Chapter Ten

Introduction

Part one has brought into focus:

- my experiences as a person and as a nurse through storytelling;

- my understandings of nursing from my own and others' experience;

- my search for a methodology compatible with how I experience nursing;

- the processes I used to engage participants and manage the field work.

Part two has provided a journey through the first research cycle paying attention to:

- The development of the group and the management of the process and the task;

- The dialogue that illustrated the key issues and concerns;

- The facilitation of the group and the management of the research data;

- The problems and difficulties in agreeing themes and managing conflict;

- The difficulties in writing a full account of the second research cycle;

- The need to revisit the second cycle to explore the way we inquired together.

It is clear to me, and hopefully to the reader, that writing this research text has been influenced by my own participation in the field work, the methodologies I used, and the journey I have travelled. These evolving experiences are a vital part of the research process and need attention before I revisit the field work.

Coming to know my own life strategy has been a central theme for me, and although I shared ideas about interpersonal competence and life strategies with my co-researchers, the ideas that I developed about life strategies and gender remained a subtext. Therefore it is important that I make clear to the reader the ideas that I have developed as a result of doing the research, and how my own life strategy has been exposed and informed by listening to my own and others' stories.

Interpersonal Competence and Life Strategies

The connection between interpersonal competence and life strategy has focused my mind for some years, searching for greater understanding is coherent with what I understand to be an important aspect of my life strategy. Immersing myself in this research has given me the opportunity to reach another level of understanding, travelling along this path has enabled me to engage with three particular writers: Marshall (1984), Belenky (1986) and Torbert (1981). All three have overtly or covertly provided ideas that enhance interpersonal competence, gender identity, and ways of knowing about oneself and others. Each one has given me something special in helping me to understand parts of myself and the way I interact with others, particularly at work. Torbert (1981) writes in a way that speaks to my masculine self, Belenky et al (1986) to my feminine, and Marshall (1984) provides a way

of holding each lightly and engaging with others in a purposeful, confident and self reflective way. I will begin this pursuit of life strategy and interpersonal competence by discussing Torbert's ideas because it was reading Torbert's work that first gave me a focus for exploring my own, and others, interpersonal strategies.

Interpersonal competence as a life strategy

There are three writings of Torbert's I found useful in developing my understanding of self and others. The first is the search for coherence in professional and personal interactions, ('Interpersonal Competence', 1981) the second is the development of leadership skills appropriate to an organisation's developmental stage, ('Managing the Corporate Dream', 1987) and the third is about nurturing 'liberating structures' within organisations so that a climate of inquiry is fostered and valued ('The Power of Balance', 1991). In all these writings Torbert focuses on interpersonal competence as the key to developing a culture of inquiry. In doing this he confronts the need for congruency across purposes, strategies, behaviours and effects (Torbert, 1981). It is the awareness that incongruities need to be noticed and corrected that led Torbert to define interpersonal competence as:

> "---the capacity in one's work and play with others:
>
> • To clarify , to formulate and to do what one wishes;
>
> • To test for and to correct incongruities among wish (purpose) formulation (theory or strategy), action (interactive process), and effect;
>
> • To help others do the same, given the limits for mutual commitment."
> (p.178,Torbert, 1981)

This definition incorporates multiple possibilities about what one communicates, the way one communicates, the context in which the communication occurs, and the choices that each person makes about their own behaviour. Torbert arrived at this rather complicated definition after considering the two main interpersonal strategies presented by Argyris and Schon (1974) in their research and experiential work with professionals and graduate students. Their claim is that the preferred interpersonal strategy, almost exclusively used both in college and in the workplace, is the 'mystery-mastery' interpersonal strategy. They also point out, according to Torbert, that this preferred strategy is incongruent with the common belief that interactions with others, if they are to be productive, should be open and collaborative.

According to Torbert, Argyris and Schon identified the governing variables of this 'mystery mastery' strategy as:

> • Define goals and try to achieve them;
>
> • Maximise winning and minimise losing;
>
> • Minimise generating or expressing negative feelings;
>
> • Be rational. (p. 174, Torbert, 1981)

It follows that if one pursues this kind strategy, collaboration and openness about one's thoughts and actions is unlikely to eventuate and, according to Torbert, the consequences of working within these identified variables are more likely to be:

> • a lack of collaboration about purposes or openness to altering the task;
>
> • inability to risk changing goals and appearing weak;

- a resistance to showing, or responding to, negative feelings for fear of being seen as incompetent or lacking in diplomacy;

- a focus on objectivity and suppression of personal feelings.

This interpersonal strategy is self oriented and designed to maximise winning and gaining and maintaining unilateral control. However, as this is a win/lose strategy, it is highly unlikely that everyone will win. Losing then becomes failure, not a point for reflection and change. In a changing environment where there is a need to work together to 'keep ahead', this strategy does not seem a useful one.

Torbert favours the idea of an interpersonal strategy that affirms the changing attitudes within the context of work, social relationships, and the nature of adult education where co-operation and peer support is to be encouraged. Torbert (1981) then takes the next step and contemplates the 'inquiring interpersonal strategy' as presented by Argyris and Schon. This strategy also has governing variables:

- Maximise valid information

- Maximise free and informed choice

- Maximise internal commitment to decisions made.

