

Chapter Five

Voice: enabling the silence to be heard

Raising questions does not require huge data sets, it requires only that an alternative truth be identified. (Fletcher, 1999:16)

In this Chapter I explore the concept of voice and its relevance to the YoWiM inquiry group. This is not to say that voice is not discussed elsewhere in my thesis – I feel it is possibly the underpinning issue throughout and is touched upon in less explicit ways in most Chapters (though most notably in Chapters One, Two, and Three). Beyond this, voice – particularly what I refer to as finding ways of enabling my voice to be heard – is a central inquiry track in my life.

I place my self in the following discussion as someone who has more questions than answers about how we might understand the many faceted nature of voice: what do we mean when we talk about voice? How do voices and processes of finding voice work? What outcomes count and for whom? How might voice be enabled? Do we cripple the achievement of coming to voice if we talk about our practice (as facilitators, leaders and so on) as one in which we ‘give voice’? I shall explore all of this in more depth later.

The way that voice is sometimes written and spoken about can sound as if we (as researchers) are taking voice away in the way we write about it, for example by using uncaredful labels: referring to people as ‘silent’ or ‘silenced’ can make all the difference to the sense of agency people believe themselves to have. Goldberger (1996) discusses her reflections on labelling of this nature undertaken by her and her co-authors in ‘Women’s Ways of Knowing’ (Belenky et al, 1986). She suggests a shift from referring to groups as ‘silent’ to referring to them as ‘silenced’. The irony being that the very way we write about voice can silence and disconfirm agency in the very voices we are endeavouring to get heard.

So, amidst all of the questions I am carrying, I present here a discussion that integrates the literature I find useful and relevant with the themes around voice that emerged through the practice of inquiry with the YoWiM group. I focus on:

- **Why voice mattered:** An overview of why making space for voice mattered in setting out to 'do' inquiry.
- **(Re)appearing acts:** Reworking Fletcher's term for how the relational behaviours exhibited by women are 'disappeared' in organisations, I consider the choice to engage in inquiry as a choice to (re)appear to each other and to ourselves, and the sometimes painfulness of this process.
- **Noticing I'm silenced:** I consider the development of an understanding of voice and silence within the YoWiM group, how they began to notice their silence, how it was enabled and by whom; how they became able to speak of that silence (with each other) and through it (in their action phase 'experimenting' with others); how they saw their voices emerging and how they reflected on this shift. I give examples of the various exercises we engaged in to 'tap into' their silenced stories.
- **Naming as Knowing:** The process of recognising silence led to a 're-description' of actions and behaviours in the work place. I have referred to this process as 'naming as knowing' and detail it here, with stories from the YoWiM group as illustration.
- **Getting visible:** Moving from 'silence' or invisibility to visibility was an important outcome of the YoWiM group's work. I discuss here how they consciously chose to 'get visible'.
 - Speaking the silence back to the organisation: This illustrates the above shift through two examples from the group - 'third-person inquiry' and 'meeting with the LDT'.

- **Aftershock:** The notion of the Tempered Radical (Meyerson and Scully, 1995) is discussed as a position of inquiry, and why continued engagement with inquiry can be too radical a position.

I then summarise by considering the role of the extended epistemology in making re-appearing possible.

Whilst my facilitative practice had a part to play in shaping this journey, it is not addressed in this Chapter as I felt greater clarity would come from focussing on it separately, as I have done in Chapter Seven.

Why voice mattered

As discussed in Chapters One and Two, finding 'Action Research' was a turning point in my life. I felt that I was being validated in my belief that there are more participative and mutually sustaining ways of being in the world than those of the dominant paradigm which emphasis separateness and 'truths' as disconnected from lived experience. This validation had something to do with a resonance between the action research literature and my deeply held beliefs that we should live in a world where we can bring our own stories, our own lived experiences, into relationship with others, and have those truths acknowledged and respected as such – as real meaning-full data - from which we shape our understanding of the world, and the world itself. I am at a loss in knowing how sad it makes me that this is not seen, by some of the people I should be closest to in my life, as a viable position.

So, the action research literature gave a name to what I was talking about, 'voice'. 'Voice', or 'voicing', by the fact that I could name it, gave my position more validity (perhaps initially just in my opinion). I felt very much that a participatory view of the world was about enabling and honouring voice. Beyond the action research literature I was drawn to other works on voice, particularly hooks (1989), Belenky et al (1986), Goldberger et al (1996), and

Fletcher (1999). With hindsight, I consider that my reading in this area enabled me to gain confidence in my gut instinct, that voice in its many guises would be a central inquiry track for me, the touchstone of my facilitative practice, something central to my life. Furthermore it struck me as a methodological issue – issues of voice are core for me in considering ‘what counts’ as collaborative research (how can real collaboration happen without attention to voice?).

