

SECTION TWO

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Research Design and Planning

AND

The Inquiry Experience

Chapters 5 ,6 & 7

SECTION TWO – Methodology and methods

Chapter 5 - Influences prefiguring methodological choice

Introduction

In this section I make visible the complex interweave of values, principles, concerns, changing perceptions of the problem, hopes and anticipated outcomes which prompted this exploration, which motivated me to keep going, and which influenced the research decisions made at various points of the project. My understanding and definition of my research topic and also my perceptions of the social environment in which I find myself have influenced the methodological choices made.

My dilemma in writing this very central section is how might I, with integrity, reveal to you the various stages through which this study has passed? How do I appropriately honour and value research activity and experiences which, at one time I struggled to articulate or conceptualise, but with the passing of time have become a familiar part of my normal way of seeing and acting, and integral to my everyday practice? How can I recount this research in a way that allows the range of feelings experienced at various stages of the study - confusion, pain, anxiety, excitement, exhilaration, among others - to emerge? Having struggled with these dilemmas for a while I decided not to try to resolve them, but simply to remain conscious of them as I write.

Chapters 3 & 4 recount the pressures, stresses, confusion and surprises encountered in the organisational and social contexts in which I operated and the questions that emerged. In 1987 I reached a place of great dissatisfaction with the approaches adopted in facilitating greater equality of opportunities in organisations, and with the solutions being offered by change agents - including myself. It was also a time of personal stocktaking and reappraisal. From this came great dissatisfaction with many aspects of my life and career choices up to then. I was disturbed by the degree of

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

dissonance between my espoused values and those expressed through the decisions and choices made in living my life; and by the costs paid for some of the benefits attained. This produced a strong commitment to my own development and growth and to bringing about radical life changes.

Registering to undertake this research project was a key strategy for engaging with and exploring the professional and personal challenges and dilemmas encountered and facilitating my development. At the time of choosing to do a research degree I was aware that I no longer wanted to choose developmental opportunities that colluded with and fed the personal and professional split that I was becoming aware of in myself. I wanted an opportunity that was intellectually stimulating while promoting emotional and spiritual growth. This research was conceived for liberatory and transformational purposes, and in retrospect this motivation prefigured, in ways that were often not articulated, the methodological choices made and the methods used.

In this chapter I explain the factors that contributed to my:

- a. *Choice of School within which to locate this study;*
- b. *Choice of Methodology;*
- c. *Definition of my topic.*

In Chapter 6 I describe my methodology and the process by which it was chosen for this work. In chapter 7 I outline the research and give a brief overview of the data generated. I describe its design, methods used, and the disciplines undertaken to enhance my researching skills and to create climates conducive to the generation of knowledge consonant with the research goals.

A. Choosing the Institution for my study

Who I am, where I have been and what I have done directly, and indirectly, influenced my research choices. Those issues were at play in the choosing of a school. For many years I had worked on issues of equality. I had learnt to recognise that racism and other supremacist ideologies infused all institutional systems and structures. At school I had encountered prejudice in some of my teachers and experienced the negative impact that had on me. Therefore I anticipated that I might overtly and /or covertly encounter discrimination and I was on guard. I perceived research to be an influential political act and therefore wanted to find a school that acknowledged the complex power dynamics in which the researcher operates.

In searching for a school I carried both personal and political concerns. I feared that the academic world might unintentionally militate against me doing work that might disturb the status quo. Yet my intention was that my research should be a process by which change in the system is stimulated, as well as information gathered about facilitating of change. I anticipated that in my study I would be challenging assumptions about the nature, abilities, and potential competencies of Black women. I was greatly encouraged by the fact that other women (though most were White) were making visible the mechanisms by which women's oppression is perpetuated through research methodology (Belenky et al 1986, Gilligan 1982). So I was not on my own.

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

However I knew that in my attempt to identify those mechanisms which oppressed, discriminated and disadvantaged Black women I needed a supportive and sympathetic environment in which to work. I needed a school which would not be afraid of (and ideally, one that would actively welcome) the challenge which both my study, and my very presence in the school would bring. One which had already begun to challenge the methodological epistemologies by which women's ways of knowing are devalued, and obliterated from research, and which would support me in challenging the covert, external and internal barriers, that together produce the absence of Black women's voices in academia.

