Section 1 - The Frame

Chapter 4 - Discourses about Liberating Black women

Introduction

The first three chapters of this thesis reveal that the roots of this work are hidden deep within my personal, family and racial history. This work is indeed, in William Torbert's words (1991) " a kind of …inquiry that is conducted in everyday life .... not a kind of scientific inquiry conducted only within sanitised experimental environments, surveys designs, or reflective, clinical, critical settings." It is what he describes as a "Living Inquiry" which attempts to illuminate and make sense of my own (and others') experience, and to identify opportunities for change, transformation and liberation in both present and future. It was always my intention that this study should disturb the status quo, and in doing so create possibilities for self-actualisation in the lives of Black women (my own and others)

From my early teens, at the time when I came to Britain, I had been growing more and more aware of the contradictions of being Black and female in Britain. I had *experiential knowledge* that racism was a constant in everyday life and that women were unfairly treated and disadvantaged, but I had no theoretical framework for making sense of that experience. Public discourse often denied my knowing and therefore silenced me.

In the early 80's my attendance at a 'Women in Management' course took me into a world where sense-making of women's experiences was taking place and a conceptual framework of sexism was presented. Prior to this, my understanding of sexism and feminism was limited to the media's accounts of bra-burning, and white women libbers, and seemed meaningless to the realities of my own life and to the lives of women I knew. Suddenly, though the experience of the course, I began to develop a framework for making sense of some of my own confusing life experiences. I also became more conscious of the need for conceptual frameworks to illuminate my subjective experience, and started a search for information about racism.

In the period from the early to mid 80's, through reading, discussions and most of all from trying to help others learn about these issues, I developed a fairly robust theoretical framework about discrimination and about the barriers to Equal Opportunities. From both the knowledge produced by a) my search for literature that progressed my learning about oppression and liberation; and b) the reviewing of my own practice and the various solutions brought to the problems of 'race' and sex discrimination; and c) my reflections on my own journey towards liberation; my theoretical framework was challenged, developed and honed. The purpose of this chapter is:

a) To make visible the framework that both consciously and unconsciously influenced what I selected as important and noteworthy from the situations in which I engaged, and the conclusions drawn from the information generated.

b) To give insights into the means by which that framework was formed.

A. Learning from literature

At the start of this journey I was searching for discourses that raised and explored some of the more complex questions with which I was then struggling. Questions such as:

1. **What is the "problem"?**

Chesler and Delgado (1986) exploring strategies for improving race relations said, "The way in which discrimination is defined influences the solutions." It seemed to me blatantly apparent that solutions were likely to be inappropriate and irrelevant unless the problem was understood. I assumed 'the problem' to be the systemised ideology of inherent supremacy and inferiority that produced domination and oppression in institutional and individual actions. Therefore, I assumed that the liberation of oppressed groups was the ultimate aim of all our endeavours. However when I observed the different approaches to Equal Opportunities and the nature of the relationship between those of us involved in what was seemingly the same struggle, it seemed that perhaps we did not share the same assumptions about the problem. Therefore it appeared important to clarify the underpinning assumptions of the problems with which I struggled. In doing this I asked certain questions.

- **How do we facilitate the development and growth of people who have been oppressed?** What are the particular challenges to developing managers from the various oppressed groups? I had located my study in the position of the Black woman but I felt that people who had engaged in considering the dilemmas of developing any other oppressed group would have something to offer to me.
- **What are the specific experiences of Black women managers in Britain?** What is the nature of the experience and what particular development needs arise as a result? Are we thriving or merely surviving? How do we construe notions of surviving and thriving? How does our location between surviving and thriving influence our experience?

With these questions in mind I looked for:

- **Conceptual insight into Equal Opportunities;**
- **Explorations of oppression and liberation;**
- **Literature about empowerment, development and change;**
- **Writings that expressed the realities of Black women's lives in Britain and that theorised the overlap between racism and sexism.**

2. **Conceptual insights into Equal Opportunities**

At the time of starting this research, unclear about the real purpose of my research, it seemed as if my automatic starting point must be with the reading of Equal Opportunities literature. So I started my search with a visit to a large academic bookshop. As I surveyed the shelves I realised that my formulation of my topic was too broad, and that to more effectively inquire into the processes by which individuals are liberated I needed a narrower focus. This was an important but unexpected outcome of my search. I also observed that under this category were books of a variety of different types of writing.

- **Instrumental and mechanistic**

They were "how-to" manuals aimed at changing organisations' policies and procedures. They provided information about the legislation, the development of policies and procedures for fair recruitment and selection, monitoring, and about Equal Opportunities training design (CRE and EOC Codes of practices, Cabinet Office and BACIE 1987, MSC 1983, Straw, 1989 etc.). They assumed a common definition of the problem and provided ready-made solutions to the assumed common problem. It was taken for granted that responsibility for the design and creation of change lay with organisations and that members of the various oppressed groups were the recipients and beneficiaries of the change. These writings did not assist me in doing the fundamental exploration of the 'the problem' that I perceived to be necessary for the construction of effective change strategies. I came to the conclusion that these writings, in their exclusion of people from the oppressed groups as key and active change agents in the process, unintentionally negated these groups and so continued the oppressive system.

- **Related to presenting symptoms**

There was writing about particular aspects of the problem - e.g. Police and racism; racial harassment, sexual harassment; women and low pay. Such writings assisted me in gaining an in-depth understanding of the ways in which discrimination and oppression presents themselves in differing aspects of Black people and women's lives. Yet, I found that these writings masked the interactive dynamics between the various symptoms and between the various discriminations. In many instances it was assumed that all Black people were male, and that all women were White. They did not assist me in understanding the process, which, denies Black women (among others) opportunities to grow and to make our contributions to our worlds.

2. **Process of oppression and liberation**

Most influential to my learning about oppression and liberation were Fanon (1952) Freire (1972) and Lipsky (1987). They wrote from very differing contexts and standpoints, yet I perceived similar themes in their work. Fanon wrote from the standpoint of a Black male psychologist from the colonies and living in France. Freire, a white educationalist, wrote from his experiential knowledge of poverty in Brazil. And Lipsky, a co-counsellor, wrote from the perspective of a Black woman in the USA. Yet their writings raised new questions about the process of becoming fully human (thriving), and about my own role in the maintenance and perpetuation of discrimination, and in the struggle for liberation. In the late '80's many of the approaches to solving racial and gender discrimination portrayed the oppressed person

as a victim waiting to be liberated. However this was not the picture presented by these writers. For each of these writers the oppressed person had a very important role to play in the struggle for liberation. Invaluable learning from these writers work concerned:

1. *The internalisation of the oppressive system*
2. *Need for full understanding of the process of oppression in liberating the individual.*
3. *The importance of struggle in the process of liberation.*

3.1 Internalisation of the oppressive system

These writers enhanced my understanding that ideologies of domination and oppression had not only been internalised by **everyone** in society, but that they produce different effects in people of the oppressor group from those generated in the oppressed groups.

- ***The oppressor in the oppressed.***

Suzanne Lipsky's writing about the internalisation of oppression made a great impact on me. Her work furthered my conceptual understanding of the role of oppressed people in perpetuating and maintaining oppression. For some time prior to encountering her work I had *felt* that the assumption that there would be greater fairness and equality in organisations if there were more people from oppressed groups in positions of power was false. This assumption falls apart when we consider the role of organisational structures and systems in maintaining the status quo and therefore in perpetuating systems of discrimination. However, in addition to this it assumes that people who are disadvantaged by oppression escape learning domination and are free of the ideologies of racism and sexism etc.

My experience as a child growing up in the Caribbean challenged that. There I had observed that Black people who most closely resembled White people were attributed greater worth (chapter 1), and I had heard the term 'Black' used as an adjective of derision ("Yo black like nite"). In my work experience there were many examples of White women managers being oppressive towards other women, and of Black managers using power abusively. Within feminism Black women repeatedly found themselves marginalised and negated, and we suffered oppression on the basis of gender from Black men. Yet I did not find these issues theorised in the Equal Opportunities literature.

Freire and Fanon both pose the issue of internalisation of the ideologies of oppression as central to the learning of liberation, and to recovery from oppression. Fanon sums up the problem in the very powerful statements – " The black is not a man […] the black is a black man." In those statements he draws attention to the need for fundamental unlearning, and for a reorientation of the whole of the individual's internalised perceptual set. Freire (1972) says, "In their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressor, to imitate him, to follow him." He perceives the oppressed person as divided – hating and loving the oppressor at the same time. He says:

> "Only as they discover themselves to be 'hosts' to the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality where *to be* is *to be like*, and *to be like* is *to be like the oppressor*, this contribution is impossible. The pedagogy of the oppressed is an instrument for their critical discovery that both they and their oppressors are manifestation of dehumanization."

The experience of surviving that I was just beginning to articulate helped me to give meaning to the abstract idea that the oppressed are dehumanised through abusive ideological systems such as racism and sexism. It was refreshing to encounter literature that focussed on the *impact* and *effect* of the various structures and of the separate and cumulative daily encounters of discrimination on the individual.

I encountered Lipsky's work soon after starting this research, and was delighted to find that she gave these ideas meaning in the specific behaviours of Black men and women. Her presentation of reactive coping/survival strategies as contrived behaviour scripted into our programming for our survival rather than part of the 'inherent nature' of Black people was invaluable to my perception of myself and other Black people. Her work (and particularly when viewed in the light of Fanon and Freire) indicated that the internalisation of the oppression was not about the pathology of Black people either as individuals or as a group. Instead it was perceived as an inevitable outcome of living for hundreds of years in an oppressive system. Lipsky draws attention to the role of the internalisation of the system in the oppressed in the perpetuation of discrimination. She says:

> "Internalized racism has been the primary means by which we have been forced to perpetuate and "agree" to our oppression. It has been a major factor preventing us, as Black people, from realizing and putting into action the tremendous intelligence and power which in reality we possess. On a personal level it has been a major ingredient in the distressful and unworkable relationships which we so often have with each other. It has to be the fatal stumbling block of every promising and potentially powerful black liberation effort that has failed in the past. Patterns of internalized oppression severely limit the effectiveness of every existing group."

Her work started me on a journey of discovery. But first I had to drop a false belief by which I had protected myself. I had to own to myself that the things that people said about me mattered. That their statements about who I was, and what I was capable of had made an impact on me. As I began to acknowledge that, I began to realise that much of my success had been driven by a desire to prove others wrong. It had been a motivating factor for achieving my 'O' and 'A' levels despite illness and for doing well at Domestic Science (Chapter 2). Although at that time I did not think that that was necessarily a negative approach to life, I began to realise that the drive to prove others wrong caused me to be very punishing of myself (I would only accept attainment of the highest standards) and of other Black people, and women who either chose not to, or could not, respond to discrimination in this way. Lipsky's work put words to subjective awarenesses that I had not yet been able to name. For example, it helped me see that the difficulty that many Black people seemed to have in acknowledging and praising the work of other Black people, and their valuing of White people's work above that of people of their own race, was connected with racism.

- ***Internalisation of the oppressive system in the oppressor***

Important to my understanding that oppression is not inherent in people of the various oppressor classes, but a learnt system of thought, were writers such as Dixon (1977) and Milner (1975). Milner's research (1975) into the development of racial attitudes in young children identified that in many children an appreciation of racial differences starts from around the age of three years old, and that by five years old children reproduce versions of the stereotypical social roles of Black and White people.

