

PART B

MY ARTICULATION OF PRACTICE-BASED ACTION RESEARCH

Sections:

- 1. The 'I' at the centre of my action research: the perspective I bring**
- 2. The roots and development of my action research practice**
- 3. Questions of quality and integrity in my action research**
- 4. Methodology: the methods I used adapted and created in my practice**

In Part B of my thesis, I reflect on the research aspect that became intertwined with my disaster stories and produced a distinctive practice. As I am author of my stories and facilitator of my internal dialogues between them, it is important that you know something of who I am. All that I embody is the main resource available to me and others as I work with disaster. The first section gives you a glimpse into the aspects of me that feel important to understanding the meanings I have given to my experiences, why I am drawn to action research and disaster work, and how I approach my practice. I would recommend you read this section, even if you choose to leave the technical aspects of my action research practice until later.

Section 2 shows how I developed my understanding of action research, influenced by my need to use it first and foremost as a practitioner rather than as a researcher. This is followed in Section 3 with a discussion of the issues of quality and integrity faced by an action researcher who has no easy replacement for the validity criteria of positivist research beloved by many external monitors wanting concrete and measurable outcomes. Section 4 concludes Part B with an exploration of the action research strategies and methods I have used to develop my practice.

B 1

THE 'I' AT THE CENTRE OF MY ACTION RESEARCH

“The understanding of human nature is an enormous problem, whose solution has been the goal of our culture since time immemorial. Its proper objective must be the understanding of human nature by every human being.”

- Alfred Adler (1927)

Action research is rooted in the participative view of the world, outlined by Skolimowski and summed up in his view, “I participate therefore I am” (Skolimowski, 1994, p.xx), in which subjective experiences are in interdependent relationship with the ‘other’ reality beyond ourselves. The role of the subjective is therefore central to the research, thus differentiating it from scientific research paradigms that demand objectivity (Reason, 1994:1-15; Skolimowski, 1994). The role of subjectivity in research has been an on-going contentious issue and, even in so-called objective research, ideological preferences leading to selective attention to data and biased conclusions have been identified (Hudson, 1972). William James noted that advancements in science depended on the ‘passionate desires of individuals to get their own faiths confirmed’ (James, 1904/1985: 21). Given our human need to search for meaning in the uncertainty of our lives neither felt biases should or could be avoided:

“Our task is not to pretend such biases do not exist, but to establish patterns of conduct that take into account this biased selection of data by researchers.”

- Hudson, 1977: 13

Finding such a pattern of professional conduct is the concern of this chapter through an exploration of my biases that, fashioned by social, economic and emotional needs, cause me to be selective in what I attend to. If action research is to be rigorous, then the subjectivity must be tempered by a professional scepticism springing from insights into the raw materials of character and values underlying who I believe I am (my ontology) which informs how I believe I know (my preferred epistemology) and therefore the methodologies I choose for this thesis. These views are also the foundation for what I believe to be worthwhile tests of quality, explored in B3, for you and others to decide whether my interpretations of my experience have produced a worthwhile and useful practice.

My perspective, the 'eye' observing and the 'I' experiencing and interpreting my stories, is the thread that holds my journey together. There is no question that this part of my life and career has been dominated by MY experience and MY journey using MY maps and models that have evolved from MY reflection or MY adaptations of other people's ideas that have caught MY attention and inspired me. By working from experience and living my own truth at specific times, I feel I have contributed more to the world than when constrained by the needs and truths of organisations and theoretical knowledge. However, this has not been a self-centred, uncritical journey without checks and balances. My truth is the result of a relationship with the truths of other people and the world outside of me. With this in mind I have developed a practice that aims to help people discover and value their own truths, using my work as a guide to possible ways of doing it. I do not believe it possible for anyone else to replicate my practice, nor do I want them to. Instead, I hope my practice may influence them enough to develop their own, but without having to re-invent the wheel completely.

I have chosen to investigate the aspects of myself that recur as the issues and concerns of my present work. Insights have thus been generated that help me place my experiences and practice into a wider context of understanding so I can work with or change any of my beliefs or behaviour patterns that reduce my choices of action.

My perspective on self and the world

Understanding enquiry choices is the 'primary rule of action research practice' (Reason & Bradbury 2001: xxvii). To understand mine, it is important to have some idea of the frame in which my concepts of self and the world lie. I find this difficult. It would be so much easier if I could hold an unquestioning belief in one particular religion or system of thought. But I stay with my present struggles along a cobbled together path, set in the traditions of a non-conformist Protestant Christian upbringing and culture that are hard to escape unless replaced by another strongly held new system. As a consequence, when events occur that challenge my concepts of self and the world, for example, after Ann's death, I find myself needing to make sense of things with reference to many belief systems. I live the paradox of humans of the last centuries described so clearly by the pre-World War II psycho-analyst Alexander Müller (trans. Wolf & Stein, 1992:1-4), wanting freedom from outer and higher powers, yet not wanting the meaningless, competitiveness and lack of personal responsibility of a deterministic, mechanistic view of life, nor the isolation of having to work only in one's own strength.

However, I accept that in order to have stability, I live by certain beliefs 'as if' they were true or would like them to be, even if my rational side cannot believe them or even if my other channels of being have not yet experienced them. Having felt that this was a rather indecisive way to live one's life, I was encouraged to find that the philosophies of both Vaihinger and Adler, drawing on Kant and Nietzsche, highlighted the practical value and indispensability for human beings to create ideal fictions and live by them 'as if' they were true (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956: 86-87). They saw the impossibility of never knowing for sure about such questions as the existence of God or gods – at least until a state of maturity or knowledge has been reached when either these fictions of belief or disbelief are proven to be true or false.

I hold the view that self is far more than a rational construct of our physical being or even the stories we make up about ourselves, because I am always discovering more than the story I have constructed about myself and sense I am constantly falling short of what I could be if I dared to use all the power and resources available to me. This in itself implies there are resources or powers available to me from beyond myself. Left to my own faculties, I could not have envisioned what has come my way over the last decade or so. I sense the energy of some greater life force, though I have no firm belief in what this is or might be. Its source may be within me, but I talk and act as if I am its channel, especially when dealing with the raw emotions of trauma. But I do not believe I am at the mercy of fate; I remain responsible for the choices I make and what I choose to do with my experiences and life. I am in conscious and unconscious co-participation in the creation of my life. I have a firm sense that my life since the Hungerford shootings has taken on the nature of a spiritual journey right here in the midst of the everyday world. Working in a cramped office in a fast food store in the heart of London, my colleague, Mel, and I came to the conclusion that being able to hold one's attention and be fully present with distressed people with noise and interruptions all around is a spiritual practice or, using Skolimowski's term, a Yoga of Participation (1994:163-169).

An image of self that I am drawn to is that of a whirlpool, a metaphor presented in 'Believe it or not', TV Channel 4, (7 September 2003), in which the self is viewed not as an object but as a process actively maintaining itself which can be felt and experienced, an idea that harks back to William James concept in 'The Meaning of Truth', 1909, of self as Promethean and self-making (Audi, 1995). At each stage in its development it may take on what looks like a form but in fact is always moving and changing as it is created, develops and dies, transferring its energies elsewhere. It is

the accumulated consequence of what has gone before and its interactions with what is around, yet is guided by known and unknown laws. It affects and is affected by all its experiences. Such an interactive view is possible even if I were to take a more biological view of self. Trauma specialist, Bessel van der Kolk writes, "*Life itself continues to transform our own biology*" (2002:50) while Ridley (2003) argues:

*"Genes are the epitome of sensitivity, the means by which creatures can be flexible, the very servants of experience. Genes are... active during life; they switch each other on and off; they respond to the environment. They may direct the construction of the body and brain in the womb but then they set about dismantling and rebuilding what they have made almost at once – in response to experience. **They are both cause and consequence of our actions.** Learning could not happen without an innate capacity to learn. Innateness could not be expressed without experience."*

I observe that the arguments I take note of and am excited by, whether from a scientific or spiritual stance, are those that fit a creative inter-active and interdependent world and self with the freedom to choose and change one's direction in life. It is also why I am drawn to the philosophies and practice of Alfred Adler and the ecological and participatory world-views of later writers such as Bateson (1976) and Skolimowski (1994). Adler viewed individuals as holistic, indivisible beings, a product of many possibilities and influences, unique, creative and dependent on the subjective interpretations the person gives to life (Stein & Edwards, 1998). They cannot be understood in isolation from the different spheres, spatial and temporal, of the cosmos, encompassing animals and inanimate objects as well as people and communities (Müller, 1992). The individual is a symphony of interactive, recursive processes (Guisinger and Blatt, 1994) and this is mirrored in the interdependence between the individual and the cosmos.

How have I selected the aspects of self presented here?

In making selections, I am likely to be guilty of the biases I seek to expose. Some of the choices relate directly to what I believe I ought to know about myself and what my professional codes of conduct, in relation to my work in disaster, demand. These include answers to the question, "Why am I involved in disaster work? What are the social, economic and psychological drives behind what I do?" What aspects of myself help or hinder my work and my capacity to support others?" Other choices relate to the underlying beliefs and values that give passion and life to my work and affect the

attitudes underlying the way I practice. I have detected these from observing content, patterns, metaphor, language, strongly stated opinions and marked omissions when looking through my personal journals and writing and listening to tapes of my conversations in supervision groups. Invited and uninvited feedback from colleagues and training groups also contribute to my awareness, as do the culture shocks experienced and reflected upon when in strange or stressful situations, both at home and abroad.

Themes I have detected relating to my disaster work include issues of belonging, self-value, finding a voice, fear of poverty, and striving to compensate for feelings of inferiority. My concern to be a responsible practitioner motivated explorations of such issues as those outlined by Hawkins and Shohet (2000:11): if and how far my wish to help others is clouded by a 'lust for power or the meeting of my own needs'. Themes relating to values and biases which are important both to my disaster work and my action research practice include democracy, community, learning and passing on learning; the perspective I bring as a woman and mother; the places, culture and history I have been part of, along with the need to find a place, have my voice heard and my way of being accepted. The economic drive of needing to earn a living is also important.

As I enquire into myself, contradictions emerge. One of the most marked contradictions in my career has been the tension that exists in the clash between my shy and self-deprecating nature, wracked by feelings of inadequacy and the person that can grow and exude power and confidence in crisis situations and when faced by the media.

Methods of Enquiry: Discerning aspects of self, my values and beliefs

I am not dealing here in absolute verifiable facts. Rather my enquiry into myself is a series of connections that have a resonance for me, both logically and emotionally, from which I can make hypotheses and pose possibilities that help me make some sense of who I am and how I perceive the world.

I have a background of many years of personal enquiry, as part of life and in therapeutic situations of various kinds. Some of these methods are described in B3. In this enquiry, I use one method, the Adlerian Individual Psychology technique of Early Recollections (Adler, 1931: 21-22; Beattie, 1994), because it means I lose some control in the selection process and surrender to the process. This method invites the recall of early memories associated with the issue being explored so that connections between

past and present can be made to increase understanding of the belief systems influencing the present. Adler's underlying theory emphasises the importance of early childhood experiences in forming the basic programme or script that the person continues to live by in adulthood.

I now offer you what I learnt about myself from the early memories activated by the themes observed from my writing.

The insights I gained that connect with my work and research

Insight 1: I can negotiate unknown territory

My first exploration of this 'I' that chose to enter the chaos of disaster and the uncharted territory of a new research paradigm is concerned with understanding what attracts me to this challenging and unpredictable territory and reject safer, more accepted worlds. The challenges of action research are personal and political while the practical problems of persuading others to fund and use it are immense. It requires the capacity to let go of control and promote emergent enquiry whose path may be unpredictable. It is not for the faint-hearted, so why should anyone be drawn into its sphere? Similar comments can be made for disaster work and for other things I have done, such as founding a hostel for young offenders in Radstock, near Bath, when I was twenty-three.

The early recollection method reactivated the stories I heard of my birth, the point of emergence when raw experience and instinct are used to discover how to be and belong in the world just entered. Action research is the first tool for survival. The story of my entry into this world gives clues to how I came to learn the skills of negotiating entry into unknown, unsettled places in order to survive. It does not matter that the memory is not directly remembered by me but is the memory of stories told to me. The method can also work with the smallest fragment of feeling. The first picture created from the recollection was of a newborn baby on a cold table with an arc of people looking on saying 'no room'. My birth made my family homeless - the real significance of my birth to my family, the 'world' I was joining. I was the last straw that made my paternal grandmother say her house was too crowded for our family, except my father who worked in London.

The story of my introduction into my family led to further insights into our family dynamics. At 10 days old, I was taken to the Leicestershire home of my maternal grandparents where my 16 month old sister had been left for 6 weeks. She had the

task of being reunited with her mother and father while also being expected to accept and make room for a rival sibling. So I entered a world of uncertainty, tension and confusion and had to fight for space in another crowded house. I observe how, even now in the re-telling of the story I personalise events by saying 'I was the last straw' as if it was all my fault.

This picture of my entry causing disruption and accompanied by coldness and feeling an outsider is a constant theme through my life. Moving to Australia in 1951, and back to England again four years later, plus several more changes of home and school reinforced the patterns of the stranger entering a different world. It continued later with my entry to Cambridge University, as the first girl from my school to do so, and most of the jobs I took. It continues as a dominant theme in my various entries to disaster work.

I learnt the skills of entering uncertain worlds early on by carefully testing and mapping the territory, engaging and working with the people and resources available. An image I use of 'sensitive entry' is that of myself, aged ten, wanting to make friends outside our new home in Chiswick. By putting on my roller skates, I found a way of gently 'rolling' in alongside the other children until my movements matched theirs and I became one of them. I learnt to negotiate the territory without the need to know or control what happened. I also learnt when and how to leave, with regrets maybe, but not too many attachments.

My learning from these stories has fed my disaster work and my thinking on reunions following disaster (as in the story of a Youth Training Group returning home following a drowning on an activity holiday), the re-integration of disaster workers back into their normal work (see D2) and the integration of diverse groups into the Liverpool Hillsborough Centre team (see B4, Story Box 5).

Insight 2: I do not feel I belong, I feel have to fight to gain my place

The story also hints at some insecurities and needs that help explain my attraction to certain styles of work. The feeling of not belonging to a particular place perhaps hints at my longing for community, and my attraction to community based work and research styles. In disaster work, I am thrust into communities at their most vulnerable when barriers have broken down and close bonds are forged, though these bonds are often transient or have abrupt endings.

But there is also a contradiction. In many early memories I am the outsider joining an existing group but, as much as I want to belong to it, I fear being trapped by its rules and culture. I notice how I want to preserve my independence of thought and I fear my identity will be taken away by those who are more dominant. I can survive best when I have a defined role and can move freely in and out of the group. As a child, I learned never to get too close to any group so that the inevitable leaving would be eased. My Hungerford and bereavement experiences left me mistrustful of groups and as a result I notice that I can be in a group and I love facilitating groups, but I am rarely of the group. The place that suits me best is on the edge, where I can contribute enough but retain my place as an observer and, in return, receive a little nourishment from the group. I used to feel this was bad, but now I accept that, from this attached but detached position, I can maintain clarity of vision and freedom to offer insights to groups who may be too encultured, when, as a Chinese proverb says, *'the fish are the last to know the sea'*. My entry on such occasions may be experienced as a disturbance, but also as a necessary act which, in the end, is welcomed.

Insight 3: I am a connector of people and a catalyst who makes things happen

This 'on the edge' position makes me an ideal 'bridge' between different groups or agencies, though this does make me a messenger at risk of being shot. This feels like the role I learnt in the family. It has continued throughout my career, for example in my roles as a Community Worker working within the tensions between the community and the Local Authorities who paid me, or in social action where I have established unpopular schemes. These dynamics have been repeated in the world of disaster where I am often an external consultant working with unknown, disrupted systems. The skills I developed to deal with them are similar to the complex facilitation tasks of action research, where diverse needs of many stakeholders have to be negotiated, and to the tasks of the net-worker and catalyst who watch out for connections and opportunities for sparking key actions and ideas.

Insight 4: I do not belong, yet I can recognise what it is to belong

Another snapshot from childhood indicates the richness and complexity of contradictions. Balancing the feelings of never quite being accepted, I was fortunate enough to have some childhood experiences of the warmth of belonging. In my mother's home village I was still an outsider by birth-place, but I could see the evidence of extended family and belonging in its history, buildings and the churchyard. Feelings of particular pride came from the extraordinary stories that often do emerge from very ordinary families. My forbears were original action researchers who worked hard,

without any Government funding, for the betterment of their families and the village society. Motivated by their faith, they founded their local Co-operative Society in 1860 that spawned houses, shops, factories and social institutions. They were dissenters, members of the Congregational chapel, that relied on and developed their skills in music, teaching and administration. The Chapel had also produced great-great-aunt Alice whose story is told in point 6 below and who has become my role model.

Insight 5: I have the pursuit of democracy ingrained in me.

My pursuit of democracy and the right of anyone to a voice and a place is also linked to this village and in particular the Congregational Chapel. I reframed the boring memories of my chapel experiences after hearing a radio talk by Tony Benn, MP, whose family was steeped in Congregationalism. He described the Congregational martyrs who died for the right to worship their God directly in a democratically run church without an Episcopal hierarchy. Congregational ministers, including women, my earliest models of female leaders, were the servants of their congregations.

These democratic values enabled many of my family members to exercise power and develop skills otherwise denied to them as members of the working class. Power gained from playing a useful contribution in society was exercised in the pursuit of God. The expectation that everyone had the right to be consulted and heard was deeply engrained in our family belief system, but it was balanced by an equally strong belief that we also had a duty to make an active contribution to society. This belief in democracy was a most valuable gift and a fundamental motivator to many of my actions.

Insight 6: I have a motivation towards action for social change

My community activist ancestors gave me models of being that were incorporated into my blueprint for living in which action research could so easily fit. My movement to act on being confronted with a social need is strong and is a prime driver of the choices I make. I draw on it for sustenance when I am working against the majority view, as is often the case in disaster situations.

I am continually inspired by the story I heard through childhood of Great-great-aunt Alice, another product of the Chapel, who left for Bechuanaland in 1893 as a 23 year old missionary teacher. When Khama, King of the Bechuana, came to England in 1895 to challenge Queen Victoria on the colonialist ambitions of Cecil Rhodes, he fulfilled a promise to visit and thank Alice's parents for her work with his people, bringing an

unlikely entourage of black Africans to this rather insular village (Parsons, 1998). These stories gave me the warm feeling and knowledge that even our humble family could extend our influence far into the world. Aunt Alice and her daughter taught the children of the Kings of Bechuana, including Seretse Khama, the first President of Botswana, who created the one African country with a democracy, no debts and no political prisoners (McCall Smith, 2003: 18 & 33). Alice was an initiator 'who did not take long to size things up and make a start' (Rutherford, 1983: 34). Unlike her fellow missionary-teacher who kept aloof from local customs, Alice learnt the local language and songs while she taught the locals hers (p.34). Seeing her skill and enthusiasm for a new school and teacher training class, King Khama backed it with money, labour and his own authority (p. 35). Alice thus laid the foundations for the Bechuanaland education system. I use her story for inspiration.

