their tribe as one of their own, so that she would never again be without paperbark needed for her work.

Through telling and hearing our stories, we transformed individual efforts into a grander story. A story which supports new growth and transformations and has created new source materials for our work.

To educate ourselves in the workplace and to explore new possibilities, we found it useful to learn from each other, as well as from those who have gone before. Through our stories, we learn; even though we may still experience a climate that does not value women’s experience and knowing as valid.

“The method of using one’s own experience to build theory has a solid basis within feminism to be sure- what else was consciousness-raising about? Yet in the current academic culture of epistemological relativism, which gives the empirical, let alone the experiential, short shrift as a path to knowledge and truth (indeed, using these words already condemns me as a hopeless clinger to universalising thought), I feel uneasy.”

Eisenstein 1991 40

I operated under a strong belief that it was essential that co-researchers have not just an input, but control over their part in the process and their own story.

“Because if I tell the story, I control the version. Because if I tell the story, I can make you laugh, and I would rather have you laugh than feel sorry for me. Because if I tell the story, it doesn’t hurt as much. Because if I tell the story, I can get on with it.”

Ephron Heartburn 1983 221

Outcomes / Findings / Mapping growth and learning over the research period.

If we felt uneasy on our own trying to combat the patriarchal forces and its resulting ‘sick’ systems (Schaef and Fassel 1988), then we found strength in joining together. We transformed beyond that uneasy feeling, to taking on board that we have the power to influence the direction of change. “The issue is bigger than me”, said co-researcher Electra as she accepted public speaking opportunities and media ‘grabs’ to speak about women’s issues.

We came to understand why it is that there are times when our perceptions do not match the given corporate climates or workplace cultures.

“...it is important to distinguish between actual and perceived leadership behaviour. Although men and women differ in their preferences for specific professional behaviours, these differences are not necessarily evident in terms of overall performance. Studies show that while women may take fewer risks in decision making than men, the two sexes do not differ in the overall accuracy of their decisions.”

Albino 1992 48
We became aware of habitual responses, that accepted the given culture arising from the world-view of those who controlled the workplace. This occurred even when the people who constructed that world-view, assumed women’s talk was not useful to workplace goals:

"Far too frequently, women say only what is expected of them or acceptable in this culture. Their input generally falls into one of two categories: ‘women’s talk’ and the ‘peacekeeping talk’. Women’s talk is stereotyped as useless. It is ‘all anyone can expect from a woman’. It is allowed to exist because it does not threaten the White Male System. Peacekeeping talk does not threaten the White Male System either. In fact, it supports its concepts and ideas. It is women’s way of demonstrating their understanding of the System and their reluctance to challenge its myths."

Schaef 1981 99

As we actively challenged these workplace myths, we researched to develop supporting strategies.

It was most valuable to take time out as a group of working women, and talk to each other about our experiences. In so doing we made meaning of our experiences and also often made choices, based upon others’ hearing of our stories. We were able to explore ‘other realities’ and try out possibilities.

"There is... ‘women’s talk,’ however. It is the kind that emerges during individual therapy groups, and private conversations - situations in which women feel safe to explore their own evolving System. The ideas presented here were free to voice their own perceptions. They provide us with a solid beginning as we seek to define the White Male System and our own Female System and explore other realities."

Schaef 1981 100

Through our ‘women’s talk’, we explored our own system of connections between responsibility and relationships (Gilligan 1982). We developed, named and explored our knowing of our own system which works for us by connecting our own relationships and responsibilities. This knowledge allowed us to speak of our ethic of care and build a conscious moral identity of self-in-relationships (Porter 1991).

And if we are to speak of the knowledge, if we are to name the connections that are named for us when we are able to work within a construct that enables our relationships and responsibilities to work together, then we are speaking what is truth for each of us.

I needed to pursue this inquiry for myself; to learn from effective strategies of other women, whose work and ethics I admired. The co-researchers chose to accept the invitation and persisted as they were finding the co-operative learning and inquiry processes were valuable supports. As we unraveled assumptions which underpinned our findings; our own, the group’s and those assumptions upon which work structures and practices were constructed; we also developed a rare insight into women’s actual lived experiences through workplace issues. I found myself agreeing with Sexton:

"Unfortunately, the abundance of statistics and generalizations about 'work and its discontents' gives us little real understanding of how women lead their daily work lives, experience their jobs, or perceive work-related issues. Personal documents are needed, individual and group portraits of workers, slices of real working life, statements by the women themselves - the handwoven fabric of their daily work lives.
To this end, I have tried to make the mountainous statistics and theories about work life more intimate and familiar by asking... workers: Who are you? What do you do? What issues trouble you? What do you want from your union or from the women's movement?"

**Sexton 1982 5**

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**Evaluative and Critical Reflections from the Co-researchers**

At the last weekend together in March 1994, we focussed upon our reflections. As a pro-active inquiry, we were concerned about going beyond identification and de-construction of oppression. We were exploring how to influence change so that it enabled and empowered all peoples. To gather collective evaluation, the following focus areas were discussed in the group:

*What were the Ways that we operated as change agents?*

There were many different creative individual Ways described in sections 2 and 3, including the development of a support network which any one of us could call upon.

This group worked on consensus to a large extent without denying differences. There was acceptance of different ways of working and being, in fact this would often be seen as an opportunity to learn another way, explore another option.

Women were able to bring problems to the group. These were not always work-based (for example, Margaret in transition from full-time parent to occasional parent status as her son moved away from her home to his father). When these problems were work-based (and they usually were), there was a definite advantage in that the group was comprised of people outside of any individual's workplace.

Often the process of being heard, affirmed and accepted, was as useful as actually arriving at a possible solution. Rarely was a solution offered. What the woman in focus experienced, was being offered a range of options and conceptual tools. By focussing on the situation and exploring it with the group, a woman would begin a process of situation management. There were times when nothing else needed to be done, once the discussion was over. Through the degree of trust experienced, much anxiety arising from workplace situations was released.

*What are the implications of this research for other women?*

There were global and local influences described by the group. Generally, we had critiqued workplace structures which disempower most workers and created our own people-friendly workplaces.

Locally, the group provided a model for other women. Grace had other women (work colleagues and friends) enthuse how lucky she was to be a member of such a supportive group. There was a suggestion that others could also create their own group of skilled, diverse women. The building of group community with trust and ethics, was considered more important to successful process than any imposed artificial structures.

*Why did it work well for us?*

The initial activities we engaged in, created an effective co-learning structure. Confidence was built individually here within the group. The fact that we used the skills within us, rather than calling in outsiders, was identified as a
major influence in the formation of trust and confidence. By accepting each others’ authority, we experienced an effective co-learning climate where it was just as acceptable to say: ‘I don’t know’, or “I want to know”, as it was to offer a skill or specific knowledge to the group.

We experienced being a truly self-directed group - we led ourselves. The group had its own momentum evidenced by on-going and continuing interest over nearly 4 years (to date). The acceptance of different styles of relating and being in the group assist this continuity. Members at a distance, who gave written input or verbal connections with any other member of the group, were still connected as there were no expectations of minimum commitment or approved styles of interaction.

Critique of Research Process

Some group members experienced the writing process in a fragmented way. This meant experiencing a lack of focus on purpose and outcome. The implications of receiving multitudinous drafts in scattered formation (odd chapters here and there) meant they had no way of perceiving the whole.

Some early feedback on this final draft distribution, which is more connected, indicates resolution on this issue. I can see a whole thesis emerging in language I can understand (Margaret), and It’s marvellous to see women’s contribution to the workplace affirmed and celebrated (Ariadne).

Finally, there are members of the group who would like to see the work published beyond the university. This would require another round of ethical checks and approvals. Omnipresent Time may not have stolen this story as Oodgeroo discovered.

Experiencing and Promoting Empowerment

"Women’s strength is complex and multi-faceted: it is manifest in her capacity to discover her own knowing and to undo the damage done to her in the world of knowledge constructed by men."

Davies 1984 41

Exploring issues together, strengthened our capacity to influence constructs and responses to our issues. We activated Fay’s definition of empowerment as “socially transformative action” (Fay 1987 205) by bringing our research issues into our workplaces and influencing the direction of change.

We experienced this empowerment as a process which included using our positions of privilege to further share power amongst co-workers and clients.

The Building of Community

Community -

... a group of two or more people who, regardless of the diversity of their background (social, spiritual, educational, ethnic, economic, political, etc.) have been able to accept and transcend their differences, enabling them to communicate effectively and openly and work together toward goals identified as being for their common good.

Peck 1987 59

We are indeed a community in that sense.
The Paradoxes of Paradigms

From a world-view that sees success as conquering and profits as the short-term bottom line, the qualities that we have identified as strengths may also be interpreted by some as weaknesses. Because we are women of the last decade of the twentieth century we are actors who happen to be in the public domain. When we know ourselves to be effective, competent change agents, we carry an authority with our competence (Davies 1984 41).

Storytelling for Social Change (title and trigger ideas from Razack 1993)

Razack’s article addresses the use of storytelling for social change in the contexts of the law and critical pedagogy. While reading her article I found myself engaging with her argument, in the context of women as change agents in the workplace. The following dialogue (as in Böhm et al 1992: applying critical meta-dialogue) arises from this engagement and addresses many of Razack’s issues, in our group context.

I found myself choosing storytelling as a major research method initially out of a sense of redress “women’s stories have not been told” (Razack 1993 83). There was also an intention of co-learning through each other’s stories: “When we depend upon storytelling either to reach each other across differences or to refute patriarchal and racist constructs, we must overcome at least one difficulty: the difference in position between the teller and the listener, between telling the tale and hearing it.”