Katz (1978) progressed this learning by her focus on the dehumanising impact of racism on the psyches of White people. Her work emerged from a concern that although it had been often stated that racism had a negative effect on the life of **all** Americans, (Du Bois 1903, Myrdal 1944, Kerner Commission 1968, Cromer 1972 among others) little had been done about addressing the effects on White people, and about engaging them in the deconstruction of the problem. She says (1978):

> "Racism is a White problem in that its development and perpetuation rests with White people. Whites created racism through the establishment of policies and practices that serve to their advantage and benefit and continue to oppress all minorities in the United States… The racial prejudice of White people coupled with the economic, political, and social power to enforce discriminatory practices on every level of life –cultural, institutional and individual – is the gestalt of White racism. Therefore the 'race problem' in America is essentially a White problem…Given that the root of the problem rests in the White community, it seems almost ironic that so much of the research focuses on the oppressed instead of the oppressors. Racism has taken its toll on White people as well. It has been hypothesised that, in a somewhat different way, racism is just as dehumanising for Whites as it is for minorities."

She was concerned to understand the psychological impact of the "serious discrepancy between attitude and action, between thought and deed." Having explored various studies she came to the conclusion that " it becomes sadly evident that the psychological disorder is deeply embedded in White people from a very early age on both a conscious and unconscious level. The disease has locked them in a psychological prison that victimises and oppresses them everyday of their lives."

She explored different strategies for helping White people to identify the issues of racism and to help them grow and learn about themselves. She also saw White people as responsible for the creation and perpetuation of racism, and therefore she saw a need for them to take the lead in creating strategies for dismantling racism in themselves and in the structures of organisations. In her search to discover mechanisms for helping White people unlearn racism she built on a training technique called the White-on-White training technique and developed White Awareness Training. This became a key influence for what became in Britain Racism Awareness Training.

This was the first time that I considered that White people or any other oppressor group, may also be victims of the system. Prior to this I had only seen them as beneficiaries of the system. Through her work I began to identify domination as an abusive practice, and as such damaging to both the perpetrator and the recipient. Later, these insights were further crystallised through my discovery of Freire and Fanon.

3.2 Need for the oppressed to fully understand the process of oppression

Fanon (1967) suggests that there must be total understanding and that it must be both on "the objective as on the subjective level." Freire says " One cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity, nor can they be dichotomised." Again this was an example of experiential knowledge being given validity, and consolidated through the encounter with theory. Working as a trainer with responsibility for the development of the race equality training strategy I '*knew*' that it was critically important for Black people to be helped to objectively analyse racism. I '*felt*' that we needed to objectively understand the differing forms racism took to be able to see the ways in which we were ever so subtly disadvantaged by behaviour that on the surface seemed innocent. I had reached these conclusions through realising the sense of 'liberation' I had experienced when I first gained a framework for understanding the subtle ways in which messages of inferiority had been sent to me. Prior to such learning the gap that had existed between my intuitive sensing and by conceptual sense-making had produced feelings of confusion and of being a little 'crazy'.(see chapter 2). It was on this basis that I had introduced a programme of training for Black staff designed to raise awareness of these issues. In the writings of Fanon and Freire I found theories which supported this action.

3.3 Liberation demands struggle

Both of these writers speak strongly of the need for struggle if freedom is to be attained. Fanon talking from the French context where freedom from slavery was gained through a pronouncement of the White man, says:

> " The Negro knows nothing of the cost of freedom, for he has not fought for it … the former slave, who can find in his memory no trace of the struggle for liberty or of that anguish of liberty … sits unmoved before the young White man singing and dancing on the tightrope of existence." He continues " Freedom requires an effort at disalienation."

Freire says: " Liberation is … a childbirth, and a painful one." He says that the oppressed must

> "Struggle to free themselves… This solution cannot be achieved in idealistic terms. In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality to oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but rather as a limiting situation which they can transform".

From the literature on oppression and liberation I was helped to understand that institutional discrimination was far more than simply the sum of the various oppressive policies, procedures and individual acts, or even of the interrelationship between these. These writings acted as lenses that enabled me to see that the *process* of oppression (i.e. the means by which the concept of domination is given meaning in real life) produces distortions in the psyche of the human being that obstructs our ability to even perceive our potential and that impedes healthy development and growth. Liberation requires the repair of that damage, the problemising of that way of being and relating and the creation of new models for living.

4. Literature about empowerment and human development

- **Learning from management development**

Coming from the perspective of both a management developer and an Equal Opportunities specialist, it is perhaps not surprising that one of the sources to which I looked for help was the literature on management development. It seemed to me that in a context where organisations had workforces composed of both genders and people from various 'racial' groups, issues of oppression and liberation should be reflected in theories about staff development and staff relationships. In addition to this I was starting this research at a time when many organisations had publicly stated policies about their intention to offer equality of opportunities to **all** staff – regardless of gender, race, age, disability, sexual orientation etc. Beginning to sense that racism and sexism did not only affect the external structures of our world, but that they had a fundamental impact on the orientation of individuals to the outer world, and on their perceptions of their ability, roles and responsibilities, I expected to have these issues addressed in management development literature.

However, the outcomes of my search were disappointing. The literature encountered did not acknowledge the diversity of the workforce that I was observing in organisations. Generally speaking, it was written from a perspective that all managers (and their staff) were male, white, able-bodied etc. At that time a few books and articles had begun to appear expressing the experiences and perspectives of women managers. However, they were not perceived as part of the mainstream management development texts, but rather to belong to a separate, and special category – 'the woman manager'. From these came confirmation that the experience of women managers in organisation were different to those of their male colleagues (Marshall, 1984). It was being identified that they were responded to differently and that they had different development needs, and that they experienced greater stress than their male counterparts (Cooper and Melhish, 1984, Cooper et al 1988).

Even within the 'specialist' area of 'women managers', Black women were invisible.

- ***The dynamics of oppression***

Kanter with her book "*Men and women in the Corporation*"(1977), and the video "*The Tale of O"* drew attention to the ways in which the experience of discrimination is constructed and to the nature of the inter- and intra-group relationships in organisational cultures where the ideologies of superiority and inferiority are enshrined. She highlighted the various strategies used by the dominant empowered group to exclude and undermine those from the disenfranchised group. Using her work with Black people, I found that it generally gave permission for the silences to be broken and for experiences of exclusion and domination to be discussed. I observed that in those discussions people discovered that these experiences were not personal but collective. Therefore her work was not only useful in widening my attention from the impact of the individual incidents to the nature of the relationships they construct and to the organisational context produced, but in using it I learnt about the value of expressing these experiences.

- **Literature on personal growth**

From the review of my own experience and from the recognition that there was a great imbalance between my development as a professional and as an individual I began to recognise that the split in myself was reinforced by the environment. As a

manager I had not been encouraged to strive for ‘emotional competence’, the emphasis of my development was on technical expertise. Many management development programmes did not see ‘facilitation of effectiveness as a human being’, as pertinent to management development. However as management practitioners and writers were influenced by humanistic psychology (Rogers, Maslow, Berne etc) perceptions of effective management shifted. Management development practices and theories began to give more acknowledgement of the need for personal/ self development of the manager (Woodcock and Francis (1982), Pedler, Burgoyne and Boydell (1986))

The literature of management self-development provided me with a useful starting point for exploration and discovery of the self. However as I explored the impact of perpetual discrimination and disadvantage on the individual, I began to search for material that helped me identify the impact of racism and sexism on the self and on the individual’s orientation to the world. At the time I found little that helped me understand the impact of racism on **me** – as opposed to on my external circumstances (e.g. employment opportunities, fair treatment by the legal system etc).

Some years later working with the collaborative inquiry group, one of the women raised the question "*What would I have been like had I grown up in the Caribbean or in a context which was less hostile to Black people*?" (Chapter 6). This is the question, though not so clearly verbalised which I searched to answer. I encountered Wilson (1978) writing from the American experience, who argues that the nature of the Black person’s existence in a White society is schizoid, frustrated, and restricted. He says:

> "The hallmark of schizoid living is ambivalence, an ambivalence which enters into virtually every activity of the schizoid’s life. His relation to himself and to others is marked by this same ambivalence. Thus, the schizoid black chronically maintains a fluctuating love-hate relation to himself, his people, other peoples (particularly whites). His life is characterized by a constant vacillation between two conflicting worlds of differing ethnic histories, lifestyles, values etc. He has no fixed reference point which he can use with confidence to orient his life goals, attitudes and behavior, and to stabilize his relations with himself as well as others. Consequently, his relations with himself and others are confused, labile and ambivalent even though these may be smoothed over by a superficial order and harmony. The middle-class black or white is particularly adept at maintaining appearances."

Wilson refers to Frazier’s work (1962) on the Black bourgeoisie, which states that the Black middle class, in their effort to succeed according to White standards -

> " become increasingly alienated from its black roots and yet its rejection and non-acceptance by the white middle class whose acceptance it perceives as the necessary factor needed for authenticating its own existence, leaves it in a state of psychological limbo … in this limbo the alienated black suffers from a love – hate relationship with members of his own race."

Wilson states that frustration is inextricably linked with the schizoid existence. He says:

> "Since blacks evaluate their worthiness and their self-regard, positively or negatively speaking, by use of the measuring stick of "white" standards and by their acceptance or rejection by white, they value very much and /or seek after those material, social, psychological, economical, educational political things which the emulated white culture had decreed must be possessed in order to be considered a "first-class citizen," to be fully accepted along with a sense of equality. Consequently, blacks are push-pulled toward these goals that

> the white have achieved or are striving to achieve …However the possibility of achieving these goals … are constantly blocked by inordinate and insurmountable white racist barriers and obstacles."

Wilson simply says "that the Black world in America is a restricted one both psychologically and otherwise is well-known". Writing as he was in the early 60's I assumed that he referred to the clear segregation of the Black and White worlds that existed in the US at that time and that was maintained by legislation. Although the situation was clearly very different in Britain nevertheless, I was aware that the covert process of segregation was practiced in Britain and that the opportunities of Black British people were also restricted. Wilson, like Fanon, paints a scary picture of the impact of racism on the Black psyche. He puts into words the complexity of the dilemma of gaining psychological, physical and spiritual health in a context where as Black people we are dependent on White people for the satisfaction of our basic needs. Bryan et al (1985) state that " our lives had been shaped and moulded by the inescapable need to find or create the work which would maintain us."

Readings such as these coincided with a process of self-awakening that was taking place in me around that time, and started an exploration of the process of finding and indeed, loving myself. Field (Milner) 1932, Rainer 1978, Powell 1982, and 1985, Maslow 1968 all contributed to my discovery of tools appropriate for this process, and in identifying the issues that I needed to confront in seeking to recover and love the self - taken from me at such an early age. This is expanded in Section 3.

5. Writings about Black women's experiences in Britain

Two years prior to starting this research I had undertaken a literature review of publications which considered the link between sexism and racism (Douglas, 1986) and discovered that there was **no** 'body of Knowledge' about Black women nor about developing Black women. There was very little published literature about Black women's lives – in or out of organisations, fictional, biographical or academic. Of the small number of publications available most of them were about, and from, the American context. These made important contributions towards my learning (see below), but I was wary as I believed that the nature and presenting forms of institutional discrimination changes depending on the historical contexts from which it emerges. Although the relationships between Black and White people in both countries were, largely speaking, formed in the course of the slave trade and slavery, Black - White relationships in Britain are also influenced by the colonial experience.