Insight 7: Sometimes, I have to be a boundary rider

My Australian colleague, Sue, suggested I was a 'Boundary Rider' who was skilled at managing boundaries of contracts and organisations, but with the intuition and courage to know when they needed to be crossed or challenged. In reflecting on this observation, I can see how my propensity to be 'on the edge' of groups, crossing from the inside to the outside and back again means that I become very aware of the nature of the edge, as I had probably also done in early childhood when I moved from one place and school culture to another. The comment really gained meaning, however, when in 1998, I discovered the story of my paternal grandfather from the War Graves Commission web-site (www.cwgc.org). Grandfather James Aldridge must have been skilled in traversing new and desolate territory. Having gone out to South Africa in the Boer War, he remained there as a Mounted Policeman covering a vast area in the remote Kimberley region. At the outbreak of the First World War, his first task in the South African Mounted Rifles was to protect the boundary along the Orange River between South Africa and German South West Africa (now Namibia). Within a month, he and most of his regiment were shot dead, led by incompetent Officers right into the fire of the enemy (Collyer, 1937)

This story has given me a metaphor for consultancy, reminding me that boundary riding is a dangerous activity that risks premature endings. The boundaries should only be broken if the greater good cannot be achieved in any other way and with the greatest protection possible. Boundary riding also requires competent and entrepreneurial leadership and protection, along with the intuition and skills of a tracker so familiar with the territory they can sense when and where to cross them. It is a thrilling role, easily

open to being done for the thrill rather than for good purpose. Realising the terrible consequences of mistakes tempers hasty action.

Insight 8: I have had to challenge some early beliefs that can trap me.

Congregationalism left me with other characteristics that, if not moderated, could create problems. Some were so deeply engrained they are hard to remove entirely – an over-pronounced Protestant work ethic, the feeling that I always have to give and give voluntarily (not helpful when running a business), guilt if I don't take action, a fear of doing the wrong thing (or more accurately, being caught for it), and the belief that fun in certain forms is bad.

Insight 9: I am a product of my social class

Though I had much evidence of democracy in the family, would I have so avidly pursued it for others if I had not felt what it was like to feel inferior? My family were reunited a few years after my birth when my mother's fighting spirit gained us a post-war 'prefab.' in Northolt, west London. I recall becoming aware of my social place there. I was above the 'common' kids who played in the gutter, but well below the likes of the Doctor at the clinic. We were in what I call the 'limbo class', the lower middle class, whose members are neither part of the working class, (who they have rejected and fear to return to), nor are they accepted by the middle classes who view them as inferior. In that position the benefits of both working and middle class are lost, a position explored by Brian Friel, in his play *'Freedom and the City'*. We had to take on the perceived behaviours of the middle class to emphasise we were not working class, so consequently lost the warmth and spontaneity of lower classes who made the most of every minute because they were not hampered by doing things 'properly' nor had money to plan for an uncertain future. By denying ourselves, we had just enough money to think we had a future, but never enough to stop the constant fear of debt. But nor did we have the money and the imbibed culture of the articulate, confident middle classes who knew about art and literature. I notice that I am especially drawn to working with people wanting to empower themselves by validating their ways of knowing and being, as my later stories in Part B2, B4 and E3 show.

Insight 10: I learned that there is always an alternative

I remember being told in 1951 that we were emigrating to Australia. I didn't know what Australia was, but I was excited. My memories of the experience remain vivid. First, I had to experience saying good-bye to grandparents, knowing we might never see them again. I remember the new and exciting world of the SS Ranchi and living alongside

different people, ten to a cabin, for many weeks; the strange ports of call with exotic names – Céuta, Port Said, Aden and Colombo, all with unfamiliar sounds and smells, and all with sunshine, in sharp contrast to the drabness of my post-war London home. The dramas of the journey are imprinted on my memory. The ship's engines broke down repeatedly, most memorably in the middle of the Suez canal, blocking it for a week and leaving us with little electricity and water. A baby died. I can still see the agony etched on the mother's face. But tragedy was followed by fun as we 'Crossed the Line' (Equator) with all the rituals of the sea. We reached Australia after ten weeks, celebrating our arrival in a country free from post-war sweet rationing with lollipops bigger than we had ever seen before.

This is a defining story of my childhood. Not only is it a useful metaphor for the journey of life, it inculcated in me useful beliefs that **'things don't have to stay the same'**, **'there is always an alternative'** and **'there is never one way of doing or being'**. I also learnt that a child can cope with change if the family unit remains secure. These beliefs have helped me out of low points in my life such as the greyness of my repressed teenage years in suburbia and the oppressiveness of being 'just' a mother at home in a rural backwater in the 1970's. They also helped me re-invent my career several times, pulling me out of distress. It is knowledge that I can now frame and use in my work to mobilise people stuck in negative beliefs that nothing in their situation or themselves can change.

Other spin-offs from emigration have been my well developed sense of location and spatial relationships that influenced my choice of University degree (Geography) and has contributed to my understanding of community dynamics in relation to disaster impact and recovery, and the use of mapping as a method of impact assessment and response.

Insight 11: I have found a way to live with my contradictions

"Without contraries there is no progression"

- Wm. Blake, *'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: The Argument'*, 1793

Blake's assertion encourages me to value and live with my contradictions. They both delight and frustrate me according to how I frame them. This chameleon characteristic can aid survival when it encourages adaptability in different environments, but is degenerative if I never allow my true self to be seen, using it to confuse or manipulate people. I would trace the roots of this trait back to my need to survive in a confused

and changing environment and my perceived duty not to upset my mother by showing my true feelings. However, I learnt to know myself enough to stand by my beliefs and values when it really matters, but, at other times, I can access different aspects of myself in order to gain rapport with people who are very different from myself. I can survive in new situations whilst finding my bearings and I value my openness to different views and my ability to empathise with others.

An astrologer I met once gave me a framing for my contradictions. Being a person of contradictions, I could accept what she said as well as being sceptical. She explained my extrovert-introvert dynamic in which I had two opposing needs, both to be out in the public arena and to stay quietly in the shadows. If I can complete actions set in motion while 'in the sun', there is no problem, but I run into trouble if I want to hide in the shadows too soon. This contradiction resonates with the tension I see between my reserved English nature and my lively Australian side that wants to be out in the world making a noise. The Jungian analyst, Arnie Mindell, saw this aspect in me when I attended his workshop in 1991. He told me that it was time I "*stopped being in the audience and acquired one of my own*". So I did, - but not without running many times back into the shadows.

Insight 12: My perspective as a woman and mother is fundamental to my being and my style of work

My career has often involved helping women to find their power. My passion came from realising how my own position as a girl and woman had been denied and the power of my emergence as '*a Woman in [My] Own Right*' (Dickson, 1982). I am also aware my career ran parallel with the powerful post-1968 re-emergence of feminism. I shall give the background to a major theme of my work and why I still become passionate when I see a good woman being crushed by a system just because of her gender, as I did in my work following the Omagh bomb (see E3).

It could have been different. My mother was the powerful force in our family, so too were my father's mother who had followed her fiancé to live in remote South Africa and my missionary aunt Alice. But no one ever referred to the women in the family as strong, independent and courageous. I realised what they had achieved by working it out for myself years later from the stories I remembered. I was fortunate that my secondary school, Bexley Grammar, was new, co-educational and with young inspiring teachers. As a girl, as long as I colluded with the traditional values of work and achievement, I could hold my own with the boys. I became the first girl from the school

to gain a place at Oxbridge and the first to represent the County at hockey and athletics. But being academic and sporty did not equate with being female and I never felt 'one of the girls'. I internalised all the attitudes about 'blue-stocking' academic women when I got a place at Cambridge in 1966, in spite of the campaign by a contemporary of mine for the '*Transmogrification of the Girton Image*' (Nova magazine, 1969). It was not until I had my first baby in 1975 that I felt at all acceptable as a real woman by other women.

I did not develop feminist attitudes as a result of Consciousness Raising groups or from reading Feminist literature. They grew out of my lived experience and only later were they framed by external theories. At Cambridge, being in the minority as women meant we were special and in great demand by men, but it was as if we were only present by the invitation of men. Women had only won the right to collect their degrees twenty years before in 1948. At the time, however, I was more aware of the feelings of humiliation from issues of class rather than gender, for example when reprimanded by the Professor for passing the port the wrong way at a formal dinner. The seeds of my feminism were sown in the last few terms, for example, when the career options offered to me by the University Careers Officer as a woman wearing an engagement ring were summed up by her words, "*Well. It's teaching for you then, my dear*". I am ashamed to say, I dutifully accepted my role and followed my fiancé to Bristol, taking a low paid job until I could register for teacher training at Bristol University.

Negative views about being a woman provided a background which trapped me in internalised patriarchal views of women and denied my female ways of being and knowing. I began to 'emerge' once I took Maternity Leave and received the culture shock of being treated differently as a woman with no job status. I struggled to rid myself of internalised attitudes and to counter prejudice against me as a woman, without being anti-men. It was during one of these struggles, during my first experience of a bullying boss, that I began my journey into self-empowerment through therapy and, thereafter, along paths that brought me under the influence of action research practitioners in Bath. I also discovered that even in my rural backwater, there were strong women who had emerged already, for example, Jill Miller, a working class woman who had found her voice and written '*Happy as a Dead Cat*', (1984), a story of an emerging feminist.

At the same time, I had to learn to live alongside the men who had economic and institutional power over me while encouraging my female qualities to develop and

emerge. The place of women in society affected my initial choice of career and ever since I have structured my career to fit in with my role as a mother. I do not, however, regret what I constructed since it has allowed me to participate in a mixture of work and family arenas on my terms, a luxury that many men and younger career orientated women do not have.

Gender themes run through the development of my pre-and post-disaster career, (as in the stories in Boxes 1 and 2 and section E3), and practice as an action researcher. When I was plunged into the real world after University as a married woman I followed a very female path of teaching, voluntary work, motherhood and jobs in the helping professions. The lack of a formal career progression meant I had little useful practical preparation for any of these tasks, and I had to learn by trial and error, taking responsibility for my own development using whatever skills and experience I had gathered on the way. Therapy brought a rapid transformation that led to fast promotion to my job as a Community Development Officer in Avon County Council, where I began to use the attitudes and skills I was imbibing from my new mentors in Bath. It was during this short period before my next promotion that I began to develop what I now regard as my particular action research style for the service of others (see the Peasedown story, Story Box 1, p.36). I believe this work is fundamental to my use of action research in my disaster work.

Bringing the threads of the past into my present self

These stories helped me understand the origins of some key values and influences that have been the stepping stones to where I am now as a disaster specialist and action researcher. As I look back into my vivid memories of the little girl in my stories, I feel her as a very knowing observer, noting, taking in and trying to make sense of all she saw and felt. I like to think I carry her with me into the many new territories I encounter today.

My enquiry has helped me discern the values I imbibed from childhood, such as the feel for **democracy** and the right of people to have a role and a voice so their talents can be nurtured. I internalised values of **social action** and **duty** in the service of the community when I saw a need. I learnt that change is always possible and people did not have to accept their lot or their place. Action could be taken regardless of how people were defined by others and it could be taken without waiting for others to do it for you. The belief in **empowerment through self-help** and the **co-operative practice** of helping each other has been a strong influence throughout my career.

Some beliefs and values needed to be unlearned, mainly those that were instilled through fear of punishment by God. The resulting need to be good and to take the moral high ground of self-righteousness had to be un-learned. I also had to learn the difference between behaving in certain ways because I was expected to, and behaving in order to make a socially useful contribution. Releasing myself from the prejudices I was brought up with in the 1950's and '60's, and re-applying my values in a more inclusive way, to all people, including myself as a woman, has been an ongoing task, like peeling the layers of an onion away. Some contradictions both trouble me and fuel my motivation, as do my vulnerabilities which both hold me back and keep me compassionate and in touch with the human frailties of others, giving credibility to my work with them. As this thesis develops I shall weave more threads from other stories and other enquiries into self. By the end I hope you will have a story of me which helps you understand foundational influences on the path I have made and present in these pages.

B 2

THE ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF MY ACTION RESEARCH PRACTICE

Joining the CARPP programme confirmed my commitment to the principles of action research. I still had to find out what action research meant to me as I understood that creating new orthodoxies and fixed methods was not the intention. In this section, I shall explore the roots and development of my interpretation of the philosophy and practice of action research. The philosophy and practice of action research and its rejection of old scientific paradigms is now well documented (Reason & Bradbury, 2001; Reason & Rowan, 1981; Reason, 1988, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Heron, 1996; Guba & Lincoln, 1989, Denzin & Lincoln, 1998), while Lincoln gives an account of the subtle differences between action research and social constructivism (2001) and I shall not repeat them here. An exploration of quality and integrity questions will follow in section B3 and the methods I use in B4.

THE ROOTS OF MY ACTION RESEARCH PRACTICE

The roots of my action research practice can be detected from a piece of community work I undertook in 1984 in an old mining village, Peasedown St. John, near Bath (Story Box 1, overleaf). This work influenced my approach to the Hungerford response three years later. Reflecting on how far this work was action research helped me move from a purely intellectual understanding of action research to knowing it from within.

The Peasedown work had the feel of action research because the action and the research were so interdependent and interactive, depending on in-the-moment actions and reflections. But was it true action research? Was it just an example of what Reason called 'Naïve action research' (Reason, 1981: xii-xiii) or another example of how a term can be diluted and diminished by using it too loosely to include, for example, uncritical organisational consulting just because it incorporates feedback (Reason, 2001)? Yet when I also read of Reason and Bradbury's commitment to '*a full integration of knowledge and action in inquiry as a practice of living*' in their '*Handbook of Action Research*', (2001: xxiv), I want to shout 'Yes! That piece of work at Peasedown did just that'. In some ways it felt like the purest form of action research because the principles I had imbibed spontaneously from my mentors, who were involved in action research in Bath, were fully embodied in my

STORY BOX 1 Peasedown St. John Community Action

This was one of several projects I was initiating in my newly created role of Community Development Officer in Avon County Council in 1984. Peasedown was then a very run down ex-mining village with many people struggling with difficult circumstances. I had met a young woman from Peasedown at my ante-natal class and had gone to her home to talk about needs in the village. The next week more women came and listened and asked questions. I told them about my role and resources. They were tough, resilient but subjugated by their roles at home. They felt their choices were limited and their voices seldom heard by authority figures including, in most cases, their husbands. Their most practical need was for a children's playground. Together we came up with ideas. A campaign video was high on their list and I provided resources and an instructor to teach them how to do it. But the group was outgrowing the house and to hire rooms at the local Youth Centre, they first had to learn to overcome sexist attitudes, such as "their stilettos will ruin the floors; their kids will create mayhem". Their latent political action skills flourished and the words 'Peasedown women' made County Officers quake in their shoes. The weekly group spawned other arts and educational activities but its essence was in the collaborative support between the women and between the group and their paid colleagues. When I was promoted I supported them in other ways through my new job. With the new community worker, they continued their campaign through overtly political pantomimes. They achieved their primary goal eventually, but much more was gained in the process in terms of confidence, skills and friendship. The pantomimes formed the basis of large-scale community plays in the whole Radstock District. One woman qualified as a part-time community worker and the project continued in different forms for over ten years until Avon County Council was disbanded. - Taken from my records, 1986

action and reflection for its own sake. I was not burdened with trying to do 'proper research', so I could approach the people I encountered in a state of mind described by Maslow:

"..in getting to know another person, it is best to keep your brain out of the way, to look and listen totally, to be completely absorbed, receptive, passive, patient and waiting rather than eager, quick and impatient. It does not help to start measuring, questioning, calculating or testing out theories, categorising, or classifying." – Maslow (1954)

Was this work action research?

The criteria

By applying what I now know, I can look at this early work more critically. I shall assess how far it was true to action research principles first by using the core, essential elements of several proponents. Reason and Bradbury's form of action research 'starts with everyday experience and is concerned with the development of living knowledge' (Reason and Bradbury, 2001:2) as the Peasedown project did. Their criteria asks that the practice is a combined process which **is participative, encourages human and ecological flourishing**, uses **practical knowledge**, is **emergent and developmental** and draws on **many ways of knowing**.

To these criteria, I would add another key characteristic: the integrated use **of first, second and third person research** and practice approaches (Reason and Torbert, 2001) which gives a clear framework for the many action research methods available. Briefly the three approaches involve the rigorous reflection on one's own actions and choices (first-person) and choices enhanced by collaborative investigations and reflections with others (second-person) in order to engage with wider systems (third-person), both to create knowledge, stimulate further enquiry and effect change. They are most effective when used in a complex of practice. I shall refer to these throughout my thesis.

Setting my Peasedown practice against the criteria

First, I approached the work with an intention to use a style based on **participation**, reflection and action in real time. The context of my involvement meant that I had to take a pragmatic approach, taking care, for instance, that the women had enough information and support to be aware of the possible political and personal consequences of their choices. It also had to be **emergent** since I had neither a formal induction nor clear job expectations and boundaries. The choice of people I spoke to was the result of my previous **practical and experiential** knowledge of this community and intuition about who might be receptive and who might be ready for change in their lives. The fact that I was a woman with young children clearly caused a bias to work with people in a similar position and, via an ante-natal class, also led to my first contact. However, this bias was not only gender based as male community workers in other districts also showed a similar bias, reflecting the mood and agenda of community work practice of that era (Poppo, 1995:24-28).

I could not have done the work without the full **participation** of the women – if it had not met their needs and they had not felt valued, they simply would not have participated. I had no preconceived notions about what might result in terms of process or outcome and I had to give full receptive attention. I needed the ‘community’ to guide me as no one in the Department had really decided what their new community workers were meant to be doing. The need to act to please my bosses need for concrete results sharpened my listening, but the choice of project, the children’s playground campaign, was the women’s and they chose the practical method (video) from the resources I could offer. Their choices led me into working in the political zone of tension between the community I worked with and the people who employed me, for example in the women’s fight to use the Youth Centre, and brought new participants from the Council into the process. Such involvement was a crucial process towards human flourishing of the women, and hopefully of the men who needed to be persuaded to change their sexist attitudes.

Joining the group was not always easy for the women if their husbands did not approve and we all had to make use of many ways, especially female ways, of knowing and learning. There was a **tacit female understanding** between us that there would be fewer objections from the men if the project benefited their children. The fact that the women continued their commitment to the project was evidence of the **developmental** aspects in our work which built their confidence and purpose. There was evidence of change in their confidence and skills at personal, social and political levels, most notably in their ability to create a video and pantomime, confront professionals and politicians in power, perform in front of others, gain use of buildings barred to them and to access further education, as described in the story. This led, 15 years later, to a First Class University Degree in Creative Writing for one woman. The empowerment and **flourishing** of these women had parallels with my own and other female workers as we learned to move away from accepted traditional female roles. We also learnt to deconstruct terminology that kept us in our place and no longer talked of our husbands ‘allowing’ us to work, even if, like mine, they were more than pleased that we did. This job was the second stage of my movement from being ‘just a mother’, to low-paid part-time work to low-paid full-time work and eventually to a job and salary more commensurate with my training and skills. A volunteer helper, an unemployed single parent, attributes the chances and training given to her in this project as the key turning point in her life (Moss, recent personal communications).