Razack 1993 83

The effort to transcend the gap between teller and listener was for us a space for learning. I believe that because this was group collaborative research, multi-layers of meaning were explored which would have been extremely difficult if not impossible with individual interview methodology.

This work is ‘flooded’ with women’s stories to get across one simple point: “... men’s narrative story and phenomenology is not women’s story and phenomenology.”

West in Razack 1993 85

When this is applied to workplace issues, many other complexities vary our story: power positions in the workplace (chapter 10); family responsibilities and the workplace (chapter 11, 9 and elsewhere); our preference for co-operation and collaboration; opportunities for learning in the workplace; approaches to conflict; structural and perceived limitations; views of success; where we find support (all addressed in chapter 9).

We were looking for affirmation of a new Way of knowing which I have demonstrated, is an emergent aspect of these women’s Ways of working. Many other women, and more and more men than previously are doing this, too. I found I could speak with Bettina Aptheker’s voice to describe our inquiry, with the same words she uses to conclude her book: Tapestries of Life.

“What I have been about throughout this book is showing that the dailiness of women’s lives structures a different way of knowing and a different way of thinking. The process that comes from this way of knowing has to be at the centre of women’s politics, and it has to be at the centre of a women’s scholarship. This is why I have been drawn to poetry and to the stories: Because they are layered, because more than one truth is represented, because there is ambiguity and paradox.

Chapter 12 - Virginia Kaufman Hall - Women Transforming the Workplace - 322
When we work together in coalitions, or on the job, or in academic settings, or in the community, we have to allow for this ambiguity and paradox, respect for each other, our cultures, our integrity, our dignity.

Aptheker 1989 254 in Razack 1993 89

This new way of knowing requires a “massive uprooting of dualistic thinking”, which Anzaluda and many other feminists have called for (Razack 1993 89). It is my experience that social ecology works to teach and practice this massive uprooting as we work to support social change activists throughout all our learning programs in similar ways as Razack puts into her summer teaching programs in human rights. Again, I find her critiques and care in their program, also resonate with social ecology approaches to our residential programs.

Researching with Stories

There is a nexus between applying rational analysis and uncritical reliance upon stories. I do not see this tension as a continuum. It is like many of these new ways of knowing and being (or old community ways rediscovered?), and more like a three-dimensional spiral of dynamic ever-changing forces.

Pluralistic paradigms encourage and promote complexity. Without a system of understanding these complexities, simply reporting them could serve to cripple further understanding and resulting social action. There were times co-researchers noted the personal and professional values to them of telling their stories, but queried what use was this to me as the researcher responsible for writing this up as an academically-examined thesis?

Through reflexive peeling away of layers of meaning (looking through the glass onion social research methodology à la John Lennon), we used our stories, and ancient myths, to help us understand how we experienced things the way they are and to understand why we did them (theoretical underpinnings).

Research Community Building

To deal with the above complexities I evaluate our process of community building by connecting with Ellsworth’s recommendations for a mixed-race classroom examining racism (Ellsworth 1989). In other parts of the thesis I have promoted the relevance of working with difference for feminists committed to social change. These same principles of practice, apply equally relevantly to social ecology programs. In my teaching and research praxis, it has been my experience that to learn through people’s stories, we must first connect through trust and community. The following evaluation also strengthens the congruence with this research and social ecology praxis.

1. Building Trust

I aimed to build opportunities for social interaction. Initially, we did this through co-learning and always meeting over an informal shared lunch. Residential weekends were structured in, as well as annual (and often more frequent) dinners just for fun. Those who participated in all or most of these events became the active core group. Others were not able to participate as much, and one member with young infants over this period of community building, felt a lack of connection (Electra’s experience is included in chapter 8). Ariadne responded in the second and third years, and acted to include herself, attracted as she said, by the qualities emerging in the writings. I learned, that while I may offer opportunities for community building, people can only respond when they feel ready and able. I actively promoted varieties of interaction and response through the writings to always keep a door open and invite participation.
Community building with distant members created some tension with another who had not met 2 women whose writings were included with first group reports in the first year (Kay and Ariadne). At the second residential weekend, one woman felt exposed by their details being circulated to women she had not met. A strong advocate for including difference in situations and geography, Jess spoke of the value she experienced from the same event. This did not emerge as an issue again, and the women who participated differently, were enfolded into the research process.

2. Learning about others' realities without relying upon them to inform us

This is raised as an issue in a mixed-race classroom by both Ellsworth and Razack. I learned that the research invitations which I initially set-up, did not meet the needs of a lone aboriginal woman at our first meeting. Firstly, I created a difficult environment for her; one woman of colour does not a group make! Secondly, her situation was complicated (as she was a lesbian who had not ‘come out’). When she saw another lesbian's experiences seemingly devalued by a one-time visitor at the first meeting, she had two sound reasons for not continuing (my reflections and learning on this are also in chapter 8).

The issue: how to create a 'safe-space' until community is built, remains a difficult one for critical social science research and critical pedagogy. The next recommendation of Ellsworth, further addresses these difficulties:

3. We name inequalities in the classroom (group) and devise ground rules for communication

We named our issues in the second meeting and also developed group agreements around the question “what do we need to do, to ensure effective and safe inquiry together?” This was re-visited at the fifth meeting when the issue of ‘power’ was fully deconstructed.

4. Encouraging affinity groups between those who are most likely to share the same forms of oppression:

The whole group has an affinity with the oppressions women experienced in the workplace and society. Smaller sub-groups of women in similar areas developed - such as the women who had been in the public sector and working towards changing government policy (Chris, Grace and Jess).

5. Offer time to coalesce so that individuals can speak from these groups:

The long-time range of the co-operative research period (October 1990 to end of 1994), allowed for deeper reflections over time. Friendships formed which became long-term and probably life-long. As reported before, the 10 core group members want to meet for a weekend every year.

Even quieter members of the group (such as Julie, a self-identified introvert), developed a stronger voice within the group as time went on. Virginia, in the first phase busy with observing and recording the research process, was further encouraged to speak up personally and I did this much more in the last phase.

6. We work from the basis that we all have only partial knowledge:

With this assumption operational, we all benefited from richer information and learned a range of strategic possibilities from the other women. The challenge
to take the research beyond the group, via strategic action in workplaces, further expanded the possibilities of enrichment for other women, beyond the group.

7. We can all claim to stand as oppressor and oppressed in relation to someone:
As we talked together of our joint oppression as women, we conversely, became aware of our joint privileges. Individuals became aware of other's individual oppressions, (such as Ariadne's initial realisation of the oppression of lesbians in the workplace) and our findings that two women in the group had experienced long-term domestic violence (Kay and Isobel from husband and brother respectively).

Our strength and range of possibilities for effective social change developed over the time of our group activities. Simultaneously we became aware individually and as a group, how far our privileges could be used to empower others. As both oppressed and oppressors, the realisation of recognising possibilities for change, become stronger.

In these multitudinous Ways I designed researching and group practices to “forge a politics of alliances based on this sharing of daily experience” (Razack 1993 91). The design was not pre-set; there needed to be room for other's needs - to make space for different voices. So emerged a process of suggesting, checking-out, asking for suggestions and creative group problem-solving of complex issues (chapters 3 and 5).

The books by Belenky et al (1986), Women’s Ways of Knowing and Young-Eisendrath and Wiedemann's (1987) Female Authority; led me to inquire into our epistemology and the ensuing epistemological influence on our work practices. I looked then for various ways of knowing that arose from our inquiry. At this stage, it would be obvious that I would be looking out for re-cognitions of epistemological underpinnings of our emancipatory political stance. Razack emphasises that

“... how we know what we know is central to our political practice
because it helps us to locate the inconsistencies, the cracks we might
then use to empower ourselves.”

Razack 1993 95

Together we had to negotiate a Way through our various ways of knowing to enable us to take individual political action in our own workplaces. Meeting number 5, when we first looked at our constructions around ‘power’, triggered this process of negotiation. A similar dynamic was processed over and over again when different members of the group took the negotiating process towards critical social action and creative problem-solving in their own workplaces (Julie, Chris, Jess, Grace).

Exploration of our ways of knowing through our storytelling led to expansion of options on how to act in any given situation. Further reflexivity focussed upon our multiple roles as co-researchers of being at one-and-the-same-time: storyteller, listener, meaning-maker, learner, supporter, strategic planner and social activist. We kept inquiring into ways to take these learnings out of the realm of abstraction (research findings) and into effective political action.

While we had begun sharing what we know, we went deeper into inquiring how we know. So we deconstructed the social and familial influences upon our epistemology and further considered the relevance of this to our ontology - how we act and ‘be’ in the world.
Conclusion

Finally through the growth of learning and risk-taking of trying out yet another opportunity for improving the workplace we took on

"... the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think."

Woolf 1929 108

As working women in Australia in the 1990's, we rejected “bureaucracy as the scientific organization of inequality” (Ferguson 1984 8). We rejected the notion of power as a limited resource (as did Foucault 1978) and re-constructor our own notions of sharing power to enable all to exercise their potential. Taking steps to apply feminist/social ecology process to our workplaces in the conscious desire to effect social change, entailed risk and excitement. When there were set-backs, the group provided support and other options for movement or processing the situation. We critiqued workplaces that seemed to not move beyond token change which barely symbolised the deep structural changes necessary to combat the power constructs embedded within our social structures.