As a bicultural woman, my experience told me the blocks and barriers to Black women claiming and using their potential in the Caribbean were different to those encountered here. I had no objective knowledge of this but my subjective experiences in both settings indicated that my experience was influenced by my environmental context. The historical construction of racism in Britain was different to that in the U.S. and I believed that made an important difference to the enactment of racism. Therefore I decided that during the early phase of this project I would refrain from reading Black American writers. I became concerned with uncovering writings that revealed the experiences of Black women in Britain (preferably by Black women), but the works of the first Black writers I had encountered nevertheless influenced me.

The lack of a body of literature influenced my design. As there were no giants on whose shoulders I could stand in order to gain a view of the area I wanted to explore, I had to create other ways of gaining perspectives on my topic. This meant that in the first part of my research I concentrated on finding out the experiences of Black women managers in organisations in order to then understand the nature of the context from which our survival strategies emerged.

- ***About Black women's lives***

In the late '80's, due to the efforts of individual women or of collectives, *and* the appearance of feminist press such as Sheba and Virago we at last gained access to the thoughts and experiences of Black women in Britain, which were previously invisible. From these writings came insights into a number of issues:

- ***The diversity within the group 'Black women'***

We saw that under this umbrella term stood Asians, Africans, Caribbeans, Latin Americans and Arabs. Women who identified themselves with the political term Black, and who came from different classes, cultural, educational and religious backgrounds, with varying aspirations, abilities and sexual orientations. In Black women's writings this complexity was acknowledged and worked with (Grewal et al 1988, Ngcobo, 1987).

- ***Need to give expression to our lives***

Barbara Burford (1988) says:

> " We are writing to tell our own particular histories; to speak our mother's silences; to share among our isolated sisters, our experiences and our joys; to stand out for each other like poppies in a wheat field... Black women writing in Britain at this moment share a commitment and a need to leave a legacy, an investment for all those young Black people whose only experience is life in Britain."

As authors we were beginning to express the challenges, dilemmas, pressures and rewards of being Black women professionals. We spoke as architects, lawyers, mothers, nurses, midwives, writers, educators, daughters, and sisters (Haque 1988, Osman 1988, Torkington1988, Douglas, 1985). We expressed the stark challenges encountered as we struggled to survive. Buchi Emecheta (1983) revealed the difficulties of raising a family in a context where the colour of their skins debarred them from renting good accommodation, and where discrimination in employment made the finding and keeping of good jobs difficult.

- ***Internalised racism***

In our writings, whether fictional or autobiographical, we gave voice to the complex dilemmas that emerge from the double binding situations in which we live. Claudette Williams (1988) says:

> "It often goes unacknowledged that the Black Diaspora has survived, resisted and developed in exploitative hostile environments which threaten physical and psychological destruction."

We wrote about the ways in which messages of inferiority and of not being good enough are acted out in relation to ourselves and to other Black people (Ross 1988, Williams 1988)

- ***Challenge of discrimination within discrimination***

In Black women's stories, fictional or biographical, I gained insight into the nature of the experience created at the intersection of discrimination, and there I saw that experiential and or conceptual knowledge of one discrimination does not automatically produce awareness or sensitivity to other discriminations. Emecheta's autobiographical stories (1983) depicted the sexism of the Black man (her husband) though he had himself suffered many bitter experiences of racism. She also portrayed the racism of working class White women, some of whom were themselves discriminated against on the basis of gender and class. They drew attention to the splitting of the resistance against sexism and racism, which occurs as a result of the overlooking of the presence of other forms of discrimination within groups, organised against discrimination. This was not a new issue yet many politicised Black men and White women were resistant to confronting this issue, felt unfairly attacked and or betrayed by Black women who raised the issue. They did not acknowledge that the overlay of one oppression on another effectively splits the group that was previously commonly united, and produces experiences of such qualitative difference that they become a new form. Yet, this is the essence of a complex system - a small change in the system may produce a disproportionate difference. The disappointment, disillusionment and anger of Black women at White women's resistance to naming and addressing these issues is expressed in much of our writings (Ngcobo 1987, Lorde 1988, hooks 1984) and is an issue emerging from the work of the academics theorising gender, race and class.

- ***The obliteration of past Black women's contributions***

In the 80's works appeared that allowed us to know some of the major contributions to Britain made by Black women. Traditionally they had been obscured in the history books and it was therefore easy to believe that women of my parents' generation were the first Black women in Britain, and to believe our lack of presence was simply because we were newcomers and that with time our presence and contribution would become apparent. Ngcobo 1987 says:

> "Search the literary scene as one may, one is hard put to find anything relating to Black women today … we have for historical, social and psychological reasons slipped into the subconscious of our erstwhile masters. This amnesia is the unacknowledged admission that British society has still not come to terms with our presence. We linger in a kind of social limbo and consequently suffer a state of invisibility."

In 1982, thanks to the work of Ziggi Alexander and Audrey Dewjee we were able to learn about the Jamaican nurse, Mary Seacole, whose reputation at the end of the Crimean had rivalled Florence Nightingale. Feeling that her skill could be used at the front she had applied to the medical department of the army, but despite her testimonial she had been rejected. Not deterred she had paid her way there, soon proved her skills in healing. At the end of the war she had been feted, and in 1857 she had published her autobiography, nevertheless while Florence Nightingale had been iconised throughout the British Empire the name of Mary Seacole was unknown.

In 1987, thanks to the work of Henry L. Gates, I was able to learn about Mary Prince, a slave born in Bermuda whose autobiography was first published in London and Edinburgh in 1831, and had great popularity at the time – going into a third edition by the end of 1831. From her autobiography I gained a rare opportunity of a first-hand account of the slavery experience.

From Peter Fryer's work (1984) I learnt about Phyllis Wheatley an American slave woman whose book of poems was published in London in 1773, and reprinted many times. She seems to have started writing at age 13 and 39 of the poems in her book were written by the age of 17.

Learning about these Black women helped me to realise that we were absent from history not because we had not made any noteworthy contributions, but simply due, as Ncgobo suggests, to other processes. Peter Fryer's "The History of Black people in Britain" provided a new perspective on the historical context of today's Black women. He says:

> "Black people – by whom I mean Africans and Asians and their descendants – have been living in Britain for close on 500 years. They have been born in Britain since the year 1505. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thousands of black youngsters were brought to this country against their will as domestic slaves. Other black people came of their own accord and stayed for a while or settled here."

So, although many of the women who participated in this study were children of Black men and women who migrated to England during the 50's and 60's it is inaccurate to assume that Black women professionals are first or even second generation immigrants.

- **Theorising the intersection between 'race', sex and class**

It was only in the writings of Black women such as (hooks (1982, 1984), Jordan (1981) Davis (1981), Brittan and Maynard (1984), Bourne (1983), Carby (1982) Amos (1984) Parmar (1982) and Ngcobo 1987) that I encountered the theorising of the interrelated complexity of oppression. The same complexity that was described in our stories was made sense of in the academic writings of Black women. These women wrote from both sides of the Atlantic yet within their work were common themes.

White feminist women generally wrote about women as a homogenous group with similar experiences and needs, and from an implicit standpoint of being White and middle class. Black men wrote about Black people as a similarly uniform group.

Carby (1982) says:

> "It is only in the writings by Black feminists that we can find attempts to theorise the interconnections of class, gender, and race as it occurs in our lives."

Perhaps Black women, located in the intersections between race, gender and class gain experiential knowledge of the meaning of those overlaps and are therefore better able to articulate that knowledge than those outside of that position. Therefore, maybe we are better placed to recognise that the whole cannot be depicted, much less

understood, as long as some of its parts remain obliterated and unexplored. Theorising out of Black women's experience enables us to engage with different questions about oppression than those that were raised within feminist literature. Patricia Hill Collins writing later (1990) suggests:

> "Denied positions as scholars and writers which allow us to emphasize purely theoretical concerns, the works of most Black women intellectuals is influenced by the merger of action and theory."

She goes on to say:

> "Very different kinds of "thought" and "theories" emerge when abstract thought is joined with concrete action."

In Black women's writings I was presented with a world of great diversity. They acknowledged and drew attention to the many important differences that must be accommodated within feminist struggle and of the need to understand and address the dynamics of racism, and other discriminations at play within the struggle. They argued that at the places where one oppression overlaps with another, new forms appear. Black women do not simply suffer the sum of racism and sexism, but when one is overlaid with another something else appears. As these overlaps, paradoxes and double binds became visible, Black women described, and struggled to name, the same complexity that Sojourner Truth (quoted in Davis (1981) described in her speech all those years ago when she said:

> "That man over there say women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages and lifts me over ditches, or over mudpuddles, or gives me the best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it – and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children and seen most of them sold off to slavers, and when I cried with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman."

Sojourner Truth was articulating the negation and obliteration of the Black woman that takes place in the overlaps of these two oppressions. When the diversity of the group is denied 'Black woman' becomes a contradiction in terms. An important aspect of domination is the power to define and to create a norm. The norms created for "woman" are based on the stereotypical image of the middle-class Western woman. Against those norms the Black woman becomes, not only, different but deviant and /or non-woman and causes Black women to be treated as subhuman. hooks (1982) says, "As American white men idealized white womanhood, they sexually assaulted and brutalized black women." Throughout the research this issue recurred and with the help of later writers such as Collins (1990), Essed (1991), Mama (1995) Scott (1991) and Mitchell and Herring (1998) my understanding of this issue has developed (section 3).

Black women writers of the early and mid '80's also gave meaning to the statement "the personal is political". They identified that the presence of one oppression within another was not only essential to our theoretical understanding of the process. When racism within the feminist struggle, or sexism within the anti-racist campaign,

remains unidentified and unchallenged we find ourselves in the confusing position of perpetuating the very things we are struggling against.

This lack of recognition of the complexity of the challenge was reflected in the enacted discourses of the early and mid '80's. Most of the popular solutions to racism and sexism, at that time, did not acknowledge the complexity of the problem. The either-or, dichotomised mode of thinking that governed analysis of the problem led to unending debates about behaviour or attitudinal change; change of individuals, or change of culture; and to the pitting of oppressions, one against the other. There was little acknowledgement of the separation that is created within a group that would otherwise be mutually bonded, by the presence of many oppressions within each oppression.

This lack of awareness was formally represented in many of the structures created to challenge racism and sexism. Women and Race Units, the CRE and EOC were separate entities with no formal connecting structures, and at a very local level there were no formal links between my job description as a Race Equality Officer and that of the Women's Training Officer.

It was only in the writings of Black women that I encountered attempts to conceptualise the new forms of oppression that emerge as they overlap. These writers addressed issues of sexism in Black men and racism in White women, and were often strongly criticised and punished for doing this.