I thought it unlikely that in 1987 any school would have begun to address the racism inherent in the research process, and to identify the very subtle ways in which Black researchers may be disadvantaged. Therefore, it seemed inevitable that in doing this work I would find myself with the additional responsibility of being a facilitator of the school's learning – if it was willing to learn.

These specifications rapidly reduced my choices and led me to the School of Management in Bath University, to work with Judi Marshall and Peter Reason. I knew that small group to be renowned for challenging the basis on which research was done. I had met Judi Marshall and read her explorations of the experiences of women managers in organisations work (Marshall 1984) and perceived a commitment to widen her understanding of oppressive systems. Therefore, at the start of this research, when the actual research topic was still very unclear, I held some core ideas of the principles by which this inquiry was to be guided. So any account of my methodology must include both the values & principles that, not always consciously, influenced my choice and must surface the process by which I 'found' my area of research.

B. Values and principles influencing methodological choices

At the time of starting this work terms such as 'positivist' and 'post positivist' were unknown to me, nevertheless from the very start, issues of methodology were paramount. At that time I would probably not have been able to articulate the political values and principles that informed my decisions and choices at the conception of this study, as lucidly as I can now, nevertheless the strong concerns were present. Ethics and values are often deemed to be inappropriate to orthodox research practice (Haan et al 1983), however it was from my political awareness and concern to change the system that this study emerged.

Research as a powerful and political act

On a number of occasions I had read with a sense of frustration and powerlessness research findings about 'Black women', 'Black people', 'Black youth', 'Black

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

culture', 'Caribbean and African communities' etc, which though presented as value free, objective and unbiased did not reflect me. Nor did they give me (or people like me) permission or space to express our values, perspectives, or differences of experience. Despite their claims, research previously encountered, reflected a very specific worldview and perspectives (Williams, 1980). Gradually I began to realise the source of my frustration. I valued and wanted to use research as a basis for enhancing my theories of my world, but my belief in those theories was undermined by the obvious bias of work that claimed to be objective. I believed that research, regardless of the method by which it is conducted, inevitably reflects the perceptual sets, value system and schema of the decision-makers in that process. It seemed to me that researchers in their routine everyday research practices engage in powerful acts which gradually undermine or shore up the White, patriarchal, colonial, oppressive system. I had begun to identify that research, whether undertaken by Black or White researchers, generally came from a worldview in which Western values, and culture are seen as superior and normative. While Black, African, Asian, "Third World" and / or feminine orientations, ways of behaving, values and cultures are seen as not only different but inferior and deviant (Capra 1982; Collins 1990; Marshall 1984 & 1995). Researchers, through making conscious decisions about method, determine who and what is included and excluded; what is selected as information worth recounting or analysing and what data is overlooked and discarded. Then through a less conscious process they choose what "lens" are used for reviewing and reflecting on the data.

I was concerned about the serious imbalance of power between the researcher and those whose lives and behaviours are studied. Orthodox research attributes powers of decision-making; control, definition, pronouncement and expression to the "objective" researcher, while objectifying and in this way disabling, negating and silencing those researched upon. Thus is an essentially dehumanising and disabling experience for the objectified research subjects. They are not permitted the right to formulate questions that are worth studying. They are not allowed to interpret, give meaning to, and name their own life experiences; nor are they allowed to influence the forms in which their contributions to the research are made. (Heron 1981, Mama 1995, Collins 1990)

The awarding of superior or inferior status to observed human behaviour seemed to be at the heart of normative research. In my view traditional research was therefore, intentionally or unintentionally, a tool of the system ensuring its maintenance and protecting it from any likelihood of transformational change. (Cooperrider and Srivasta, 1987; Mama, 1995)

I saw it as an important pillar maintaining our very unfair and unjust status quo. So recognising, with great ambivalence and concern, my desire to engage in research I determined to explore other ways of working, as I did not want to be part of a process that further empowered the current dominant world system. Nevertheless, I was concerned that the powerful status quo may be very resistant and punishing of anyone challenging it - even if it was merely by devaluing its way of thinking and methods of researching. Therefore finding the right school for this study seemed critical

Research as both end and means

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

It was always my opinion that the research process - the thousands of large and small actions that would be taken throughout the life of an inquiry - and its findings were not separate but part of the same whole. It seemed that research was never simply an end in itself, but that it was also the means to an end. Research goals and objectives, intentionally or unintentionally, were always linked to the achievement of bigger organisational or societal goals. I wanted to explicitly acknowledge this and to ensure that I kept my ultimate goals in mind at all times.