The existence of our researching group provided a structure of support, a place for learning and collecting other options:

An important step that can be taken to overcome the isolation, fear, and frustration is to create a reality outside of the institution where feminist values can be enacted more fully within a group or groups committed to creating liberating transformations for all people. Experiencing a community, even though it may be a small group, where the ideals can be more fully realized, provides a place of centering, of concentrating our energies in a healing direction, of support for the values we are seeking to enact, and for exploring what might be possible. Then, when the disappointments from the old world come crashing in, the visions of the new possibilities are there...

Wheeler and Chinn 1991 96

By telling this story of women transforming the workplace, we strengthened work practices which are effective and useful to organisations and have rarely been named as women's Ways. This inquiry through qualitative and collaborative research supports and strengthens women's ways of working and, in so doing influences workplace cultures to acknowledge and value; indeed to use women's Ways of working to transform unfair and inhuman work practices to human-centred Ways.

The End (and another beginning)
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Appendices
Appendix 1

The Story of Our Mother
A Conceptual Framework - mapping the territory:

Where are We Now and Why?

I wrote this story to answer for myself the question: Why do I as a woman experience the world as I do? I wondered how stories of women past affected my day-to-day reality. So I also wrote this story to express to the women I was inviting into the research group, something of our mythical context. As I was raised with Christian beliefs, biblical archetypes loom large in my psyche. This story is archetypal, personal and relational. Written before the research group met it served as a mythical context for our inquiry.

The Story of our Mother draws upon some pre-history, legends and myths. It is not a summary of current mythology. It is my mythical creation expressing my symbolic understanding of what has gone before. Everywoman has her own collection of fables and myths of ancient origins. Indeed, so does every man and child. Now these combine with contemporary stories from the electronic and print media to form an unconscious play of meaning. In Transactional Analysis these underlying constructs are called life scripts (Harris 1970 44 also Berne 1975, 1964 and others). Unrecognised, they are part of our shadow-play. One very powerful life script for women for example, was identified by Colette Dowling (1982) in The Cinderella Complex - women’s hidden fear of independence.

“Freud, Jung, and their followers have demonstrated irrefutably that the logic, the heroes, and the deeds of myth survive into modern times... The latest incarnation of Oedipus, the continued romance of Beauty and the Beast, stand this afternoon on the corner of Forty-Second Street and Fifth Avenue, waiting for the traffic light to change.”
Joseph Campbell from The Hero With a Thousand Faces in Berne 1974

As little girls in a Caucasian, European-based culture, we have been influenced by Red Riding Hood, Cinderella and Snow White as well as most probably, the (U.S. and Australian) television images of Murphy Brown, Roseanne, The Simpsons and (in Australia) Neighbours. Because of the powerful imagery of the electronic media and the many daily hours our children are influenced by TV, there is much debate over the effects of these images on the psyche of our children. According to Berne (1964), Harris (1970) and Estes (1992) their archetypal imagery is built upon a conglomeration of these influences.

This story takes us much further back than today’s electronic influences, trying to re-construct in story-lines, oral pre-history and written historical influences upon our experiences today, as women. As I am recording my Way in myth, legend and story, much of this story is not referenced. Most of this story reflects the development of my life script over more than 4 decades. Written sources have been noted when available.

A Story of Women Past

Story telling is one of the softer ways of finding out things. It certainly falls within a feminine way of knowing which is enjoyed by all people, any age, all cultures. Our inquiry collected many stories of women’s Ways of being, doing and learning about our lives.
I began my inquiry, long before I collected together a research group. I needed to find and tell a story. This story was an essential preparation for me to create the compost and grow the roots of the whole inquiry. Roots, past conscious and subconscious memories, archetypes and belief systems that create reason and the heuristic for the project slowly came together. The method of storytelling became a process tool to search for an unknown goal.

_"heuristic ... a procedure for searching out an unknown goal by incremental exploration."_

Bullock, Stallybras & Trombley 1988 382

Story provided me with a symbolic concept for the project. It gave the co-researchers a symbolic construct to understand my motivation.

This is a fanciful herstory of creation and the development of people on this earth. It is in effect part of a patchwork quilt that embroiders some images in detail and others are barely cut to fit. The stitches that hold it together are my own intuitive, wanderlustig (Daly 1987) steps that walk the path which I could not yet see. I discovered as I journeyed.

The story is unfinished; in the sense that our research is also on-going and life-long. I consciously leave spaces for other women’s belief systems, other people’s cultures. This story arises from my own anglo-celtic heritage with some influences from other cultures, although the reader will recognise a strong influence of the Christian tradition. These are my roots, the myths that surrounded me as I grew up. I later experienced power and creation in other cultures. One space I am very conscious of is that there is no telling here of Koori stories of women’s Ways. Another wanderlust adventure calls... Next adventure - perhaps, next story.

And this is my story as I wrote it...

_The Story of the Mother_

In the beginning was the goddess.

Perhaps the goddess was known as god, and in later male versions may have been known as godmen?

She was complete and universal in herself. She was in fact, a self-fertilizing goddess, complete, whole and full as is a full moon, androgynous needing no male god to create new life.

This “mother-of-all” created all. She squatted in the heavens and with one great simultaneous contraction, expanded herself into the universe. Such is the integrated, miraculous paradox of such a goddess.

_Her wondrous breasts brought forth nurture for all beings in a burst of spray from her nipples spreading out and out, becoming the milky way with galaxy upon galaxy spreading through the aeons._

Her after-birth she deposited as the organic matter from which a particularly grandly beautiful planet would grow. This planet instilled with the magic of her placenta was to be wondrously fertile. It prepared itself for a
magnificent transformation from a hot molten body to a glorious world with 
varieties of climates, seas and life. And her milk continued to nurture as the soft 
rain brought moisture to the new life below.

The beautifully fine details of this planet were embroidered by the goddess 
onto a web of the life she sewed. She sat in the heavens watching as her needle 
and silken thread developed life-forms. It was truly a glorious design. Time does 
not pass for her as it does on this earth; her space-time has all of eternity and 
plays with multiple universes.

Her particular joy was in designing the feathers of the rosellas and 
parakeets, the soft warm wool of the sheep, the strength and majesty of the 
elephant, and the graceful cetaceans: whales and dolphins.

The whales and fellow cetaceans, the dolphins, she wove with an extra layer 
of crystalline thread worked under their pattern. This enabled them to talk with 
her and tell her of the goings-on of the planet by singing her songs as she rides 
with them in the waters. She also seeped into the earth with the rain and 
travelled across the sky in company with the earth’s own guardian goddess, the 
moon.

She wove the meaning of life into her embroidery of trees; she designed 
power into the quilted coils of serpents; sea was woven in aquas, greens, blues and 
silver spirit; and the fertile earth stitched within an underworld of darker 
knowledge through which the long, thread-roots of the lotus entwine as the plant 
grows ever upward in a search for light.

Eventually, the cetaceans, the moon and the great mother-of-all, together 
decided that they may enjoy other god-like creatures upon the earth, to play 
games with, to tell stories, to laugh and to dance together.

So the goddess created companions in the form of people. They were god-like 
in their given ability to tell stories, sing, dance, laugh and create beauty together. 
In their god-consciousness, they recognised the divinity in all their relations: 
four-footed, feathered, finned, the plants of the earth which gave their fruits, the 
waters which gave them drink, the earth herself, Gaia their mother-of-all, wind 
and fire elements.

She created many rainbow people; some red, some yellow, some black and 
some white. Different colours - one people. Different tribes, different cultures, 
people from different lands with diverse customs and all with their own varieties 
of stories, music and dance. She created woman and she created man.

**Different genders - one people.**

Women and men had their own tones and colours to add to the harmonies 
and stories to tell each other. Each gender began to appreciate qualities inherent 
in the other. As they made connections they wove the web of life -able to co-create 
infants to carry on the stories and music of their own people. The great mother 
wisely taught that they needed to make connections with each other, emotionally, 
physically and spiritually, before another being could be born from two others. 
While the goddess was androgynous, she saw that the people’s own need for others 
would ensure they work together to look after her most beautiful of planets.
The new arrivals learnt very quickly and the great mother-of-all amused herself by teaching them many of her powers and developing awareness of the qualities of many energies, seen and felt in different dimensions.

They learnt from her how to grow grain. They learnt to make fire. The goddess like any good mother, waited patiently for her children to develop before she gave them gifts of great power. It would be of no use to people if she had given them control of fire before they learned the qualities of its energy. Knowledge and power must integrate. She taught them by teaching them the wisdom needed to handle power. Her vision saw a glorious day when all beings would become godlike.

*When people have integrated their minds, hearts, bodies and spirit, to hold within one being the power of both female and male energy.*

This is the power that creates universes of galaxies and worlds. This is the prime energy that integrates all the creative energies of all worlds, the power that nurtures and creates.

The beauty and abundant fertility of the planet was a gift from the mother, honoured with rites every spring as each generation’s young women joyfully and lovingly fertilised the earth with their own powers. The women would lay upon the earth and invite men to implant their seed. In the occult tradition - as above so below. As the mother ensured growth of the grain each spring, so the women would nurture the seed of new life within their beings.

The strongest blessing upon the earth came from the old women who no longer bled. These crones were the holders of wisdom and creative energy. Their footsteps on the earth, ensured its fertility. These agricultural hags were essential to each tribes’ survival and so accorded great respect.

And the mother-of-all, in her wisdom, taught the people and waited patiently for their understanding. During this time, the people of the earth enjoyed a partnership society where “qualities such as caring, compassion, and non-violence (were) highly valued” (Eisler 1987 xvi).

Some of the women and men over time developed towards the qualities of god-like beings on this planet. The great mother seeing that some were ready, gave power and knowledge to these beings. She taught Demeter to nurture the earth so the grain would grow to nurture the people. She taught the old wise woman Hecate how to inspire human fertility and to teach the youths to pleasure the mothers’ initiates.