B. Learning from different approaches to the 'race' and gender 'problem.'

The theoretical framework brought to this study was also influenced by my reflections on the various approaches taken to the 'race' and gender problems at the time when I was actively involved in working towards the attainment of greater equality of opportunities in organisations. I realised that the approaches were themselves theories-in-use even though they may never have been articulated as such at any time. In interacting with the various solutions I gained insights into the variety of assumptions which underpinned the different perspectives on the 'problem' and also the solutions offered; generated new questions and also gained a better understanding of the nature of the issues involved. There were a number of differing responses to the 'problem' and they can be categorised in a variety of ways. However for the purposes of this chapter I will focus on the following approaches:

1. **Legislative**
2. **Policies and procedures**
3. **Training**
4. **Change from outside the system**

1. The Legislative Approach

Common questions raised by participants on Equal Opportunities training courses and debated by Equalities specialists were:

- What is the role of legislation in creating Equal Opportunities?

- Can Equal Opportunities be achieved without legislative change?

I was never sure about the answer to the second question though clear that the presence of Equal Opportunities legislation made a difference to our work. It seemed that it gave leverage for change that would probably not have been there without it.

- **Equal Opportunities Legislation**

There were a number of Acts with implications for Equal Opportunities but the main pieces of legislation were the Race Relations Acts 1965 and 1976 and the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. The Race Relations Act 1976 created the CRE with a dual role of educating the public about race discrimination and sanctioning discriminatory practices. It also attributed to Local Authorities the statutory duty of eliminating racial discrimination and of promoting good race relations. The Act did not have an immediate impact on the policies and practices of Local Authorities (Ouseley, Silverstone and Prashar, *The System*, undated). The response of Local Authorities has remained patchy with stances ranging from an assumption that "We treat everyone the same here" to those who recognise the presence of great inequalities and set about trying to address those patterns of unfairness. However without the Acts it is unlikely that many, if any, Local Authorities would have given priority to these issues.

The 1975 Sex Discrimination Act addressed issues of inequalities between men and women on the basis of sex or marriage, and constituted the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), like the CRE, with a dual role of educating and monitoring the legislation.

In the early 1980's, both CRE and EOC published Codes of Practices to assist organisations in identifying sexist and racist practices and in developing good practices. They set out policy and procedural guidelines that could be adopted by employers desiring to achieve greater equality of opportunities. The EOC's Code of Practice, although influential on the policies and practices of many organisations, did not attain as high a profile as the CRE's Code of Practice. The CRE encouraged employers to sign up to it and researched, monitored and publicised their findings with regard to the take up of these issues by employers. Shifts in the environment from 1976, when the CRE was created, to 1984 when the Code of Practice emerged meant that there was greater openness, and commitment to taking action to reduce racial discrimination. The riots of 1981, and the ensuing Scarman report (1981) had produced in inner city organisations greater willingness to address issues of racial discrimination and disadvantage.

- **Creation of a culture of compliance**

These pieces of legislation were public statements of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. For instance, by making the incitement of racial hatred an offence the State made a public declaration that such behaviour would not be tolerated. Every time that this section of the Act was enforced that message was reinforced. It also put race and sex inequality on the agenda of many organisations, groups and individuals. It opened up discussions and debates on these issues, and focussed attention on issues that previously had been in the taken-for-granted context. Equal Opportunities legislation

was therefore important to the creation of the societal culture, in which discrimination became an issue of importance, whether we agree or disagree with it.

Yet in many instances changes created in this way have seemed superficial. In situations where the hearts of the people were not won and change was imposed, many resisted - paying lip service but having no intention of going beyond compliance with the letter of the law. In recent years there has been a backlash from members of the dominant groups who have felt aggrieved at losing some of the privileges they had grown accustomed to and who felt that they were now the targets of discrimination. With this has come the discrediting of anti-discriminatory actions as mere political correctness.

- **Immigration Legislation - double messages**

The legislative approach sent conflicting messages about the problem, and about the State's commitment to creating radical change in the system. At the same time that the Race Relations Acts were being produced there were other pieces of legislation, such as the immigration laws and SUS laws, that presented Black people as the problem. They communicated a perception that the 'race problem', and the resulting poor race relations being encountered were due to:-

- the presence of Black people in Britain,
- the numbers of Black people in Britain

In the 50's and 60's, through the "push and pull factors" that a) strongly influenced the emigration from the ex- colonies, and b) strongly attracted labour from the colonies to Britain, White British people found themselves living side by side with Black people (Bhavnani (1994), Bryan, et al (1985) and Prescod -Roberts, and Steele, (1980) see also chapter 1). Living in close proximity, latent tensions and conflicts inherent in the established relationship between White Britons and their colonised Black people were activated. The anxieties and fears of Black people were engendered by the dominant racist images of Black people (Mama 1995) and fears of being 'swamped' and of losing their jobs produced various forms of attacks on Black people.

Many of the Black people from the Colonies had been actively recruited to come to England to fill jobs that the White British did not want to do. There was also well-established Black community (Fryer, 1984), however the presence of Black people in sizeable numbers triggered very deep fears in White British people (Bryan et al 1985). These fears were reflected in the statements and acts of the politicians of the time. There was Enoch Powell's infamous speech about "rivers of blood", and in 1964, a conservative Candidate fought a by-election with the slogan " if you want a "nigger" for a neighbour vote Liberal or Labour". This situation of racial tension and unrest was often referred to simply as the 'race problem.' Fears about the explosive nature of the situation prompted searches for solutions.

In addition to the Race Relations Acts of '65 and '76, the legislative responses included a series of Immigration Acts which were designed primarily to give protection to the White British population. Their explicit objectives were to stem the flow of immigrants to Britain by making it progressively more difficult for

prospective immigrants to satisfy the entry requirements. The 1968 Act removed the right of entry of British passport holders unless they had a "substantial connection" with the UK i.e. at least one grandparent born here. Then rather confusingly, and seeming to run counter to the explicit political agenda of reducing the entry of immigrants, the 1971 Act removed **all** controls on the immigration of Commonwealth citizens who have at least one British-born grandparent. When we examine this Act more closely and apply this new entry criterion to various groups of Commonwealth citizens, we realise that a far greater percentage of White Commonwealth citizens would be able to satisfy that criterion than the percentage of Black (not-White) Commonwealth citizens, and the underlying racist ideology becomes visible. It is now clear that the concern was not to restrict the flow of immigrants into Britain per se, but rather to keep out those considered as being undesirable i.e. Black people.

The 1971 Act changed the status of most Black people in the Commonwealth to that of aliens (Moore 1975). Subsequent Immigration Acts, right up to the recent Asylum Acts (REF), have continued the process of the systematic legislated disenfranchisement and alienation of Black people. With the continued perception of Black people as 'labour', these Acts have also been designed largely to control labour in line with the economic needs of Britain. (Sivanandan 1982, Parmar 1982, Bhavnani 1994)

- **Governmental response to childcare**

Various studies in the mid '80's indicated that an important influencing factor in the participation of women in the workforce is their responsibility for caring for small children.

  - *Most men and non – married women work full-time while the majority of married women worked part-time. (EOC 1987 quoting a, Dept of Employment survey in 1986).*
  - *73% of married women <u>without children</u> worked full-time while only 7% of married women <u>with a child under 4 years</u> worked full-time (EOC 1987, quoting General Household Survey 1985).*
  - *While only 7% of married women **<u>without children</u>** were economically inactive, 50% of women **<u>with a child under 4 years</u>** were economically inactive (EOC 1987, quoting General Household Survey 1985).*

The EOC report (1987) concluded:

> "The hours which women work are strongly influenced by the presence or otherwise of dependent children. In 1985 over two-thirds of married women with dependent children were working part-time, compared with two-fifths of married women without dependant children and only 13 per cent of non-married women without children."

The 1975 Sex Discrimination Act, despite its objectives of challenging discrimination in the opportunities of women in the workforce did not respond to the difficulties that women with dependent children face in participating in the world of work outside of the home. It seemed to me that the State's response to the liberation of women was as ambivalent as it was to Black people's equality. The Sex Discrimination Act (without supportive acts addressing the provision of reliable childcare), could not radically

change the roles and contributions of women to society in general, nor could it transform the possibilities of women's self- actualisation.

Indeed, since the end of the Second World War there has been a trend of drastic reductions in State nurseries. Brannen and Moss (1991) in their study of dual earner households say:

> "During the War, faced by a chronic labour shortage, rapid expansion of nurseries took place to encourage mothers into the labour force, where their work was desperately needed. Immediately the War ended, government urged women with young children to stay at home and began a rapid reduction in nursery provision. In 1986 there are only 29,000 places in public day nurseries, slightly less than 1 place for every 100 children under 5 – in 1945 there were 62,780 places. Moreover the limited places that have been available in these publicly funded childcare services have become essentially a social work resource, for the use of families with major problems, rather than a service for the general run of employed parents (Moss, 1990). The only other intervention on childcare services for employed parents by government was similarly negative: between 1984 and 1990, government has taxed parents using nurseries which are subsidized by their employer."

These authors argue that government's policies with regard to child care (and to maternity leave) have been influenced by the dominant ideology of women as home makers and carers, and men as breadwinners. They support their view by offering the following quote from a Ministry of Health circular (221/45) which heralded the rundown of State nurseries:

> " The Ministers concerned accept the view of medical and other authority that, in the interest of the health and development of the child no less than for the benefit of the mother, the proper place for a child under two is at home with his mother. They are also of the opinion that under normal peacetime conditions, the right policy to pursue would be positively to discourage mothers of children under two from going out to work."

Therefore the legislative response to gender inequality could be seen to be half-hearted and not geared towards the making of fundamental change. These observations raised for me questions about how we change huge social systems, and they caused me to reflect on the role of the oppressor in the struggle against oppression. Can the oppressor be expected to radically change the system in which he is a major beneficiary? Freire argues that this is unlikely. He says:

> " the pedagogy of the oppressed cannot be developed or practised by the oppressors. It would be a contradiction in terms if the oppressors not only defended but actually implemented a liberating education [...] Pedagogy which … makes of the oppressed the objects of its humanitarianism, itself maintains and embodies oppression."

Fanon, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela and other freedom fighters also argue the need for liberation to be gained through struggle rather than as a gift from the oppressor. Yet I did not believe that this necessarily required a revolution fought with guns and won through the killing of others. The killing of others seemed to run counter to the core values of the liberation struggle. So what sort of revolution was I thinking of, and how could it be brought about within the context of the current system? These are questions that I carried within me for many years and that influenced my reactions to all of the various approaches encountered. I looked for congruence between the goals and the strategies used in attaining it.

1. **Policies and procedures**

This approach is closely related to that of legislative change. Policy and procedural changes were key strategies used by organisations in response to the problem of institutional discrimination. They were developed in the context of the Sex Discrimination and Race Relations Acts. Generally they took a mechanistic, behaviourist approach, designing 'ready-made' model answers for what were assumed to be known problems. They assumed that the policies and procedures of the organisations would control the behaviours of the workers.

Organisations such as the GLC and ILEA in the public sector, and Littlewoods in the private sector, with their much-publicised commitment to tackling discrimination, became leaders in the field and had great influence on others. Soon organisations across all sectors were declaring policies and developing anti-racist procedures. There was a spate of "how to" booklets, manuals and articles. Employers were advised to publicise their organisation's commitment to equality, and to development of policies and procedures to achieve fair recruitment, and to ensure equal treatment with regard to promotion, conditions of service, disciplinary and grievances. Soon "We are an Equal Opportunities Employer" became a phrase routinely expected on job adverts, and the language of Equal Opportunities became commonplace.