Our strategies and methods integrated enquiry practice at different levels: me, us, and wider political and community systems. Use was made of **first person practices** (self-reflection and care), **second person methods** (collaboration with myself and participants, participants and their partners, other community workers and local professionals in adult Education, Social and health services, therapy and private consultancy) and **third person strategies** (engagement with systems to increase contributors to knowledge and undertake political action to bring about sustainable change). These were brought together, not in a systematic programme, but in a messy, lively and ever changing strategy of choices based on a living theory of using one's position and skills to help others improve their lives. From a canvas with only a few scribbles, a work of art, or perhaps a moving installation was created together.

I would claim that Reason and Bradbury's core elements were present in this work, along with characteristics of other articulations of it. Also present is Torbert's action research orientation of integrating 'inquiry and action in the present moment' and using it in '**a timely way**', (Chandler & Torbert, 2003), with loops of learning at an individual level feeding into learning at organisational and community levels. The concept of action facing "not only the problem of how to understand events and practice, but also the problem of how to infuse events and practices with a certain understanding" (Toulmin and Gustavsen, 1996) can be discerned in the developing skills and understanding of the women that led them to explore the fundamental beliefs and politics that had influenced their lives and restrictions placed on them. Increased understanding about ways to bring about change in their lives and local community resulted. Though they may not have known this in propositional terms, they lived this knowledge. They learned how to become sufficiently emancipated and liberated, first of all to dare to join the group and then to challenge those in authority who blocked their way to fulfilling their goals. In this aspect of the project, I can also detect Greenwood and Levin's (1998) essential ingredients of action research: **participation, action and social change** directly **relevant** to the lives of all of us participating.

In short, we co-generated knowledge through our action together. Our respect for each other grew and the impact of power differences was lessened as they gained respect for their own forms of knowledge, practical skills and power. Their '*Women's Way of Knowing*' (Belenky et al, 1986) was validated. The quality of the project's foundations was sufficient for the group to exist, develop and change long after I had been promoted to another job. Given enough information about political systems and encouragement to find their hidden voice, their courage, honed through years of

survival as women leading tough lives, allowed them to become owners of their campaign and their project. If the women were developing, then so was I – in confidence, skills and attitudes. I was learning about systems of power, the tensions of community work, the power of information in the hands that needed it and the fear of men in the bureaucracy facing a group of determined, newly empowered working-class women, no longer afraid to challenge the status quo.

When I reflect on what resulted from that first meeting over a cup of tea it feels like magic. It was magic sparked by the hidden energy of that one young mother, reading her poetry about the nuclear threat as she mashed the potato for her husband's dinner. I have an organic image of an isolated spark suddenly given oxygen and setting off seemingly chaotic balls of energy that did their work unseen until a web of connections was formed with the power to make bigger things happen. In a small part of the world, systems were shaken and a few things changed, and change created more change.

The limits to my claim that this was action research were in the lack of writing up and transmitting what we had done. I did not value the work as something worthy of dissemination, while caring for three young children and developing many other projects in my District were considerable barriers to writing. However, I kept detailed records of my daily work activities and outcomes to protect myself in a 'watch your back' culture. The tasks of community work were difficult to explain to those who viewed having cups of tea with people as refreshment rather than the medium for engagement and empowerment.

Now I can imagine other ways of doing this work using whole systems methods (Pratt et al, 2000), with the benefit of new technologies such as Open Space conferences (Owen, 1997) and large group interventions (Bunker & Alban, 1997; Leith, 1997) to involve more sectors of the community. However, such strategies might have intimidated the women and silenced their voices. Community work methods drew heavily on informal, emergent and organic styles of working. The choice of who I contacted first was based on my understanding of how to reach silenced women quietly, even subversively, through their children until they could raise enough confidence to resist attempts to crush them. Going through established community channels in this tough macho ex-mining community, where incest and abuse against women and children were reportedly high, would have made it impossible for them to be seen, let alone heard in their true voice.

In terms of epistemology and methodology I can claim this was 'good enough', pragmatic action research, given the restrictions of my role and resources and who and where we were at that time, geographically, emotionally and cognitively. I had a practical task to achieve but I could not achieve the task without integrating meaningful practice-based research. I believe I did so with less naïvety than I first thought, coming from a position where certain values and theoretical perspectives, absorbed from various training and influences on my early career in the politically radical world of Bristol and Bath in the 1970's and early 80's, had been well integrated into my practice.

My action was to enable enquiry, growing spontaneously out of the fact that I was living my values of promoting useful social action in my work and working in partnership with people for their benefit and wider social change, though there was always benefit, challenge and change for me too. The women showed me how they survived and exercised their power in spite of their circumstances and were as challenging to me as they were to the system. They were also incredibly supportive and I became aware of how much I needed them to help me assert my own social and political agenda. Because of this, I had to exercise my integrity so as not to misuse them or abandon them later when I gained promotion. The work was conducted with good enough quality for powerful results to emerge for these mothers, who kept many struggling families going, and for myself in my struggle to re-create a career and develop practices that influenced future work

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY ACTION RESEARCH PRACTICE

Early progress

Between leaving the Peasedown project in 1985 and the Hungerford massacre in 1987, was a period of intense and rapid learning. I took many opportunities that developed the foundational skills of my present action research and disaster work practice. Such was the speed of my own empowerment, I was promoted in 1985 to become Principal Staff Development Officer in the newly created Avon County Council Community Development Department. Here I learned much from being one of the first women in the Department to break into management, learning about organisational systems and the challenging power structures, the status quo and discriminatory practice. I created systems that allowed previously devalued groups to find their place and instigated a whole-systems strategy for integrating the newly combined, but philosophically different services (youth, community, libraries). Here I learned about

how to help the 'system know itself' (Pratt, 2000: 16-17) to envision its future. An account of this work is included in Hawkins and Shohet, (1989, 2000, Chapter 9). The practices I learnt have since served me well and some are reminiscent of Cooperrider's 'Appreciative Inquiry' methods (Ludema et al, 2001) and Large Group Interventions (Leith, 1997). One aspect of my learning about organisational dynamics, the tactics used by middle managers to sabotage senior officials at HQ, was particularly useful in a later cycle of development when I became a middle manager, a Youth and Community Officer in Berkshire, and found myself in a position of challenging senior managers at HQ, described in C2.

Also at this time I joined a two-year experiential Humanistic Psychology Diploma programme sponsored by Bath University. It was a challenging course of collaborative enquiry with a diverse group of 20 people through which I gained experiential and practical knowledge of a very meaningful kind. This course was crucial for developing my capacity to facilitate groups in difficult situations and engage in disaster work. The Humanistic Psychology framework, a core influence in the development of action research, contributed to my experiential understanding of its principles. Most of all I learnt how not to be afraid of chaos, meeting Heron's action research criteria of the need to allow the unfolding of distress and chaos from which creative solutions may emerge (Heron, 1996).

Half way through this course, in 1986, my husband was promoted to a position in London and I became a District Youth and Community Officer in Berkshire Education Authority, based in Newbury. Thus began a period in which I learnt much about the kind of culture in which action research as an integral part of practice cannot so easily flourish.

Learning about the conditions counter-productive to action research

The strength of action research is that some form of it can be used anywhere, at anytime by anyone, even if only for surviving conditions where it cannot flourish. The sterile, non-learning culture of the politically reactionary Berkshire Council of the 1980's and a very macho Youth and Community Service taught me a great deal about what Schön also discovered, that:

"the scope and direction of a manager's self-reflection-in-action are strongly influenced and may be severely limited by the learning system of the organization" - Schön, 1983: 242

It was quite unlike my experiences in Avon Council where, except for teaching, all my work roles were newly created giving me freedom to be innovative.

In Berkshire, first-person reflection was a means of survival though its quality was reduced but my depleted internal environment. I had left a job I loved, I had left an area whose beauty fed my spirit, and I had lost my personal and professional female networks. I hated the job, I hated the move, I hated the area because it was not Bath and the people seemed different, they seemed affluent, time-starved and closed. I fell into depression and all my reflections were negative, creating an even more negative view of my situation. Every attempt to develop female networks or any networks of like-minded people floundered and every avenue I explored was a dead-end. My course and consultancy sessions in Bath were my only places where I could breathe and reflect.

In my new job, it was hard to claim my power and territory sharing an office, area and resources with a long established co-Officer who, I discovered later, kept power and information from me. Our line Manager abdicated his responsibility for managing the co-officer relationship. Everything was fixed by existing patterns and procedures and there was no room for innovation. Line Management was not my strength as being Staff Development Manager had been. Moreover, feminine energy and ways of knowing were dis-respected as fair play for ridicule. I had no allies at Officer level, except for one established female Officer who was ousted from her post in acrimonious circumstances soon after my arrival.

My retrospective reflection on this period highlighted the conditions I need to engage in action research as an integral part of my practice. Interestingly similar conclusions were drawn from the Joseph Rowntree research project (see section B4 and Mead, 1996:10) for good conditions for disaster workers. They are:

- ☞ The space to breathe and be myself through freedom from over-rigid procedures, expectations and demands.
- ☞ Within those flexible boundaries, the freedom to be creative, freedom to access many forms of knowing without fear of prejudiced attitudes and freedom to be responsive to emergent needs.
- ☞ Allies in the same organisation with similar perspectives and values, who are not too enculturated to see the bigger picture or too afraid to challenge the status quo.

- ⇒ A positive mental state to act with clarity and be confident in my personal power and ability.
- ⇒ A management style that does not abdicate the responsibility entrusted to it, is trusting and supportive of autonomy and creativity, allows risks to be taken, and encourages learning.
- ⇒ A role that is not trapped in what Charles Handy describes as a bureaucratic 'Apollo' culture. (see Part D and Handy, 1988). Handy's entrepreneurial 'Zeus', the expert 'Athena', or the creative 'Dionysus' roles are more conducive to action research.

I was quite obviously in the wrong job in the wrong place, yet I was there at the right time for the role I discovered in the aftermath of the Hungerford massacre. The repercussions of the disaster work opened up conditions conducive to my natural organic style of working. Thus, I found my time to be present in this organisation in the way I knew best to live the experiences on which this thesis is based.

Since that time, I have found myself using and living action research, constantly seeking ways to intertwine personal, collaborative and systemic enquiry as a means of personal survival, economic and professional development. Creating my own business and working in a newly developing field has meant that I have never returned to the kind of organisational setting that suffocates me and my creativity. I nearly did once, just after I left my Berkshire job, but my soul rebelled at the threat to my integrity posed by another bullying boss and I removed myself quickly.

THE CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF MY EPISTEMOLOGY

My learning about using action research as a framework for my disaster work practice still has a long way to go but this thesis is a resting place to account for what and how I have learned so far. Through my time on the CARPP programme, I have reflected on my practice and writings, in collaboration with my peer supervision and workshop groups, and list below the principal characteristics I have discerned in my epistemology:

Characteristic 1: My route to generating my action research knowledge has been long and tortuous, a messy, creative 'act of faith'.

I found a philosophy and practice in action research which felt immensely familiar, yet hard to pin down and define exactly because, like myself, it refuses to be pinned down

and categorised. It is holistic, emergent in response to real needs rather than the needs of a researcher or the body commissioning the research. My way of generating knowledge is a messy and creative 'act of faith', proceeding cautiously and tentatively as I test it. If I really allow myself to enter into the communities I work with, I have to risk myself and suspend preconceived ideas of what will emerge, while at the same time holding responsibility for what I know and what I have been paid to do.

Characteristic 2: Action research is something I live as well as practice at work.

I became aware of this when my daughter was ill and dying in 1993. People told me to forget I was a professional and just be a mother, but this distinction was unreal to me as I cannot be split into pieces. Posing questions, observing, feeling, allowing myself to be absorbed in a new experience, acting, reflecting, finding out, trying out, reviewing are the way I explore my territory and survive in the whole of my life. By holding core questions and concerns, usually the ones that have created dissonance with what I know or believe, I seek to discover more about them in all parts of my life. Little of what I have written about in this thesis has been planned as disaster rarely gives notice of its arrival. Opportunities for learning arose unexpectedly, spinning off into new arenas and feeding back to inform the old. What I have held constant is the presence of questions and aims flowing from, and sometimes refining, my core values and goals that are key to my personality and behaviour.

Characteristic 3: My perspective is holistic and interdependent

My disaster learning cycles have already been described in terms of a fountain with water returning to the source to be recycled into new cascades, an interconnecting process of discovery.

I aim to hold both the whole and the contributing parts of my subject, as well as work across different channels of being as a friend with deep insight helped me realise. The friend, Herthe, was with me in an Oxford hospital during the night of my daughter's dying. She noticed how I was able to hold many aspects of that night – persuading another hospital that, when my husband was taken ill en route home, he was hyperventilating, not drunk; locating our other children and finding support for them; dealing with my angry mother on the phone; negotiating with the nurses to turn a clinical room into a sacred space fit for the process of dying; maintaining myself physically and emotionally so I could be totally present with Ann in her dying. Without Herthe's reflections, I would never have been aware of my capacity to move across many levels of being or its worth as a capacity to be nurtured. I had tacitly

encapsulated the process of action research in the moment of each need, whilst at the same time holding the whole system involved in Ann's death in my mind and acting as appropriate – expanding outwards, then pulling into myself and my relationship with Ann in her final moments of life.

My own experience taught me to view people as whole beings of whom their traumatic experience is a part, countering the common tendencies in the professional world I encountered to view them as traumatised or bereaved people, split off from their whole selves as well as the social environment in which they were embedded.

Characteristic 4: Values, meaning and usefulness must have a place in research with human beings.

Einstein summed this up succinctly with the note he pinned to his wall:

“Not everything that counts can be counted; not everything that can be counted counts.”

The phrase indicates the limits of ‘counting methodologies’ since they so easily exclude what is deemed to be worthwhile and useful. When I used it in my lecture at a conference in New Zealand in 1998, a member of the audience reported that, as one, the audience picked up their pens to scribble it down, such was their recognition of its truth. This does not mean that I do not respect the accomplishments of the scientific method and I do not reject quantitative methodologies used appropriately in a way that is respectful and inclusive of the people supplying the data. For example, in my Community Epidemiology Study of Leukaemias in Newbury (Capewell, 1998c), it was important to quantify data in a statistically rigorous manner. The use of statistical methods empowered our community by enabling us to speak the language understood by Health Authorities and Cancer Registries. However, I have challenged the belief of many in my field that the same methods could research everything, even the unquantifiable (Capewell, 1996a, 1997, 1999, 2004a, Capewell & Capewell, 1997). What is also at fault is the insistence that scientific research is truly objective and value free when science is clearly a value-laden social activity subject to all kinds of social manipulations. Richard Lazarus explores the truth of this in his research into the psychology of stress and coping (Lazarus, 1998).

Characteristic 5: My methodology has involved and valued many ways of knowing

Although I had a bent for cognitive knowledge and succeeded academically at school, I was always aware that it did not prepare me for the practical world or help me realise my full potential as a human being living in a world which had many more channels of existence. I noticed the dissonance between what I found to be useful learning and what the established world told me was so. Life experiences such as giving birth, rearing children and general living in this world, as well as experiential training, could not be ignored, nor could my perspective as a woman and my female way of doing things. Belenky et al (1986) noted that many major transformations in women's ways of knowing came from their first experience of becoming a mother. I can add to this that even more come from their first experience of the death of a child, echoing the old saying that *"you are never truly a woman until you have experienced the death of a child"*.

In creating my professional practice, John Heron's concept of the Four Ways of Knowing (Heron, 1996:163) has been particularly helpful in framing different forms of knowing. Heron describes experiential, pre-verbal knowing as the tacit knowing gained from direct encounters in the world using all the senses. This type of knowing is of course very relevant for dealing with the repercussions of moments of extreme experience when the frontal lobes of the brain dealing with cognitive processes are suspended and the most primitive, pre-verbal right-hemisphere of the brain is highly aroused (van der Kolk et al, 1996). Experiential knowing gives birth to images and representations of the experience that Heron describes as **Presentational Knowing**, another form immediately relevant to my own development and my work. My experiential knowing at Hungerford transformed into the presentational form shape with the emergence of my Trauma Process Map. I use a similar process when working with disaster survivors as they take their first steps towards sense-making in the form of cognitive **Propositional Knowledge**, the third way of knowing that is given a privileged position in the rational, mechanistic Western world. The fourth way, **Practical Knowing**, is the culmination of all the previous forms of knowledge and is the means by which they are transformed into physical, emotional and spiritual skills and useful practice. These are the practical skills needed in order to survive in this world – to maintain ourselves as individuals, to have intimate relationships for procreation and nurturance, and to contribute usefully to the social group that will, in return, provide mutual protection and support (Adler, 1927). Thus, my disaster work practice was first generated from experience grounded in knowledge gained from my previous practical,

experiential and cognitive knowledge which I later processed, developed, framed and put into practice, using further experiences to deepen my knowledge and its application in many contexts.

Characteristic 6: The perspective of my gender is important but not dominant

An influential part of my empowerment came from the validation of my ways of knowing as a woman, often described as ‘*Women’s Ways of Knowing*’. The writings of Belenky et al (1986) enabled me to understand these, but also where my formal education and greater economic power made me different from the women in their research. I explored this in more depth in my Diploma paper in relation to the Newbury Leukaemia Community Epidemiology study (Capewell, 1998c). Thus I had another task – to value the skills I had learned from the masculine world. I did so by reaching the conclusion that neither types of skill are good nor bad, it is the manner of application that is important. Like yin and yang, which contain a little of each other, so-called masculine, ‘left-brain’ strategies need to be employed with the sensitivity and wisdom of the ‘female’ way and so-called female, right-brain strategies need some of the rigour of the ‘masculine’ way. Polarisations cause distortions and the loss of useful methods from each perspective. My understanding of these different ways of knowing has meant that I have been a useful bridge between people with different styles. Much of my success working in Ireland has been my ease with working in communities and cultures where story making are dominant but where the patriarchal nature of church and established society has subjugated many of these voices, especially those of women. For example, after the Omagh bomb:

“A school Principal, whose ‘woman’s way of knowing’ was disbelieved by her Managers, had been labelled a ‘neurotic’ woman and made a scapegoat. I could recognise her plight as she had recognised, in the suffering of her staff and pupils, what others had failed to understand. I was, however, able to stand back from her accusations about her Managers and communicate with them in the practical and propositional language which they had to use to be acceptable in their own organisations. By creating a ‘safe space’, I enabled the Managers to meet in a spirit of enquiry as a group to find a shared language for their own experiences. Meanwhile, I helped the woman channel her emotions and experiential knowing into practical action with a cognitive framing. Thus a bridge was constructed between them.”

- Taken from my records, 1998. See also section E3.