As women and men became ready, the mother taught them powers and knowledge of the earth and it’s peoples. In different parts of the earth, goddesses and gods with other names were given roles to help their people in their places of living.

The Great Mother taught her people to support and care for each other and the earth. No one dominated; diversity was not equated with either inferiority or superiority. Difference brought with it qualities of richness and more options and Ways of being and doing. Their ideal was a pure partnership model where everyone is consulted to decide on action. Many earth-based cultures still use consultation with all members of the tribe, as their Way of managing policy and implementation (Eisler 1987 xvii & Lawlor 1990).
The great mother-of-all particularly liked playing games with Zeus, who was initially a consort of Demeter's. He had developed a great energy and harnessed some of the lesser gods of power with his influential will. And the mother-of-all watched.

She laughed as he also convinced others of his supreme power. But the great mother knew in her heart, that she needed to leave her children to learn about the perils of using power by themselves.

The mother knew that as all things in the earth's environment integrate and depend upon each other, so too, must power and knowledge and wisdom interweave in the peoples of this earth. So she used the time of Zeus to retreat from her mothering of this earth. As with all good mothers, she knew her children must learn to try out life beyond the realm of mother's protection. And she retreated, quietly to watch, to embroider new worlds or to tell her stories in other constellations.

Many vowed not to forget their great mother.

As it is when children eventually grow and leave behind their parents ways, so some adult children can tend to forget much of the mothers' wisdom as they experiment, rebel and try out new experiences.

Many cultures of the earlier times continued to honour the earth itself as their mother, and in this way stayed close to the spirit of mutual nurture.

Some noticed that Zeus and other male gods created a conspiracy of silence, (no reference or reverence was paid to the great mother). Later, there was active usurpation of her role.

As Zeus' power increased, he used it against the chosen women of the mother. Persephone his own daughter was promised to her uncle, Hades and the pubescent child was captured, raped and kept hidden from her mother. Not for her the gentle initiation into the pleasures of fertility rites performed for the mother on the fertile soil in spring sunshine.

Demeter searched the earth and not finding her daughter retreated in her sadness. As Demeter's feet did not walk the earth, so the crops failed that year. She was only found when the people petitioned Zeus believing it was within his power to make the earth yield its harvest.

Demeter nurtures the earth with great-mother love, not enforced productivity.

The old wise hag Hecate told Demeter that she heard Persephone's cries for help. They confronted Zeus.

Demeter bargained her power of harvest with Zeus' power over the people of the earth and won. She demanded her daughter back.

As soon as mother and daughter were re-united, Demeter asked Persephone if she had eaten while in the underworld. Persephone knew that she would be trapped in that place if she ate there, had not let food pass her lips for the whole year she was imprisoned. Yet Hades forced a pomegranate seed into her mouth to ensure her return to him.
So it came about that Persephone had to spend one third of the year underground while Demeter retreated in sorrow. On Persephone's return, spring and new life returned to the earth and all was renewed. Yet now, maiden, mother and crone (Hecate) are divided.

The power of the great mother has then as now, bargained with worldly power. Spirits and hearts tackle intellect.

*Working together to nurture the planet changed to working against the inner realm to survive in the outer world.*

Many women of the earth in all-female gatherings vowed they would hold the wisdom. For many ages it was passed down from mother to daughter, or aunt to niece, wise woman-hag to goddess-daughter. Many of the rituals were still openly practiced as women and men who worked with the earth acknowledged the power of growth at every harvest festival.

The notion of sacrifice became associated with gifts from the gods, as Demeter had to sacrifice her daughter. So too, in later times under a monogamous all-male god, did another mother have to sacrifice her son for the good of all peoples.

Not only women were expected to sacrifice their sexuality to the new gods. Male infants were to be initiated, circumcised in ritual sacrifice of their sex. For them the sacrifice was as an infant, in some parts of the world it came as a test of initiation at puberty.

It came to pass that the women of the Judaic and Christian cultures, sacrificed their natures, all lifelong. For a time however, many Hebrews who worked the land honoured their great mother, Asherah at their own hearths, by baking ritual bread together to ensure the harvest (Gadon 1989 167-188).

The patriarchal monogamous hegemony squashed Asherah's and similar cults by banning and destroying "graven images".  

*Their god was to be contacted through priests and writings, and is certainly not accessible to the people through stories, touchable images and sacred sites with deities or local places of power.*

Even the mother's image of the golden calf with its moon-shaped horns was broken by Moses. Symbols to the earth religions were expunged from many sacred sites where Christian churches were built. Such as at Chartres; the special home of Mary the mother of god. Here the story of Ariadne leading the Way out of the labyrinth was expunged from the records. The brass plaque inscribed with Theseus, the Minotaur and the saviour Ariadne at the centre removed (James 1990 86). The great spiralling labyrinth is still the floor design of the nave. The nave is the people's place; where the 'ordinary' people may gather in the great cathedral. The great spiral was built in the late thirteenth century - around the time of the burning of witches. The goddess' image still shown as the Way to god, as the floor, in touch with the earth and our footsteps.

*The goddess energy is grounded, the patriarchal god placed high in the heavens, towering above in the huge vaulted roof far out of reach of people.*

Appendix 1  ~ Women Transforming the Workplace ~  

334
The labyrinth, earlier considered the mother’s body, has now been defiled by death. It becomes a symbol for the Christian underworld, no longer worshipped as a holy place - the earth mother (Gadon 1987 105); no longer the journey into the underworld seen as an important pilgrimage. The dancing floor for fair haired Ariadne the most high fruitful mother of the barley remains written in Homer’s words (Graves 1961 329).

Man has killed the king of the underworld, and man need no longer face the fear of death. Such is the Christian message, denying our need to look upon the face of the monster at the centre of the spiralling maze, denying our curiosity, denying our unconscious. Power is handed to the priests and for the agnostics, Freudian psychiatrists.

We need not worry our pretty little heads bout all that dark and evil stuff. Let the patriarchs, the philosopher kings and priests decide what is right and wrong.

And an angry, violent and revengeful god reflecting these dark times was thrust upon the people. This god was separated from his people in a way not known by any goddess who lived locally, day-to-day alongside her people. The way to this god had to be studied by men, who then told other men, who may tell bits of the holy writings to the people. What was sacred became hidden, inaccessible, not of our ordinary lives.

As time went by some people noted the lack of love in their god, and listened to a new Hebrew tale of a man of Galilee who spoke of love not revenge, from his father-god. Even though this prophet too was violently killed, the message remained in some hearts.

Over the ages his story grew too, along with the story of his virgin birth.

Back in time there was a haunting memory of a virgin goddess who could bring forth new life. Then the term virgin meant ‘unmarried’ and called up images of the fertile virgin forest rather than a chaste woman.

“For virgins like Artemis and Athena, their virginity symbolized autonomy and independence, freedom to take lovers. Virgin meant one in herself, to be true to her own nature and instinct, not maiden inviolatē.”

Gadon 1989 167-188

This virgin called Mary, was honoured as the mother-of-god. Maybe woman again would be elevated into a partnership role in the new religion? The story of Mary’s giving birth to a son destined by heritage to be King of the Jews, resembles those stories of

"... earlier “mystery cults” revolving around a divine Mother and her son or, as in the worship of Demeter and Kore, her daughter."

Eisler 1987 xvi

Was the goddess we knew before, integrated through Mary the mother, into this new religion about love and compassion? From what we know of the early A.D. centuries this may have been possible. She was the fate-spinner and the triple Goddess was incarnate in the three Marys who stood at the foot of the cross (Walker 1983 605). But around the time called the “fourth century”, men of letters

Appendix 1 ~ Women Transforming the Workplace ~ 335
began to rewrite herstory in the official record called the "bible". Amongst other unorthodox stories, the Gospel of Mary was dropped from the Christian New Testament (Walker 1983 605).

As stories do, they live on in hearts that are enlightened by the story.

What are now called apocryphal stories still tell of Mary's link with earth goddess powers; such as the story of the field of grain which Mary passed in her flight into Egypt where miraculous growth occurred. Many Christian Churches are built over sacred springs and sites of earth goddess worship such as Chartres (Gadon 1989 203) and ignored as an ancient goddess symbol by James (1990) in his in-depth architectural study of Chartres. The power still attracts and its original source denied.

The great festivals of the Christian religion are linked to those of the earth mother. The celebration of the virgin birth is set at the time of the northern hemisphere’s winter solstice and resurrection of their god is celebrated at springtime, tied to the full moon after the Vernal Equinox and named after the Anglo Saxon goddess Eostre. The myth still lives in Lourdes and other sites where miracles associated with Mary are still reported (Gadon 1989 198).

The connection with this mother and her sexuality was violent, relentless and continues to be torn from her. There is no realistic model for women to be holy and sexual. Another Mary of the same story (Magdalene) was punished for her sexuality. To be a wholly and complete sensual woman and love this god, was not accepted by the patriarchy. Indeed the “holiest of women” retired to a life away from men. Holy men were also protected from contamination with women, as it was an earlier woman (Eve), who was believed to have brought suffering into the world by her seduction of man (Adam).

Eve fraternised with the clever serpent from the holy temples of earth-based religions.