The Sex Discrimination and Race Relations Acts through the concept of indirect discrimination drew attention to the perpetuation of discrimination through the conditions and criteria of seemingly unbiased and objective regulations and procedures. Race advisers and specialists identified the link between economic power and liberation and worked to eradicate the barriers embedded in the criteria that controlled entry into organisations. They also addressed discrimination in disciplinary and grievance procedures and practices, and in the conditions of service. They advised the development of detailed procedures and guidelines for practice, and monitoring of policies with appropriate sanctions for those who chose not to comply.

- **Compliance with letter rather than spirit of the law**

Many anti-racist specialists of the 80's perceived the main challenge to effective antiracist action to be the lack of will on the part of many managers to properly monitor the implementation of the new policies and procedures. There was often a reluctance to take the work done in creating these new policies and procedures further, by developing processes for monitoring and then being willing to enforce sanctions when and where they existed. Once again local organisational action reflected the ambivalence present in the legislation. Often there was not the political commitment in organisations to go further than the creation of the policies and procedures, and there seemed to be more concern with the letter than the spirit of the Acts.

- **Means becoming ends**

In comparison with the numbers of employers declaring policies, a much smaller number developed and implemented monitoring procedures. A Department of Employment study by Jewson et al (1990) which explored processes of change in patterns of ethnic minority employment in six major companies found:

> " an almost complete absence of data in the participating companies on current and past patterns of distribution [of ethnic minorities in the workforce]…In only one organisation were accurate and precise figures available on the current situation. Even here there were no time series."

A later Department of Employment study (Jewson et al, 1992) which set out to identify and evaluate best practice with regard to the benefits of ethnic monitoring stated:

> "Despite being chosen from among those thought to be the most advanced in the field of ethnic monitoring, most organisations were still in the process of developing their monitoring systems. Even the most advanced had made less progress that the researchers expected."

It seemed that somewhere along the way means became confused with ends. I observed the frequency with which organisations and specialists demonstrated their success by referring to the numbers of structures changed by the organisation rather than on the **impact of** those new procedure and policies. They rarely engaged in discussions about how to evaluate the extent to which the needs of the Black community and women were being better met, or about how we might develop mechanisms for ascertaining if their experiences of oppression were ameliorated.

- **Responsibility but no authority**

Responsibility for Equal Opportunities was vested in 'experts.' They were attributed responsibility for determining what had to be done and the rest of the organisation scripted as passive 'followers' either complied or resisted. This was not a model that empowered individuals or that actively engaged organisations in learning about these issues. The development of knowledge and expertise on these issues was perceived and relevant only to Equal Opportunities specialists.

My theoretical knowledge and practical experience of change in organisations indicated that change demands the explicit and demonstrated commitment of top managers (Chesler and Delgado, 1986). With Equal Opportunities this knowledge was overlooked, and as advisers and specialists we unwittingly colluded. The practice in many organisations was to appoint small numbers of staff to a specialist, advisory unit to which the responsibilities for creating Equal Opportunities would be delegated. On the surface this appeared to give great power to these Units, and as specialists staff and advisers most of us were seduced into thinking that we were in positions from which change could be made. Often, these Units were placed directly below the Chief Executive and participated in top management meetings. However, they were usually placed outside of the normal organisation structure. There was no direct link to the functional Departments, and with only advisory relationships to the functional managers they had little real power. I was puzzled by the fact that in an approach that was concerned with structural change, issues regarding the design and location of the Units in the organisational structure were overlooked. I also could not understand that knowledge about influencing organisations, often located in Organisational Development sections, was not tapped when Equal Opportunities strategies, policies and procedures were being designed. Many equality specialists did not perceive any need for establishing such links and neither did the OD personnel see Equal Opportunity interventions as organisational change initiatives. Such separation puzzled me.

- **'Doing to' rather than 'working with'**

It was also surprising that people concerned with liberation did not perceive the need to gain the commitment of the staff for the proposed change. Generally speaking, new policies were developed in accordance with the prevailing norms. They were designed and written by a small number of specialists and approved by senior management and Committees. Staff were then required to implement them. The belief was that White people were racist and men sexist and that attitudes, if they could be changed, took a very long time. This in turn created a concern to control and monitor individuals' behaviours. It was not perceived as necessary to engage individuals in reflecting on their taken for granted assumptions and on the effects of their behaviours on others. Therefore attempts to raise awareness to discrimination and encourage the stereotypical assumptions, and to gain commitment for anti-racist and anti-sexist actions were devalued. Paradoxically, it was felt that such endeavours diverted the resources needed for changing the structures and systems of organisations.

It was impossible to delineate procedures for all situations and eventualities. In many organisations many people had some discretionary power and a small number had great opportunities for exercising discretion. The effective implementation of Equal Opportunities demanded that these powerful people acquire skills for identifying, interrupting and changing potential or actual discriminatory practices in themselves and other colleagues, and that they were committed to learning about applying Equal Opportunities principles in the generation of solutions for the situations faced. It was an approach that invested responsibility for these issues in a small number and enshrined the need to control and patrol. Therefore, it was not about fundamental, sustainable long-term change. The experience of the '90's has indicated that as soon as the pressure to comply lifted, organisations reverted to their previous ways of working with amazing speed.

- **Alienation perpetuated**

I believed that the processes by which an objective is expressed is related to the quality of its impact. I was therefore not comfortable with a strategy, which was so dismissive of the individual and so concerned to treat people as automatons - as if their actions could be so easily manipulated. My experience as a manager, trainer and consultant had taught me that individuals and groups have a tendency to skilfully sabotage and subvert policies and procedures to which they were not committed. It also seemed that in positions where formal sources of power are weak (I perceived this to be the case with most equality units and personnel) there is greater need for investing in the development of influencing skills rather than mechanisms of control. This approach seemed to perpetuate rather than challenge the dominant culture of alienation that existed in many organisations.

1. **Training**

The provision of short Equal Opportunities courses for staff was a highly favoured response to Discrimination. In some organisations training complemented and sometimes supported the policies and procedures approach, but in others training was the main or only response. These popular training responses can be loosely categorised as:

1. Orientated towards the oppressor (e.g. Racism Awareness Training)
2. Orientated towards the oppressed (e.g. Positive Action Training)
3. Developing partnership in challenging Discrimination (e.g *Through 100 pairs of eyes* (Annamanthodo et al, 1985)

1. Orientated towards the oppressor

At the time of starting this research it was not uncommon to find people acting as if the problems of racism and or sexism were attributable to explicitly chauvinist men and racist white people. There was the implicit assumption that racism and sexism would be eradicated from organisations if all White people received racism awareness training and men sexism awareness training. In practice the focus in organisations was on racism awareness training. There were men's groups, whose focus I assume was sexism, but these were generally self organised and operated outside of the context of the organisations.

- **Racism awareness training**

In the late 70's early 80's Britain racial equality work in Britain was influenced by the work of Judy Katz. Her book *White Awareness* was published in Britain in 1978 and was becoming popular just at the time of the inner city uprisings in 1981. These disturbances made it difficult for the establishment any longer to avoid evidence of severe racial disadvantage and discrimination and to ignore Black people's dissatisfaction with their treatment. Consequently, there was a desire to find ready-made solutions. Katz's book on "White Awareness" proved to be that. It was an easily accessible training package, complete with trainers' notes and fully outlined training activities. In an instrumental world driven by a need to find a quick solution all that was needed was the trainers, and these were found overnight.

The original Katz model, as outlined in her book, is a much more complex analysis of the problem of racism than was generally practised in the mid '80's in Britain. As mentioned earlier, Katz developed her training as a solution to what she saw as the need for White people to take responsibility for changing the racist structures and systems of organisations. She specifically recommended it as a White-on-White strategy in which White people collaboratively developed mechanisms and processes for changing their own attitudes and behaviours, and their organisations. However when adopted in Britain it became a Black-on-White strategy with a heavy orientation towards attitudinal change. Racism awareness training was widely used in all sectors and was, for instance, recommended at governmental level for staff and managers of the Home Office, and for elected members and Local Authority Officers who select and recruit staff and who offer social services (London Against Racism 1987).

An objective exploration of Racism Awareness Training is difficult as it became the site for enacting much of the confusion, challenges, dilemmas and contradictions of creating racial equality in organisations. Memories of Racism Awareness Training still live on, like spectre, in organisations even though many of the people who actually experienced such training are no longer there. Exploration of this response is made further difficult by the fact that there were multiple versions of Judy Katz's training model, with a wide range of training forms and practices, and critiques of this approach were done in contexts that were highly emotive.

- ***A quick-fix rather than fundamental change***

I perceived this solution to be a "quick-fix, arising from the establishment's anxiety to do something, rather than to uncover and deal with more fundamental issues and processes of racial discrimination, disadvantage and oppression. It was heavily criticised by Black activist and racial equality specialists for diverting attention away from many of the other critical aspects of institutional discrimination. They argued that in placing the emphasis on individual action organisations were avoiding issues of structural and systemic change. (Sivanandan 1985, Gurnah, 1984, London against Racism 1987). I had a lot of sympathy for this view. Though I appreciated the need to gain the commitment of everyone involved, I felt that Racism Awareness trainers, like the 'race experts', became places for dumping organisations' responsibilities for race equality.

- ***Divorce from and abdication of responsibility***

In many instances Racism Awareness Training was contracted out of the organisation, or consultants and specialist were brought in to do this work with very little intervention and /or support from the mainstream organisation. Consequently aims and expected outcomes from this work were often not linked to organisational objectives and priorities, training activities were generic rather than based on the specific organisational experiences and contexts of participants, and the training event was perceived as separate from the organisation. This lack of ownership and identification with these programmes made the transfer of learning particularly challenging. When this was combined with a training culture of high confidentiality, many trainers and commissioners of trainers were inhibited from struggling with the challenges of rigorous reviews of this training. Therefore, even at this level organisations did not take responsibility for the racism awareness training.

- ***Hostile climate breeding defenses rather than reflexivity***

This work took place in a climate of rivalry and competition among the various groups involved in Equal Opportunities work, which bred a culture of defensiveness. There was an *assumption* that critique equated attack, that feedback must be negative and that evaluation was a process in which a detached observer told the practitioner what's wrong with their practice. The notion of collaborators critically reflecting on their practice was completely absent. In a context where organisations had externalised this work and abdicated their responsibility it was easy for them to disassociate themselves from the challenges encountered and be the critical observers rather than collaborators. In addition to this the providers of the training service were usually Black and the commissioners and users of the training were almost always White, so the dynamics of racism, and sometimes sexism, were often at play.

- ***Training detached from organisational strategy***

Racism Awareness training, as a stand-alone initiative not embedded in a complex organisational strategy for tackling institutional racism, placed inappropriate and unfair expectations on the training. It was often assumed that at the end of a two or three-day training event participants would be able to radically change not only their own practices, but those of their organisation.

- ***Individual as powerful actor***

In this approach the individual was acknowledged as a powerful actor in the maintenance and perpetuation of discrimination, and treated as a fully self-determining human being, making choices that impacted on others and on organisational systems.