It was important to me that the project was designed in ways that allowed everyone participating in the project to gain direct benefits from their involvement and so produced other valuable outcomes beside academic theories.

Research as a liberatory tool and a catalyst of change

As a project conceived from my attempts to facilitate fundamental organisational change, I wanted to keep in mind that this was simply *another* means of doing that. It was my intention to go down from the 'high ground' of Equal Opportunities policies and procedures, into the messiness of the 'swampy lowlands' (Schon, 1983) where individual perceptions, meanings and behaviour are entangled, and where what is being sought is often not clear. In doing that I hoped to gain insight into some of the underpinning structures of the system and be therefore better equipped to design effective change strategies.

I also wanted to shift the traditional power balance by using the research as a vehicle for the voices and thoughts of Black women to be expressed. I believed that Black women have an important part to play in deconstructing discriminatory systems and in designing and framing more liberatory ways for people to relate to each other (hooks 1982, Friere 1972). I saw this research as one opportunity for us to make such a contribution. From my experience I had observed that actors and perpetrators of racism and sexism are often unconscious of their actions while the recipients of those actions are often very aware of what has taken place (Essed 1991). I believed that from years of witnessing, observing and experiencing discrimination the oppressed develop a sophisticated level of skill at observing and analysing human interaction and detecting discrimination. We seem to have a well-developed 'sixth sense', which allows us to 'know' discrimination, even when we are not able to isolate and verbalize the problem objectively. Therefore Black women, and other people who experience discrimination, have unique contributions to make to the understanding and deconstructing of racism and sexism. I wanted a research paradigm that validated that contribution and empowered research participants to offer their knowledge, and to bring to the project their skills in making sense of their experiences.

Research that allows me to understand from inside out

Influenced by a perception formed from my participation in Equal Opportunities initiatives in the early '80's a core goal was to understand better the blocks and barriers to creating social changes in organisations. I was intrigued that despite investment of many resources there had not been any real fundamental or radical changes in organisations and this observation triggered many questions. In a working paper written in 1988 I wrote:

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

*"I need a method of working that enables me to get inside and understand the **meaning** of the desired changes.*

What does it mean for an oppressed group to have greater equality of opportunities? What pushes, stresses and strains occur as members of these groups awaken to their potential and try to attain it?"

Energised by feelings of disappointment, tiredness, anger at what appeared to be the waste of efforts – others and mine, I wanted to find out why so little had happened. I had a sense that as change agents our ineffectiveness was partly due to having a very poor understanding of what was really needed. I sensed that the rigid boundaries between disciplines and specialisms made it difficult for important and difficult questions to be raised, explored and pertinent solutions generated. Initially I had been focused outward - trying to identify what others (men, White people, organisations, government, and communities) needed to do to create greater equality of opportunities. Then, as mentioned earlier, in the process of journalling I realised that the questions I most wanted to ask were:

*"What does equality of opportunity mean to **us** as Black women? Can I, as a Black woman, thrive in Britain? What do I/we want/need? What is our part in maintaining or changing the system?"*

In framing the issue through my passion I became involved in a deep inner search, and in which I wanted to understand the problem from inside out. I needed a method that allowed me to **know** from within. It was critically important to me that I should be able to inquire into, explore, uncover, discover ways in which I had been inhibited from finding the fullness of my human potential and from making a fuller contribution of the many gifts and talents with which I had been blessed. This concern is aptly expressed in the following poem:

The Explorer returned to his people,
Who were eager to know about the
Amazon. But how could he ever put into words
the feelings that flooded his heart
when he saw exotic flowers
and heard the night sounds of the forest
When he sensed the danger of wild
beasts or paddled his canoe over
treacherous rapids?
He said, "Go and find out for yourselves."

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

To guide them

he drew a map of the river.

They pounced upon the map. They framed it

in their own town hall. They made

copies of it for themselves. And all who had a

copy considered themselves experts on the

river, for did they not know its every turn

and bend, how broad it was

and how deep, where the rapids were

and where the falls?