“In fact, it is only from this historical perspective that the story of Eve taking counsel from a serpent makes any sense. The fact that the serpent, an ancient prophetic or oracular symbol of the Goddess, advises Eve the prototypical woman, to disobey a male god’s commands is surely not just an accident. Nor is it an accident that Eve in fact follows the advice of the serpent: that, in disregard of Jehovah’s commands, she eats from the sacred tree of knowledge. Like the tree of life, the tree of knowledge was also a symbol associated with the Goddess in earlier mythology. Moreover, under the old mythical and social reality (as was still the case with the Pythoness of Greece and later the Sibyl of Rome) a woman priestess was the vehicle for divine wisdom and revelation.”

Eisler 1987 88

Other goddesses from other lands trip a lively dance of destruction / transformation (Kali) sexuality (Shakti) and abundance (Lakshmi). In the Hindu tradition human drives are seen as holy Ways by intent. Thus by the Tantric path, sexuality becomes a meditation, a prayer, a Way to god, illustrated graphically for any pilgrim in the Kama Sutra. In the Hindu scripture the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna can sexually satisfy 1,000 gopis (shepherdesses) all at once. Sexuality in this tradition, is a Way to god / goddess Shiva / Shakti.
But the story within many stories goes on. The power of giving birth to the son of god, is one part of Mary’s story that is still acknowledged. Even there, so much of her story has evolved from earlier myths where great goddesses had conceived daughters or sons of gods. Censored from the gospels is the story in the revelation of St. James (the Proto-evangelium). This gospel said that Mary “... received God’s seed as she was beginning to spin a blood-red thread in the temple - the work of the Fate-virgin, first of the Moerae of ‘marys’, who spun the thread of destiny. At this crucial moment the angel Gabriel1 ‘came in unto her’ (Luke 1:28), the biblical phrase for sexual intercourse.”

Walker 1983 605

Just like a ballad sung through the ages, the goddesses have a ‘songline’ telling a story of the conception of Dionysus by Persephone when she sat in a holy cave weaving the great tapestry of the universe and visited by Zeus in his phallic (serpent) guise (Walker 1983 1048).

As we move into a time called the “middle ages”, we see some wise women were specially chosen by the others to protect the power of birth which still lay within women’s wombs. While they needed men’s seed to start creation, they certainly didn’t need them to bring it to fruition.

**Women were there to ease birth and women were there to ease death.**

The men who held power over the many, noticed this.

Curiosity and jealousy of this one power left with women lead them over time to plot to steal it away from women. Men of letters wrote *The Hammer of Witches (Malleus Maleficarum)* for the representative of the god, called Pope Innocent VIII. From the time of 1484 when this was written to the time of the seventeenth century they hunted for witches. It is said 9 million were killed, tortured, imprisoned to death, and most of these were women. Many were midwives and healers (Shuttle & Redgrove 1978 203).

So any who followed in her heart, love and reverence for the mother by helping her sisters through birth, death or illness, were vulnerable, and suffered.

But still, women gave birth, and it was women who assisted them. So how could men intrude on this life-transforming event?

A king named Louis XIV of the time called the “eighteenth century”, because he wanted to see his women give birth, had their legs strung up on horse stirrups so he could see. The normal position of squatting, which of course relaxed the muscular perineum, to ease the infant out, was not convenient to a male wanting to see the mystery.

From there on males intruded into the birth sphere until two centuries later, male technology developed what is called in-vitro-fertilisation, to unite the creation of human life in a laboratory test tube rather than a women’s womb.

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1 Gabriel in the Hebrew means divine husband (Walker 1983 332).
Just as at other times of usurping women’s power, a few men proclaim what wondrous things they are doing for woman. No longer would she have to bear the discomfort, and trials of pregnancy, it could be claimed. Men strive for successful full-term gestation under their control (ex-women, outside women’s bodies and control).

Some women in defiance, practice women-centred pregnancy, by collecting sperm from collaborating men, and inserting it themselves to start life.

*The patriarchal technology goes underground in the hands of women using home-sterilised technology of a hypodermic tube and jam jar.*

Women and men who now recognise the need to re-create the story and re-construct the experience of birth together, learn about the practicalities, the anatomy, the functions of birth. People create for themselves, their own birthing teams to nurture the energy which emerges forth. In this Way, people are integrating the medical knowledge and technologies, with their own needs to nurture and control their own birthing processes.

*This return of birth (and death) to people who want to work with these energies, is a major symbolic change in integrating the energy.*

The earth mother in the form of the goddess Gaia, has become conscious in many women and men. They look around them and see the rape of Persephone re-enacted eternally in the use and abuse of the earth mother. People join together to reflect upon the sacrifice people are making of the earth instead of sacrificing to the earth spirit. Many sacrifice themselves in varied ways to try and stop this ravaging of the earth and her creatures. Even Demeter’s realm is challenged as controlling technology works with the essence of rebirth of plants (genetic engineering, etc.) and changed it to suit men’s desires.

The struggle continues and many are looking for the mother-of-all again. Many new women and some men still carry her wisdom and learn, and re-learn old lessons of nurture with wisdom balancing the use of power.

Some remember the great mother’s vision of uniting the female and male powers together in one being. Some wonder in whispers could we still attain that vision? Bold ones like Jean Houston speak out loud that we are at a time now when male and female energies need to be integrated into one people (Houston 1993). Just as we have the ideal of ‘different colours - one people’ so we also incorporate the differences and range of qualities from both genders of the same people.

Many women and some men meet together to strengthen the vision and recall women who united with their inner hero or warrior to use their goddess power. Stories of women like Joan of Arc, Boadicea, even the cloistered women who were guided to operate within the limits of the patriarchal god are retold (Hildegard of Bingen), as we struggle to learn their lessons and unite our wisdoms. Women don’t need to re-invent the spinning wheel. Mother Theresa and her nuns carry on the compassionate, nurturing work inspired by their male god; Gaby Hollows (in Australia) continues the work of her husband in an active and compassionate and collaborative way with many different peoples. Gabriel in the Hebrew means divine husband (Walker 1983 332). The symbol in the name can
signal that in this age maybe we can understand and recognise the spirit of the
divine within both the wife and the husband who dedicate their lives to
compassionate and political work; providing a practical representation of male and
female energies working together.

**Women remember the power of the goddess running through storytelling.
Even in darkest times, stories of the women are told to the daughters.**

Emily Bronte wrote her story of Catherine and Heathcliff, telling of her
struggle with the dark male. In her nineteenth century society in clerical
Yorkshire, it was not seemly to let it be seen that she had this side of her nature...
yet her story had to be told, then she died. In Cathy's heart-rending cry "I am
Heathcliff. He is my very self." We hear a soul yearning for integration, but not yet
ready, not in the right times, to handle the energy. It tore them apart and
destroyed both of them. This woman's creative power carried her symbolic wisdom
into other times and places. The story lives on.

A hundred years later, stories are told of women warriors who knew the
goddess. Fantasy stories awaken the deeper memories of past times in The Bear
Clan stories and Marion Bradley's retelling the herstory of the round table, the
priestess Morgaine and King Arthur.

A story is told in our times; *The Bone People*, by Maori woman, Keri Hulme,
who personifies the woman, man and child in three spirits linking, learning
wisdom together. Certainly, in this story we see the dark male, the active feminine
principle, all the aspects of male and female energies, dark and destroying, light
and compassionate, intervening and active. The silken thread is still being woven
by the mother in many stories, fiction and biographical.

Many devotees of the goddess, some calling themselves feminists, tell their
own stories of recognition and even in some patriarchal churches, the mother is
re-emerging as the nurturing of the soul spirit and seen to be safe in female
hands. This battle still rages in older more traditional churches. Small/great wins
are made as the language of prayer books and hymns are changed so that the
word of god no longer excludes the feminine aspect.

The great spiralling maze on the floor of Chartres Cathedral invites our
footsteps. It is a Way.

"It is a rhythm of awakening, a root pulse that carries with it the
codings of our comings. It is a yeasting in the searching soul. It is the
bell that tolls at the back of our minds, calling us to remembrance of
where we came from. It is evolution entering into time. It is the
insistence that bursts up from the mud. It is the dance in which one is
danced, the song in which one is sung. It is the doing of the Done."
(Houston 1993 1)

"This is the time of the Dromenon" chants Jean Houston in ancient Greek,
at a business breakfast in a luxurious international hotel in Sydney.
"In the modern Dromenon, one becomes part of an even larger eco-
system, a larger ecology of Being."

Houston 1993a 3
It is a time when we are beginning to work together, to recognize the conflicts we experience daily in our little local lives and within our larger social and ecological contexts, is the dying of the old, is the opportunity to bring forth new integrated energies which human survival in the twentieth century is demanding. We can respond. We are already walking the ways and telling the stories of the 'local' selves which are creating greater union with other peoples and our ecology.

There is no ending to this story as Gaia, Demeter, Persephone and so many other versions of the mother story still live, re-enacting their roles in so many women and men today. We do not know if the earth spirit will survive repeated exploitation... The myths tell us it is renewed. Kali is the great destroyer / transformer, another form of the Hindu goddess is Shakti, a form of creative energy. The changes we are living through have the qualities of Kali -transforming to create new life, new ways -Shakti dancing with Shiva integrating the energies of both genders and all peoples.

"As in this ancient story, as throughout all human history, and in my deepest family traditions, the ultimate gift of story is twofold; that at least one soul remains who can tell the story, and that by recounting of the tale, the greater forces of love, mercy, generosity and strength are continuously calling into being in the world."

Estes 1993 3

To continue the story we need to keep telling it.
We need to keep listening too.

The patterns re-emerge, reform, the story weaves on ...
Appendix 2

Interview Questions

Dear Research Group Member,

I am sending you the suggested questionnaire/interview format. I would like to introduce it to you with an invitation to:

- be stimulated by the questions to further discover your own style of working and being.
- add to or ignore questions as is more appropriate for you or even to tell your story in a format that suits you better.