- ***Changing individuals***

These programmes raised questions for me about the processes through which we engaged individuals in initiatives intended for change. Many models of this programme worked from the premise that the individual should be jolted into consciousness, and confronted with their complicity with the system in maintaining and perpetuating racism. This seemed to be an important but paradoxical insight. It seemed true that in the usual state of unconsciousness in which we generally live our lives, we approve and act out values that run contrary to those we profess to believe in (Schon 1983, Torbert 1991). Therefore the awakening of the individual is critically important to this process (Freire 1972, Fanon 1967). Notwithstanding, when we confront a huge and complex problem, and we see and feel our responsibility while having no ways in which we may constructively respond to the problem, we are often overcome by a powerlessness, and helplessness. That sense of impotence triggers overpowering guilt against which, for our psychological health, we must defend ourselves (Harrison, Winter1962-63, Rowe, 1987, Maslow 1968).

When training happens within the frame of an organisational strategy, with clear opportunities, and permission for the individual to act on new insights by changing his/her own behaviour, and/or work procedures and practices, there is a channel for the energy which guilt produces.

It is my observation that many programmes left participants much more aware but no more able to act, and possibly even more paralysed by the greater insights. This produced distress and anger that were then projected back on to the training and trainers.

3.2 Orientated towards the oppressed

The 1975 Sex Discrimination Act and the 1976 Race Relations Act allowed training to be given to a particular racial group or sex in the following circumstances:

> " If at any time within the preceding 12 months an employer finds that racial groups are markedly under-represented in any particular area of work within the establishment it is lawful under the act to encourage and assist members of the racial group concerned in entering these areas of work" (Jane Straw 1989).

- **Positive Action Training**

Under the banner of Positive Action, a range of different skills were offered to women, and less often to Black people, who were under-represented in many areas of organisations. Recurrent patterns in organisations were that though women often constituted at least 50 % of the organisation, they rarely appeared at senior management level and only in small numbers at middle management. Even in those

professions that were traditionally female such as nursing they were still under-represented at levels of middle and senior management. Also, they were over-represented in the areas associated with the stereotypically female skills e.g. welfare, personnel, social work and under–represented in the traditionally male areas such as finance, survey and planning (EOC1987). The patterns for Black people were different. In many organisation there were few Black women and they were usually at the lowest levels, engaged mainly in manual work, paid least and had lowest status. The overlay of racism and sexism created big differences between the profile of White and Black women in organisations.

Positive Action training attempted to change these patterns. It was intended to equip Black and White women with the knowledge, skills and qualities needed to succeed in organisations. It aimed to enable women and Black people to attain positions of policy and decision-making at which they would then be able to make their unique contributions to the work of their organisation. It was also intended to increase the economic power of these traditionally disadvantaged groups, recognising this as one of the ways in which oppression is perpetuated in society.

Working as a Race Equality Trainer and Equal Opportunities Specialist for many years, I was involved in the design and delivery of many of these types of training events. However as I observed and reflected on the impact of these initiatives and on their effectiveness for changing the patterns of discrimination in organisations I realised that there were many limitations and that (like every other 'solution') they had to used cautiously.

- ***Black people / women - the problem***

This strategy, although often developed in order to assist the oppressed, has within it an underlying assumption that their lack of success can be attributed to deficiencies in the oppressed individuals or groups. Where the construction of the organisation and its ideology and norms are not problemised, it may reinforce the assumptions of inferiority attributed to these groups. Therefore it is critically important that such training takes place within the frame of a more complex Equal Opportunities organisational change strategy, in which Positive Action training is complemented by other initiatives promoting structural and systemic change.

- ***Things are not always what they appear to be***

It is sometimes misleading to equate the positions of Black and White women in organisations with a lack of the skills or abilities valued by the organisations. Sometimes it may be that unconsciously held racist and sexist ideas cloud our eyes and stop us from identifying ability and experience within these groups. Sometimes this may be because their knowledge and skills were attained in ways different to the male norms, which remain devalued, or because stereotypical expectations of the groups blind us to the competences of the individual. One example of this comes from my own experience. In 1985 while working as a Training Officer (Race Equality) for a Local Authority, I gained information that Black people were largely absent from certain areas of the organisation and that when they did appear they were concentrated in the lower grades. So I devised and ran a series of positive action training courses for Black workers in the two Departments with the highest numbers of Black people.

On the first day of each course, I asked participants to map the knowledge and skills present in the group. My course design assumed that there may be a need to help the group translate knowledge and skills gained in informal settings, to those required by the organisation and so boost confidence in their own ability. Knowledge about the effects of discrimination on oppressed people, gained from the writings of others, and from my own experience, indicated that discrimination undermines confidence in one's own ability. This activity was intended to boost confidence.

At the end of the first three courses I was stunned by the level of formal education and training residing at these first two non-manual grades of the organisation. I was amazed to discover that most participants had a higher level qualification, and that many had more than one degree. The observable evidence that most of the Black people in the non-manual grades of the Authority were located at the lowest levels; together with the unconsciously distorted perceptions of Black people as less able; and constant reports of Black children being failed by the education system, had fostered a belief that Black people were not achieving due to lack of knowledge, skills and competence.

This surprise prompted reflection and inquiry, and left me less willing to assume that the absence of Black people from the higher levels of organisations was due to a lack of skills and knowledge. It made me more aware of the need to inquire into the source of the problem rather than respond to the presenting symptom. I discovered that despite the various studies which indicated that Black children particularly boys have a lower level of academic attainment at school, there are also other studies which indicate that a high proportion of Black people return to full or part-time education after school (DES School Leavers Survey 1981/82 in DES 1985:110; ILEA 1987:7.19; Brown 1984). So assumptions of Black people's underachievement may be misleading.

More recent studies that were not available at the time of starting this work indicate that we have to consider the trends in the labour market to understand the position of Black people in the work force (Mirza 1992). Bhavnani (1994) in her study of Black women in the labour market says:

> "Some [Black women] are better qualified; some have equivalent qualifications; yet overall they work in worse jobs that White women."

Without this process of inquiry it was easy to assume that our positions in the organisation reflected our competence and experiences. More recent studies challenge this assumption (Dickens and Dickens1991 study of Black managers in the US, Davidson 1997 of Black managers in Britain). The Dickens and Dickens study supported my discovery that Black people in organisations **may** be more in need of training that supports them in surviving the racism and sexism they encounter in organisations, than in technical expertise.

It seemed similarly true that the positions of women in organisations may be more greatly influenced by factors such as caring responsibilities in the domestic situation rather than lack of skills. More recent studies indicate that women may make career and job choices due to the difficulties encountered in managing (often with very

inadequate support) the challenges of a full time job and family responsibilities. (Marshall 1995, Brannen and Moss 1990)

- ***Disproportionate and unrealistic responsibility for change***

Positive action training programmes were often (like racism awareness) laden with explicit and implicit objectives that were unrealistic. It was sometimes assumed that as a result of the training there would be more Black people or women at senior levels in the organisation; or that the service delivered would be enhanced, or that there would be less dissatisfaction among the disadvantaged groups, or staff relations improved. Research identified the severe limitations of training, when undertaken without the support of other organisational initiatives (Pettigrew and Reason 1979, Bennett and Leduchowicz, 1983) yet the disjunctions between interventions aimed at individual development and organisational change were rarely identified. Unsupported by a more complex organisational strategy for change, these programmes produced clearly identifiable valuable benefits for the individual but less observable gains for the organisation. The bitter paradox was that the responsibility for the latter was placed on the 'race experts' charged with achieving the change.

- ***Risk of increased frustration and disillusionment***

A common experience was that individuals returned to their work setting with greater expertise and competence, and then encountered managers and peers who continued to overlook their abilities, and to restrict them to tasks that did not consolidate and develop their ability or potential.

- ***Means becoming end***

As with the policy and procedural approach, it was easy for the means to become confused with the ends, and for organisations to measure progress in tackling discrimination by the amount of Equal Opportunities training they undertook.

- ***Paradoxical and double-binding***

Positive action training presented me with the challenge of walking the tight-rope between empowering individuals to challenge oppression and reinforcing the system. The training and development of members of the oppressed groups are critical for the deconstruction of the old system. There is a need to identify and unlearn internalised oppression, and review the effectiveness of the strategies used in negotiating organisations. It is also important that we have a diverse group of people at decision-making levels of organisations, who may be able to influence new ways of seeing, thinking and acting in the organisation. Yet I often experienced a strong seductive pull to create programmes that taught the people from the oppressed people to succeed in the organisation. To succeed well, Black and White women were required to fit into the traditional norms, and to competently execute its procedures and practices in the ways in which they are done by the dominant (White male group). In this way Black people and women are assimilated and co-opted into the organisation and become a part of the status quo and perpetuators of the old system, rather than agents for change of the organisation. Reflecting on my experience I became aware of the great potential for positive action programmes to be mechanisms for assimilating diverse groups into

the system. A question that I took into the research was how might we develop managers to succeed *and* also to make a difference.

- ***Developing partnership in challenging Discrimination***

One training programme in which I participated that took a very different approach to many of the popular Equal Opportunities programmes was*:*

- *"Through one hundred pairs of Eyes"*

This was based on the premise that collaboration and dialogue between members of both the oppressed and oppressor groups was necessary for the deconstruction of the oppressive system. From my participation in this initiative I learnt about the challenge of establishing relationships across differences, but I also learnt that it was possible to do this. It seemed to me that one of the most difficult chasms that must be somehow crossed in the forming of such relationships is the intense anger and rage of the oppressed person. In many programmes members of the oppressor groups (men or White people) experienced the anger as a personal attack (and sometimes it was!) and retreated. Their retreat triggered further anger, and in this vicious cycle the possibility of a mutually constructive and beneficial relationship became less attainable as the programme progressed.

In the *"Through one hundred pairs of Eyes"* programmes I experienced greatest success in establishing cross-race and cross-gender relationships that were not based on denial or avoidance of issues of racism and sexism. On many occasions I have reflected on what it was about those programmes that assisted us in crossing the divides that had proved so perilous for many other programmes. I am still not sure that I have been able to identify the various contributors but it seemed that that the following may have been important to our success:-

- Based around video scenes
- Shared analysis of Institutional Discrimination
- Attention to building a climate conducive to learning about challenging issues
- ‘Doing with’ not ‘to’

Before elaborating on the insights gained from my reflections it is necessary to say a little about this training package. In 1984 Susan Weil, Centre for Staff Development in Higher Education, London University brought together a team of Black academics, professionals and practitioners in the Race Equality field to develop a training video - *Through a hundred pair of Eyes* (Weil with Annamanthodo et al, 1985). We hoped to provide managers and trainers with a tool for developing understanding of the issues of Institutional Racism, and for enhancing skills in challenging racist practices. The video was scripted through a process of inquiry into our own and others' everyday work experiences, particularly in organisations that had well established policies, procedures and training approaches. It was composed of a series of 52 short scenes – critical incidents that held within them expressions of racial discrimination. The camera took the place of a participant in the incident and as a result the viewer found him/herself being invited to make a response to the incident.