This presents a very different framework for interaction, relying on the behaviour of participants to bring about change in knowledge and skill. For this framework to be effective it is necessary for each participant to accurately report what they see, hear, feel, and think within a given context so that decision making is informed by discussion, debate, and careful thought. With this in place, decisions about commitment and action are likely to be more rationally taken and intrinsically satisfying.

Torbert affirms this move towards openness and reflection, however, the point is made that the discrepancy between understanding the need for a new strategy and actually developing and using it requires further development in thinking and acting. Torbert identifies three main areas of difficulty to be overcome:

- If one already has an interpersonal strategy, then it is easier to modify this strategy, but not so easy to learn a new strategy in conflict with the old.

- These kind of competencies rely on skills, knowledge and experience. Skills can be taught, but it is the 'live' experience that develops competence.

- Teaching this kind of interpersonal strategy within an educational setting is almost a contradiction in terms. The context of a traditional education setting does not encourage openness, honesty, and risk taking.

In considering these difficulties, Torbert identifies the factors that need to be managed in order to provide a more fruitful context for such competencies to develop.

To achieve this Torbert turns his attention to each person's actual practice and questions how valid information about this practice can be elicited. Clearly, the question of what is valid information needs to be explored from a wider perspective than professional behaviours that relate to the agreed task. There are aspects of effectiveness that are influenced by the role each person plays within a given context and the interpersonal processes that emerge. According to Torbert (1981) -

> "----the governing variables Argyris and Schon propose for the inquiring interpersonal strategy are offered in universalistic analytical language that provides no clues about timing, about when and how to focus one's attention as they suggest." (p.178)

The process of managing this new strategy is vital to any real change in both purpose and outcome. Successful change involves being responsive to the unique context in which each individual works and acts, and having the skills needed to change the behaviour of self and others within that context. This is not easy to teach or learn.

It is clear that changing from one strategy to another is about wanting to act differently because one desires different outcomes. Having supportive colleagues willing to give honest feedback and a different point of view helps the process along. In developing a strategy to support management students to make this transition, Torbert focused on the use of power, particularly in the class room. He notes that if teachers do not use their own power then students do not have the guidance they need and if the teacher tells or corrects then the student is not free to make choices. The answer to this dilemma, he says, is to concentrate on the task, the process, and the purpose. The trick, according to Torbert, is to focus first on the process, the here and now of it, and then to bring in the purpose as the students begin to grasp the skills of inquiring, listening, and giving feedback. This way of working requires observation, formulation and expression at each layer of interpersonal life, and presupposes a thinking, acting and feeling relationship with others.

To illustrate this growing interpersonal process, Torbert presents different dialogues in which work groups seek to find answers to common problems. Presenting people within the context of their work is one of the strategies Torbert uses to illustrate the movement towards interpersonal competence. This presentation of the 'live' situation is one of Torbert's strengths and demonstrates his commitment to:

> "--a community of inquiry- a lifetime circle of friends who can help clarify , and when necessary challenge, each other's purposes and actions." (p. 176, 1981)

This theme of developing a community of inquiry over time and context moves across the explicit centre of attention in Torbert's writings. For example, in writing about Interpersonal Competence (Torbert,1981), the centre of attention is on people learning new strategies and the focus initially is on students in higher education and the workplace. In 'Managing the Corporate Dream' (Torbert,1987) the focus is the organisation and the development of leadership skills for both the individual and the organisation, where stages of development for each are identified. In contemplating 'The Power of Balance' (Torbert,1991), the focus is on power and the need for managers to move between the various forms of power in order to develop transforming structures.

It is this theme of developing a community of inquiry that connects with my own ways of working. The techniques, structures and frameworks are important because they make explicit the path that Torbert takes, both to achieve his own purposes and to discover other possibilities. In order to make these connections between Torbert's ideas and my own ways of working, I will briefly outline his ideas about developing management leadership. Then I will address his ideas about power and liberating structures.

Managing organisations

Torbert anchors much of his practice on clear theoretical statements and developmental structures. To achieve this he creates frameworks for action and uses these as way of measuring effectiveness. One of these frameworks is designed to lead an organisation through multiple restructuring in order to achieve the 'Corporate Dream' (Torbert,1987). The framework is developmental and provides stages of managerial and organisational change (Figure 1). These stages describe steps in the development of managerial competence and organisational development.

The first Six Stages of Development

	Organisations	Persons
1	*Conception*	*The Impulsive Manager*
2	*Investment*	*The Opportunist*

3	*Incorporation*	*The Diplomat*
4	*Experiments*	*The Technician*
5	*Systematic Productivity*	*The Achiever*
6	*Collaborative Inquiry*	*The Strategist*

Each stage in the development of the organisation has a task to be achieved and each stage of personal development has a focus of attention. Between each stage are transitions that require changes in ways of knowing and acting in order to move to the next stage. These transitions are a challenge to the organisation as a whole and to individual managers. Successful transitions require that someone in the organisation is able to function at all stages of leadership development in order to take a meta view and manage change. With this leadership ability, the corporate dream is developed and communicated to all managers, and each manager is supported through the appropriate transition thereby creating an more sophisticated organisation.