I want to approach the question of ethics with you all. I see it as important that we frame the publication guidelines to sit comfortably with everyone. Anonymity is offered by name change and/or anything else you suggest. I suggest we raise this at next group meeting and agree together on an ethical procedure. From this we can put it into writing that all of us hold a copy of. It is highly important to me that the product that arises from this joint venture is in line with our research principles of:

- collaborative - we designed the process together
- participatory - we all took part at a level that suited each woman
- democratic - power amongst us was at all times equally shared
- emancipatory - that the process of group research was able to free us from old fears or habits, that we learned from each other and strengthened our own personal and professional power, choices and skills.

Indeed. I have understood that our group has continued because the above was happening for each woman participating. As you will see in the questionnaire, I have asked what your experience of the research group has been.

Your input at our meeting has already affected the design of this version. Your comments, changes etc, are further invited. Perhaps the central question may be for me: What do I want to know about each woman’s style of working, and reasons behind her actions? I also want us to learn from each other about How do you succeed at what you do? as well as What survival and learning tactics work for you when in challenge situations? Also to understand more the female input in our male orientated and patriarchically structured work organisations, with a not too ulterior motive to change this situation to a more female-comfortable environment.

My current intention with your responses from these questions, is to record detail of your stories, styles, and significant scenarios. This would be the core content of our research while summaries of our meeting would record the process of our learnings together as well as other content.

Once again, I am constantly aware and respectful of your time and energy and your commitment to this project. Would you like to have a copy of your interview for you own reflections?

I am excited by this step in our research. I guess I started all this because I love to hear women’s stories. Thank you for sharing yours.
Please consider these questions as openly as you like.

Name

Age

A description of your Lifestyle (home, area, family or household, children, pets etc).

Please describe your current work (paid), Where, position held, employer/or client base.

Describe any unpaid or voluntary work you have done and also current involvements. Why did/do you do this?

Professional, Career, Qualifications, Experience, etc.

The next segment covers your work qualifications and experience as you perceive it. (If you have a resume you could let me have that would be useful.) The framework of this section is that of your Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats in your career history and currently. While focussing on these please keep in mind the close overlap we’ve experienced between professional and personal issues.

List your personal and professional strengths. How did they develop? Please include experiences that have enriched these areas.

What do you perceive as your weaknesses? Why do they exist? What do you do about surviving/succeeding when they play a part in your professional life? (Maybe you personally, do not perceive these attributes as weaknesses when work colleagues or others in positions of power do. Can you illustrate your approach?)

What opportunities have been there for you - past and current. What did/would you do to make the most of them?

What situations have threatened your professional life? What did you (or are currently doing) about these situations. Once you have described the situation and your efforts, give one instance of the best possible outcome there would/ could be for you.

What have been your greatest achievements or things you have done that were greatly satisfying?

What is your ambition? Why?

Professional/Personal style
This segment focusses on your current work practices and situations.

What is 1) essential and seperately, 2) preferable for you to function in your work?
• environment
• colleagues
• practices
• ethics and values

What do you do if any of these are not operating?

How and Where do you find real support?

Describe a situation at work that illustrates a current significant issue for you.

Can you say what is challenged - your values; preferred style of working; other?

Please record your type indicator results from the Myers Briggs questionnaire we did.

Gender Issues
Can you describe your responses to working with a) women b) men c) mixed gender groups. How is it for you? Could you give examples of relevant situations?

Relationships
What role does friendship play in your professional life? Which relationships are important to you and why? How do these relationships affect your career.

In your experience does being single/married/divorced/separated affect professional relationships? How?

Sexual Preference
How does being lesbian/heterosexual/bi-sexual affect professional relationships? And how would you like it to be?

Parenting
Has childcare been an issue for you affecting your work?

If yes: Please describe the situation(s), how you managed, where you found support (if so!) and what would you like to see to support working parents.

If no: Would you please share what are your personal and professional views about being or not being a parent yourself?
Future Visions
Describe what you would like to have achieved professionally and personally when you come to complete your career time.

How do you visualise your life after 60?

Reflections of the Research Group:
Past
Finally I would ask you to reflect back to the beginning of this venture. Why did you join this research group? What did you expect would come out of it for you for others for Virginia?

Describe any particularly difficult and/or successful times in the group.

Present
Why are you still participating in the group?

How do you see your input?

Has involvement affected you in any way such as
• your approach to your work
• awareness of your style preferences
• skills or strategies learnt from other group members

Future
What future hopes and aspirations have you for the group? What would you like to see happen with the group?

If this requires action on your part what would it be?

and Finally
Is there anything else you want to say?
Appendix 3

Atalanta’s Strategic Plan for the Nineties

In which, through a series of strategic questions, every woman can review her situation and develop her own plan for change.

In 1992 Fran Peavey visited Australia and ran a series of workshops on a process she developed and named: Strategic Questioning. I immediately saw this as a tool which anyone could apply to any situation. It is a particularly malleable tool because it can be applied very effectively. It is especially useful in places where we, as women, can feel powerless because of systemic structures that bind us.

I have used the process of Strategic Questioning (SQ) many times. It always produces results that move participants beyond a place where they felt stuck.

One example is especially notable for me. I used SQ in a large public sector institution, where women were responsible for the training and support of career development of women. Additionally, in that institution, sexual harassment officers felt that the current management paid only lip-service to their cause. This was a good example of a clear case of systemic rigidity in many respects. A rigidity that blocked women’s Ways of working and being.

The outcome of SQ was the creation of pathways wherein the women could gather support. Then, step by step, to create pathways to improve women’s experiences in that workplace and to keep the quality of women’s learning high (quality of education was a major issue).

In the middle phase of the research, I applied the SQ process to one of our research group members, Julie, who was overworked and felt stuck in her hierarchical bureaucracy, to change her level of workload.

For this problem-solving she invited around her women whom she felt could support her. Of those invited: one woman worked at the same organisation, two were research group members, another was an old friend. The cronies gathered together in spring sunshine, in the bush, and went to work on Julie’s problem.

Julie left three hours later, with a proposed series of strategies she then executed as calculated actions. The intention was to create tangible and concrete improvements. The strategies worked. Now, Julie feels more in control and has built a network of support around her. The new systemic changes to her work load enable others to access for themselves, procedures and information. Previously, they habitually called upon Julie.

I left with a changed sense of self worth, because of the attention that had been focussed on me, because people I valued behaved in a Way that showed clearly that they valued me. It was this valuing that liberated my response to the questions.

It was the process of having friends with her that enabled Julie to find quite different responses to the questions. Being handed the questions on their own would not have been as useful as questions plus friends.

That change in self worth enabled me to change my behaviour when I took all that stuff back to the workplace.
I want to offer a series of strategic questions here, so that anyone reading this, can apply the process to their own situation. As in Julie's case, encircling oneself with friends may enrich the process. I have worked the process alone as a journal exercise, too.

**Flexi-work - Applying Strategic Questioning to Create Room to Move:**
First Steps Towards Change

The following is triggered from Fran Peavey's self-published paper: *Strategic Questioning* 1992 and further developed into a chapter in Peavey 1994. It is acknowledged that after many different applications of this process, I have varied the process to suit, when appropriate.

1. **Whole System Review**
   - to identify and understand the situation
   - What are you most concerned about in your work?
   - What are the structures around you?
   - Where do you fit in the system?
   - What positional power have you?
   - What personal power do you feel you have?
   - Where does your area of influence reach?

2. **Observation**
   - What do you see happening around you day-to-day?
   - What effects does this behaviour/procedure/system have on you?
   - ... on others?

   Peavey's keywords are given here as: see, hear, know, find etc.

3. **Feeling**
   - What does your body tell you about your response to the situation?
   - Keywords: feel, suffer, tired, stress, angry, stuck, needs.

4. **Visions**
   - to identify your dreams and values
   - What would you like to change about the situation?
   - Keywords: hope, wish, like, love, better, justice, flexibility etc.

5. **Change**
   - What exactly needs to change here?
   - Think widely and laterally, about how these changes could occur.
   - Who can make a difference?
   - What changes have you heard, seen or read about?
   - How did these happen?

The purpose of these questions is to find and expand one's view of change. The shapeshifting element, the alchemy that makes the difference.

6. **Personal Inventory and Support**
   - What do you like to do that would be useful in bringing about the changes?
   - What support do you need?
7. **Action Plan**

Here we get down to the specifics.
Who do you need to talk to?
Who can support you as you go through this process?
What can you do now, that will help?
What can you do next day at work as the first step.
What procedures, or ways of doing that start with you, can you change? How?

It was here that Julie really started to make a difference. Being a systems person, a woman who likes to organise a system to solve a complex and messy problem, she called upon her staff to “nut out” the messiest with her. Within two days after the meeting, they were turning things around.

Now they have regular process meetings which provide a forum to ask strategic questions such as these. It is a useful and effective tool for action!

Thanks Peavey.

Central Network TAFE

March - April 1991

Project Collaborators: all the women who participated in questionnaires and interviews.
Their positive response is greatly appreciated by all involved.