The programme was well received and the Centre offered trainer training programmes to people wishing to develop their own and their organisations's skills in using this programme to its full potential. Susan, a White woman colleague and friend, and I, were involved in both the development of the video package, and in the design and delivery of the training that followed. So returning to the factors that seemed to contribute to our success in working on issues of gender and race across the divides of racism and sexism, these seemed to be:

- *Training based around video scenes*

It seemed important that starting point for this work were video scenes rather than 'live' experience. In a 'subjective trigger the camera takes the place of the viewer in the scene. Thus the viewer is involved in the scenes. They experience themselves being confronted with the dilemmas in context, and yet there is distance from the experience as " it is only a response to a video scene." Participants were required to take turns in listening to each other's responses to the scenes, and asked not to have a discussion about the response given. In this process they were able to hear the very different ways in which the same situation could be perceived and experienced by another. This was important learning and groundwork for the training course.

- *Shared analysis of Institutional Discrimination*

In the manual we presented Institutional Discrimination as a complex and seamless weave of interactions between individuals, institutional structures, culture and the taken- for -granted unobserved context of society. We saw it as learnt ideology that influenced the perceptions of individuals and informed their decisions and behaviours, rather than as inherent characteristics of the individual. We said:

"[it is] 'both the ideology of White superiority on the grounds of 'race' and the structures , traditions, practices and processes which transmit and perpetuate that ideology …while racism takes many forms it essentially entails the attribution, either explicitly or implicitly, of negative and/or fixed characteristics to particular groups. These attributions are used in turn to justify – covertly and overtly – the unequal treatment of specific groups." (Annamanthodo, et al, 1985)

I observed that as participants engaged with the significance of this analysis, they were able to move from the labelling of individuals as "racist" or "sexist", and to seeing racism and sexism as learnt behaviour internalised by **all** of us to a greater or lesser degree. With this came greater possibilities for empathy, dialogue and connection. It also allowed us to find ways of holding the paradox of justifiable rage and non-attributable blame. By this I mean that the fact that I may be angry about the way in which I have been treated by 'men', does not mean that the man who witnesses my anger to an incident experienced is personally to blame for the actions that triggered my anger. In some instances, my anger may have been triggered by his actions, but this theoretical framework allowed us to be better able to untangle personal responsibility from that of the collective.

- *A climate conducive to learning about challenging issues*

On each training event a lot of attention was paid to building a learning climate. This process was started before the training in that priority places were allocated to Black and White pairs, preferably from the same organisation, and not to individuals, and

participants were asked to establish a learning contract that would continue beyond the training event. In this process the attentions of participants were focussed on some to the challenges that joint learning would present. With the support of a pre-course questionnaire they were encouraged to think about what would help them to be able to effectively learn together about racism and sexism. It also provided a level of support in the transfer of the learning back to the workplace. We asked participants to consciously work with us in establishing a context in which the paradox of mutual support and acceptance *and* challenge.

- *'Doing with' not 'to'*

We acknowledged ourselves as learners rather than experts. As a Black and White partnership we continued to find racism at play in our relationship, and sometimes very much struggled to find ways of tackling the dynamics of racism, while continuing to value the other, *and* the relationship. We did not mask the complexity of our relationship and tried to use it as opportunities for furthering our own and others learning. It was interesting to observe that although we never stated this commitment explicitly to participants, on most courses participants commented on how much they had learnt from watching our own relationship. We modelled dealing with racism as a continual learning and unlearning process encompassing reflexive challenge and support.

4. Change from outside the system

As I took time to reflect on the lessons learnt in the years that I actively worked on equality issues, I realised that the legislative and organisational systems were not the only locations in which these struggles were fought. There were individuals and groups who had consciously chosen to locate themselves outside of the formal system, and that they too had important lessons to offer. It is not the work of this thesis to describe the various ways in which liberation was struggled for outside of the formal system, but simply to identify the insights and questions those initiatives raised for me.

From the 60's to the 80's there were a number of Black self-help and / or political organisations. I was not a member of any of them, but nevertheless they influenced my thinking through conversations with members of those organisations. From them the importance of the following issues was raised:

Unity and collaboration

Through these interactions I was helped to see Black people's experiences in Britain as simply one example of the domination of Black people by the White Supremacist System. The fight of European colonies for independence; Civil rights, Black Power and the struggles of the Native Indians in the USA; the anti-apartheid struggles in Southern Africa were other forms and locations of the same struggle. From this perspective the need for the awakening of Black people all over the world, and for their movement from objectified victims of an abhorrent system to active agents of change could be seen as critical. It was perceived that the segmentation and dividing up of Africa, and the splitting of Black countries, ethnic and cultural groupings and of families had greatly contributed to the institution and maintenance of the racist,

imperialist system, so the unifying of Black people became an important act of resistance.

I was particularly impressed by a group of Black women who had within their aims the intention to build good communication and relationships with Black men. They worked towards holding together the paradox that the Black man while being a member of a oppressor group was also a brother, father, husband, friend and also a member of the oppressed. This was the first time I had encountered people struggling to live out that complexity. I was more accustomed to the analysis of the problem that placed men in the category of oppressor and therefore unlike ourselves - the enemy.

Consciousness-raising, empowerment, self-love and self-reliance

Fundamental to the Black movement was the need for consciousness-raising. It was perceived that in our struggle for survival individuals needed to become aware of the processes by which they were being oppressed, and by which we had been taught inferiority. The movement in Britain was very much influenced by the Black power movement in the States and the 'Black is Beautiful' campaign. Black identity and consciousness-raising workshops were run and Black history was taught. In this process individuals were empowered and became active in the struggle against oppression. Racial liberation was perceived to be a task primarily for the Black person. White people were not seen as having a central role to play, and in many organisations they were excluded. Taking responsibility for our recovery from the damage of racial oppression we became actively engaged in the education of our children and our communities, and in fighting against racism in the policing, immigration, employment, and housing practices (Bryan et al 1985, Sinclair1988). Freire (1972) talks about the need for emancipatory endeavours to involve cycles of action and reflection. I do not know if these initiatives included reflection but they certainly were instrumental in producing empowered people determined to struggle for their liberation.

As I review the various approaches to the problem of 'race' and sex discrimination, prevalent in the early and mid'80's I realise that my assumptions about the nature of the problem and about what were likely to be effective responses, had been greatly influenced by these social movements. In response to the constraints of time and restriction on this document my reflections on the importance of these initiatives to our learning about emancipation is rather brief, it is a topic that warrants a research study in its own right.

C. Learning from own journey

Freire asks:

> "Who are better than the oppressed to understand the terrible significance of an oppressive society? Who suffer the effects of oppression more than the oppressed? Who can better understand the necessity of liberation?"

As I thought on these issues it seemed that by inquiring into my own journey I might gain valuable information about the process of learning about issues such as racism and sexism and about empowerment and change.

Awaking and coming to consciousness

From my exploration I realised that although I had worked with the issues of institutional discrimination for many years, I had little real ‘conscious awareness’ of the *experience* of discrimination. This is not to say that I had not been the recipient of any oppressive acts, but rather to acknowledge that one of my coping mechanisms for dealing with a discriminatory and oppressive system was to close down on my feelings. I had learned not to feel - to become numb. Throughout the period of working as an equal opportunities specialist I was out of touch with the impact of racism and sexism on me, except at an intellectual level.

As I explored my experience I realised that the awakening and coming to consciousness of oppression was, at least in my case, a slow and incremental process. There are indicators of a developing consciousness raising of in the stories recounted in chapters1, and 2. However it was two later experiences that made most impact on my development and produced a greatly enhanced level of awareness.

The first of these was the invitation, in 1984, to join the team developing the ‘Through One Hundred Pairs of Eyes’ trigger video described in the previous section. With hindsight I realise that we were engaged in Co-operative Inquiry, but at that time I /we did not label our actions in that way. We were simply researching our experiences in order to make a training video. Working on this project heightened my understanding of and ability to recognise covert racism in many everyday occurrences, and validated my subjective knowledge. The process of sharing experiences enabled me to discover that I was not the only one perceiving disjunctions between explicitly stated messages and those implicit within everyday occurrences,

However despite the heightened awareness gained, I was unaware that I was engaging with these experiences at an emotional distance and at an intellectual level only. I observed and noticed discrimination as if it were some one else's experience. I sometimes felt the anger but I was usually well able to suppress and control it.

It was this second significant event that helped me make connections with the degree of detachment and unawareness with which I had learnt to live my life. At the end of 1985 I was asked to write an article on "Being a Black woman Trainer in Britain". I agreed to write it without realising what it would demand of me. I had never asked of myself ‘ What does it mean to me to experience racism and sexism on a day by day and week by week basis?’ From an early age I had been taught that survival depended on learning to " ignore it ". Common messages were " don’t take any notice, they are just ignorant", and "just get on with what you want to do, don’t waste time thinking about it." These messages stood me in good stead. They allowed me to progress through and up the heart of the System - the Civil Service. This creating of distance from my reactions to racism and from the feelings evoked by those encounters protected me. It enabled me to be able to negotiate alienating and negating situations seemingly unscathed. It was a survival strategy developed over the years, which enabled me to analyse discriminatory processes, without being affected by them.

However as I tried to write this article I began to realise that it was extremely difficult to do. I found myself retreating to my bedroom. As I closed my door the experiences

started to emerge and with them great anger, rage and then pain. I wrote pages, many of which were quickly relegated to the wastepaper bin. With those words came tears and then sobs. I had been, for so many years completely unaware of what it *felt* like to be a Black woman trainer in Britain. In and through the writing of that article I took another step in my process of coming to consciousness. In the making of the trigger video I had opened my eyes and started to see more clearly and now in the process of giving expression to my experience I had started to feel.

Torbert (1991) identifies the lack of conscious awareness with which most people live their lives, and operate in organisations, to be one of the greatest inhibitors of learning and change. My experience here concurs with that. In waking up, in allowing myself to see and feel, I could no longer avoid experiencing the searing pain. I could no longer avoid the hurt, the loneliness, despair and sense of powerless, but in going into this I discovered a level of awareness and learning that had previously been out of my reach. The tapping of my pain also released my anger, and with that came an increased energy, and determination to achieve change, and to liberate myself, and others, from this oppressive system. It increased my motivation to understand the processes by which we were trapped in order to deconstruct it, and widened my own and others opportunities for empowered choice and actions.

This is the point at which I decided that I wanted to undertake a serious exploration of these issues. I wanted to better understand the range of issues involved in working towards greater equal opportunities in organisations, in order to improve my practice as a change agent.

From this exploration I learnt that a process of awakening was critical to the liberation of oppressed people, but that this may be a gradual, incremental and painful process. It also raised further questions for me about the triggering of this process. The questions remained throughout the research and in chapter 9 I return to them again.

Starting to problemise the learnt strategy of detachment and distance

This learning point is related to the previous one, but at this stage on my journey I was beginning to notice that detachment and distance were not simply indicators of a position taken in relation to potentially hurtful experiences, but they were **habitual life positions**. Freire states that " *No pedagogy which is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed.*" From my life inquiry I was learning that no one who wishes to liberate herself can distance herself from life – painful or otherwise. I began to recognise the need for integration of the self, for connection with others and participation in life.

This issue of detachment and distance was a great challenge in the early stages of the thesis. It made the definition of my topic a seemingly lengthy process. My thesis is registered as "Creating social changes in organisations" – a title that at that time provided me with the mask I needed to engage in this endeavour. However, many pages of writing track my discomfort with this definition and my struggle to give voice to the real source of impetus for the study. In chapter 5 I describe the process through which the topic was defined. In this chapter my only concern is (through

journal entries) to illustrate some of the dances of closeness and distance in relation to this work, and the resistance to my participation as a research 'subject'.