Since I embarked on my doctoral studies, Reason and Bradbury have published the Handbook of Action Research (2001) in which links between feminist scholarship on voice, the relationship between power and knowledge generation, and collaborative research are articulated at length, giving clarity to the necessity of a central position for voice in action research work (see Reason and Bradbury 2001, Chapters 5, 24, 27). Prior to this, I was trying to figure out the links for myself drawing on hook’s text ‘Talking Back’ (1989) and Fletcher’s ‘Disappearing Acts’ (1999) as well as the body of literature on Action Research which all seemed to say something about how it mattered that in working in ways that create a better world, I would by definition be creating a space in my research for more people, different people, not only to tell their stories, but to have them heard as knowledge, as something others could learn from.

This resonated in me as something that mattered. In Chapter One, I sketched out some ideas on how my own education and upbringing helped me to learn that voice mattered – not through being told it did, but through knowing in my body how it felt when I was silenced. It is only from this bodily knowing that voice and power were linked, that I understood then (and now) why others would seek to silence me. In this context of questions, I shall now consider how voice and the issues that surround it became a central theme in the YoWiM group.

Reappearing Acts

A long period of time may be required simply to elicit what a participant group needs, for no better reason than that individuals may never have been asked before... The period of time needed to become *conscious* of what one needs – to undertake conscientization – may be one of the more extensive periods of any inquiry process. (Lincoln, 2001:130)

I believe it is arguable, based on my experience of inquiry with the YoWiM group, that the entirety of the inquiry process is one of becoming visible to ourselves and to each other. By this I mean that the process of inquiry deepens our awareness of ourselves and of others, as it is a reflective process through which our stories and our experiences of ourselves, each other and our actions are interrogated. As Gaventa suggests:

Not only must production of alternative knowledge be complemented by action upon it, but the participants in the knowledge process must equally find spaces for self-critical investigation and analysis of their own reality, in order to gain more authentic knowledge as a basis for action and representation to others. (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001:76)

This act of becoming visible, or (re)appearing, takes time and seems dependent on many things: how visible we want to be, how visible we want others to be, how this changes over time as the space we create together changes and our experience of it, and of inquiry within and beyond it, deepens. It seems important to link up the act of reappearing with storytelling, as this played a key role in enabling members of the YoWiM group to (re)appear.

There is a growing body of literature from the field of qualitative social research which details the role of storytelling and narrative as a means of accessing personal experience (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994; Griffiths, 1995; Reason and Hawkins, 1988). Furthermore, there is considerable tradition of storytelling

being a process through which women relate and create knowledge. Storytelling is an important feature of action research inquiry practice generally and co-operative inquiry practice specifically.

This can be undertaken in very formal ways (Heron, 1996), or much more informally as a method of reporting what happened in the preceding action phase (Traylen, 1994; Treleaven, 1994; Baldwin, 2001; Mead, 2002). Whichever way story is used, developing an inquiring attention enables an exploration of the particular interests, motives and purposes of the storyteller. For example, the choice I make in which stories to represent from the YoWiM group is not without motive, and the same is true for my whole thesis – it is constructed of an array of different stories which hang together to construct a representation of experience.

The YoWiM inquiry group used story in an informal way, as described above. The process of relating stories, and the storied responses this evoked – replies, echoes, re-creations and reflections (Reason and Hawkins, 1988) – shaped much of our practice. This storytelling was not as neat as the name might suggest – our stories were frequently without the beginning-middle-ending pattern we associate with a ‘well-told story’. They were jumbled, stumbled through, co-authored (and often un-elegantly so – being smattered with bits that didn’t fit together). But the point is not that inquiry enables us to create elegant stories. It is that it makes the process of telling stories a valid way to relate (to) our experience. It is a process that welcomes the unedited, the unspoken, into the world and says it will be listened to. It enables us to access personal experience and to present it in its muddled form. It offers, I think, a less threatening way to talk with others as people who (would like to) believe that our experience is valid. I think it goes some way to helping us destroy the fear of exposure hooks speaks of:

The fear of exposure, the fear that one’s deepest emotions and innermost thoughts will be dismissed as mere nonsense, felt by so many young girls keeping diaries, holding and hiding speech, seems to me now one of the barriers that women have always needed and still need to destroy so that we are no longer pushed into secrecy or silence. (hooks, 1989:7)

Furthermore, hooks' ideas echo my earlier discussion (Chapter Three) of first- and second-person inquiry streams being interdependent, as they help us move beyond a possible reproduction of secrecy and silence (through stand-alone first-person work in 'secret' journals) to a place where we might engage in 'self-critical investigation and analysis of [our] own reality' (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001:76).