Project Management, Survey Process and Report Writing: Virginia Kaufman
Initiative & Implementation Support: Eunice Lovell Women's Strategy Officer,
Sydney Technical College.
Funding and other support: Bob Puffett: Principal/Network Manager,
Sydney Technical College,
Zoe Roser a/ Manager Business and Pre-Vocational Courses.
Survey Design: Chris Marks and Virginia Kaufman, Katoomba TAFE

Needs Analysis

Central Network
TAFE

March - April 1991

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Survey Design
3. Findings
3.1 Current Strengths and Competencies
3.2 Threats, Difficulties Because I'm a Woman, Areas Where More Strategies or Skills are Needed
3.3 Weaknesses and Threats not necessarily gender caused
3.3.1 Time and Stress
3.3.2 Reading
3.3.3 Career Paths
3.3.4 Trust
3.3.5 Isolation
3.3.6 Resources
3.3.7 Restructuring
3.3.8 Language
4. Conference Program Preferences and Desired Outcomes
4.1 Method
4.2. Issues Preferred in Conference Agenda
4.2.1. Management styles
4.2.2. Networking
4.2.3. Career Options
4.2.4. Managing Difficult People and Situations
4.2.5. Paper War
4.2.6. Global Budgeting Implications
4.2.7. Practical Management Strategies for TAFE Today
4.2.8. Stress and Time Management
5. So...This is Where We Are Now

1. Introduction:

This survey was implemented as part of a Women's Education and Training Strategy (WEATS) project for women who are senior managers of the Central Network. It is designed as a needs analysis upon which to design a two day conference to be held on Thursday 6 and Friday 7 June at STC.

Through drawing out common areas on needs and issues, we can ensure that session content is appropriate to the participants needs.

2. Survey Design:

Response to surveys was highly co-operative and quick. Such an overall positive response is greatly appreciated. Comments accompanying responses indicated women felt the value of taking time to consider their professional needs right now, as well as seeing a two-day conference as an opportunity to learn and share information.
now, as well as seeing a two-day conference as an opportunity to learn and share information.

Two questionnaires were designed; the first intended to be quick and easy to answer, and fax (one page, double-sided). 58 were sent out, 36 returned at time of writing.

The second questionnaire was designed as an interview schedule, however was also offered to those who wanted to respond to the survey in more depth. 30 (approximately) were sent out, 19 were returned, this figure includes the 13 managers interviewed personally.

This report is designed and written as a reflection of the women's voices. The writer has tried to accurately report on findings, by using original language as far as possible. Direct quotations are written in *italics*, while observations and summarised findings are in plain type.

Original surveys are held by Virginia Kaufman at Katoomba TAFE. Survey 1 is available for perusal. Survey 2 was guaranteed confidential, and so non-identifiable information could be available.

### 3. Findings:

Following is a varied picture of how women managing in TAFE's Central Network, currently perceive their work. It informs us of what they are actually doing, the daily activities, AND more importantly for this project, how they see the value of their own attributes in the current TAFE environment.

The findings present a current picture of how TAFE women managers perceive their strengths and identifies areas for on-going learning focus and training.

#### 3.1 Current Strengths and Competencies: (listed in order of frequency)

The first question on both surveys asked for a self-assessment of existing competencies. The women recognised their considerable strengths in managing people. As a whole, they noted their interest and skills in working with people. This informs their management style as *people-centred*, in that they consider the human ramifications of decisions made, looking for *graceful outcomes* for TAFE and the people (including *empowering people*). Terms like *caring, nurturing, even motherly*, were noted. It was also noted that this people-centred view was not always perceived as a strength by some managements. There was some discussion too, on how this approach can be experienced as a liability, when an opponent takes advantage of it.

**Interpersonal communication** skills were ranked high, and listed variously as: *listening & counselling skills, consultative, advisory, empathic, supportive, openness, respect for others' point of view, and people skills amongst staff who are supervised, colleagues and industry*. While nearly all returns listed communication skills as strengths, it is interesting to note that one woman listed *assertiveness* as a strength, and four noted *negotiation*.

**Team Management** skills were also common, sometimes described as *staff management, supervision of staff, and personnel management*. Some managers emphasised their work in recruitment, training and developing staff, as well as motivating and supporting their staff and encouraging them to up-date. *The best way to get people to work is to recognise their strengths*. While one noted her *democratic* management style, another noted as a strength her preference for NOT being into "Power" - feeling *I have to own the section, the students, the resources the staff etc., but certainly facilitating people.*
Organisation, co-ordination, and delegation were also amongst the most frequently listed skills. Frequent mention was made of *persistence, handling many demands at once, determination and learning to 'stick to one's guns'* (develops with children). Leadership perception was high and was also seen as having the ability to encourage staff to problem solve, as well as pushing/monitoring projects through to completion on time.

Administrative capacities are also ranked as high; incorporating financial management capacities (resources, budgeting, ECs), and a sound knowledge of TAFE procedures.

Planning was recognised by many as a high priority. Some women noted they identify goals and attain them, while another spoke of her initiative and ideas plus energy to put these into action. One described this as *future vision* and another spoke of *her enthusiasm with new projects and willingness to try new strategies*, while another held awareness of the implications of behaviours and systems, on her people. Insight or intuition was listed three times, while another said she could see *reasons for things*.

Problem Solving skills and decision making were mentioned. One stressed her creative approach, another two - lateral thinking. There is some concern over issues of conflict in staff, while a few saw their managing responsibilities included *mediation*, others stressed *facilitating co-operation* and for one, *seeking consensus*. Two expressed their ability to see the big picture and understand a range of opinions and/or issues. *Negotiation* skills were listed by 3.

Maturity was seen as a strength - *My age linked with life experience, does facilitate my abilities to make decisions, delegate, co-operate ...and manage.*

A depth of understanding by each manager, of her own area was strongly evident. Most made passing reference to the long hours they worked; 50 and 60 hour weeks were common with much reference to large amounts of reading being taken home. An extraordinary diversification of skills and experience was uncovered, with high formal qualifications. Many women, had had vast experience in community and professional or otherwise voluntary activities, which equipped them with wider professional skills.

For the few with *non-traditional* technical qualifications, they stressed how much easier knowledge of these qualifications by male colleagues, eased communications with them. *It's a plus for a woman with men who realise my technical background.*

The women spoke often of their preference for sharing information, strategies and techniques. *I like to share information with others.*

3.2 Threats, Difficulties Because I'm a Woman, Areas Where More Strategies or Skills are Needed:

Many surveys referred to their common experience of the perception that a male manager is *stronger, better, holds more authority, his judgement is trusted, is taken more seriously (even by some women).* Similarly much mention was made of the woman managers feeling stereotyped as a woman. The term *little woman* was quoted twice, and *token woman* mentioned often. This view was felt to be held by older males particularly, who were said to have *trouble seeing a woman as a person.* While no overt lack of respect was emphasised, some senior managers can still perceive an expectation that they *take a hand-maiden role.*
Other perceived difficulties were noted as:
- A woman works harder at getting male management’s co-operation,
- …difficulty in handling men in senior management who “hate” women.
- A woman is seen as a push-over, and I am easily ‘conned’.
- Men place less value on women’s opinions.
- I often feel we’re battling the way men perceive things; it’s the same game with different roles.
- I have to prove my competence.
- I feel isolated by the old boys’ network.
- My ideas are taken by male leaders and passed off as theirs’.
- Women are seen as threatening and aren’t trusted.
- I am unacceptable in male controlled management groups.
- In a female dominated school others’ perceptions are coloured about the seriousness of our work.

Other concerns from individuals included: taking home work worries; the difficulties of having an older start to a career and so having younger supervisors; getting emotional, home obligations restricted career mobility and a disappointment in lack of support and antagonism from other females.

Four respondents perceived no difficulties experienced in their position because they are women. One of these acknowledged that other women may hold these concerns.

3.3 Weaknesses and Threats not necessarily gender caused:

One manager would like more knowledge of the Department and doesn’t know how to get it. Talking with others from different areas helps, but it takes time and access to them to build the trust needed to learn a lot, about how things can really work.

Some already in Network positions felt some resistance to Network functions. Often perceived as another level of bureaucracy to cope with. Marketing for TAFE was seen by many as an opportunity and there was also sensitivity to the difficulties it poses for many e.g. teachers or administrators who were originally hired for other skills. Some felt it was unrealistic to expect people to attain marketing skills and thinking.

Central to concerns expressed was the people-centred management perspective. The main concern of anxiety for me is caused by leadership which affects the motivation of staff. …the leader who cannot or will not recognise that people are the most important asset to TAFE and that people should be encouraged to reach their potential through providing a work environment which is supportive and challenging to the individual.

3.3.1 Time and Stress:

The strain of juggling new work demands, often study and home life was a common concern. Burn out was mentioned a number of times, as a perceived barrier to women’s careers. There was a common perception that they have to perform twice as well in the job and also take extra time to deal with people’s needs.

A general view was that there are ever-increasing demands of checks, accountability and increased performance.

3.3.2 Reading:

The amount of current reading expected arose as a very common issue. Generally,
Can anyone teach me techniques to cope with this paper war?

Information overload - one way communication from the top down does not increase the co-operation or motivate me to cope effectively with the waves of change.

3.3.3 Career Paths: - Will I still have a job?

Some administration people saw a restriction in the three year cut off from Public Service position, now TAFE is a commission.

Many women surveyed have had a number of interviews recently, and there was some demoralisation about not winning at interviews, as well as a mention of the cost in time and effort job applications and interviews take.

Those whose substantive positions are about to be devolved are uncertain of where they will go next. There was understandable anxiety.

I tend to underestimate grossly my own experience, abilities and contribution.

People above me give no reinforcement, positive nor negative either informally or formally.

How do my present skills fit a new position? How do I cross reference my skills. (especially when new positions have acquired a new jargon)?

Some women wanted to consider future career paths outside of TAFE as it was noted there really weren’t a range of options for continual advancement. Three said they had nowhere else to go! And it was asked, is continual progression the only desired answer?

Its more important to many women to have a job that I feel enthusiastic about and believe in, than a high salary.