August 1988Defining it [my topic] as being about Black women is more personal. I find myself in the centre - the focus - of the research. It seems to me that if I redefine it in this way I would be starting from the core and working outwards. I would be in the very centre of it. That feels like a very painful place to be - exposed, vulnerable, nerve ends showing. I am not sure that I want to be there. Yet this is what means a lot. I need to look at this further. [...] This makes me aware that I am essentially looking at me - asking what does Equal Opportunities mean for me. Yes, I am back to recognising that I may be opening up old half - healed wounds. I may also be making my relationships vulnerable ... I may not be able to avoid this.

In this piece I can now see that I was at a stage where I was consciously aware that my urge to do research was not simply one of becoming engaged in a piece of academic study, but it was a part of my struggle to make sense of my world. In moving from an inquiry into the creating of social changes to an exploration of Black women thriving, I was signalling my concern to identify what would need to happen for **me** to be able to realise **my** potential, and to make **my** unique contributions to the organisations in which I worked. I was acknowledging our disillusionment with organisations and wondering would it ever be possible for me to attain a sense of self - actualisation and full participation in White organisations. I was activating the question that had been formed during the Maya Angelou concert some months previously, that I mentioned in the introduction to the thesis.

Sun 10 Sept 1988

I am now clear that I want to look at creating EO for Black women in Britain. The new question " What do Black women want?" has now emerged. I am aware that the needs of Black women have been neglected for so long, and I have read so little in this area that there is a great temptation to read everything I come across. I want to be selective but I may need help. I think that I want to focus on Black women's career aspirations - but more specifically on what they need from employers.

- *The question "Who am I doing this for?" (besides myself) springs to mind. Is it for the Black women themselves? Yes, I would like other Black women to benefit from it, but my prime aim is to influence organisational change. There are a number of organisations with Equal Opportunities policies and goals who are unaware and ignorant of the specific needs, goals and aspirations of Black women. I am also concerned that so often they fall between the work of the Race specialist and the Woman's specialist. Primarily I want to do something that supportively challenges organisations - something that helps other Black women make sense of their experiences and that encourages them to "raise their voices". [...] I would like to do more than just a study of the needs - I would like to be generating some models of how to change ... however there may not be many models of "good practice" to use as a starting point. Maybe I could look at other*

change programmes aimed at creating greater sex and racial equality generally and identify what else needs to be done.

In this second entry I have moved back a few paces, from the intense challenge that full participation in the study raised for me in August. I have retreated to the much safer position of trying to change organisations, and of being the facilitator of other Black women's change.

24 September 1988 - *On the train returning from my first Post Graduate Group meeting.*

Today I put into words - to Peter, Judi and the Group - the developments that have taken place in me around the definition of my topic area. I am conscious that in redefining it I have made it less safe for all of us. Prior to this I was only aware that it had become less safe for me, but today I became aware that in shifting from the organisation to the individual, it has also become less safe for the group and for Judi and Peter in particular. The issue of me as a black woman in the group is now explicit. Our group process is now the content of my work. It is likely to be similar to the way that Heidi explicitly brings women's perceptions, and their use and engagement with power into the group. This relationship between research topics and group process is fascinating.

This entry indicates that I am now identifying with the issues, and recognising that issues of race and gender, part of the unspoken dynamics in any cross-gender, cross-race group, are made more explicit through my association with my topic.

In June 1989 I reached a point of resolution. From this point onwards there was greater consistency in my statements of my topic. The stated goals were:

- ***Goal 1****....I want to give greater form to the notion of equality of opportunity for black women. What changes need to take place in: a) Black women - as individuals and as a group? b) The organisations in which they work? c) In the wider contexts and societies in which those organisations and those women exist? What would need to happen if Black women are to be able to move from a state of surviving to thriving?*

I want to explore, make explicit, and gain a better " sense of knowing" of what it means in practice for Black women to move from states of surviving to thriving in a racist and sexist society. I want to understand the meanings of, and the difference between, these states in a way that enables me to communicate these meanings to others - black and white, men and women.

- ***Goal 2*** *... To make explicit and give voice to the patterns / themes and commonality of experience of black women as they struggle to survive in organisations. What is the experience that is forcing many to leave organizations (having succeeded in joining), and which make survival so stressful for those who remain.*

These goals, though expressed in the third person were followed by a piece of writing in which I explored the specific benefits "For me", "For us" and "For them". Reason and Marshall (1987) suggest that these are explicit and implicit objectives in research projects. In 1991, writing in my journal, I expanded and personalised the goals. In this piece of writing my complete identification with the research is clear and from the writing came new insights about both the nature of the problem and about my hopes and aspirations for the research. About the first goal I said:

Journal 1991

Over the years I became increasingly aware of the lack of connection between my private and my public/ professional self. The gap between these two faces of me had widened to an extent where it was causing me pain. I was no longer happy with this separation. I had a sense of being out of balance and I was becoming more and more aware of the need to transfer learning and skills between these two ways of being. The professional self seemed to be already highly developed and skilled and rapidly expanding and while the private /inner self seemed small, immature, under-developed and relatively unskilled. The pain that accompanied this awareness triggered me to start a process of connecting with and developing the private/ inner self. There was a desperate cry for wholeness. Then the private /inner self as it began to grow was no longer prepared to be kept hidden, invisible and silent. It began to want to speak and to appear in the public arena. It began to claim for itself some of the awareness and skills which were the taken-for-granted possessions of the professional /public self. These were some of the inner / hidden processes motivating me to attempt another academic qualification. My private /inner self was no longer prepared for this to be the arena and gain of the professional self only. It was clear that whatever I did had to be of benefit to me as an individual and well as a professional.

This is part of my own journey towards greater self-actualisation, the discovery and claiming of my potential, self -empowerment and growth. It is intended to assist me in understanding better what is needed from me as a facilitator or helper in the development processes of oppressed people. My intuitive feeling is that substantively different challenges are encountered when developing people who have experienced discrimination as a lifetime and everyday process than those encountered when working with people for whom experiences of discrimination and disadvantage is a short-term occasional happening. I feel that in order to understand better what are the issues involved I need to bring a sense of conscious awareness to the study of myself in action. I have decided to use my experience of tracking and noticing the blocks and barriers encountered both internally and externally to observe the process by which change comes about. I want to pay close attention to my work as a developer / facilitator of learning and growth in oppressed peoples.

Reflecting on the second goal I wrote:

I am aware of the irony in researching the attainment of greater equality of opportunity at a time when I have withdrawn from employment in organisations and through self employment I have chosen to place myself

outside of all organisations. I want to understand better what was behind this positioning of myself. I have noticed that a growing number of Black women and men are similarly placing themselves outside of organizations - willing to take the risks of self employment in an increasingly uncertain economic climate. What experiences trigger such actions and what hidden survival patterns exist between these observable facts? In my own situation, there may be a link between my increasing determination to grow and develop and my moving outside of any organisation. It is important to become aware of what it was that I was trying to attain or to avoid by placing myself outside.

As I became more accepting of my position within the research so I began to intellectually understand that in focussing on professional development I may be colluding with a process that masked the need for personal development. This knowledge had been developing at a subjective level for some years but until this piece of writing it had not been so clearly articulated. In gaining conceptual understanding of this issue, I began to understand that some of my dissatisfaction with the management development literature was the omission of personal development needs. In recognising my concern for self-actualisation and growth, and in beginning to discover the internal and external blocks to these processes I understood something about the ways in which discrimination and oppression dehumanises and alienates the individual. I then understood that any liberation process must have within it objectives about both professional and personal development. It must be a process that facilitates a psychological and intellectual awakening, and that stimulates a yearning to be fully human. This awareness influenced both my research and professional practices and caused me to be more concerned to find ways of working and methods that acknowledged the whole person and the conflict that sometimes exists between professional and individual development.

From this writing and in this process, I also understood something about the need for the integration of conceptual and subjective knowledge if we are to act consciously. I had read Fanon and Friere and recognised that a familiar coping strategy was the splitting of the professional and personal. Yet, somehow these various sets of information were kept separate from each other, and not consciously related to the alienation of the self that is inherent in much management development theory and practice. I began to think that learning and change demands that we gain and relate different types of knowledge (see chapter 6).

In the process of this writing I began to name a fundamental contradiction in my research, and a critical dilemma in the liberation of oppressed peoples. I recognised that I had adopted a position of alienation (placing myself outside of organizations) in order to protect and to facilitate the possibility of becoming, yet alienation was in itself both a product of discrimination and a means by which it was perpetuated. This was probably one of the first aha moments in which I began to understand that surviving and thriving were not different points on the same continuum. Thriving was not about learning to be more skilled or adept at thriving, but instead I began to realise that to thrive I may have to let go my attachment to, and or change my relationship to some of my survival strategies.

The 1991 piece of writing quoted above marks a shift in my concerns. No longer was I so occupied with the external blocks and barriers to our progression and

development in organisations, I was now focussed on our internal processes as oppressed people. I tried to identify what were the specific development needs of people who had suffered discrimination on a regular or daily basis. I was more deeply questioning some of the indicators used in assessing my/our success at creating more liberatory systems and structures.

Taking responsibility for both liberation and oppression

In the process of awakening that took place in the years just prior to and after the start of this work I began to more fully recognise that I played a part in my own oppression. For some years I had believed that oppressed people must play an active role in the designing of and attainment of strategies of liberation. However, I had not attained the subjective learning that enabled me to move beyond this to knowing that **I** also participated in the process by which I was oppressed. I had not understood why Fanon's "Black Skin White Mask" frightened me. As I found and explored some of my coping strategies so I began to see my own complicity in the oppressive system. The thought that I had played any part in those very painful and self negating experiences was one against which I resisted, yet in defending myself and refusing to consider my responsibility in this process, I was accepting the part of passive victim scripted for me by the system. In this way I was subjectively understanding an important paradox about deconstructing discrimination and oppression that I had encountered as intellectual knowledge in the writings of Fanon (1967), Freire (1972), among others. This proved to be a critically important insight that created a very gradual and incremental but fundamental shift in my understanding of and my stance in relation to discrimination.

Closing Remarks

It is apparent that the theoretical framework that influenced the decisions made at different points in this research was developed from learning gained in a variety of different ways. I carried into the research an awareness of:

- the complexity of Institutional Discrimination and of the need for multi-stranded organisational strategies.
- The paradoxical nature of Positive Action initiatives. I perceived their potential for reinforcing, as well as for challenging, the status quo.
- the need for abstract issues of oppression and liberation to be grounded in our actual everyday experience, and that racist and sexist ideology had been learnt by us all and needed to be unlearnt.
- the value of dialogue and collaboration in unpacking and understanding discrimination as it appears in everyday experience and in developing strategies that effectively change our ways of relating.
- a number of questions and dilemmas that were worked on through out the research. Questions such as:
    - What are the respective roles of the oppressed and oppressor in the fight for liberation?

- *In a situation where the oppressor group holds institutional power how do the oppressed initiate change?*
- *What is the process by which a conscious awakening takes place, and empowerment starts?*
- *How does our internalisation of the system get acted out in our lives, and how can we "liberate our minds from mental slavery"?*

These questions and issues were worked at implicitly and explicitly throughout the whole of this study and they appear as distinctive threads in the chapters that follow.