Managerial competence and organisational development would seem, at first glance, to be directly related. That is, managerial competence equates with organisational development. I am not sure that Torbert actually believed this to me so - certainly he comments that a manager functioning at one particular level does not necessarily aim to achieve the next. It requires a leader with an 'eye' for the potential for change to facilitate this development. Thus, according to Torbert, managers of organisations need to be functioning at a higher level than the organisation itself if they are to create a vision and a strategy for transformation to occur. However, although individual managers have different styles of management that match the defined managerial competencies outlined by Torbert, I do not find a direct correlation with the development of the organisation. Two particular factors seem to have a considerable bearing on organisational development and whether this can be managed through central leadership or not. The first is the culture of the organisation and how power is located, achknowledged and transacted. The second is the external environment and the degree to which this either places conflicting demands upon or positively affirms the organisation.

From my experience of working in large public service organisations, both managers and clinicians can present at a range of stages of development, from opportunists through to strategists. Some move between all the possibilities and some exhibit a preferred style. I observe very experienced technicians acting in an opportunistic way and people in executive positions being less than strategic, not aspiring to any clear purpose. I find it very difficult to make judgements about the 'level of development' of individuals from the way they behave in a particular context. It is only in working in an interactive way with people that a clearer picture emerges. One might say that this the nature of organisations and that people will behave differently in different contexts. If this is so, then the focus of attention needs to be on developing contexts where collaboration is affirmed, rather than diagnosing individuals. However, this assumes that people will choose to behave collaboratively it the option is presented (not necessarily so). According to Torbert, developing interpersonal strategies that favour collaboration, when other strategies are predominately in use, is not easily achieved. Large organisations are complex, with different stages of organisational and personal development occurring simultaneously. Therefore, the ability of an organisation to achieve a transition does not just rely on one person's leadership. The power of the chief executive is not all encompassing as one might expect, particularly in organisations that have multi professional agendas and power relationships defined by external bodies. Finally, it seems to me that there is an implicit framing within Torbert's developmental stages that is independent of both context and time and the complexity of transactions. This feels distant from my live experiences and the sense I make.

From observations of myself and others, people behave differently in different situations. For some (mainly clinicians), management and corporate issues are not highly valued. For others (mainly managers), clinicians hold too much influence. However, when both groups join together around critical incidents affecting patient care, then a collaborative process emerges and those who might be labelled technicians or diplomats become achievers or even strategists for that space of time. For me this has something to do with span of focus, ownership of the issue, and the power one holds within that particular context. As I meet and talk with people I am often surprised at their personal analysis of what is happening around them, and what might be possible. Creating contexts for action inquiry is

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achievable within a large organisation without a highly developed executive manager if multiple communities of inquiry are developed and linked together, this process, I believe, can transform an organisation.

The central resource that Torbert offers me, within my own work experiences, is a language to discuss corporate ideas, leadership, and organisational issues with clinicians and managers. By using Torbert's concepts and language I am able to join with others, and in so doing, to clarify joint purposes. To this end I am able to move within, and between, the defined stages of development and encourage others to take more flexible roles. However the developmental hierarchy, in its strictest sense, does not fit comfortably with my experience. I find Torbert's ideas of power more integrated with my understanding of managing multiple perspectives.

Forms of Power

Matching the use of power with purpose, process and desired outcomes, sits more easily with my need to adjust strategy to time, place and the perspectives of others. These ideas of power and their relationship to the development of liberating structures are central to managing in a complex environment. Consequently, they deserve attention before introducing my own understanding of interpersonal life strategies.

Torbert presents three essential forms of power:

> • *unilateral power* - that which is held through position and authority. It is the power of kings where subjects obey without question, and the consequences of not obeying are unquestionable;

> • *diplomatic power* - that which is agreed and given freely to others through recognition of the others abilities. It is the power of consent;

> • *logistic power* - that which is given to others through laws. It is the power of rights and logic.

He explains very fully these forms of power and in doing so uses illustrations and stories that are familiar in western history; stories of kings, democracy, patriarchy, ethics and western law. This acknowledgement that each form of power is of value within a particular context avoids establishing a hierarchy of power where there is an assumption that one form is more civilised or 'better' than another. At times of crisis and in life threatening situations, unilateral power is appropriate and essential. In situations where agreement is needed in order that actions are owned by participants, then diplomatic power is appropriate. In situations where careful planning is needed to find the most appropriate action, after considering all the information and all possible options, then logistic power is likely to be appropriate and effective. However, situations are not always clear and often it is necessary to consider different perspectives of the same situation.

This is where Torbert (1991) considers Rawl's theory of justice as a way of merging all three levels into a fourth dimension. Torbert applies Rawl's theory to the development of a just and humane society. To do this, moral and developmental frameworks are applied to Rawl's basic principles and the outcome is perceived by Torbert as a form of power that respects the rights of others, is rational, and seeks consent. However, the ability to manage this kind of power relies upon individuals being aware of the possibilities within any given context. From Torbert's point of view this is similar to the awareness needed to develop collaborative inquiry. This seeking out multiple perspectives, purposes and issues, requires the ability to move across different power bases, testing out and deciding which is the most appropriate at any given point within the overall vision and intent.

In moving away from developmental stages and a hierarchy of competencies, it seems that power is viewed as organic, rather than abstract, and part of the development of a life strategy rather than outside it. This requires an integrated, interpersonally competent person who can lead the organisation towards transformation through the timely and appropriate use of different power strategies. The question of how people gain these competencies is expressed by Torbert (1991) thus:

> "How can persons develop toward leadership capabilities that include Plato's awareness of the whole, Rawl's parental awareness of principles, rules, own actions, and effects on others, and the dynamic awareness of - and courage to correct - incongruities among these territories of experience?" (p.42)

This is Torbert's search for the contexts and the experiences that will facilitate each individual to develop this multifaceted state of being in the world. Relating the stages of manager development to a preferred use of power, demonstrates that there is a place in the developing organisation for different power strategies to dominate (in Torbert's terms). It is the ability to frame and reframe that allows the individual to act authentically and congruently. It seems to me that as individuals learn to manage power, so they are able to move between the stages of management development defined by Torbert. This movement between is important, as the appropriate use of power relies on an astute awareness of the situation and the ability to respond in a way that suits the purpose.