"The song of the Bird " Anthony de Mello

Like the explorer I wanted a research paradigm that valued the research process as valuable in its own right and not merely as a necessary means for producing a 'map'. The extent to which I, and others involved in the study, shifted in the taking of responsibility for our part in the maintenance and/or changing of discriminatory and oppressive structures, was for me as important a criterion for assessing the success of this research.

Research that values questions as a legitimate outcome

Flowing from the previous point, it seemed critically important that I needed to work within a research paradigm that valued questions as both a starting point for, and a legitimate outcome of research activity. In 1987, a paper on Equal Opportunities that I submitted for publication had been criticised for raising questions but providing no answers. Following the criticism, I decided not to resubmit it as at that time I had only questions - no answers. However, I was disappointed that the finding and giving form to new questions had been perceived as a shortcoming rather than as a valuable and necessary stage in the change process. I needed a method that permitted me to acknowledge that I was starting with only very tentative answers and to admit that I was even unsure of what questions needed to be asked. My expectation was that at the end of the period of researching I may have resolved many of the questions with which I started **and** that I would have as many, or even more, new questions waiting to be explored.

The more traditional approach to research, with its concern with testing and verifying previously formed hypotheses seemed to demand a clear picture of the outcome of the research from the point of starting. In that approach questions seemed useful in testing hypotheses, but were not in themselves a valuable outcome of the research. When I enquired about the possibility of doing this research at an institution, which clearly

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

took a traditional approach to research, I was asked to submit full details of my study - length of my thesis, how many chapters and the proposed content of each chapter! At that stage my area of interest was vast, and I was very unsure of what I wanted to look at. It seemed to me that every time I talked about it, it sounded different!

I needed an approach that accepted that the process of clarifying the area for study was an essential part of the research.

A process that acknowledges power differences and dynamics

It was important to me that the power within the research process - at all levels - should be openly acknowledged. I was conscious of the various power relationships in which this study was set. The power of the institution was vested in Boards of Studies, internal and external examiners, and supervisors. Then there were the power dynamics within our research community - acted out in our Post Graduate Group meetings¹, supervisory sessions, conferences and other learning events; and also my own power, as initiator of the study, in relation to other research participants. It had been my experience that when power was openly acknowledged it was more likely to be used responsibly - with a sense of accountability and openness to challenge. In a study concerned with discrimination (i.e. the abuse or merely the irresponsible, and unconscious use of power). I wanted to work in a mode that would see attending to power relations in the "here and now" of the process as a valid research issue.

Research that facilitates articulation of experiential and tacit knowledge.

In my, and others' (Essed 1991), experience information about discrimination as it happens in the everyday lives of oppressed people is hard to generate. The emotions, which are often, attached to the experience of discriminatory incidents (frustration, irritation, shame, anger, boredom, despair, confusion, pain, sadness) means that they are often rationalised and treated as unimportant or suppressed. Returning to such incidents is therefore not an easy process. Uncovering and exploring discrimination as it takes place in everyday interactions is made more difficult by the fact that some much of this knowledge is gained and held at a subjective, experiential, non-verbal level and hard to articulate.

Research that values stories and anecdotes as legitimate knowledge.

For reasons given in the above paragraph the telling of stories and the recounting of experiences is critically important to the surfacing of subjective knowledge, so that through a sense-making process, patterns and themes could be identified and theories formed. I was very aware that research in the area of institutional discrimination has been overlooked by researchers in the past and that there was not then (and still is not) a body of knowledge with well-formed and commonly accepted theories to inform research (see Chapter 4). I was involved in groundbreaking research, and faced with the challenge of generating raw data about the construction of human relationships. Therefore I needed a research paradigm that validated stories and warrantable knowledge (Estes 1992, Essed 1991, Collins 1990).

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

Research that acknowledges the complexity of diversity

Suppression of diversity and differences, and the awarding of differential value to differences, when they are acknowledged, are both products of discrimination, and means by which the system designed to privilege a small group and disadvantage and exclude the majority is rationalised and justified. This dominant belief system allows us to neatly reduce concepts of 'women' to White, middle class European women; 'Black people' to men of sub-Saharan African descent; 'the disabled' to asexual, white, ageless people in wheel chairs; 'Black youths' to aggressive, amoral, young men of African descent, between the ages of 15 -25. Thus we go on - simplifying the wonderfully complex world in which we live in order to ease our sense-making and meaning-forming processes, and to stay within our Cartesian framing of the world in which things must be either/or and cannot be both / and. I entered this research with the assumption that the Black women collaborators in the research would bring both similarities and differences. I assumed that there may be many 'truths' about the means by which we are excluded, and disadvantaged, and our development and growth suppressed. I wanted an epistemology of research that validated multiplicity of truths and realities. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) says:

"While an Afrocentric feminist epistemology reflects element of epistemologies used by [Black people] and women as groups, it also paradoxically demonstrates features that may be unique to Black women. On certain dimensions Black women may more closely resemble Black men; on others white women; and on still others Black women may stand apart from both groups. Black women's both/and conceptual orientation, the act of being simultaneously a member of a group and yet standing apart from it, forms an integral part of Black women's consciousness."

Research as a part of and not the whole of my life

Having chosen research as a means for enhancing my ability to live my life more fully, it was therefore important to me that it did not expand to fill the whole of my life totally engulf me. It was important to me that through the process of undertaking this work I should learn more about balancing the various parts of myself. I hoped to give space and voice to their differing needs, in this way allowing me to bring my multiple selves to all that I do and both integrate and hold them separately.

Finding my topic

*****START HERE *****

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

As mentioned earlier, this research grew out of my work and life experiences as a Black woman in Britain working with organisations to implement their various equal opportunity policies. I was very much aware of the vast amount of resources that had been put into creating these changes in organisations – resources ranging from money through to emotional energy. Yet it appeared to me that very little real change had taken place.

This left me with many questions: *Why was this so? What needed to happen to bring about these changes? Was the effectuating of social changes so vastly different from that of other types of organisational changes?* My area of interest was wide. It concerned both the effecting of fundamental change **and** a better understanding of the real life and practical experiences of equal opportunities. It was focused on the ‘how’. I wanted to be able to identify clear strategies, guidelines or at least guiding principles and key questions to be asked of organisations wishing to effect Equal Opportunities. Despite my value that the researcher should not become detached from her subject, for some time I was unaware that my focus was on creating knowledge and understanding for my professional practice. My experience as a consultant, together with my unconscious internalisation of orthodox research practice, made it the most natural position focus for this work. However, it was not a very satisfying place to be. My dissatisfaction pushed me into action to discover what I really wanted to know.

I thought my first action was to do some reading, so I rushed off to a bookshop, hoping to find some key books on my topic area. That visit rather vividly illustrated my problem to me. The scope was vast. The possible appropriate titles increased depending on how I viewed the subject. Was my field equal opportunities or organisational change? It seems to be neither, yet both at the same time. Whatever it was, I was now both daunted and overwhelmed.

Notwithstanding, during this visit I came across Judith Bell’s (1987), *‘Doing your own research Project’*. This first piece of reading provided very useful guidelines for starting the inquiry. She encouraged her readers to record their questions and to search for even more questions. It was so reassuring to be told to welcome and even to seek out questions, when I expected myself to be certain and clear. It was also a relief to read that others are quite often confused and unclear at the start of a research project, so I got myself a notebook and started to write. My journal has played a very important role in this process of defining my topic. In Sept 1988 I wrote:

“What is the literature I need to research? Is it about equal opportunities or organisational change? Do I want to do something that assists people working in equal opportunities or do I want it to challenge and help those working in organisational change to recognise and take account of the social change issues, or maybe it is mainly for me? Perhaps it is to assist me in clarifying for myself what is meant by ‘social change’? When we talk about a pluralistic, equal society - what does this mean? How can such a thing be achieved? Is it possible? I am aware of the many groups who fall under the equal opportunities umbrella. Am I intending to look at creating equality of opportunity for all of these groups?

I am aware that I am particularly concerned, interested in, and know most about two groups - ‘women’ and Black people. Maybe this is where I need to

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

start. Perhaps I am not talking about creating social change in general - but about creating equality of opportunities for Black people and women in particular. Do I want to look at Black people and women or is my interest specifically in Black women?"

In another entry in the same period I wrote:

"I have found all the organisations in which I worked uncomfortable, difficult and stressful places for a Black woman to be and work. Yet I am aware that most, if not all, of my colleagues and bosses would be very surprised to hear me say this... This gap between apparent and felt realities, together with the need to maintain appearances has often influenced my decisions around development opportunities. It meant that I had a greatly felt need to seek opportunities for personal development. I was in search of places where I could be me, and where I could get the emotional support that I needed.... Yet it was logical for me to want to consolidate my thinking on organisational change. It was a topic that had fascinated me for some time. The first was a felt need, coming from the gut, while the second was a desire to be intellectually stretched and stimulated - coming from the head. This is the tension that is being reflected in the definition of this study."