This example points to the importance of relationship and conversation in knowledge creation, a theme explored by Reason in his conversation with the Pragmatist, Richard Rorty (Reason, 2003) and by Lazarus (1998:396). The Managers above obviously had their own experiential knowing, but it was trapped by their own lack of language or value for it and useless unless it could be expressed in conversation with colleagues and others. They were too fearful of what it meant to them and of the reactions of peers in a work culture that would ridicule or dismiss it. Thus they could neither tolerate a dialogue with this powerful form of knowing within themselves any more than they could tolerate it in others.

Characteristic 7: My action research is aspirational, teleological and pragmatic.

In the spirit of Vaihinger (trans. 1925), I work 'as if' the ideal conditions such as perfect participation and democracy were always possible, deciding that it is better to proceed with imperfection than wait for the impossible ideal and not proceed at all. While the aspiration is present, indicated by the actions taken to strive towards perfection, it is more likely that the essential elements of action research will be retained. By being **aspirational**, my action research is goal-orientated and therefore **teleological**. When I am stuck in negativity, my transformational question, "*What CAN I do?*" is provoked by the goal of survival. When I look at the social or organisational context of an individual, my goal is for a higher level of strategic and more lasting change. Because my goals are practical, using all the (usually limited) resources and time available, and the ideal rarely attainable, my approach must be **pragmatic** in terms of action research practice and my disaster work aims. My action research is therefore a **practice orientated research** and I define myself as first and foremost a practitioner. I am encouraged by the words of Fals-Bordo (1996) that:

"Knowledge, theory building, intuition, hypothesis making can all be derived from practice. Knowledge cannot be derived from any action, only from meaningful behaviour (or PRAXIS) enriched with prudence for the achievement of the good life (Aristotle's PHRONESIS). We can progress in spite of the instability and uncertainty of life through regulated improvisations".

Action research has been an ideal, perhaps the only, way for me to research my practice because it is a **strategy of actions and reflections**, a 'process of inquiry involving not only propositional knowledge but also practical and experiential knowledge' (Heron, 1981a) and a flexible research which frees and empowers me to be creative in achieving its goals and criteria in whatever situation I find myself. For

instance, if formal collaborative research groups are not feasible, I can find many ways of involving the ideas and reflections of others before taking action which can be refined as it proceeds. This leads into the following three characteristics of my epistemology.

Characteristic 8: Knowledge is generated with greater rigour and richness, and is most likely to be relevant and put into practice, when it is gained in collaboration with others.

While I am a firm advocate of collaborative practice and partnership, I am under no illusion about the difficulties, as shown in the case studies collected by Reason (1994), and the way in which the terms can be manipulated by agencies in order to gain funding or credibility. In an action research project I co-ordinated concerning Youth Crime in Bath (Bath YCSC, 1992), many 'stakeholders' would not participate because previous experiences with collaborative exercises had been tokenistic and nothing had changed. I found in my Community Epidemiology study (Capewell, 1998c) that many people were not used to inclusive ways of working and rejected such ideas suggested by me as a peer, though they did participate fully in a democratically run Community Brainstorm led by an external facilitator. Participation after disaster can also be difficult because people want things done for them, yet also want to be in control. Seemingly democratic community initiatives and decisions have been the source of further trauma for the victims, as found by bereaved parents in Dunblane (North, 2000), while community leaders often speak for themselves or the part of the community that is dominant. Collaborations seem to work best where they are initiated as a joint effort between people with a shared purpose and a willingness to give similar amounts of commitment. Having practical and financial resources to support the running of the groups also helps.

I set up a collaborative group, The Disaster Staff Network, when I first became self-employed. Though the group was mutually supportive and we learned a great deal from each other, the logistical problems of a national network became too great and too burdensome for the few of us who were willing to do the work. I have noticed many similar problems even with a well funded Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) collaborative project, of which I was a member, composed of people with great commitment, but too many conflicting demands on their time. As a small independent practitioner, I am also aware of how much of my intellectual property I give away in such collaborations if I am to give my full commitment.

I have had to be creative to ensure that I am not making a solipsistic path on my own without the enriching experience of contributions from others. Participation and collaboration can, however, take many forms, from simple consultation to full collaborative research with participants involved in critical decisions at every stage of the process, from problems definition, choice of methods, data interpretation and use of learning (Reason and Rowan, 1981). Perhaps even more important is the question of where the power lies (Merrifield, 1993) in who determines the need for research, who controls the process, the decision-making, dissemination of results and accountability. In the Newbury Community Epidemiology Study (Capewell, 1998c), the power for each of these stages lay in the hands of the people affected by the problem, but within that group there were still many issues of inequality in power and responsibility. We were also still dependent on those with an established power base because of the unequal access to funding and information. Even when, the Oxford Cancer Intelligence Unit was ordered by a court of law to release information, following action by Dr Chris Busby of the Low Level radiation Association, they still refused (Busby, personal Communication).

Though my path is often solitary, it is guided by service to others and the wish to enable the transformation of attitudes and practice, not just the generation of knowledge, a key aspect of Participative Action Research according to Orlando Fals-Borda (1996):

“just gaining valid knowledge is not enough – it must also be useful, especially to exploited communities and those whose knowledge and power are not privileged. It is about justice and equalising exchanges”

Our Newbury Community Epidemiology Study aimed at this in our efforts to challenge the dominant scientific community in their arrogant dismissal of the lay community and those who dared to support us from the scientific community (usually haematologists with direct knowledge of patients as people, not statistics), who themselves had been marginalised. (Dr Alice Stewart, Lecture, Greenwich, 2000; Green 1999). We were seeking justice for other forms of knowing by demanding a more humane form of science as Merrifield had demanded in similar work in Tennessee:

“What we need to do now is break the link between scientific knowledge and elite forms of enquiry and devise new approaches that combine essential elements of scientific research - the rigorous rules of proof for example - with

the process that is accountable to people... to meet the needs of ordinary people rather than the power holders."

- Merrifield, (1993).

Characteristic 9: I have a responsibility to act in the interests of the world and a responsibility to develop my conscious awareness to discover purpose.

These two responsibilities lie at the heart of my epistemology and I return to them in moments of feeling worthless and inadequate when I ask myself "why bother?" or "who do you think you are that you should presume to have something to offer?" They originate in the world view that we are all co-responsible for the fate of the world and, in the words of the Adlerian, Müller, which resonate with the ecological views of Skolimowski (1994) and Bateson (1976).

"Where we neglect developing ourselves or neglect developing the power to do good or correct injustice, we share the guilt, the responsibility for the negative or destructive outcome. We are all co-responsible through our awareness of creation, a planning creation that calls upon us to cooperate in completing an unfinished world. Awareness of creation means awareness of the unity of all existence."

- trans. Wolf and Stein, (1992)

I am inspired by Müller's challenge that since we are endowed with consciousness and a creative potential:

"...we must develop and use it. We have a choice. What we choose to do or not to do strengthens or weakens our belonging to creation, and moves us toward or away from realisation of our real being, our best form... We cannot escape from choosing or not choosing, no one can relieve a person from this responsibility for himself."

- trans. Wolf and Stein, (1992)

B 3

QUESTIONS OF QUALITY AND INTEGRITY IN MY ACTION RESEARCH

New approaches to knowledge generation by action researchers have demanded new approaches to assessing the claims made by the research. This section explores how I have come to understand these issues in my search to establish a practice of quality and integrity. I draw on an action-reflection enquiry in which I lived the tensions of having work called to account by people judging it for different purposes to show how I have made sense of my own approach to validity. I consider it first through the idea that quality concerns should pervade all aspects of the research and second, through the use of structural frameworks. I begin with a discussion concerning the confusion over terminology.

Terminology

The terminology itself is under scrutiny. Should the word validity be reclaimed from the web of connotations from traditional scientific practice? Should its meaning as a 'regime of truth', that 'polices the borders between science and non-science' (Lather, 2001), be reconstructed in order to 'honour the generative, creative role of the human mind in all forms of knowing' (Heron, 1996). Should we say 'Farewell to Criteriology' (Schwandt, 1996), if this means a set of uniform measures, and find other terms, such as 'trustworthiness' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and 'Tests of Credibility' (Greenwood and Levin, 1998)? Exploring these arguments has helped me avoid the pitfall of finding answers that parody positivist concepts of validity, with its preference for generalisation, replication and standardisation and gaining validity only through its methods, regardless of worthiness, value and impact on people. I realised my need to make a final shift in conceptual thinking to remove the deeply entrenched remnants of internalised traditional notions of validity.

Ensuring Quality in My Practice: A case study

Quality and integrity are key words in my practice. If I explore my interpretation of these concepts, I see the **quality** of my work as a manifestation of the depth and breadth of the knowing I bring to it; the quality of attention in my relationships with co-participants, the boundaries of the context and the choices I make; and the skill with which I apply my various professional practices. Essential to this quality is the integrity of my practice. **Integrity** is judged by the congruence between all aspects of my practice and

the claims I make, and between my aspired action research practice and my espoused values. The choices I make as I practice need to be guided by the agreed purpose of a particular contract and context. This congruence also needs to be evident from the beginning to the end of the contract, and then in what I do with the information and learning I gain from it. For example, I follow the criteria laid down by Disaster Action (www.disasteraction.org.uk) relating to personal information about disaster survivors. If contradictions arise, then the integrity would be exhibited either by knowing why exceptions had been made or by a willingness to be open to scrutiny, showing humility to admit mistakes and a desire to learn from them. I use the first-person enquiry methods described in B4 to monitor this congruence myself, while the second-person methods provide support and challenge from others.

I shall use a case study to highlight the dilemmas of practising in a volatile, emergent situation. I have called the story, 'Giving Myself Justice', my supervisor's phrase that became the mantra focussing my efforts to defend my work. It involved a short contract in 2002 with a national youth organisation who I had done work for intermittently for twelve years. The Child Protection Officer had asked me to 'sort out' a group of volunteers who had become enraged by the way the way a case of historic abuse had been handled by the organisation (see Story Box 2, overleaf). I knew that working with 'historic abuse' issues could leave me open to displaced anxieties in the organisation so I wanted to contract well. To do this, I kept the strategy, 'The Flow of Fourth Generation Evaluation' (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:186-7) in mind. When the Child Protection Officer could not gain the full involvement of her senior managers, I was immediately faced with a quality issue: "Do I start the work knowing that the contract is poorly defined because of the organisational denial of the abuse issue?" I remembered the warning of the dangers for external consultants if they have to confront organisational defences (Argyris et al, 1985).

My social concern for the victims, and the issue in general, motivated my choice to continue. I therefore had to begin by working to my own set of quality standards, based on my values, professional and commercial integrity, and knowing that my contracting had been compromised by pragmatic considerations. To make up for this, I had to ensure that other qualities were in place, gained from knowledge of the issues and past experience, to strengthen our ability to deal with the guilt and complex mix of emotions and behaviours that this kind of work engenders. Quality was enhanced by introducing educative information and questions into our conversations to seek commitment and gain consensus about aims and boundaries, checking these constantly against the

STORY BOX 2**GIVING MYSELF JUSTICE****The Background Story: The work under scrutiny**

A senior volunteer in an organisation was about to be arrested in connection with allegations of historic sexual abuse of a number of young people in the 1970's - 1990's. I had specifically been asked to deal with a current, bitter conflict that had arisen between officers in the organisation and a group of volunteers, several of whom were family groups. They were heavily involved in the legal proceedings, they all knew or were related to victims, and the accused had been their long-standing colleague and family friend. The volunteers were very angry with the way the organisation had handled the case and officers had responded to them angrily.

There was an expectation that my colleague and I could resolve the problem with one 'counselling' session, but we argued our case and gained three days for the assessment work with the volunteers and other key groups who were essential to the resolution of the conflicts, after which recommendations would be made. On paper, this was a very short contract, lasting three days over a month plus a day of feedback that I demanded with senior managers a month later, in early 2003. In reality it was an all consuming piece of work which continued with pro bono telephone support to victims while they awaited follow-up action. When this did not happen quickly, I wrote a further report to raise management awareness about continuing concerns.

The work was incredibly difficult and complex, with on-going legal proceedings throwing up new information and issues. The dynamics between the many people involved were constantly changing and often took degenerative forms against the volunteers. Some officers clearly could not deal with abuse issues in a helpful manner and we were constantly trying to get senior officials to treat the issues and media interest seriously. Our working conditions were cold and dirty, and we worked long hours with little food and drink readily available"

organisation's stated values and policies. Information about our professional code of conduct also had to be incorporated into these dialogues. Written records and note-taking, especially of verbatim comments and our own reactions, were the principal method of disciplined data collection. Tape-recording was out of the question for reasons of confidentiality and trust. My colleague and I also engaged in a great deal of critical enquiry of ourselves and each other, as well as seeking consultancy after the sessions, and the advice of specialist agencies on specific issues.

After each stage of the programme, we checked whether needs had been met and gained agreement about our next steps with the contracting officer, for example how to manage an official who objected to our challenge to his inappropriate jokes in the presence of the volunteers. After our final meeting with senior officers, a letter praising our efforts was received from the Chief Executive. The volunteer group, and the leader in particular, had nothing but gratitude for our work, since we had, in their words, 'restored their sanity, self-esteem and strength' and helped them deal constructively with their anger. Potential damage to the organisation had also been prevented because the group decided not to go to the media. Most stakeholders had used our brief time with them very constructively and one in particular, the only one to openly condemn the abuse and treatment of victims, proved to be an excellent supporter of our work. Several, who had been close colleagues of the accused, had continued their resistance and continued to attack the volunteer group with verbal insults and abusive letters. By most accounts, we had done a difficult job with quality, integrity and a great deal of courage worthy of Heron's validity criteria (Heron, 1996) described later.

But our involvement had not ended. Nearly a year later, a fundamental challenge to our work came from people who had never met us and had little idea of the work we had done. This focussed my thinking about validity issues. The central issue for me became, "How do I show (it felt more like prove) the quality of my work to powerful outside observers, and how do I give myself justice, especially so long after the event and when the chief observer appears to be seeking revenge because I dared to ask questions?"

The story continued when the organisation set up an Inquiry Panel about the handling of the case by the organisation. The sequence of events is complex and will not be detailed here, but I shall try to highlight the salient aspects relevant to this discussion. By a circuitous chain of events, the Panel chairman asked for my input to the Inquiry. This raised integrity questions about information given in confidence, so I asked for clarification of the nature of the process and how information would be treated. The questions produced an aggressive response and arrogant tone from the Chairman and a refusal to acknowledge my professional role. I consulted my professional body and was advised not to attend, resulting in more aggression and vindictiveness from the Chairman. I also began to realise that the Inquiry was inquisitorial in nature, not the process for learning and improvement of dealing with abuse cases as recommended in our report to the organisation. A few months later, I received extracts from the Panel's draft report containing a very unbalanced account of our work, with many inaccuracies

and conclusions based on little evidence. Some were defamatory about my professionalism and integrity in a legal sense. In particular I was being blamed for unprofessional conduct and 'harming' a member of the Volunteer group who I had never met.

To prevent myself responding reactively, I moved into action enquiry mode and asked for clarification about the unknown person and his letter of resignation that he had sent to two hundred people, including Royal patrons. This again produced aggressive e-mails from the Chairman and I had to draw on all my first- and second-person methods to maintain my integrity and keep asking questions. He grudgingly sent me a copy of the offending letter.

Ironically, the problem had arisen because of my insistence on following my rules of integrity and my values for pursuing social action and justice. After our contract had ended, the volunteers were left without further support, in spite of on-going legal proceedings and revelations. We felt our offer of pro bono telephone support was being abused so I took action to challenge the organisation's lack of action through one senior officer who appeared to be the only one to take the issues seriously. I had worked with her before and trusted her, so I took the perhaps unwise step of promising to send her a detailed account of our work, hoping this would help her fully understand the issues that needed to be solved. But first I wanted the Volunteer group to give their permission and check for confidentiality issues. This sharing of control of information with co-participants proved to be risky. Though I had emphasised that only those who attended the sessions should see it, the group member who had declined to take part was given a copy and was enraged by the account of problems caused by the labelling of the volunteer group by senior officials as 'irrational, over-emotional, vindictive and unintelligent'. The letter of resignation resulted in which he listed sixteen reasons why the organisation had failed, ending with the reference above as the last straw and naming the source, '*a report written by Elizabeth Capewell*'.

My own assessment of the consequences of our and the letter writer's actions conflicted with that of the Panel Chairman. Rather than harming the absentee volunteer, I saw that we had indirectly enabled him to find his voice. Whereas our rational appeals to HQ had brought little active response, he had managed to get them to take notice at last, though only to preserve the system, not improve conditions for abused clients. Those who had been to our sessions had learned to channel their anger in less emotive ways. I understood the dynamics of the situation in terms of the

organisation being unable to face their own discomfort, having been unsettled by this public exposure of misdemeanours. As an external person who had exposed and named many reprehensible features of the conflict, I was a convenient scapegoat on which they could offload the guilt they could not bear.

I was faced with several dilemmas in countering the accusations made against me. How, for example, could I give myself justice and prevent inaccurate, defamatory statements being printed in an open document, whilst also keeping everything in perspective in relation to time, energy and costs. I attempted to use an enquiring approach and learnt that enquiry and dialogue can only occur when both parties want to co-operate in a search for a similar goal. Every enquiring question I posed increased the level of attack from the Chairman, with threats that more adverse comments would appear in the final report. My anxieties escalated and I was aware I was being drawn into a battle I had no wish to enter, nor time or money to deal with properly. Our initial contracting and on-going consultations throughout the contract meant little to the Panel Chairman since he had not been involved in making them and had only a narrow view of what the work was really about and the difficulties of working with volatile situations and people. I could only engage in good quality facilitation of myself.

Another dilemma was how to validate the quality and integrity of our work without sounding defensive about actions that were in being attacked on false premises. Too much protestation of innocence might be seen as a sign of guilt. My solution was to give the Panel enough of my time to hold my ground and to state my position as clearly, fully and honestly as I could without being drawn into the many false suppositions that were, in the opinion of one volunteer officer, '*Aunt Sallies*' set up in order to knock us down. I also had to learn how to give justice to myself without wishing ill will on the adversary, (a hard but necessary task for maintaining my integrity), yet without feeling obliged to rescue or give justice to the Panel or the organisation – that was their business. I noticed that to validate my position, I drew most of all on our contractual agreements and those written later to clarify aims and record changes agreed as new events emerged. I had insisted that the key contracting officer participated in the programme so that the values and aims of the organisation could be referred to when necessary. We made our own values clear as we proceeded and checks were made between all parties before final decisions were made. Maintaining quality was an integral part of the process, and it was our attention to this that contributed to my greatest feeling of despair- that we could be subjected to such personal attacks in spite of doing so.