The ability to view situations from different perspectives, and intervene across the different power bases, can be found at all levels of the organisation. It is often the way the organisation is structured, and the culture that has been created, that works against collaboration and inquiry. As Torbert found, it is not easy to change one's life strategy if the only tangible rewards are locked into the existing one. From my point of view, it is about the way individuals view situations that releases this multiple understanding, and allows power to be seen as facilitative, rather than controlling. Learning to 'hold power lightly' while responding to the moment, with the long-term goals still in view, is the challenge that confronts all 'would be' transforming leaders wishing to enact this fourth dimension of power.

Transforming power, according to Torbert (1991), is the ability to restructure oneself and so develop new ways of thinking and acting that better 'fit' future possibilities.

> "It can be generated neither by internal motivation alone nor by external pressure or opportunity alone. An exercise of unilateral power can force changes in external behaviour but cannot transform the meaning-making structure of a system." (p. 56)

Transforming meaning-making requires a leadership that encourages mutual responsiveness, where the interplay between people creates the context for innovative thinking and practice. In this situation, transforming leadership invites challenge and inquiry, it does not seek to dispel the incongruous and chaotic but rather to stay in midst of it until new clarity of purpose is achieved. Torbert's focus is on leadership as central to the transformation of an organisation and most of his case studies have authoritative leadership central to the story. In my experience, very often authoritative leadership is not able work in the midst of chaos and uncertainty. However, individuals who are aware of the facilitating nature of power can bring about a transformation of the organisation and it maybe that the authoritative leader remains unaware of the implications of the change.

Liberating structures can be developed through people of 'like mind' working together to seek out the incongruities between purpose, strategy, behaviour and outcome, and to continuously doubt the existing structures by inviting challenge. A community of inquiry where interpersonal competence is encouraged through self-disclosure, supportiveness, and confrontation, can be nurtured throughout an organisation if a critical mass of people are willing to think, act and inquire in a collaborative way. It would seem logical that a recognised and affirmed leader is in a stronger position to develop this, however it is not entirely necessary. If it were so, then women would rarely be influential in developing liberating structures because authoritative power rarely rests with women in organisations.

I have found Torbert's ideas both challenging and revealing and at times I have struggled to stay with him as he recounts his own informative experiences with his understanding of them. My own experiences come to the fore, and the subsequent 'dialogue' that ensues clouds his essential 'truths' - as the understanding he draws from an experience is some times not in harmony with mine (collaboration needs an ongoing dialogue). However, I have come to realise through questioning this internal dialogue that if I allow Torbert to speak to the masculine in me then a language for developing alternative dialogues in the work place is available to me. The key to Torbert's writings for me is the sense of energy and enthusiasm for learning, interacting, and developing. In this I find a 'kindred spirit'. I realise that I engage more fully with writers who communicate a sense of energy and enthusiasm to seek out

the essence of an idea or possibility. This kind of energy is also reflected in the work of Belenky et al (1986), Marshall (1984) and Farrell (1992).

Life Strategies and Gender

In exploring the idea of a life strategy I have found that very simple principles guide how I act in the world. However, the interpersonal strategies I use, particularly at work, are complex and often gendered. My experience as nurse tells me that the nurse's role is centred within the context of caring and consequently draws the feminine into dominance, where intimacy and responsiveness blur the interactions. If however I move towards a collegiate relationship within the context of treating people, power is then more clearly defined between who provides and who receives. This draws the masculine into dominance and I find myself in a more defined relationship. I have always been aware of this juggling of self presentation, between 'being with' and 'acting on'. However, I have never examined the way I do this or what guides the changes in strategy. This idea of different strategies within different contexts is visited more fully when I discuss Marshall's work below.

Torbert's writings have helped me to clarify the strategies I use within multidisciplinary and organisational contexts. Ironically, this clarity has brought into focus the different interpersonal strategies I use within the intimate contexts of caring and exploring personal experience. Discovering these differences has enabled me be more aware of the need to address the genderedness of any given context and draws on interpersonal strategies that affirm basic principles contained by both. These strategies are in harmony with Torbert's collaborative inquiry and pay attention to the differing perspectives of all concerned. This understanding of holding divergence lightly and moving between gendered perspectives has not been gained easily. My own emergent understanding of gendered life strategies is important to recount before I explore the ideas of others.

As far as I can remember, I have valued being clear and straightforward with regard to intentions and actions. Yet I also acknowledge that there are interactions within a given context that cause me to use strategies that 'hold' and 'safeguard', rather than act in a clear and decisive way. When I consider why this is so I arrive at two possibilities. The first is that intuitively I have responded to cues within the context that alert me to be cautious. The second is that others in this context need to maintain power and control for their own sake, and my responding or questioning in an honest and open way may potentially lead to their loss of face. This dilemma about holding back responses that 'fit' with my own life strategy in favour of maintaining an 'open' relationship with colleagues whose interpersonal strategies differ, has encouraged me to inquire into others ideas about gender, power, and spirituality. It is timely now to explore the writings of others before I turn again to my own life strategies and ways of knowing.