3.3.4 Trust:

Mention was made that an area that is often a strength, that of openness, honesty, sharing, operating with all cards on the table, can be a liability.

I’ve been too generous as a woman and accommodating others’ needs I lose a lot of energy and don’t gain a lot anyway.

3.3.5 Isolation:

The higher I go, the lonelier it gets.

Managers have noticed that positional power creates an authority barrier in personal relationships with their staff. Some of this is exacerbated by physical isolation caused by building design. Most very senior managers note the difficulty in sharing ideas with women in similar positions of authority as there are very few as yet and they are physically isolated and very, very busy.

It’s hard to feel strong as a woman in a pin-stripe world.

I still feel a women’s softness inside and find it hard to operate coldly.

I now find I’m in an area where women are just as bad a men in what we have to cope with - perhaps worse, as women in power can be more resentful of another woman.

Because I’m trail blazing, I’m constantly criticized.
Because I'm trail blazing, I'm constantly criticized.

As women we prefer the consultative process - this is extremely difficult to create in a hierarchical situation.

3.3.6 Resources:

Economics is our (libraries') biggest problem because we are overworked/unsupported/isolated and overlooked.

Training is only one difficulty. If I am at Staff Development, there is no delegation for replacing Administrative staff and so the work piles up and still has to be done.

3.3.7 Restructuring:

It is clear that many positions are operated by people acting at this time. There is also rapid turnover amongst the shifting sands of excavation and new structures. Many managers had concerns about staff working flat out for too long without break times; as well as people who are acting can't do the jobs as fast as people who know what is expected of them.

With devolution staff will be swamped with work without advance training.

When changes are made in procedures it takes time to find out the guidelines if they are not clear.

The level of interference restricts (local) management effectiveness.

The new TAFE does not seem to have the (previous) philosophical base as part of their agenda any more.

The 'money cuts, and the "must be commercially viable" approach are all serious threats to libraries. Libraries are part of the quality assurance, yet top management seem not to be convinced of this.

The Scott Report could have been a good opportunity, but the process is not encouraging. The 'top down' approach is being very disruptive. We could have removed areas of conflict and worked on consensus as the Metals Industry restructuring involving unions and management.

I've been in TAFE 22 years and never seen morale so low.

I want to understand the direction and purpose of change. Being able to understand the reality would increase my commitment and support.

3.3.8 Language:

I am unable to answer questionnaires, reports, evaluations in terms that sound professional, career oriented, logical and masculine. I tend always to the personal.

Advertising of senior management positions were not 'women-friendly' in wording. It is still assumed that people operate in a male way - we should all be looking at better practice for all people. Contracts, performance appraisals etc. scare some women.

...in TAFE where I am less familiar with current management decisions, plans and strategies. The ability to comprehend them is restricted by current terminology.
4. Conference Program Preferences and Desired Outcomes:

With so many burning issues, what would women managers choose to focus upon during a two day conference?

4.1 Method:

Firstly how would the women like to address these issues?

With such a strong educational field, of course the women selected a range of approaches.

By far the most preferred were, experiential workshops (24) and small group problem solving with women in similar positions in other colleges (20).

Another popular learning tool was that of hearing talks from women in senior positions in other organisations (18), while many also wanted to hear from senior TAFE women also.

There was recognised value in having individual time to process information and apply it to own work situations (11) and some wanted to hear lecture style presentations (9).

Many women volunteered extra comment that they would like time and space during the two days to socialise, network, talk, gossip, extend their contacts beyond home college and to have fun with what we learn.

4.2. Issues Preferred in Conference Agenda:

4.2.1. Management styles:

Countering the stereotypical view of women in management.

Women’s traits such as openness, honesty, sharing may not be perceived as strengths but liabilities.

Women are more likely to question reasons, outcomes and ask how will it affect my staff and students. I often feel I am the only one in executive meetings asking how is this effecting our people?

Mention was made of the value of recognising own’s own and others’ management styles. Also comment was made about women’s preferred management style (people-centred) and that this style was not popular in the current climate. A lot of people have a management style of keeping people on their toes, putting pressure on people.

I’d like strategies to cope with different management styles. Especially those people who are much more critical of women managers. I’ve never heard a male praise a woman manager. What is it that men find so scathing? Why?

Some women suggested the conference would be an opportune place to strengthen the value and effectiveness of such a human-centred style.

To further develop this, a suggestion was made from three women that a structure is developed for women that would be endorsed at the Group General Manager level, as a committed goal on the Management Plan. They question where could women have an input and ensure its effectiveness?
4.2.2. Networking:

Local support groups were noted as a preference for many women. It seems a major outcome of the two day program would be the formation of local and inter-college networks. The women surveyed see a real opportunity to learn and support each other through establishing and maintain networks.

*I want to have my parochial experience expanded to a global view, which would include both a TAFE and Industrial setting.*

*I would like to see women in Senior Management to formalise communication with other women. At least one woman on the college and network executive committees even if they have to be brought in.*

4.2.3. Career Options:

Many senior managers are reviewing their career at this time of change. Questions are being asked about available choices. Such as: *Is continued progression the only desired answer?*

I am trying to keep a sense of priorities. I put a lot of energy and commitment into my job. Its enjoyable but exhausting and not good for my family life and social relationships. How do other women do it?
A common query was; *What is the career path for women in the new TAFECOM structure?*
*How do my present skills fit new positions. How do I cross-reference my skills. Especially when new positions have acquired a new jargon?*

And for those with imminent deleted positions, the threats were outweighing the immediate opportunities. They felt 'in limbo', between interviews. Those who were currently holding acting positions had even less positional stability.

Some are asking to look at career possibilities outside TAFE. Many are noticing their options for advancement are being limited. (e.g. librarians and Marketing Managers do not see a "next step" - in their area of expertise: there isn't one.)

4.2.4. Managing Difficult People and Situations:

This was an area that many people would like to see addressed. Included were skills in HR development; Body language and visual appearance. Developing strategies to identify games people play.

*Mediation between members of my staff, takes a huge amount of my time. I feel skilled at it, but it is draining.*

Mention was made that staff need to increase skills of dealing with the public, especially with multi-cultural and koori backgrounds. Two managers noted their difficulty with confronting people with their failings as well as dealing with people currently losing their jobs; such as the 61 year old welding teacher who no longer has a teaching program.

Comment was made of the perceived and structural differences between administration and educational career paths. *In the country a woman administrator can have worked her way up from a typist. Most country registrars are female; most metropolitan registrars are male.*
4.2.5. Paper War

At a time of such major change, communication of these changes is of course highly important. The outcome of so many major reformatting of procedures, policy discussions and outlines of positional restructuring etc, etc, combine into mountainous literature on everyone’s desks.

Senior managers, of course are hit hard by this phenomenon. Common comments were:
- *not coping with the amount; so much is pumped down to us.*
- *I don’t understand much of what is written.*
- *The language and the thinking are alien to me.*

It was asked that an activity at the conference could include:
*someone capable of handling paper who would outline strategies, workshop a situation with a small group and share strategies amongst the group.*

4.2.6. Global Budgeting Implications

One request here was to deal with the implications of Global Budgeting - how to handle it, where does it go next, and to hear a talk that opens the door to a working knowledge.

*In Resource Management where do we make decisions on cut-backs.*

*Decisions can be logical but I have concern about the people affected.*

And a perceptive comment on the difficulty of balancing the resources with the people:

*Managing people is what makes managing hard.*

4.2.7. Practical Management Strategies for TAFE Today:

*I don’t want any heavy in-depth psychological stuff. Practical management issues; things that men would wish they could go to, with the woman’s slant still needed giving her perspective on management issues.*

*Case study problem solving* Jana Stone was mentioned twice as a manager who could provide useful strategies.

*We could design a way to incorporate the consultative process into TAFE management styles.*

Senior managers said that they preferred to work with people at their own level. This was considered necessary to help with practical strategy building and reducing the experience of loneliness for these few women.

*Many women want to hear from other women who take different approaches that work.*

*I like how women discuss things together and I like to share information and strategies also I need to know how other women juggle all the demands.*

*I want to be able to analyse myself impartially. I still question my own tendency to be hard on myself and others (e.g. my children).*

*The worst thing in this job is there is not enough time for self analysis and planning strategies.*
4.2.8 Stress and Time Management:

These areas were mentioned in passing by many and identified to include in the conference by four. *We have ever increasing demands of checks, accountability and increased performance.*

5 So... This is Where We Are Now:
The women surveyed who hold senior management positions in the Central Network of TAFE today, have collectively voiced a desire to hold a two day conference. During these two days they would like to address common and current issues as described above.

They are, we know so well from this survey, busy and dedicated people. To ensure the investment in time they will give is rewarded, they would like to come away at the end of the program with the following:

...interaction with other managers. *Is everyone coping at the same level as me? Am I OK?*

*Refresh, up-date ideas on managing a section. Learning form other people's case histories. Learn something new I can apply e.g. from case studies, way of managing, coping handling. Hear how other women experience the same things, and hear others' strategies.*

*I'd like to see the establishment of a mentor network of personal and comparable level, within a network committee An outcome that is adopted at Group General Manager level, whereby there is a women's committee that has real input in decision making.*

*Acknowledgment that women's traditional skills are valuable to the organisation.*

*I want administration and educational staff working together on this day.*

*Most S.D. waste our time with constant structured activities. Give us time to network, talk, gossip, learn from each other.*  
*I want a network of contacts.*

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The collaborative cycle of this enquiry into the experience of women managers in the Central Network, will be concluded when evaluations from the planned conference tell us if these aims and objectives were met.

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