Having made our case, the report was finalised and presented to the local Volunteer Group. The defamatory remarks had been deleted, but so had all the favourable remarks and nothing had been added about the main body of our work. The volunteer group and others were similarly dissatisfied about the way their submissions had been ignored or misrepresented. After a great deal of self-enquiry, I made a decision to withdraw all communication and involvement with the organisation. I knew that if I was drawn in any more to the dysfunctions of this organisation, I, as a small external organisation, would always be vulnerable to being the depository for anything they found too painful to address. The organisation had wanted quiet victims, not empowered ones. The senior officials distributing the damaging statements about the volunteer group had been protected, as had another who had broken child protection guidelines but was still the person who people had to go to with suspicions. This was an organisation that preferred to hide difficult issues and would become more adversarial to protect their name. With the support of people we had empowered, I withdrew knowing I had done what I could to 'give myself justice'.

Higher questions of integrity in relation to a wider social justice issue remained to trouble me: *"Should I have taken more action to expose the fact that the officer who had contravened the Child Protection rules remained in post? Would I feel I had colluded with a culture in which abuse was likely to go undetected because people would not speak out for fear of being vilified like our volunteer group?"* I reasoned that I had done more than originally asked to do, I was not responsible for solving all the problems in the organisation and, most importantly, I knew that we had increased the capacity within the organisation at several levels for the matter to be pursued internally. A well respected senior volunteer had assured me he would pursue the remaining issues through the Trustees and, if necessary, the Charity Commission. I therefore chose to trust that the process towards justice would go on without me.

Reflecting on this experience reminded me that much of my work thrusts me at some point into a role described by my Irish friend as 'the poet in the ditch'. When working in ditches with a great deal of mess and dirt created by anger, guilt, shame, fear and stress, even the highest quality work and integrity can be hidden or distorted by grime. It may only really be validated by those who were part of the experience and were committed to agreed goals. If someone is intent on being vindictive and destructive, it is easy for them to take a narrow view of what they see and manipulate evidence to meet their intended goal, especially if they carry organisational and economic power.

Perhaps the greatest validation of our work is that we were prepared to be there at all, that we know when to get out and we are willing to work in other 'ditches' again when needed. The injustices against us are more than balanced by the trusting relationships we build with our clients suffering injustice, and with friends that stand by when some of the mud we work in sticks and besmirches us. It is a question of whose validity criteria is valued most.

Bringing rigour to emergent, messy practice

Most of my practice is composed of pieces of work that, like the work above and the story in Part E3, are inherently messy and emergent, usually small parts of a bigger process with contracts set up in a hurry, without well defined goals and boundaries. Helping people to get systems moving again, usually in far from ideal situations, is not a linear process. Discovering ways of evaluating this type of work is an on-going process in which I continue to be engaged, especially with colleagues who are bound by narrow definitions of validity by external monitoring agencies. For my own purposes, I draw on two types of quality criteria for maintaining quality and integrity:

- ☞ **Quality checks as an ongoing process:** checks that go right through the action research, being evident in the presence and attention I bring to my work and the quality of the interactions I conduct with others
- ☞ **Quality or validity frameworks:** checks using the systematic use of external frameworks devised from the underlying values and principles of action research.

I shall deal with each of these in turn.

Quality Checks as an Ongoing Process

Quality questions need to be an integral part of methodology throughout the research. Marshall (2004) has exemplified this by noting her quality choices as her narrative unfolds (p. 306), a useful model for the story-telling approach I have adopted in this thesis. Generated knowledge is more likely to be valid and authentic if 'truth is developed in a communicative process' (Kvale, 1995) where people learn and change through their dialogue. Lincoln believes that criteria should be encouraged 'to grow indigenously as a natural consequence of the inquiry effort' and calls for a 'profusion of validities responsive to the immediate inquiry and its context' (Lincoln, 1995). One of my first tasks, from individual to organisational levels, is to discover what people want to be different as a result of our work together so we can produce realistic, relevant goals (given their context and, for example, the limits of their employment contract) with

criteria of success that they understand. If validity is a concern throughout, a rigour is given to practice while it is in motion. Many of the skills and attitudes that contribute to first-person inquiry have this capacity, such as skills of **critical subjectivity** (Reason, 1981), the **self-referencing rules** suggested by Chandler and Torbert (2003), Whitehead's **self-reflection questions** (McNiff et al 1996) and Judi Marshall's concept of '**inquiry as life process**' (Marshall, 1999). Validity is also gained by the enrichment that reflexivity gives to accounts, exposing the struggles of internal processes and dynamics. This is a self-regulating validity that questions and challenges one's comfort zones and actions.

In the example above, I built quality into the process through the constant checking of goals, expectations and progress of all the people we worked with, along with impromptu conflict resolution sessions when differences arose. Our final arbiters were my contract and the stated values of the organisation underlain by my own professional codes and personal integrity. As in much of my work, the absence of serious involvement in the contracting by senior personnel limits what can be achieved, but I still aim to maintain high quality within the limitations. The comments we receive from our clients, and the changes in their facial expressions and posture, attest to the quality of attention they received which enabled them to be heard, empowered and moved into forward action rather than despair and inaction. For example, Elton, a young Kosovan refugee who had survived torture and a perilous journey to England, only to be violently tied to a tree at gunpoint in a raid on a fast-food store in Essex, told my colleague after his session with me, *"I can see it in her eyes – I feel safe to talk "*. In another incident, an 18 year old young man from a run-down south London estate who had been held at gun-point in a raid, turned to me after our session and said, *"You know, I really do appreciate what you've given us. You help us see things we wouldn't realise ourselves."* After another 4-gun armed robbery incident, a no-nonsense Franchisee, said of our sessions, *"I didn't really believe in this kind of stuff, but now I've seen its value – you've taken the burden of what the robbery did to my staff off my shoulders."*

As a practitioner who researches as part of practice, not just for itself, **usefulness and practicability** are extremely important to me. The contentious issue is who decides what is useful and worthwhile, whether a balance can be met between competing demands as part of the process or, if this is impossible, how choices are made and against which criteria. As in the case described above, I have to address such issues when needs of a group or individual conflict with the needs of the organisation

employing me, taking many factors to do with my legal contract as well as my contract with my own values and professional standards.

Turning from actual practice to verbal and written accounts of my practice, consideration must be given to how believable they are to readers. Two of the criteria I most value are taken from John McLeod's classification of tests developed for quantitative research, (McLeod, 1994) drawn from many sources. These are **experiential authenticity** and **catalytic validity** (cited as Kvale's criteria, 1983). The former describes the degree to which my accounts can be believed by others by how I tell them and how well they communicate empathy (emotional experiential knowing) alongside detailed cognitive knowledge of a subtle kind. The spirit of 'deep-participation' described by Reason (1994) must be evident. I know I have achieved this when people with 'inside' knowledge of disaster recognise the authenticity of what I have written, all the more so when they can then make better sense of their own experience as a result. My first public account of my work at Hungerford (Scott, 1988) rang so true to the experience of staff dealing with the Lockerbie disaster that they invited me there, thus providing the spark to my future career. This feedback given to me by a Californian colleague illustrates how such a tacit quality as authenticity can be acknowledged:

"I have had the opportunity to observe your facilitation style on several occasions (and in several countries). They were all different, but shared a remarkable similarity.

Picture this:

'150 school psychologists, counselors, and teachers from the New York City schools at a major school crisis management training. Elizabeth is asked to speak to them on short notice, and give her impressions of the state of school crisis management internationally. She quietly and unassumingly walks to the front of the lecture hall and sits down on a stool. Instead of dazzling them with an action packed power point presentation, she speaks to them as individuals, each sharing her pilgrimage, her walk towards . . . towards wherever it is that we are all supposed to be heading in this lifetime. She shares facts and experiences, feelings and truths in such a manner that all 150 people are enchanted by her, and her journey. 150 of New York's finest warriors, normally intense and boisterous are entranced. Somehow the time disappears and when they are suddenly applauding, they carry with them a sense of her, her work, their work, and themselves.'

I can't boil it down into more objective parameters than this, unless by "objective" you mean that all who observed it would nod up and down at the same time. And that's about what happened."

- E-mail from Dr Kendall Johnson, 14 February, 1999

Achieving **catalytic validity** (Kvale, 1983) or Fetterman's similar **Empowerment Evaluation** approach (Fetterman, 2001) is particularly important to my personal hopes for my work – that people will discover their own power to make choices. Such changes can be discerned in the written accounts and verbal feedback of participants, but mainly in the changes in attitude and behaviour, especially their commitment to action. My story in Part E3 of this thesis exemplifies this, when the Chairman of the Board of Governors changed his actions once our work and information had helped him fully assume the power of his role. He then used this power to influence his community and progress our work with the school and Education Authorities.

My final guide to quality and integrity is the question, *"Can I live with myself if I do this or act in that way, and can I live with myself if I don't"*. At Hungerford and in many pieces of work since, I have acted according to this rule at the expense of my own career or other commercial interests. In situations where I sense a culture of blame and mistrust, my contracting and work is also guided by legal considerations and having the kind of records and evidence that would back my claims, as in the example cited above.

External quality and validity frameworks

External frameworks that guide and inform my choices act as critical consultants to sustain the quality of my work in motion. In particular, the framework of validity questions described by Reason and Bradbury (2001:12) and based on the core components of action research enables me to check how far my aspirations to work in an action research mode are being achieved. I kept these questions in mind in the example of practice above and I shall give a brief indication (in italics) of how they were demonstrated:

⇒ **Quality as relational praxis:** is the work explicit in developing participative and democratic relationships, such as those between initiators and participants? *By insisting on a partnership of stakeholders, so that the volunteer group was not further pathologised as the 'problem'*

- ☞ **Quality as practical outcome:** is the work validated through new ways of doing and being? Does it work? Are they useful and life enhancing for the people involved? *Group A learnt how to rise above the projections placed on them by others in the organisation. They learnt to channel their anger and found different ways of expressing and using it.*
- ☞ **Quality as conceptual-theoretical integrity:** is good theory anchored to experience and to practice? *I drew on past experience, especially of the dynamics of agencies dealing with abuse (Hawkins & Shohet, 2000), and theories of group dynamics (Randall & Southgate, 1980), crisis management and conflict resolution, as well as action research. I also chose my co-facilitator because of her expertise in child abuse issues.*
- ☞ **Quality as plurality of ways of knowing:** are experiential, aesthetic, imaginal, empirical, propositional, practical and other ways of knowing drawn on appropriately? *We relied a great deal on our own experiential knowing and the parallel processes between the issues at the heart of the problem and what we were experiencing in the inter-actions with the organisation and different parts of it. Group dialogues were used to generate knowledge, and the various forms of knowing favoured by participants were validated and used. Our multi-dimensional coping models ensure that knowing from many channels of being are used in our work and in our work to increase coping and behaviour strategies of participants strategies.*
- ☞ **Quality methodological appropriateness:** are choices of method appropriate and congruent with values and purposes? Is the research well crafted in its own terms? *The methods used to help participants generate knowledge about their situation and future were also our means of practice. We chose methods congruent with the haphazard situation, the distressed state of participants and the poor physical working environment. We had to craft messy situations to harness opportunities and make them work towards the needs emerging. For example, our work had been so badly presented by managers to the volunteers, only a few were going to attend. By the end of the day after building trust and confidence, others were encouraged to attend and many more came to the following session.*
- ☞ **Quality as worthwhile work:** does the work explicitly address questions of value and significance? Does it contribute to wider concerns of humanity? *It attended to the socially important question of child abuse and victimisation of victims..*
- ☞ **Quality as emergence:** is the work self-organising over time and developing toward enduring consequences? Is it emergent, evolutionary and educational? *The last sentence describes what we did very well. I know that many of the consequences have brought about change for people's lives. I am less sure about the organisation*

and its ability to learn from, rather than deny, real issues. In a short time we did our work robustly enough to raise awareness and give opportunities to change. I believe that some of our recommendations, which were included in the Inquiry report without attribution, may be taken up including the power relationship between the organisation's Executive and the powerful Volunteer sector. Attitudes of some people are unlikely to change, but it is their right to choose this route.

More recently, the comprehensive '27-flavor typology' of action research possibilities (Chandler and Torbert, 2003; Torbert, lecture, July 2002) has provided another useful structure showing how quality can be assessed by the degree of differentiation and integration of three dimensions:

- time (past, present and future)
- research voice (subjective, inter-subjective multiple and objective generalised)
- practice (first-, second- and third-person methods).

Other concepts developed by Torbert (summarised in Torbert, 2001: 250-260) can be integrated within this frame as additional checks on quality, for example the degree to which the enquiry has worked across, and created multiple feed-back loops between, his four territories of experience— vision, strategy, action and outcomes and triple-loop learning and feedback (p. 254). In retrospect, the case presented above achieved many of these requirements in embryonic form even in the short time available. We enquired into past history in order to help the participant and the organisation understand more of itself and deal with the present conflicts. We then provided opportunities in which they could create different ways of behaving in the future. The work moved across different levels of experience, from personal to interpersonal to organisational, in order to give attention to interdependent parts and help each hear the stories of the other. We attempted to work not just at the level of individual behaviour change, but also opened up questions about timing, strategy and fundamental assumptions about child abuse, the implementation of policies and the culture of the organisation.

Within these broader frameworks, other specific guides to quality can be used, including scientific validity tests where appropriate. I shall not go into all in detail but will list some below:

1. Heron's methods for evaluating quality in the of facilitation of **co-operative inquiry** programmes (Heron, 1996)
2. Yoland Wadsworth's **criteria for collaboration** (Wadsworth, 2001)
3. Madeline Church and colleagues work on evaluating the quality (internal process and external influence) of **international networks** (Church et al, 2003)
4. Tests for quality participation in **participative action research** (PAR) (Fals-Borda, 1996:10-14, 2001:27-37 and Gaventa, 2001:70-80)
5. Statistical tests of validity for **quantitative data**, undertaken within an action research framework, as for example, those used in the Newbury Community Epidemiology Study that I initiated (Capewell, 1998c).

From this list, I shall take Heron's criteria for evaluating co-operative inquiry and show how I practised these in the work described in the story above. I am, of course, applying Heron's criteria to a different situation from the formal Co-operative Inquiry groups for which they were designed. My work is too emergent and haphazard for formal groups, but I find using such criteria holds my practice together. In other parts of my work, I am often the only continuous presence in the informal networks I create so it is important that I use the criteria of 'other voices' as an invisible consultant constantly checking what I do and where I deviate so I can critically scrutinise my choices. This does not prevent the individual groups and networks from devising their own quality criteria as well.

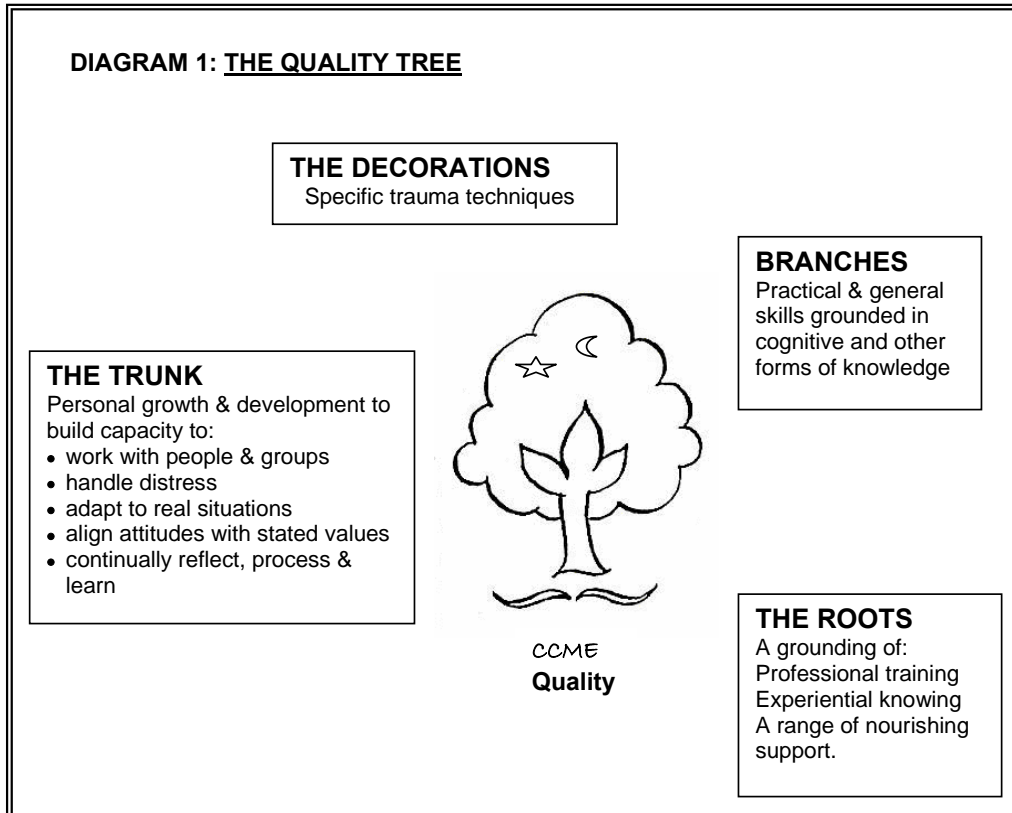
For a quality inquiry, Heron suggests the following should be present. My illustrations follow in italics:

- ☞ **Research cycling** – the constant cycling between action and reflection, the topic as a whole and different aspects of it, singly and in combination, from different angles, developing different ideas, trying different ways of behaving. *Reflection was built into the process with my co-facilitator and between ourselves and 'stakeholders'.*
- ☞ **Divergence and convergence** –co-researchers will look several times at the same issue (convergent) and look at different issues on successive cycles (divergent). *This contract gave me an opportunity to experience a different form of crisis (divergence) and to compare it with other situations involving abuse, both in this organisation and others (convergence, with an element of divergence).*
- ☞ **Authentic collaboration** – each group member is fully and authentically engaged in each action and reflection phase, with equality in how they express themselves, are heard, and contribute to decision-making. *A constant theme was to gain equality*

and re-balance power relationships between different parts of the organisation. We facilitated real-time conflicts as they happened, thus working with authentically engaged participants.

- ☞ **Challenging consensus collusion** – procedures that challenge forms of collusion, such as false assumptions, unaware projections distorting the inquiry process. *Much of our work involved unravelling projections and collusions that had created the conflicts, the scape-goating of the volunteer group and resistance to change.*
- ☞ **Managing distress** – arousal of anxiety and distress is an inevitable part when enquiring into the human condition. *The whole contract involved managing different forms of distress from the primary incident, its repercussions and what our work was revealing.*
- ☞ **Reflection and action** - having an appropriate balance between action and reflection to avoid the extremes of 'armchair theorising' and 'activism' for its own sake. *Even in the midst of a haphazard situation, we insisted on brief periods of reflection and modelled this during our work, especially with emotionally charged groups.*
- ☞ **Chaos and order** – moving between order and chaos is a common feature of any group process and an inevitable if the group is to be creative. *There was a great degree of chaos from the outset and we worked to bring about order to achieve the task, except where it was safe to allow chaos to reach its own resolution.*

My continuing concern with validity, quality and integrity issues comes mainly from the value I place on doing high quality work with integrity. The underlying foundation of this is the preparation, training and on-going development supporting my practice, as represented in Diagram 1 on the following page. This shows that if I am deeply rooted in my beliefs and values, and well supported by my professional training, then the branches and leaves, the various general methods and skills will grow naturally from them and be applied with wisdom, so that new techniques can be hung on the tree with confidence. Good fruit grows from such trees if attention is given to all parts of the system.