Interpersonal competence and being a woman.

I have always considered myself as assertive and willing to take risks and to question my own beliefs and values. Being assertive has meant that I have learnt techniques that help me suppress negative self doubt and develop clarity about my own and others' rights and responsibilities. This way of functioning is in harmony with Torbert's ideas about interpersonal competence. These strategies can be learned and are effective in helping mutual respect and acceptance when put into practice. Belenky et al (1986) challenged my complacency about 'having arrived' by presenting me with another way of viewing my own way of knowing. Reading about the research experiences of these authors caused me to revisit my own ways of knowing, and in doing this to locate and connect their accounts of differing women's epistemologies with my own experiences. Through this process I began to understand the journey I have travelled and the tensions I experience in adjusting to the realities of working in a large organisation,.

In reading about the lives and 'voices' of other women I have gained a broader understand of being a nurse in western society. I have become more aware of the intrinsic difficulties nurses have in asserting themselves in a male dominated culture, and why I am more successful at work when I use strategies that are from the masculine part of myself. I am now more circumspect when male colleagues say, "I like it much better when you really get the energy flowing and punch it out!". There is pleasure in this affirmation, but there is also a sense of rejection and denial of my need as a woman to be heard and understood through a dialogue that affirms a more mutually supportive stance. Belenky et al speak to

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the feminine in me, reaching deeper and more profoundly into my personal self, making connections with my sense of spirituality and my need to be part of and with life. In order to place my own experiences within the context of Belenky et al's work, I will briefly note the work they undertook to uncover the way women gain knowledge. I will relate this to Torbert's ideas and the personal changes Belenky et al experienced as they worked with the women and their stories.

Belenky et al and Torbert were all interested in understanding how students developed their ways of knowing and coping in the world. Torbert's focus is on the development of interpersonal competence and to this end he formulates an understanding of what this means, then creates a context in which this will develop. There is no reference to gender but rather an assumption that the path from one interpersonal strategy to another is common for most students. Belenky et al (1986) take a different point of view, beginning with the premise that students develop in predictable ways but moving to pursue the idea that women gain knowledge and competence in ways that do not necessarily mirror what is known about men.

The rationale for researching the way woman gain knowledge was based on the belief that:

> "our basic assumptions about the nature of truth and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it." (p. 201)

The intent was not to directly influence the learning environment, but to discover why:

> "--women often felt alienated in academic settings and so often expressed doubts about their intellectual competence." (p. 202)

It would seem to me that in the same way that Torbert uncovers the interpersonal strategies of college students, Belenky et al seek to uncover the life strategies of women. Their beginning points are very different, but their vision of what an interpersonally competent group of colleagues might be seems to be very similar.

Belenky et al take a constructivist point of view in understanding the lives of women. In their research, information was collected about the way woman viewed their lives, and from this data five different perspectives about reality, the nature of truth, knowledge and authority, were extracted. Assumptions were then developed about they way women gain knowledge, and more importantly, how this gaining of knowledge might be nurtured. This understanding of the way women learn led to ideas of life strategies and interpersonal competence.

The research methodology was based on the work of Perry (1970) who constructed a map charting the epistemological development of university students, mainly male. This work was repeated using women students and the results indicated that women move through very similar stages to men. Belenky et al (1986) found this research lacked rigor with regard to the way women perceive themselves and the learning process:

> "While this strategy enabled the researchers to see what women might have in common with men, it was poorly designed to uncover the themes that might be more prominent among women. Our work focuses on what else women might have to say about the development of their minds and on alternative routes that are sketchy or missing in Perry's version." (p. 9)

Thus, this research begins with acknowledging that giving women a voice is important. This openness to direct information arises from the experiences of the writers as they worked with students and colleagues prior to the research. Consequently the researchers entered the research with an understanding of the way some women experienced gaining knowledge, and this influenced the way in which the methodology was implemented. The respondents were asked to talk about what was important about their life and learning, placing the emphasis of the research on hearing the voices of women. 135 women from different ethnic and class backgrounds, different educational and community settings, and different life experiences were interviewed. The data was then analysed in two ways, the first using the encoding system already established by Perry (1970) and then a contextual analysis designed by the authors.

Belenky et al found that Perry's encoding system was unable to do justice to the way women explored their own thinking, consequently the data were regrouped to better match the epistemological perspectives of women's experiences. From this analysis five epistemological perspectives were identified and the characteristics of each were defined. The results of the contextual analysis yielded a wealth of information about the way women experienced and made sense of their lives. It is this presentation of personal experience that illuminates my own.

<u>The life strategies of women</u>

The use of metaphor and story is very familiar and has encouraged me to pay attention to my own ways of knowing. Before I consider my own sense of gaining knowledge and communicating with others, I will outline the ways of knowing Belenky et al identified, then I will describe the ways the women interviewed talked about their lives. Finally, I will consider whether the different ways of knowing experienced by women are linked to developmental stages (e.g. Torbert, 1987) or are contained and 'complete' within the context of their particular life.

The five epistemological perspectives developed by Belenky et al are:

<u>silence</u>- A sense of being mindless, voiceless and subject to the whims of external authority.

<u>Received knowledge</u>
These women conceived themselves as capable of receiving and possibly reproducing but not creating knowledge.

