Summary

This thesis describes the development and findings of my inquiry, and its impact within my life process. It traces parallels between challenges that emerged in my inquiry in building and sustaining collaborative relationships between women who were working towards gender equality in organisations, and challenges that emerged in my life process and professional practice.

The first section situates my inquiry in political and personal life context. 'Feminist action inquiry' methodology is introduced with its key epistemological concepts and practices and criteria for quality (chapter 2). Subsequent chapters describe inquiry practices and findings within pathways that overlap and are grounded in personal and professional spheres Patterns in relationship identified in discussion and in professional collaborations with women within the inquiry (chapters 3 – 4). Shifts in relationship patterns are achieved through reflective and dialogic practices, through which subject to subject interaction is sustained and subject to object interaction repaired.

In the second section generative and degenerative patterns of interaction are traced between women working towards equality in organisations (chapter 6). Research on women in organisations is reviewed; the concepts of 'enacting gender' and of 'subject to subject' dialogue are adapted to consider how gender power is enacted or reproduced in interactions between women (chapters 7 and 8). A conceptual framework is developed that draws together key concepts from relational psychoanalysis, and feminist post colonial and organisational research sources.

Three case studies describe use of inquiry practices within consultancy projects to sustain challenge to women's inequality and enable analysis of gender power dynamics (chapters 9 – 11). Key methodological challenges for feminist consultancy are then conceptualised for working within and across multiple frames in political and business environments (chapter 12).

Four 'Red Threads' intersperse key chapters to develop a political meta-commentary and draw out political and ethical dilemmas. Final reflections draw together cross cutting themes within life process and consultancy practice inquiry pathways.

link to: http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/m_page.html