I have learnt, however, that good practice guided by values of integrity can still lead to problems with people whose status quo is challenged them. There have been just a few occasions where I have been called to account in this way and the final test of validity is whether I can honestly live with myself if I act or if I don't. The Hungerford situation and the story in Box 1 provided me with major challenges where my work was being judged positively by the people I was primarily there to support, but negatively by senior managers in the organisation who had been discomfited by it. This gave me a strong understanding that evaluations of quality depend on the views, experiences and underlying motivations and re-stimulated emotional distress of the people making them. The repercussions after the Hungerford work meant I could not maintain my integrity by staying in an organisation whose priorities were so different from my own, so I resigned knowing that my work was valued by the people who really mattered to me. However, this view did not stop me from putting my practice under scrutiny to look at how things could have been done differently.

B 4

MY ACTION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

“Useful research knowledge is not manufactured by the mechanical application of method. Rather, method is used to assist the basic human impulse to know and learn.”

- John McLeod (1994)

What follows demonstrates the amount of awareness, thought, and discipline that go into the making of my strategic path. It is indeed a life-long living process engaging both the personal and professional. As Marshall (2001) points out, it is also a highly political business and full of potential danger, as my first trainees in action research discovered when they began to ask enquiring questions in their organisations.

I have wanted to find methods which can be used by any practitioner in volatile conditions with little time and few resources so that no one need be excluded from being practice-based action researchers. I shall present the methods I most often use with their benefits and problems. Reference will be made to experiments I conducted with particular methods. I shall use the first, second and third person classification of Reason and Torbert (2001) to give some structure, recognising that this is not to be used rigidly. How I bring these methods into a synthesis of practice will be described in Part E.

I have no easy labels for my methodology except to say that I tend to “make my path as I walk it”, a phrase used by several people such as the poet, Antonio Machado, (1875-1939), Horton & Freire (1990) and Varela (1986). This can be dismissed as a lack of method, incoherent, ill-disciplined and making things up on some irrational whim. I view it is a pragmatic, well informed quality response to highly contextual and unpredictable situations for the active generation of knowledge in a newly developing field. I noticed my defensive attempts to parallel and gain credibility with the professionals from a traditional scientific perspective who I observed colonising my community-based area of practice. I had to heed the warning of Marshall not “to create alternative orthodoxies, [rather than] engaging with the dilemmas of fully living... action-based forms of researching.” (Marshall, 2001). My growing confidence as an action

researcher has encouraged me to reclaim the place for a style more suited to working with and for communities (Capewell, 1999)

Another challenge for me involved the exclusion I felt when I heard CARPP colleagues referring to methods I had never heard of, such as Ladders of Inference and Learning Histories. I discovered these methods were similar to my unpackaged ones and my cynical response was, 'Is that all they are?'. Having looked behind the labels, I appreciated the limits of my 'natural', unframed methods were limited. Having wandered around in a 'cloud of unknowing', with an intention to discover, I sensed, explored and mapped the territory from many angles until some wisdom came out of my confusion. Teaching action research to others then tested and consolidated my understanding. Students demanded a menu of methods and, while I could appreciate their need, I also saw the danger of creating a new elitism between packaged and labelled methods of the corporate and academic world, and those created by lay co-participants out of the stream of action research. My own struggles help me retain an empathy with people who feel excluded by the technical terms and even by the word 'research'.

My methods have been chosen for their ability to create useful knowledge as I integrate research into my practice. They also have to be congruent with my values and beliefs about the world, how I believe people come to know it and what will be done with what we discover. Thus, I reject 'methodolatry' (Bergin and Garfield, 1994), in favour of a strategy of multiple methods which enable people to create their own methods and knowledge. I am also averse to using standardised methods that control the questions that can be asked and the type of data that can be valued.

Two ideas in particular helped me find a flexible way of grouping methods. First, that action research could be a strategy of actions and choices made with awareness and intent and, second, the grouping of methods by Reason and Torbert (2001) into first, second and third person practice as described in B2. I drew up a table, too long and complex to include here, of all the strategies and methods I used in my action cycles with different disasters and types of work. I found that the majority of my work had been undertaken as a practitioner integrating action research as a **strategy of practice**. The research and action were dynamically and continuously informing each other in a moving spiral with methods becoming both the research and action. The Youth Crime project I co-ordinated in Bath (Bath YCSC, 1992), was the only time research was specifically required by sponsors and seen as an integral part of the strategy to develop

practical action and solutions. This is the only time I have been commissioned, funded and supported by an external agency to undertake what was essentially an action research project.

Trying to separate first-, second- and third- person research on this table was extremely difficult, but I concluded that first-person methods were always present, various forms of second- person methods were commonly present (though few were formal collaborative groups), and there was always an aspiration for third-person research, even if an opportunity was not found to achieve it fully. The story in E3 illustrates how my practice emerged as an integrated strategy moving from a meeting with one woman and spreading out to become a mechanism for engaging with wider social and political systems, not dissimilar to my Peasedown project (Story Box 1).

FIRST-PERSON METHODS USED IN MY ACTION RESEARCH

"Self-reflection is the school of wisdom."

- Gracián (1601 - 1658); Spanish philosopher.

First- person methods are the tools of personal research and the foundation of all action research. They involve the inward exploration of inward beliefs, thoughts and feelings and outward reflection on action to increase awareness and congruence between action choices and desired results. Marshall has termed these 'inner and outer arcs of attention' (Marshall, 2001:433-4). Because they are often used on micro-time scales 'in the moment of action', they might better be described as skills but skills used as a methodical strategy for an overriding intent to enquire into the improvement of practice. These methods seek answers to the questions of the kind drawn from Reason (Training course notes):

- ⇒ Who is the 'I' engaged in this project? What purposes are important to me? What do I believe is worth enquiring into?
- ⇒ What biases and frames do I bring? Which am I unable to move out of?
- ⇒ What are my patterns of behaviour? Am I flexible, diplomatic and outrageous, cunning and simple, wise and foolish?
- ⇒ How do I embody my values in my work?
- ⇒ Am I awake to what is happening in the world around me?

- ☞ Do I bring a quality of attention which seeks out and corrects incongruities between purposes, frames, behaviour, and the outside world?
- ☞ As I inquire into my own conduct, am I able to invite others to inquire with me?

Fundamental concepts

Fundamental to first-person practice are the two concepts of Critical Subjectivity and Action Inquiry that I shall now consider.

Concept 1: Critical Subjectivity

The concept of **critical subjectivity** (Reason and Rowan, 1981) is congruent with a subjective-objective world-view where the relationship of the subjective experience to the world around is crucial to understanding human situations. It allows me to be authentically engaged in the research as a human being, yet, by having a critical subjectivity, I can be aware of and deal with any biases, past distress, anxieties, social and political pressures that may cloud my view. Though complete objectivity is impossible (Marshall and Reason, 1998), a critical eye and enquiring inner voice can notice and expose distortions so that actions can be changed. The knowing remains grounded in its source, but is not consumed by the experience. Like a choreographer, a dance inspired by an intense personal experience can only be communicated to and danced by others after being crafted using professional technique and expertise. Having a tendency to being over critical of myself, other terms such as **disciplined subjectivity** coined by Erikson (1958, quoted in Schön, 1983) and Schön's own term, the '**reflective practitioner**' (1983) remind me that the critical eye can be appreciative and is not an authoritarian judge.

Concept 2: Action Inquiry

Torbert's **action inquiry** (1991, 2004; Chandler & Torbert, 2003), based **on action science** (Argyris and Schön, 1974), has been a core part of my methodology. This discipline focuses reflection on action to create transformations in the moment of action and develops an attention that spans purpose, strategies, behaviour and consequences (Fisher et al, 2000, Torbert, 2001). The detailed attention that has to be paid to the process of each action as it happens is particularly relevant to my work in situations where everything is in turmoil and where I am initially unfamiliar with both the context and the people. Any elements that are incongruent with beliefs, actions and intentions can be harmonised to produce the effects desired. Creating conversations that encourage and teach people to move from reactivity to reflection to useful action forms a large part of my work.

As an illustration of my use of action inquiry, Story Box 3 below contains an extract from a much longer account (Capewell, 2002a) of work with a staff team in a fast-food franchise following an armed robbery.

STORY BOX 3

Using Action Inquiry to Transform a Critical Moment in a Post-trauma Session

The first critical moment occurred when the alarms went off several times in rapid succession during the group session. Several group members became tearful and shook uncontrollably, as if they were actually back in the trauma, demonstrating our teaching about the reactivation of symptoms by a sensory reminder of the incident. One woman became very angry at the frequent ringing of the alarms. I attended to my own anxieties and chose to use the incident to teach self-calming through breathing, self-talk, imagination, posture and finding support. I noticed that the angry woman, 'Kim' did not really settle and guessed from the look in her eye and her defensive posture that she was not satisfied. I had to make an instant choice to ignore or attend to her needs and I chose to stop the session and focus on her. This rapid intuitive decision was based on her past trauma history given in the individual pre-group session interview, my theoretical knowledge of trauma reactions, my own experiential understanding of the cynicism created by previous trauma that produces a determination never to be fobbed off by techniques. I shared my hypothesis with her and helped work out a strategy so that she did not 'go on alert' when the alarm rang as if a raid was about to happen. The shift manager explained that the alarm had been set to go off every time the back door was opened as a safety measure. The woman's face and body relaxed visibly – she had been convinced. The need for a different, less re-traumatising system was recorded, and the lessons about dealing with hyper-arousal and the power of reminders needed no more explanation. The angry woman had also taken the first step in learning that resolving issues could be more productive than hanging on to her anger, as she had done for many reasons since the raid. Her praise of our work compared with the help received for her previous traumas was high.

– Taken from my account, 2002

This story shows just how many 'in the moment reflections' were made as we worked with our own and the teams' process and dealt with interruptions and emerging issues, conflicts and a second armed robbery. As with the stories in Box 1 and section E3, this one began with one woman, and grew until the affected staff group and then the whole system were engaged in the process work essential to her recovery and the recovery

of other staff and team. I found it hard to choose one extract from the interconnected whole, but the extract shows how I used first-person action inquiry to notice a critical moment within a second-person method and turn into one of several transformative conversations that demonstrated a different way of dealing with anger.

First person methods are at the core of what I do and help me check quality as I proceed, especially at times when it is difficult to engage formally with others. I am the only person who can carry my learning from experience to experience, from one place to another, so first person methods are essential to developing my whole practice. For disaster work situations, my preference is for methods requiring little or no technology that use my own inner and physical resources, along with paper, pen and materials for creative expression. Developing my capacity to use the methods is an on-going process. Using these two concepts as constant threads, I have created a variety of methods and skills to research myself and it is to these I turn now.

Specific first-person action research methods and skills

Having logged the methods I most commonly use, I looked for underlying themes and chose to group them according to their dominant purpose. These methods, listed below, represent the progression of enquiry needed to take the action researcher from a state of tacit awareness to outward action in the world.

Group A: Methods for enhancing my presence in experience.

Group B: Methods for stepping out of an experience while still living it.

Group C: Methods for recording data during or soon after an experience.

Group D: Methods for making sense of experience in a wider framing.

Group E: Methods for transforming experiences and planning future action.

I shall now expand on these methods in detail.

Group A: First-person methods for enhancing my presence in experience.

A.i. Meditative practices

These have been an aspiration rather than a fully practised discipline in any particular form. I have received instruction in several forms such as Christian meditation, Chan Buddhism, Sufi practices, Tai Chi and Reiki. Group and active meditations have suited me best, perhaps because the group situation makes the discipline easier to sustain. I use the methods as a means of:

- ☞ creating the conditions for more effective first person research
- ☞ grounding myself before a stressful event

- ☞ clearing my mind and attuning myself to the people and environment I am engaging with
- ☞ self-nourishment and care during and after stressful work
- ☞ changing my defensive attitude before meeting a potentially hostile group or situation. (I often find when I do this my fears are not realised.)

Some of my deepest insights shaping my work and life have emerged from these practices. For example, the images gained on my first Zen Buddhist retreat in 1986 were the 'stem cells' for my Trauma Process Model. Other Zen practices were important in the attention I could give to my daughter through her process of dying. It is on occasions of intense emotion such as this and immediately after major trauma that I experience 'going beyond myself', tapping into forms of awareness I do not yet understand and channel an energy that is greater than me.

A.ii. Yoga of Participation

One meditative method devised by Skolimowski (1994) from his yoga of participation involves 'approaching a natural object with reverence, communing with it in silence to attempt to identify with its form of consciousness and way of experiencing the world' (Heron, 1996). When I was first taught the method at a CARPP conference, I remember being asked to close my eyes after the engagement and notice what imprints were left as images. I have adapted this method for engagement with human situations. The imprints, transposing into symbols, that the group or relationship leaves on my mind enables me in an instant to access other dimensions for consideration I may not otherwise have noticed.

A.iii. Rituals and other methods gained from therapeutic training

The more I practice, the more I realise the importance of rituals for a fuller engagement with an experience. The ritual can provide a safe boundary so that physical and emotional distractions can be left behind. For example, rituals can be made from marking the beginning, the points of transition and the end of an experience or from defining the space physically or mentally. Many methods from psychotherapy have a ritualistic form that can be used, for example to crystallise or emphasise a particular experience so that it can be experienced again more fully. The method I most use is to give a feeling or experience some form, such as a colour, shape, sound or voice, so that I can set up a dialogue with it to discover its nature. The predictable frame of the ritual allows unknown experiences to be approached with less anxiety, for example in

training session where I want participants to have some idea of working in volatile situations. I also used a ritual walk to enable me to cope with, and explore my experience of, living with the uncertainty of my daughter's illness:

"Being attentive to every step I took, I walked up the volcanic outlier on the edge of Dartmoor to the ancient chapel of St Michael de Rupe perched on top. The colours and messages of the setting sun and the stained glass windows sustained me through the sudden turn of events and her death a few days later. The walk allowed the experience to come more fully into my awareness so that it could be transformed into a source of nourishment"

A.iv. Methods for stepping out of an experience while still living in it

I have used a range of methods as a first step to noticing and enquiring into the nature of my relationship with the experience prior to making cognitive sense and meaning from purely sensory perceptions. In terms of brain processes, these methods form the first stages of processing and storing sensory images as verbally accessible material (Turnbull, lecture notes, 2003), one aim of post-trauma recovery work.

The co-counselling method of **Identity checking** (Evison & Horobin, 1988:100) is useful for checking how far an experience of a person has been fuelled by reactivated emotions connected with someone from the past so that the two people can be separated and the new one respected in their own right. Simple **Gestalt therapy techniques** (Parlett & Hemmings, 1996), for example making statements about a person or situation such as 'I know, I imagine, I am aware of' help me observe in a more systematic and attentive manner. Using **metaphor** and images aid my reflection on the experience as I live it. Such images include having one foot in the pool of experience and the other in the pool of reflection, or the image of having a wise consultant on one's shoulder. I have also trained myself to take quick reflective breaks during an experience to research and maintain my attentiveness. Regular practice has meant that I can use the **multi-modal coping model** (BE FIT & Phys, see section D3) rapidly to scan the channels of my experiencing very quickly and make changes if necessary. Similarly, I can use my **trauma process model** (see Part C) at points when I catch myself moving into downward spirals of reaction or negative thinking to remind myself there is always an alternative.

Group B: First-person methods for recording data during or soon after an experience

My methods of recording data require the capacity to allow the process of action research to be communicated with richness and authenticity and to capture the subtleties of the 'here and now' before they are forgotten. Those too subtle to be captured accurately can only be recorded through the transformations they produce. Examples are:

B.i. Written records

Journaling is a method I have used for personal reflection during intensive experiential training, periods of therapy, and once as examination coursework. **Professional note-taking** tends to take over from Journals during professional engagements, though after a stressful day of non-stop disaster work, I find it difficult to write anything so use key words, symbols and sketches instead to jog my memory later. I tend to combine the personal with professional note-taking in one exercise book, keeping one side free for reflective comments and notes. To improve my note-taking choices and skills, I have been influenced by Judi Marshall's self-reflective inquiry practices (Marshall, 1981, 1999, 2001). In particular, her writing has made me revalue my natural ability for internal multiple tracking of myself and developing it into a more disciplined craft, improving the way notes and choices of what is noted, are recorded.

My colleague Sue Pittman instilled in me the discipline of keeping **Time-lines** as 'real-time' records has been a successful discipline for me in recording the myriad of process and recovery tasks of my work as an on-going process. In work involving abuse and suicide it is vital I track and stay alert to the complex dynamics and displaced emotions in rapidly changing situations. At the end of each session I can use these records as a reflective tool with my colleagues and with our clients. All of them can be used to understand the whole process in evaluations at the end of the contract or each phase when deciding how to continue. They are therefore an important tool for maintaining quality and integrity, as well as evidence for external monitors.

The edited extract of a ten page Time-Line in Table 2 on the following page is an example, chosen because it is one of the simpler incidents I have attended. It records our actions and feelings as the response to a suspicious death of a young male resident of a Children's Home developed.

TABLE 2: AN EXAMPLE OF A TIME-LINE

TIME	ACTIONS	REFLECTIONS
Thursday breakfast	Planning with colleague	Less apprehensive after briefing & planning with Director of SSD on drive from the airport.
Children's Home 9.00am	Shown round Home Introduction to some staff first impressions re the Home's culture	Tense atmosphere, strained faces. Noticed evidence of impending change – boxes etc.
9.15	Meeting with Manager. Dialogue: Information gathering -assessed impact of the death on circles of vulnerability and himself. Observed his decision making, motivations, level of ambivalence and resistance to working with us. Offered a framework to make sense of the incident. Informed and reassured about our role. Gatekeeper for our safe entry to the work	He felt safe - expressed feelings - the death and his future Data on political context of his position and re-structuring. Pleased to have us there Noticed - his tiredness, cynicism, demoralisation and breakdown in relationships with his boss and organisation. Feared media. Fear for job & re-organisation. Watch - my over-identification re problems with bosses. Discussed this with colleague.
Meeting - Deputy Manager	Dialogue to assess the impact on him, connections between the boy's death and his own experiences. Gained his assessment re impact on staff and residents. Reassured him that our purpose was not to do 'counselling'	Very resistant - 'not the sort for counselling'. Room full of boxes, defensive but allowed us in. Off-loaded impact of the death on him, his suspicions. Talked non-stop - sister's sudden death, mother's death (recent anniversary). A secondary gatekeeper -could influence staff either way.
10.15 - 10.45	Meeting with 'high risk' member of staff Stress defusing re fear and flashbacks. Quick trace back from 'first thoughts?' to root out the purpose of flashbacks. Root issue = fear of what other ex-residents might do to him. Exploring, teaching, reframing to help restore functioning. Focused enquiry - 'What info, support and action is needed now to function personally and at work? Identified priority issues. Creative methods Basic preventative education, mapped his coping skills	Only had 30 minutes Looked drawn, exhausted. Had the 'trauma stare'. Found dead boy. Few months ago he and the boy saw car crash in Grand Prix – more horrific but less impact. Couldn't believe impact of the boy's death– images of face and smell of body at night. Pleased with the rapid exposure of the core issue. His faced relaxed. Worried re inquest – priority – fear of parents' anger and blaming. Wishes of parents fro funeral? Angry - incorrect and unfair media reports. Strong religious beliefs helping.
10.45- 11.00	Meeting with SSD Psychologist Professional to professional discussion - how she might carry on staff support after our visit. Gave space for personal frustrations. Actively encouraged her as an 'agent of recovery' – information, support, ideas	Mismatch between verbal and non-verbals. Hiding behind professional talk? Lots of off-loading - frustrations of moving to this area - e.g. the denial of abuse etc on the island, only gets 3 sessions per week in the Home

Logging everything in sequence as it happened, with additional reflections at the time and later, improved my understanding of the inter-acting dynamics of the young residents, the staff team and the Children's Home internal and external managers. Many of the details recorded had little significance at the time they were taken. Tacitly felt elements such as the emotional atmosphere are easily forgotten if not captured in brief notes or symbols. As the work proceeded and new information and insights were sensed and obtained, patterns and connections developed and earlier seemingly inconsequential information gained meaning.