<u>subjective knowledge</u>
Truth and knowledge for these women are personal, private and subjectively known or intuited.

<u>Procedural knowledge</u>
These women invest in learning and applying objective procedures in order to obtain and communicate knowledge - both 'separate' and 'connected' knowers are able to use their minds in this way.

<u>Constructed knowledge</u>
These women view all knowledge as contextual experience, see themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both objective and subjective strategies for knowing

The first sense of knowing is almost to not know, <u>silence</u> is experienced as 'mindless, voiceless and subject to the whims of authority'. Although my experiences of this silence are mainly in my past, I still have fleeting times when I am unable to find my voice and feel estranged from the dialogue occurring. The second way of knowing is through <u>received knowledge</u> and in this the woman is able to receive

knowledge and to reproduce it. The knowledge is received from some external authority that is 'all knowing', the individual not being able to create knowledge from their own experiences. This way of knowing is not so far from my awareness, as I stumble and doubt what I know from experience in the face of the dominant thinking that presents 'the truth'.

The third way of knowing is subjective knowing and produces an understanding of truth and knowledge that is personal and private. This kind of knowing is often gained through intuition and noticing themes, patterns and repetitions. This is very close to me and I have struggled with bringing it to full consciousness and, more importantly, to the scrutiny of others. I can acknowledge now that this is a valuable way of knowing and needs to be shared if it is to be fully valued. (Re-valuing this way of knowing gave me courage and calmness to develop personal story telling in the fieldwork.)

The fourth way of knowing is procedural knowing and is about formulating a way of making meaning which can be achieved through a process of understanding the other, or gaining knowledge of the other.

> "Procedural knowledge is "objective" in the sense of being oriented away from the self - the knower - and toward the object the knower seeks to analyse or understand." (p. 123)

Belenky et al use the terms connected and separate knowing to identify these two very different ways of developing procedural knowing. They borrow these terms from Gilligan (1982) and Lyons (1983) who describe two differing conceptions or experiences of the self. Separate is experienced as essentially autonomous or separate from others; connected is experienced as essentially in relationship to, or connected with others. They take the analysis further and say that those who experience the self as predominantly separate tend to resolve moral dilemmas by appealing to impersonal and generalised systems of justice and rights. Those who experience the self as predominantly connected tend to resolve such dilemmas based on notions of care and responsibility.

Similarly, Belenky et al conceive of two epistemological orientations with regard to the moral position of each perspective. They describe a separate epistemology as being based upon impersonal procedures for establishing truth, where as a connected epistemology views truth as emerging through care. However, in defining separate and connected knowing, they refer to the relationship between the knower and the objects/subjects of knowing, where the latter may or may not be persons. Therefore, the focus of their study becomes the relationship between the knower and the realm of ideas. Separate knowers emphasise objective 'truth' and seek mastery and control of ideas by taking an adversarial stance and playing the 'Doubting Game.' On the other hand, Connected knowers develop procedures that include collaborative relationships, an active surrender of authority, the use of narrative, and play the 'Believing Game' to achieve this.

In summary:

> "Separate knowers learn through explicit formal instruction how to adopt a different lens - how, for example, to think like a sociologist. Connected knowers learn through empathy. Both learn to get out from behind their own eyes and use a different lens, in the one case the lens of a discipline, in the other the lens of another person." (p. 115)

Finally there is constructed knowing where women learn that knowledge is constructed from the contextual experiences co-created with others. They learn that they are the creators of knowledge and value both subjective and objective strategies for achieving this. Women come to understand constructed knowing through the two different pathways of separate and connected knowing. Both groups look beyond limited compartments, and advance their understanding of how all knowledge is constructed.

> "It is in the process of sorting out the pieces of the self, and of searching for a unique and authentic voice, that women come to the basic insights of constructivist thought: *All knowledge is constructed, and the knower is an intimate part of the known.* ...... Ultimately constructivists understand that answers to all questions vary depending on the context in which they are asked and on the frame of reference of the person doing the asking." (p.137)

It seems to me that constructed knowers, whether favouring a separate or connected knowing stance, are able to seek knowledge from both perspectives. However, each person has their own unique way of interacting with the world and will have developed a preference for engaging with ideas and co-creating knowledge. The question of whether gaining knowledge is achieved through defined stages of development was explored by Belenky et al, but no conclusion was reached. The idea that separate and connected knowing may be gender specific, was considered and it was recognised that women were more likely to be connected knowers. However, no evidence to this effect could be extracted from the research because the research subjects were all women. I identify myself as coming from predominantly a connected knowing stance and I lean towards a caring frame in my transactions in the world.

My recent experiences and past memories tell I that I carry all the ways of knowing identified through this research. I can still feel silenced in situations where others are assuming a position of dominance through authoritative power and when I see no useful purpose in challenging these situations. There are certain situations where I use received knowledge in order to move away from issues that are of little consequence from my point of view. There are also times when I revisit my subjective knowing and become once again tuned in to my 'wilder self'. It is in my subjective knowing that I can engage my sense of the world and feel passionate about ideas and issues.

However, in the main I am a connected knower. I have many ways of accounting for this and I will do so when I tell my own stories of my research experiences. Suffice to say, now that I have learnt to stand in other's shoes, to understand their ways of being in the world, this is now a part of who I am. This does not mean that I never function as a separate knower. I do, at times very actively, particularly when decisions are being contemplated that will create more problems than they will solve. At these times I am very able to debate the issues and validate my own understanding.