Personal experiences with the academic world, disaffection with traditional research, the social and economic costs of a long period of study meant that my decision to undertake a research degree had not been made easily. It was very important to me that in my eyes it should be worth it, and questions such as "Why am I doing this research - for what, and for whom?" constantly recurred. I talked to friends, family, colleagues, and fellow post graduate researchers at Bath and my supervisors. As I talked, I listened to myself, and then reflected on my observations in my journal, I pushed myself to try to express the goals hopes and aspirations for the study (see chapter 4). Through this process I began to understand what this research meant to me.

Such was the process of clarification. My questions and thought processes meandered and wove themselves in, out and around the various issues, finally producing a quiet yet exhilarating sense of understanding and knowing. Yes, I wanted to contribute to the knowledge about creating both equal opportunities and organisational change. However, my passionate concern was to clarify what it meant for organisations to offer equality of opportunities to Black women. What types of organisations would we need to create if Black women are not simply to survive but thrive? How might these changes be effected? I realised that I wanted to ground myself in the specific and then to generalise outwards. I wanted to place Black women at the centre of any learning about creating equality of opportunity.

In another paper during this same period, I defined the study even further. I said that I had become more conscious of its boundaries. I realised that this inquiry represented but a drop in the unexplored and uncharted ocean of Black people's experiences. Even having narrowed it down to looking at what it meant for Black women in Britain to move from surviving to thriving, it was clear that the area was still too broad. Under the umbrella of Black women stood a wide diversity of women impacted upon by different issues. I could not hope to look at such a group. Therefore, I narrowed the

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

focus further to women in organisations, who were seen, by themselves or others, to be successful. I hoped to reduce the complexity of the study by focussing on women who, having had their basic security needs addressed, may be open to exploring issues of self-actualisation. I intended to invite women from this rather select group to collaborate with me. I realised, I was excluding the experience of the vast majority of Black women in Britain, because they have:

1. Chosen not to engage with organisations;
2. Been unable to get in; or
3. Got in, but did not survive.

This process assisted me in marking out the boundaries of this research and identified what was outside of my research. Psychologically, it was a very important stage, as I now felt less daunted by the task, and more accepting of uncertainty. I was also more prepared to trust in the process, i.e. that one day I would know!

Closing remarks

The definition of my topic was an important stage in the research process. It started me exploring, clarifying and questioning terms, concepts, ideas, and assumptions about research that previously had been taken for granted. Negotiating the shift from observer/researcher to participant researcher was a valuable step in my development. This involved re-framing my role in ways that allowed me to move from being a commentator/critic on others' actions and producer of theoretical solutions to the problem, to becoming an active participant in the struggle to make sense of a constantly changing and complex problem, and collaborator in the creation of new ways of working and living. In a process that at the time was surprising to me, the definition of my topic was facilitated by my attempts to locate the particular approach to Co-operative Inquiry that was appropriate to my work. In the same way as Judith Bell's book (1987) had started the process so the reading of other writers on research methodology continued it. I say more about this in Chapter 6.

An important goal for this work was my own learning and development. I hoped that by identifying underlying, and so not easily visible patterns of reacting to situations and presenting problems and checking their potential undermine my development, I would facilitate my growth. The clarifying of my topic and the implications of my political values and principles for research methodology provided me with a strong basis from which research decisions could be made.

The choice of research methodology was started well before I registered for this degree. In selecting the Bath School of Management, and Judi Marshall and Peter Reason as my supervisors, I was consciously choosing not to work in the traditional research paradigm, even though I was later to discover that I did not really know of what I was choosing. My work in the early stages of this study was to find out my choice! Reflecting on the many concerns that were present with me prior to starting the course with regard to my own support and safety, I am recognising that for Black women the selection of a school is not a simple or automatic one.

In outlining the values that influenced my decisions at all stages of the research process I am also starting to articulate some of the criteria that act as touchstones for Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html

this research against which I was always to assess questions of quality. In the next chapter I outline the methodology used in the study.

Link to:

http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/c_douglas.html