It will be noted that the extract covers just two hours at the start of 2 days work in the Children's Home and contains only the bare-bones of what was recorded. Thus the time-lines expose the complex nature of our work and just how many facts have to be retained and processed when working systemically, attending sometimes to individual needs, sometimes to the needs of groups and sometimes to the needs of the wider community and system.

B.ii. Audio and video accounts

I have tried using audio and video tapes to record experiences but only find them helpful in training situations. The vulnerable situations I work in demand trust, confidentiality and an environment undisturbed by the presence of equipment, and the logistics of using it. Attending acutely to each moment can also be reduced if I think I can rely on the tape as a record. The atmosphere that I sense in person as part of my intuitive decision making can never be captured well on tape and the level of my technical skills and equipment mean that poor recording gives a poor record of events. I tried to video record sessions with teachers during my three-year programme in Derry schools, but without someone to operate the equipment, the results were poor. Audio recordings were also poor as people spoke too quickly or quietly to be heard and the strong Northern Irish accents were hard to decipher on tape. As the story in Box 4 on the following page shows, even professionals cannot adequately record what happens. My preference is to work on improving my attention and capacity for reflection in the moment of action along with my recordings in notebooks that I can easily store, carry and access.

Story Box 4**Testing Method B.ii: Video Recording**

Video recordings of my work after the Docklands bomb were made when Independent Television News. I saw an opportunity to educate people that post-trauma work was not just about individual counselling. After discussions with the Head teacher and staff, we agreed they could film a class group that we had already worked with and were well trained in group discussion skills. The group were superb and the reporters gained a better understanding of what our work entailed, but I learnt that even with high quality camera operators and equipment, it was only possible to gain a viewable end product that was highly edited and showed only a fraction of the whole experience. The film rushes act as reminders of the session and give brief glimpses into what took place, but they are too disjointed to be of real use.

– Taken from my records, 1996

B.iii. Visualisations, symbols, metaphor and creative modes of expression

I use these to encapsulate the multi-dimensional aspects of what has happened, including aspects that are not yet recognised and known and where a great deal of chaotic information is being received in a very short time through the senses. These sensory images are stored in the most primitive part of the brain, the hippocampus, which is pre-verbal so pre-verbal methods are most suitable. I can use any symbol or metaphor, even something as simple as a colour or shape to record the data I need for my first person enquiry. I can take it further using other devices, such as metaphor, mapping and story which provide the starting point for further work. Ayalon (1996) suggests that the metaphor acts as a buffer or mediator between an individual and the chaos or pain of the experience, like a bridge between my inner and outer world, thus making it possible to access a great deal of information quickly in a manner that can be used to gain insights and clarity. For example, I often imagine the situation as an island or foreign land and ask myself questions about what the territory is like, where I am in relation to others, how the rules are being made, who has power and so on. This can be done in the imagination while working but the method gains even more power if it is expressed in some visible form. Drawing the images on paper and mapping processes as a journey (as I did in the Trauma Process Model, Part C) have been the most useful methods for me, but I have also sculpted in clay or made living sculptures of my body posture. Creative forms of verbal expression such as poetry and story, with a heavy emphasis on imagery and metaphor, tend to flow from the non-verbal forms and represent a transitional phase towards the next stage of making sense. For example, I

encapsulated the complex experiences I had in my organisation after the Hungerford shootings by writing them as a fairy story. Key symbolic characters carried the meaning in my story more concisely than anything that I could have recorded formally (Capewell, 1989)

B.iv. Methods for making sense in a wider framing

Once I have gathered experiential data, I begin to articulate it non-verbally, then verbally as a narrative before looking at how I can place my insights into a wider framework of understanding. The starting point of this process, which will eventually need engagement with others, begins with making connections with other aspects of my past and current life, my inner world, my outer concerns and all the values and beliefs that underlay my perspective on the world. Many methods I use have been instilled over many years from training in **therapeutic disciplines**. For example, the **'Spot Imaging'** of transpersonal psychology (Somers, 2000) and the technique of **'Early Recollections'** (Beattie, 1994, Mosak & Maniaci, 1996:36) from Adlerian Psychology allow past experiences to be brought to the surface to examine their links to the present (as used in section A1). Connections can be made with other life events, patterns of behaviour can be discerned and insights gained about the influence of past distress on present thinking, actions and behaviour. Early recollections in particular help clarify underlying beliefs and values as well as the roots of prejudice and bias. Once an adult eye and understanding can be brought to bear on the mistaken beliefs and patterns of childhood, change in beliefs and therefore thinking, emotions and behaviour become more possible. I have used the Early Recollection method extensively in my work to understand my patterns of belief and thinking, to change emotional reactivity and behaviour and as an important tool of enquiry that I teach to help clients research their own patterns of living.

I have further increased my kit-bag of skills with the use of procedures requiring **rational thinking**, including the **'Ladder of Inference'** (Argyris, Putnam and Smith, 1985) to detect the biases and assumptions in thinking made from observable data that might lead to global conclusions, The **'Learning Pathways Grid'** (Rudolf et al, 2001) to track differences between intentions and actions, and **'Multi-column note-taking'**, a discipline that encourages the tracking of several channels of experience as they are being experienced or soon after. As I record data, I notice how I begin to make connections with other events and situations, my own and accounts of others, and thus begin to find a place for my experience. These connections can be made at many levels and in many forms – theoretical, biographical, systemic, presentational,

symbolic, spiritual, scientific, in the form of myths and legends. This is where the first-person enquiry gives way to second-person as other voices come into conversation with me, though not in person. This process moves forward when I turn the insights into presentational forms and diagrams, as found in Parts C and D. Thereafter, cognitive channels and written accounts provide the discipline I need to consider different frameworks from my own and the connections between them.

B.v. Writing

The process of writing articles for popular and professional readership, and especially the multi-cycle process of writing this thesis, has been an important strategy of first person enquiry, especially as my practice originated and developed from personal and practical experience rather than academic research. Reflecting on and sifting through material, making choices about form and content helped me gain new ideas and insights in the process of trying to make sense, verify and communicate ideas. Writing and re-writing my experiences has brought a great deal of my practice, and the values and attitudes which ground it, into my awareness and created many re-understandings of earlier work and writing. Though others may be involved in the process, the final result is my responsibility and it is essentially my voice that speaks through it. My thesis also became a repository, even a silent motivator and supervisor, of work undertaken while I wrote. The Community Epidemiology study is a case in point as well as my further research into the 'debriefing controversy' (Capewell, 2004a) since my research and writing gave me the purpose and discipline that motivated and guided my involvement.

Group C: First-person methods for transforming experiences and planning future action

These methods are a vital step in transforming my experiences into useful action during or after a piece of work. Those presented here can all be developed in many ways, such is the strength of the basic format:

C.i. Multi-dimensional coping model (BE FIT & Phys.)

This model is described more fully in Part D, reminds me to value all channels of being and coping and that I am ultimately the author of my own experience. The structure of the model gives me a systematic method for thinking and then taking action in each of the channels to ensure none are neglected. It is most useful when I feel frozen or

helpless and have forgotten that I have choice and alternatives. I often use the model in conjunction with the next.

C.ii. Six-piece story-making

The Six-piece story making method (Lahad, 1992) provides a format for projecting difficult situations on to a symbolic, metaphorical story, drawing on the basic pattern of ancient legends and fairy-tales: the hero/heroine is given a mission to accomplish but to achieve it, help has to be sought from various sources to deal with the obstacles in their path before the final stage of their quest is reached. It provides me with a creative method for standing above seemingly intractable situations and finding new sources of energy, support and methods of coping to work out my next steps.

C.iii. Mapping

Various forms of mapping the path taken through a difficult work period and its repercussions is a method I have used for myself many times to aid understanding, but also to decide how I continue in the future. My Trauma Process Map (Part C) is the most developed example of my use of this method. A similar method to mapping has become a vital '**escape strategy**' for moving myself out of incapacitating reactions using imagination. I imagine or draw a ladder from where I am in my stuck place at the time to where I want to be by a certain time. For each rung, I think of small actions and thoughts that will help move me up the ladder towards my goal. Thus finding a form for and mapping my route stimulates rational thinking and the creation of a practical action plan. When the 'rational thinking' function of the brain is frozen, this method uses the right brain which deals with creativity and lateral thinking to kick-start it.

C.iv. Self-supervision and self-therapy

In this case, methods are borrowed from one-to-one situations and used on myself, sometimes with an imaginative device such as a wise consultant on the shoulder or the 'empty –chair ' technique from Gestalt therapy. It usually involves checking out my actions against theoretical models or, when work is exhausting, against metaphor. For example, the image of a tent pegged in as many places as possible represents an image that I can use to check that I have found a wide enough variety of allies to anchor a contract in enough places across a community or organisation to ensure that it will be well grounded.

SECOND-PERSON METHODS USED IN MY ACTION RESEARCH

First-person enquiry is lonely and can easily perpetuate existing biases and degenerate into the fulfilment of one's own prophecies. Hawkins noted that too much working alone, reflecting on reflections, as phenomenologists did, felt like a route to insanity. His research was brought alive by the feedback loops and creative insights from the encounter with communities and teams (Hawkins, 1988). My capacity to be critical, disciplined and reflective about subjectivity had to be checked and the pool of experience generating my knowledge needed to be renewed and complemented by the perspectives of others. Even the solitary meditative walk described before was enhanced by the presence of a person walking alongside in silent communion.

Second-person enquiry was therefore essential to the health and rigour of **first-person enquiry**, especially as **inter-personal relationships** are vital to participative approaches of all kinds. Understanding about dynamics and processes complex disaster situations was deepened by the pooling of diverse perspectives and creativity was enriched by the pooling of ideas. As more people became engaged in our responses, the interpersonal dynamics also become the raw material for real learning about post-disaster community dynamics on a larger scale.

My second-person enquiry was informed by the questions of the kind set by Reason (Training course notes):

- ⇒ What different experiences can we bring to our inquiry?
- ⇒ What can we learn about working together from how we work together?
- ⇒ What ideas can we create together (that we could not create alone)?
- ⇒ How can we use our resources to try them out in similar or different situations?
- ⇒ What can we learn from how the group is working?
- ⇒ How do we experience the power dynamics working between us?
- ⇒ How are our cultural and other identities influencing how we are interacting?

The nature of my work and financial resources have been too random for me to envisage setting up formal enquiry groups that meet regularly, such as **Co-operative or Collaborative Inquiry** groups developed by Heron and Reason (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1988) and **Appreciative Inquiry** groups developed by Cooperrider and Srivastva (Ludema et al, 2001). My early attempts to set up a collaborative National Disaster Staff Network foundered after a few years because of lack of funding and

commitment of people better at giving help to others than themselves. During its existent, the Network did generated knowledge about the impact of disaster, and especially poor management, on staff in the helping professions.

It seems pertinent to acknowledge that the most creative and professionally successful part of my whole career in terms of international recognition and even, in some years, financially has been at a time when I was in sole charge of myself and my path, working only in loose collaborations with others. When I began disaster work, I needed to learn how to find my own voice and work from my own authority without being part of a group or organisation. This was partly the result of the shame and loss of trust I experienced after my Hungerford disaster experiences and later, after the death of my daughter, I did not have the physical or emotional capacity to give a regular commitment to others. This does not mean I could have started or survived alone, rather that I had to find creative ways of collaboration to suit the needs of the main purposes of my work and the specific projects I was involved in. Indeed, the foundation of my disaster work skills and my capacity for action research were laid down in a collaborative enquiry experience, the two year experiential Humanistic Psychology course I attended in Bath, 1986-7, described earlier.

I shall now present the forms of second-person enquiry that have contributed to my action research. They fall into the following broad categories of purpose:

Group A: Methods for personal and professional development

Group B: Methods for improving specific practice situations

Group C: Methods for collaborative assessment in specific situations

I shall now explain these groups of methods in detail.

Group A: Second-person methods for personal and professional development.

These methods are intertwined in all aspects of my life, professional and personal. At their heart is the quality of dialogues and conversations that I conduct, making my practice a relational one. I use the distinctions drawn by Baker et al (2002) between dialogue, an essential intellectual, verbal exchange of differing ideas to refine knowledge and abstract ideas, and conversations, a more emotional exchange in which human understanding is created beyond words and even in silent communion. My path and practice is a mosaic of many conversations with the occasional intellectual dialogue.

A.i. Inter-personal conversations

Since the start of my career in disaster work, I have been so consumed by my need to answer the questions raised for me at Hungerford, that I overcame my usual inhibitions and set up a conversations and, occasionally, more structured dialogues with anyone I came across or read about who appeared to have mutual concerns or similar experiences. Many of the resulting relationships had a depth of shared knowing that meant it was a community that immediately knew its own kind and had few inhibitions about sharing information. From the feedback I received, I discovered that my approaches immediately communicated my authenticity, genuine interest in the issues and that learning would be put to good use. Because my experiences are so embodied in me, I could approach as a human being first, thus avoiding the barriers of approaching from a purely professional, academic or voyeuristic stance.

These dialogues have generated real-life information from many different people and groups, including survivors of disasters, campaigners and people from a wide range of professions, from disaster and trauma specialists, professionals caught up in disaster and the media. Two particularly fruitful dialogues were set up with Dr Ofra Ayalon of Israel and Dr Kendall Johnson of California, whose books first validated my approaches at Hungerford. At the time they were two of very few people specialising in community and school-based trauma response and their knowledge, support and encouragement has been central to my practice.

These first international links motivated my applications for travel scholarships that widened my dialogues with people with first hand knowledge of other disasters, as well as academics and clinicians. I also met more people who shared my belief in holistic approaches to disaster work than in the UK where there is more rigid polarisation of professionals and approaches. Most importantly, I felt less isolated and was motivated to develop my ideas in my own style.

Action research gave me tools for improving these dialogues, for example Torbert's '**Four Territories of Experience**' framework of Framing, Advocacy, Illustrating, Inquiry (1991) I used this structure as a framework for my presentation when I lobbied the UK Department for Education and Skills to raise awareness about the need for a more comprehensive approach to school crisis management in 2001. Where conversations took place in counselling situations, they were guided by my training in Heron's 'Six-Category Interventions' (1975) which gave me 'permission' for the more directive conversations needed in the early aftermath of disaster.

A.ii. Networks of enquiry

My ability to network was founded on my capacity for lateral thinking, making connections and spatial awareness. It developed further as my survival strategy as a mother of three in a rural area trying to re-establish a career. My account of the Peasedown project (Story Box 1) illustrates where my personal networking merged into my professional work which developed through my work in Hungerford and later after disasters in London Docklands and Omagh, (see Part E). The networks sometime developed as the result of intended actions, sometimes spontaneously because I recognise and act on opportunities to do so. My professional disaster work networks expanded as a result of the article written about my Hungerford work (Scott, 1988) which was seen by professionals working with the Lockerbie disaster. They contacted me because my story resonated so much with theirs and they too felt marginalised. The subsequent invitation to Lockerbie and the networking that followed helped me create a small community of inquiry for mutual support and learning. It also led to many more networks, the next involving the Hillsborough disaster workers, and many more opportunities for action and learning that continue to this day.

My idea for a Disaster Staff Network grew from my informal networking. Going through the process of contacting other disaster workers across the UK contributed to my growing body of knowledge and also created a link with Gerry Smailes, an inspirational man involved in network development at the National Institute of Social Work. New Network members sent their stories with their applications to join, and these affirmed that my experiences were not unusual. A newsletter was published so our learning could be shared. We tried to hold meetings across the country, but many of the people involved were struggling emotionally with their disaster experiences or physically with the on-going demands of the disaster work or other stressful jobs. I also needed time and energy to create a new business and had little capacity for dealing with fund-raising or establishing a new charity. However, many of the links made at that time have persisted and there have been many spin-offs for myself and others. A Trauma Association developed in New Zealand, inspired by a short piece about our Network in a national journal (Beth Webster, personal communication).

The relationships I built up through travelling abroad, have meant that I have been able to create ad hoc networks of enquiry when I have needed them. Some have developed for specific purposes, such as the '**International Brainstorm**' I conducted via fax and post in 1995 using a questionnaire to gain a consensus view from expert practitioners

around the world about the competencies needed for post-trauma group debriefing (Capewell, 1997, 1999). Since my disaster response career began, and even since I joined CARPP, the advances in technology have revolutionised my capacity to create global networks. When I was invited to present my case about school crisis management to the Department of Education, I e-mailed everyone who worked in this field from many parts of the world to send a story or statement that would back my argument. This gave a richness to our advocacy with very little cost in time, energy and money.

As I complete my thesis, I am establishing a network with professionals who share my interest in community-based participative disaster response and action research in Melbourne, Canada and Los Angeles. The recommendations of people involved in International Development networks (Church et al, 2003) about developing, sustaining, evaluating and improving networks for creative participatory enquiry could add rigour to my future networking efforts.

A.iii. Research groups

I have belonged to two research groups about disaster impact and response that contained many elements of action research and had similar values of democracy, participation and social change. They valued diverse ways of knowing and presentation and were as emergent as the constraints of funding bodies have allowed. They differed mainly in the absence of significant first person enquiry and reflection on process. However, they have provided mutual learning forum which have felt inclusive and accepting of holistic perspectives. Their products have the mark of authentic, real-life experience of people and professionals 'who have been there' and got their hands dirty. They were more fruitful than other traditionally run groups that I had abandoned

The first project was funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and led by Dr Tim Newburn as a development from a qualitative study of the impact of the Hillsborough disaster on Social Workers (Newburn, 1993a, b, c). It consisted of a series of conferences using story-telling whereby our stories of disaster work were told to other participants, first in small groups, then as a whole. Finally, we told of how our learning had since been integrated into our lives and practice. Recommendations for policy makers were drawn up. The story-tellers continued to meet and write a book together, 'Journeys of Discovery' (Mead 1996), and this became another method of research in itself. This is where my embryonic Trauma Model was first used and published.