Gaining knowledge, valuing experience, and living with the memories of past encounters is all of value, as is the ability to develop frameworks and test out hypotheses. There is something about knowing that both releases and binds - once choices exist one cannot choose blindly. The struggle I have had to write this thesis has been about knowing who I am and making choices. Both Torbert (1981) and Belenky et al (1986) are concerned with how people learn to develop self worth and interpersonal competence. I have found that both have an approach that is compatible with the way I experience my own interactions with others. Torbert has developed a schema that aims to uncover and provide an option to the mystery/mastery interpersonal strategy. Belenky et al entered into the thinking of women in order to understand the ways of knowing that encourage a sense of personal worth. My view is that each travels on a different pathway to reach an understanding of interpersonal life strategies, although their goals seem to be similar. My path has been more akin to that described by Belenky et al, and I intend to present a summary of this journey before I consider the issues of gendered life strategies.

I have always had an inquiring mind and consequently I have always been interested in the way people learn. When I began to read 'Women's Way of Knowing' I assumed that I would be reading about 'other women', not about me. I viewed myself as quite assertive and able to confront issues, although I knew I had developed strategies that were a bit different from other people. It was not long before I became aware that not only was I like many other women in the way I thought, but I had actually experienced the impotency of knowing that the 'truth' is held by others more powerful than me. At each stage of knowing I could identify with the person I was, and the person I am, as the anxiety and tensions were re-experienced. However, I could also recall clearly the people and experiences that had helped me find my own path to new ways of knowing.

The impact of reading about how women learn, and about the power of patriarchy in controlling women's minds, opened another dimension of my working life and released an urgency to be myself. This process of recognition and affirmation also faced me with a conflict about integrity and congruency between thinking and acting. It would seem from reading the authors' reflections that they also changed and developed as a result of their experience of researching together. I found this acknowledgement mirrored the changes I have made as I discover new ways of understanding myself and others.

Belenky et al, in exploring women's voice through interview, discuss the way women need to overcome a multitude of obstacles to develop the power of their minds. One of the ways to achieve this 'power of mind' is to ensure that the way in which women receive their education honours the way they naturally learn. This idea of congruence between gaining knowledge and ways of learning caused me to reflect on the way I facilitated the research group, and on my own learning preferences. I also realised that attending to the way women learn does not exclude men, particularly men whose work encourages feminine ways of being and interacting. Learning is about experiencing the world and although the context in which learning takes place is important, gender issues will always present another dimension and create different possibilities.

In reality, I have found it impossible to keep gendered ways of interacting mutually exclusive. Although one may be dominant in a particular context, the other is always present. My own vision and purpose in life and sense of spirituality transcends my occupation as a nurse - being myself is much more than being a nurse. My search for congruity and integrity as I develop my sense of self, and the patterns and pressures that make sense and bring both joy and pain, are the essence of my being. The value of rewriting my own history, noticing the repetition in different forms, recalling the stories that keep experience alive and available, all these ways of interacting keep me in touch with my sense of being. In all this I am aware of the interweaving of my feminine and masculine self, and I have found a clearer analysis of this through reading about others' journeys. Marshall's (1984) book 'Women Managers: Travellers in a male world' opened up another dimension that had been lingering at a subliminal level. It became clear as I worked through the field work, paying attention to my own external and internal experience, that I sometimes struggled to accept what I considered to be the masculine side of my nature.

Expressing the masculine and feminine.

I began to read about Bakan's concepts of 'agency' and 'communion' (in Marshall, 1984) when I was struggling to understand why I chose to respond to some situations in a very logical purposeful manner and others in a searching, responsive, inclusive manner. It seemed to me that my choice was not about different kinds of problems but more about the people involved and the contextual relationships. I was aware of the gender balance within myself being tipped in favour of one or the other, but I was not clear about why or what the process meant for me. Torbert and Belenky et al, in their separate ways speaks, to either the masculine or feminine in me. Marshall speaks to my need for balance and integration between these two ways of interacting in the world.

This searching for balance and internal integration has led me to follow Marshall's journey from exploring the ideas of feminists, to creating another way of presenting the power that belongs to women. It is in the middle of this journey that I gained a sense of balance between my own masculine and feminine. Marshall's development of the ideas about agency and communion, and the possibility of balance, provided me with a connection and a counter-balancing between the two.

Marshall, in searching out the masculine and feminine ways of acting in the word, refers to Bakan's concepts of agency and communion. Agency being:

> "the expression of independence through self-protection, self-assertion and self-expansion; communion the sense of being 'at one' with other organisms." (p.64)

Marshall goes on to say that the agentic strategy's main aim is to reduce tension by changing the world about it. By contrast, communion seeks union and co-operation as its way of coming to terms with uncertainty.

