## Acknowledgements

There are a number of people without whom this thesis might not have been written, and to whom I am greatly indebted.

To my mother, Helena, who continues to learn, grow and develop and who has been a source of encouragement and inspiration to me throughout my life, a very special thank you for providing a 'writing space' and for nurturing me through the months of writing. And also for the myriad of ways in which, throughout my life, you have actively supported me in my determination to find and realise my potential, and to make this contribution to our world.

To my mother-in-law, Maryam, known only briefly but loved and missed, who represented to me 'living proof' of Black women's ability to redefine and recreate our lives despite, and maybe even because of, the tremendously constraining, oppressive and repressive situations in which we often exist.

To my dear husband, Bala who remains willing to engage with the struggle, and ensuing discomfort, of having a partner who refuses to accept the given role of the "Black woman" and is actively engaged in redefining and redesigning that role. A very special thank you for your practical and emotional support as I added the roles of wife and then mother, to the competing demands of business, work, study and personal development.

Thanks to dear Kamal and Azaria, for being so supportive - even when being 'without Mum' was hard, and for your help with the bibliography and diagrams. This work is for, and because of you and all the generations to come. It is dedicated to all our journeys in learning to thrive.

It is also dedicated to Josephine - friend, 'sister', colleague, 'co- traveller' and researcher - who knowingly and unknowingly- led me to an understanding of some of the more subtle challenges to our ability to thrive. If our attempts to claim our right to speak our truth, and to unravel and follow the threads through which our oppression is maintained, and are instrumental in helping one other Black woman from 'going over the edge' - in which sight we continuously live our lives - perhaps, it might be seen that your invaluable contribution to the attainment of many of the insights gained was worth it. It is also written in honour of all our my grandmothers, and their mothers, and grandmothers, and to **all** our and mothers and grandmothers, who though not marked by history struggled so heroically to resist the definitions attributed to them by the dominant system and communicate messages of hope and expectation.

I am also very grateful to Maya Angelou, for the inspiration she has been to methrough her writings, poetry readings and as a living representation of a woman thriving. Thanks to Mary Washington, Alice Walker, Jackie Kay, Buchi Emecheta, Toni Cade, Lauretta Ngobo, bell hooks, and other Black women writers of the 1980's, who in telling stories for and about us validated me and my experiences in ways I cannot begin to explain here.

To all of the women who participated in this Inquiry - formally and informally – thanks for your stories of organisational life, which assisted me in identifying Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc\_theses\_links/c\_douglas.html

emerging patterns across our differing experiences. And particularly to the women who participated in the Collaborative Inquiry – I am tremendously appreciative of the support you gave me, in willingly accompanying me on a journey of exploration that we knew would be immensely challenging and painful in parts. Thank you for attempting to meet with me without the defence of our various well-used and muchtrusted masks. I would have liked to name and individually thank each of you, but to preserve confidentiality I will not.

Loving thanks to my friends / learning partners, Agnes, Susan, Ulana and Namonya, who played such important roles along the journey, as we mutually engaged in making sense of the various challenges we faced and in providing encouragement to each other at those times when it seemed impossible to continue. I offer my gratitude and appreciation to my supervisors, Judi Marshall and Peter Reason, for the deft ways in which you lovingly challenged and supported me through out the whole of this work - knowing when to push and when to let up. I offer special thanks to those who supported me in the mechanics of producing this thesis. Rosemary, for reading and rereading drafts; Rajwant for editing and proofing; Susan for help with typing and for helping me get 'unstuck' with this thesis on many occasions; and Peter and Trevor for 'rescuing' me at those times when I was almost defeated by the technology. Most of all thanks to God the Divine who continues to make the impossible possible.