The second research group ran for two years until the end of 2003. The record of the project can be found on www.edgehill.ac.uk/faculties/cscsj. The research was the first ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council) funded group to have disaster victims/survivors as equal co-researchers and they represent a diverse range of views and background, from academics to the unemployed. The 'professionals' too have a wide range of experience, from social justice, political action, social work, emergency planning, law, psychology and education. Our disaster experience also covers a wide range from murders in custody, civil unrest to high profile murders and major disasters of all kinds. There have been many personal spin-offs for me in the quality of the relationships I have made and the affirmation of my holistic stance to disaster response. My past learning has been consolidated and deepened from hearing other perspectives on disasters I have been involved with. I have gained new learning from experts, especially high profile lawyers and campaigners, and new learning and challenges from people involved first-hand in disaster.

A.iv. Professional seminars and conferences

These of course have their place and were very important to my early learning and networking. They helped me understand how my ideas fitted into the wider field. However, unless they are small and designed to encourage enquiry, I soon found that their competitive nature and emphasis on many short papers about quantitative studies was not at all conducive to helpful learning, even of the cognitive kind. The high costs and infinite number of these conferences now tend to be beyond my means and I choose carefully which I attend.

A.v. Silent engagement with others

This involves me as the unknown audience for someone else's communication. The power of an author or speaker to stimulate me to enquire depends very much on its timeliness and the passion with which I am posing my questions. Hillman's chapter on Betrayal (1975) came my way in such a timely fashion that I was willing to struggle with the difficult concepts of Jungian Analytical psychology and develop my Trauma Process model (see Part C). Whatever I read or heard, I noticed a stream of enquiry with the external voice, *"Where are you coming from? What makes you tick? Can I trust what you say? What is your bias? Do you speak with your own voice or as a mouthpiece for others for undisclosed reasons or gain? Do I feel included as a valued recipient of your message?"* If I am aroused by opinions and actions I do not like, I find this silent dialogue enables me to stand back from intolerance while I try to understand their position, the different routes that people take and the variety of choices possible. If

I am aroused with agreement or disagreement, it may spur me to contact the person, made easier by e-mails. Reading about the lives of others gives me ideas, inspiration and courage. Above all it lets me know I am not the only one with fears and frailties. In learning about others, I learn more about myself.

Group B: Second-person methods for improving specific practice situations

By this I mean, the way I engage others in my search to improve my practice as I work during specific situations and contracts. I describe these methods below

B.i. Consultancy, therapy and supervision

These forms of second-person enquiry have all been influential throughout my career, providing a safe relationship for loving challenge, for experimenting with new behaviours, for support and clarity in my learning about organisational issues, myself as a professional and as a person, and general human behaviour. Some relationships have also helped me understand the application of theoretical perspectives to practice, especially Adlerian and Transpersonal methods. I have also transformed potentially damaging experiences with therapists, for example the one who got angry and walked out on me two months after Ann's death and the other a few weeks later who could not cope with my tears, into learning about the different styles needed after trauma and bereavement. Finding the money to use independent sources of therapy and consultancy even when my income has been low has been a priority. I have supplemented one-to-one work with group experiences, such as long-term therapy or training groups to widen feedback and experiments with new behaviours. With increasing maturity, I have also found colleagues with whom I can practice what we call 'equavison', or co-supervision. All of these methods provided a means of continual professional development and many of the foundational skills of my action researcher.

B.ii. Peer supervision - for mutual learning about practice

These are created with my immediate work colleagues during a piece of work and between different pieces of work. Because of the expertise of the people I work with and familiarity with supervision techniques, the sessions are informal but operate with an intent to learn and understand each other's actions. We agree on what we need to explore and then draw on our varied resources for creative methods, such as mapping or drawing, when we need deeper insights. During intense periods of work, we extend first person methods and use, for example, metaphor and the BE FIT & Phys model

(see Part D) to gain a sense from our tacit knowledge of what is really happening and to access our thoughts and feelings in order to change things if necessary.

B.iii. Peer knowledge generation during an emergency response

When working in difficult conditions, often with basic facilities and rapidly changing information, methods had to be developed to ensure knowledge could be generated, choices identified and decisions made from a shared basis of information. Attention had to be paid to the mechanics of how this was done when people were tired, messages mislaid, emotions easily aroused and people became upset if they felt excluded from receiving up-dates. The recording system that developed involved large sheets of paper stuck to the walls of our 'office' where everything except identifiable personal information was recorded. Depending on who had access to the room, different sections could be added for recording emotions, frustrations, ideas and affirmations. Our team and 'internal' assistants could keep abreast of new information and developments without much effort as they passed by and nothing could get lost or hidden. At the end of each day, the papers were used for reflection and planning, and for review and future learning afterwards.

Group C: Second-person methods for collaborative assessment in specific situations

This group of methods had a dual purpose, illustrating how my methods also become the content of my practice:

- ⇒ First, as a means of gathering data about an issue or disaster
- ⇒ Second, as a means of helping participants take charge of their own learning and recovery by researching themselves, their own situation, needs and resources. As well as researching their past and current situation, they are also researching the future possibilities and even creating futures as yet undreamed of.

C.i. Disaster assessment frameworks

The methods can be used in training disaster response teams, where I encourage people to learn self and group enquiry methods to create plans and procedures appropriate to their context. I also use them immediately after an incident, for example my S-S CIRA framework (See Part D3) to foster enquiry and mobilise a wide range of group and inter-personal support in the community. It will be seen from my later accounts that all the models I use in my work are designed to build enquiry dialogues

and conversations, both with peers, professional supporters and agencies. These include my trauma process model that invites exploration of past, present and future dimensions; various forms of post-trauma debriefing, processing and review. For example, Ayalon's '**Empowerment Model**' (Gal et al, 1996) invites people to map their past and current coping strategies in order to influence their future choices and expansion of coping skills. The multi-dimensional coping model, '**BE FIT & Phys**' described in Part D3, helps a group understand the variety of reactions possible after trauma, identifies gaps and encourages them to create new ideas to open up new channels of coping. These methods can be used cognitively, practically and experientially.

C.ii. Creative and therapeutic methods

These methods offer opportunities for collaborative learning and moments of surprise. Many of the exercises I use have their origins in dramatherapy and several of my most valued colleagues have been trained in this tradition. Other methods, such as Instant Drama (a wonderful method for involving many diverse voices and creating new solutions), were developed during my time as a youth and community worker.

C.iii. Methods from organisational development and assessment of culture

These methods enable the collaborative raising of awareness of the dynamics and culture of teams, communities and organisations for several purposes:

- ☞ to work together in pre-emergency planning to understand the culture, identify aspects that might impede resilience to the disruptions and stress of trauma and to produce effective crisis management solutions that are congruent with the organisation's culture.
- ☞ in post-trauma work, to identify collaboratively the significance and meaning of traumatic disruptions to the system in order to assess vulnerability and needs.
- ☞ to ensure post-trauma responses are culturally relevant and to envision future readjustments to the system.

The methods I use specifically use for this purpose were learned when working alongside Dr Peter Hawkins and Dr Adrian McLean (see Hawkins and Shohet 1989, 2000; McLean and Marshall, 1988). Some rely on the quality of questions posed to a group or to key people within a system that encourage reflection, often at a profound level. Questions of the kind, 'The unwritten rules of this group are...' or 'the hidden agenda that this group carries are...' can begin to penetrate the hidden assumptions

and unnoticed everyday practices and rituals. Cultural knowing is gained at practical and experiential levels when such questions are used within creative exercises such as sculpting the group, or as 'enacted role sets' that explore the roles and boundaries between different parts of the system (described in Hawkins and Shoet, 2000:149-150).

I found such methods particularly useful when developing multi-disciplinary crisis response teams. Each discipline has to be clear about its role so that other teams can relate to them and negotiate boundaries and co-operation. This can be done simply by asking each discipline or agency to complete the following statements

- ☞ What I offer this group (or team, or agency) is
- ☞ What I expect from this group is
- ☞ What I see happening in this group is...

Such questions help each component part to be very clear about their specific role, their boundaries and what they need to communicate to each other. I first used these when working with a multi-disciplinary disaster team in a Northlands hospital, New Zealand in 1992 and it was remarkable how unclear different groups were about their core task and unique purpose.

In the emotionally charged environment of post-trauma work, creative methods enable difficult issues and complex dynamics to be exposed quickly and safely, as shown in this brief extract from the staff development programme I ran for the Liverpool Hillsborough Centre team in Story Box 5 on the following page.

STORY BOX 5**THE LIVERPOOL HILLSBOROUGH TEAM: GETTING TO KNOW ITSELF
BETTER**

First, I used a sculpting exercise to bring the conception and birth of the team into our awareness. Various issues and information quickly emerged and we three distinct groups within the team were exposed – initiators, second wave and newcomers. Each has different levels of exhaustion which were exaggerating the divisions. Having identified the history of the team, the three groups described themselves in terms of tribes from different countries, creating their own rules, rituals, songs, jokes and artefacts that symbolised their values, history and culture. A dialogue was set up between the three ‘tribes’ to communicate their distinctive features and ask questions of each other what they could contribute to the team and what they needed from others. This helped them value each other’s perspectives and gave the newcomers the equal right with established groups to express a view. Difficult issues and complex concepts were brought into awareness and given concrete form. Perceptions could be checked and altered. More importantly, this was done in a spirit of fun and enjoyment at a time when few felt able to laugh.

– Extract from records, 1989

THIRD-PERSON METHODS USED IN MY ACTION RESEARCH

While first and second person enquiry and practice were geared to knowledge creation ‘for me and for us’, third person action was ‘for them’, the wider audience, whether in society, a professional field or organisation, who were not known face-to-face. The aim was to encourage and empower these unknown people to become action researchers themselves, not just passive recipients of an out-there form of communication. Denzin (1997) also notes the concern of post-modern writers and ethnographers to communicate to wider audiences through writing, lectures and other public media forms in a way that, through their self-reflective, paradoxical and ironical quality, people become engaged in their own self-reflection. Reason & Torbert (2001) believe that genuine third person research and practice welcomes inquiry that results in re-forming the original research practice design, purpose and conduct.

Third person inquiry should ideally be grounded in the personal and interpersonal forms of enquiry described above and the boundaries are not always clear. It is concerned with questions of the kind (Reason, Training course notes):

- ☞ How could decision-making processes in this system be more transparent?
- ☞ How could more voices be heard?
- ☞ How can this system learn more effectively?

I would also add: 'What does the whole system, community or society need to learn and change in order to resolve the issues that have been identified in a part of the system?'

The logistics of my business mean that I cannot resource the various technologies and methods designed to facilitate the large-group enquiry, such as those described by Leith (1997) including **Search Conferences**, **Open space design and Real-Time Strategic Change**, and methods such as **Learning History** (Bradbury, 2001) and **Dialogue Conferencing** (Pålshaugen, 2001). However, I can learn from and integrate aspects of them in my opportunistic third-person strategies. The same can be said for the third-person strategies of practice that move on from single case studies to large-scale projects 'creating change through the generation of new arenas and discourses' that become political events (Toulmin and Gustavsen, 1996). Of particular influence have been the **Participative action research** projects described by people such as John Gaventa and Juliet Merrifield (1993) and, in Reason and Bradbury (2001): Fals-Borda (Ch.2), Swantz et al (Ch. 39) and Brinton Lykes et al (Ch.36). They all gave the ownership of knowledge back to the people who need it for change.

The closest I have come to using PAR was in the Newbury **Community Epidemiology Project** (Capewell, 1998c) which I initiated and co-organised with my husband and then other members of our own community. I drew heavily from PAR approaches described above and especially from the work of Merrifield and others (Park et al, 1993) dealing with similar issues in Tennessee. It was also inspired by the book, *Citizen Science* (Irwin, 1995), which advocates a place for the everyday knowing of communities affected by an issue. These books gave me the confidence to engage with and challenge the established scientific community as well as to seek participation by people with many different voices. Two major reports were published as the result of our study, one into the incidence of cancers in the area, (Berkshire HA, 1997) and one into the radiation environment of Greenham Common (Croudace et al, 1997). This

Project was the subject of my CARPP Diploma research and it involved working within many political, community and professional tensions. Story Box 6 gives a glimpse into my third person practice.

STORY BOX 6

A COMMUNITY EPIDEMIOLOGY STUDY: The incidence of Leukaemias and environmental links in the Newbury area.

The study grew from a wider enquiry in 1996 by Andrew Gilligan, the Defence Editor of The Sunday Telegraph, following the exposure of secret documents relating to accidents involving radioactive material at Greenham Common in 1958. I mobilised the local community to generate statistical data of high quality on the spatial incidence of the illness and information that might shed light on the relationship with environmental factors, such as radiation. From the more localised second-person research, the study moved into an impersonal third-person arena through the making of a documentary for national television (ITV, World in Action, 9th Sept. 1996) and the involvement of national and international media of various kinds. This brought us back into second-person enquiry with other community groups around the world and also promoted second and third person engagement with the academic community and special interest political and campaigning groups. The nature of the subject and the presence of leaked secret documents meant that all our action and reflections had high political significance. This fact was highlighted by hearing about the invasion of the Sunday Telegraph offices by Ministry of Defence police, warnings to ourselves to keep separate copies of all computer files and documents, and the continuous harassment of a CND officer who fled abroad to hide in his ancestral estate. First-person research to care for myself and my own grief was essential throughout

– taken from CARPP Diploma paper (Capewell, 1998c)

My style of third person research-in-practice tends to emerge in an organic way as a consequence of first- and second-person practice which usually exposes issues and questions that need to be addressed at a wider systems level, whether in an organisation or community. My motivation towards social action means that I always attempt to do what I can to move my enquiry to this level, as shown in my work from Hungerford to Omagh (Part E). The Omagh bomb work described in Part E gave me the best opportunity to work with a wider system, though I could never be sure how long the contract would last and plans could only be made for one stage at a time. Many questions about the fundamental issues raised by disaster and the purpose of disaster response also need engagement with wider audiences in society and amongst

professionals if they are to influence policy makers and resources at Government levels. This is particularly relevant now in relation to the Contingency Bill going through Parliament which increases central control (Turney, 2002).

In my future work, I should like to promote the use of whole systems approaches, especially in the development of emergency plans to encourage greater community involvement and participation. This might reduce the gap between theory and practice and make their implementation more likely in times of crisis. **'Whole systems approach'** projects such as that led by Pratt et al (2000) in the Newcastle and North Tyneside area whereby lay and professional people collaboratively developed services for the elderly would provide a model. One multi-agency project has been undertaken by Gregory and Midgley (1999) to create a psycho-social disaster response service involving nineteen different agencies in Hull. It helped re-form the original questions and issues being addressed and encouraged enquiry across agencies about values and practice assumptions. However, whereas Pratt's whole systems work was led by the needs of a diverse group of stakeholders and consumers of the services being developed, the Hull project was led by the needs of the agencies and the methodology of system's theory to the exclusion of the needs of potential clients. The fact that neither the consultants nor participants had any first-hand experience of major disaster contributed to the theoretical, unauthentic 'feel' I had about the results. Co-ordination of such diverse agencies in the heat of disaster seldom works (Hills, 1994).

Throughout my work in disaster, I have sought to fulfil the imperative of third-person practice to put one's work out to a wider audience for scrutiny, dissemination of ideas and for the encouragement of further enquiry. This action has also motivated my enquiry into how I best present my work to different audiences and this has in turn influenced the development of my conceptual thinking and construction of flexible theoretical models which can be used elsewhere. This has been done in the following ways:

- ☞ **Lobbying** through written representations and, if possible, meetings with policy makers and senior executives, for example Chief Executives, the Department for Education, Unions and Professional bodies, and politicians such as John McFall MP, then Minister for Northern Ireland.
- ☞ Pro-active and reactive contacts with all branches of the **media** (TV, radio and press) from local to International levels. I have been involved in media interviews and documentaries on three separate subjects: youth crime; disaster, trauma, and

bereavement; and Leukaemia and environmental issues. (E.g. several features about my work in the national press; letters to Editors, articles for publication, influencing the content of an item on ITN news after the Docklands bomb, appearing on GMTV Breakfast TV, BBC News, ITV's This Morning, Radio 4 'Today' and, in 2004, contact with the Producer concerning local protests against a BBC TV documentary about the Hungerford shootings. Most recently I have used my media contacts to gain information about the Berkshire rail crash and to establish outreach survivors and the wider disaster community.

- ☞ **Writing articles** for publication in professional Journals and newspapers such as the Times Educational and Higher Educational Supplements. (e.g. an article on the need of Universities and Colleges to be aware of the needs of new students just affected by the Omagh bomb, Times Higher Educational Supplement, 25th Sept. 1998.)
- ☞ Contributing **chapters to books** (Black et al, 1996; Lindsay and Elsegood, 1996; Mead, 1996, Newburn, 1993b).
- ☞ **Consultancy** to organisations producing reports and training packs (Yule & Gold, 1993; British Red Cross, 1992, BPS, 2002, INTO guidelines, (2000) and to a novelist writing about trauma (Mead, 2003)
- ☞ Giving **lectures**, running **workshops and seminars** at local to international levels.
- ☞ Contributing to **internet networks** such as the Crisis Response Network of the International School Psychological Association
- ☞ **Contacting** any one or agency that I hear or read about who may have a mutual interest in sharing experiences or information to further action at a higher level beyond that which can be done by a smaller group.

The challenge I give to myself is to find ways of doing all these things in a way that promotes enquiry. With this in mind, I once attempted to introduce the idea of using Open Space Technologies at an International Conference to encourage greater participation from people attending, see Story Box 7 on the following page.

STORY BOX 7:**An attempt to encourage a third-person enquiry approach at an International Conference.**

I was invited to join the organising committee of an International Conference in 1999. I floated the idea of Open Space technologies to the co-ordinator who immediately read Harrison Owen's book (1997). With the committee's agreement, planning began for an Open Space event, facilitated by a person skilled in Large Scale interventions and graphical representations of the proceedings. The only male committee member, who had never attended meetings, took action outside of the Committee with his friend, the Conference Chairman, to challenge and stop the idea. As a result, only a few Open Space sessions were included as a small part of a traditional conference structure. While I wanted a new idea to be seeded, I feared that if it were not done properly, people would completely turn against such ideas. The conference provoked strong reactions in both directions. Some found the different style liberating while others found it disturbing because 'they came to conferences to learn from experts', not each other, even though traditional presentations formed the bulk of proceedings.

– Taken from record, 1999

This experience taught me the risks of introducing such a new concept before I was fluent with the methods and without other informed and experienced allies. Gender issues were also at play on several levels and there were many factors in the running of the conference, not least lack of funding, that were not conducive to a fundamentally different style. It brought home to me just how much rigour, discipline and organisation is needed to produce smooth running democratic technologies that give the appearance of total informality. Lack of funding can only be countered by a general commitment and enthusiasm from everyone involved to make such an event work.