> "Whilst agency manifests itself in focus, closedness and separation, communion is characterised by contrast, openness and union." (p. 65)

Agency and communion are seen as two life strategies that are markedly different in the way they are experienced. Agency is a sequence of stages that allow the individual to manage the anxieties of interacting in the world, and is centred on the need to control and stabilise the environment. Communion, on the other hand, is quite different. The focus of communion is on union, wholeness, the

recognition of patterns and the importance of context. Marshall expands and provides depth to these concepts by providing another dimension, one that feels familiar but requires careful thought. My immediate sense of resonance gave way to surprise as I identified with Marshall's idea that:

> "Communion incorporates an expectation of change - to the self, situation or context - as inevitable. Acceptance means that change is toned neither excessively positively, or negatively - it just is." (p.69)

In pursuing the connections with my own thinking and doing, I realised that writing this thesis has taken me to the point of disintegration in my desire to express my feminine self. The strategies of communion:

> "....make it open to penetration flooding and eventual destruction by contextual forces ...... its attributes of success are also context-dependent'. (p. 69)

Marshall talks about the way in which a successful life strategy might be developed by 'mitigating agency with communion' and through 'communion enhanced by agency'. This echoes the discourse in my head between Torbert's ideas about unlearning mystery-mastery strategy in order to learn interpersonal competence, and Belenky et al's statement of concern about imposing the doubting model on women (or men for that matter).

> "Doubts imposed from outside seems at best redundant and at worst destructive, confirming the women's own sense of themselves as inadequate knowers. The doubting model then may be peculiarly inappropriate for women, although we are not convinced that it is appropriate for men either." (p. 227)

Marshall takes it further and provides me with a multifaceted way of managing gender within myself, by exposing the energy that each contributes. Working with these ideas has not only given me a way through the impasse when the two energies are in conflict within me, but also when I experience this clash in live situations where I must choose how I present myself. These ways of understanding the expressions and driving energies of gender have given me an analysis and a thoroughness in reflection. However, when I reflect on my own life strategies and the choices I make, Marshall's following statement resonates with my own experiences.

> "Women maintain society through physical and emotional nurturing, often at the expense of their personal needs for independence. In doing so they tap a base of truth which values interdependence, and respects personal skills for achieving it." (p.74)

In recognising this truth as essential to my way of being, I can also recognise the way I have woven into this core concept:

- • a way of balancing my own ways of expressing gender;

- • a degree of clarity about what I am perceiving, receiving and internally creating in any one context;

- • a heightened awareness about valuing the parts and the wholeness of myself and others, particularly in relationship to gender energies.

Having now reached an understanding of my own interpersonal life strategy, there remains a part of my journey that begs to be acknowledged. It is about my sense of spirituality that I always assumed was a part of being a woman. I am able to recognise parts of my spiritual self in images that are not feminine. Thinking and researching ideas of feminine and masculine has given me a different sense of how the two aspects can co-exist and intertwine. I no longer deny spirituality expressed in the masculine form. Mythology that is patriarchal provides me with a sense of union with the warrior women (Bolen, 1992) and I can make sense of the forces of good and evil and the role of gender in finding a balance (Eisler, 1987). I can now hold competing images and ideas lightly rather than rail against one or the other.

Link to: http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/j_quinlan.html

I am aware that the images women use to express spirituality are closely connected with the reclaiming of the feminine in society. Starhawk (1989) expresses a sense of belonging and beginning through the cycles of life, providing an underlying metaphor that moves us to take action to express our aliveness. This sense of spirituality is strongly <u>of</u> nature, and like other feminist writers, Starhawk sees this as the goddess-immanent embodied in the living world, and all that the world entails.

> "Immanence challenges our sense of values. When the sacred is immanent, each being has a value that is inherent, that cannot be diminished, rated or ranked, that does not have to be earned or granted." (p. 177)

This immanence is perceived as 'an ache or power from within', creating the personal power to realise our potential in the world. This is an image I have held for most of my adult life, and like Starhawk, I acknowledge that this personal power is not reaped without return. To be 'at one with the world' requires that this power is grounded through 'returning something of ourselves to the world.' This sense of a reciprocity is embedded in my life strategy as I seek to achieve this kind of balance.

Starhawk talks of the 'power within' much as a seed has the power to grow and mature, so an individual can gain power without diminishing another's power. As I write this, I find myself considering how my own sense of spirituality has changed frame. At first reading I understood through my feminine muted self, but now I am able to recognise my masculine self and to begin to address the energy that engages with the power within myself and others. It has been through feeling compassion for the powerlessness of both men and women as they struggle to find the 'power within' that this new framing has become clear to me.

Colgrave (1979) also confronts the ways in which we separate ourselves in gender opposites and in so doing become alienated from ourselves. Colgrave considers that the aim must be one of striving towards androgyny in order to be to be truly 'at one' with ourselves.

> "Just as the union of the physical male and female is described as making love, so the union of the masculine and feminine principles within the psyche allows for an inner experience of love which is the hallmark of the androgynous consciousness." (p.98)

This sense of inner wholeness liberates the individual to love others for what they are, because we are no longer searching for the aspects of ourselves that we cannot develop. This sense of being whole in terms of the individual, the world, and all that flows between, appears to be a state without boundaries. For me, it is about the nature of each personal event and is intricately linked with who I am when I am 'being a nurse' .

Nursing, I believe, encapsulates many of the concepts and conflicts associated with the gender struggles that I have explored. As the fieldwork unfolded, I began to recognise that the way nurses make sense and take authority over their work, and through their work, expresses their own lives. Each of us took time to review our own personal lives as we explored our lives as nurses. This exploration created a shared sense of knowing about nursing and being a nurse. However it was in the second cycle of research that ways of knowing about ourselves and our work were explored, and through that our life strategies became apparent.

In the next chapter I will first consider storytelling as a method for understanding personal experience, and then I will revisit the second cycle of research and describe the patterns that emerged as we worked together.