From the very first moment of engaging with each other's stories, the process of (re)appearing began. The very act of joining the YoWiM group was to a great extent a (re)appearing act - a statement about what kinds of processes the participants valued. I have been asked many times before, during and after my work with the YoWiM group... 'surely the stories you explored together are not representative, as the method appeals to a particular type of participant?'. And yes, any and all types of work appeal to different types of people. So any inquiry group - by the very fact that those in it are fulfilling Lincoln's (2001:130) first condition of fieldwork, prolonged engagement - are those who are prone to work in a particular way. But the stories are representative of their experience. And therefore, yes, they are representative - not of a population, but of the individual, or of the group, which generated them.

So, the act of joining the inquiry group meant we (re)appeared to each other as people who had hopes about ways of working together, and engaging in the telling of muddled stories further enabled us to (re)appear. It is interesting to note that after the first couple of inquiry cycles the stories became more muddled, less sure, less ordered, less clear on what the point of the story was. But the teller became clearer that it was an important story to tell... though often remained unclear as to why. And it was through the making accessible of these stories, bringing them into the second-person space, that we as a group could find what it was we could learn from the story, that we could help the storyteller (who most usually ended up being multiple, as bits of different stories were woven together) discover why it was an important story for them to tell. In this sense it created both 'mutual understanding and consensus' *and* individual reframing, or re-understanding of, as Kemmis phrases it 'what to do next':

Part of the task of an action research project... is to open communicative space, and to do so in a way that will permit people to achieve mutual understanding and consensus about what to do, in the knowledge that the legitimacy of any conclusions and decisions reached by participants will be proportional to the degree of authentic engagement of those concerned. (Kemmis, 2001:100)

So, the act of joining the inquiry group meant that we (re)appeared to each other through engaging in the process of inquiry. But as Kemmis suggests, the degree of authentic engagement shapes what it is possible to know about each other, and therefore what the inquiry group can go on to achieve. We might consider different levels of authentic engagement as different degrees of (re)appearing – the depth to which we are prepared to immerse ourselves in the practice of inquiry. This differs between people and changes for each throughout the inquiry process, as people feel more or less safe, and more or less able or willing to confront challenging agendas as they arise. Such differences between inquiry group members can result in mismatches in the level of engagement we experience from each other. This can make the experience of inquiry feel challenging – ‘they are going too deep for me’, ‘why is she not bothering’, ‘others aren’t going as deep as me - this makes me feel exposed and alone’, and is to some degree an experience had in the YoWiM group, particularly in the early days, as illustrated below:

A mismatch in engagement: the pain of (re)appearing

The ‘mismatch’ that sometimes characterised the (re)appearing process in the YoWiM group might most vividly be understood by our experience of ‘Conflict’ in our March meeting. We had just begun our session and were discussing how we might best attend to the process we engaged in each time we met and how this might best be structured. Norma described her preference for warming up gently:

I think we have to try to strike happy medium because I know there are people who work better with a discussion developing. I do. I can't open up straight away, it's just too difficult. But I also appreciate there are some time constraints, so there has to be rigidity in our structure somewhere. (Norma, YoWiM March 2001)

One of the other group members, Ann, was frustrated by this, and essentially challenged Norma on what she perceived to be a desire not to engage:

I can understand that - that it takes time to warm up into this. But we [Ann, Norma and Fiona] drove over here in the car together this morning and I was really excited because I have been doing a lot in my action cycle. I was excited to tell you both about it all on the way here, and I just don't think you two were in the mood for this group this morning, or in the last action cycle. I got into the car and you just switched on the radio. And I was like 'can't we spend some time talking about our YoWiM stuff?' But you weren't in the mood for coming, I could tell. I wanted to tell you all the stuff I have been doing - my journal is about to burst with it all and I was looking forward to seeing you. But I think you think you can just turn up here once a month and mention anything that comes to mind. I get frustrated with this 'cause I am really trying hard to get everything I can from being in YoWiM, and you not putting any effort in stops me from doing that. We owe it to each other to do things in our action cycles so we can get meaning out of being here. (Ann, YoWiM March 2001).

Such a challenge to the quality of participation, in only our third meeting as the YoWiM group, resulted in Norma and Fiona leaving the group. (Re)appearing to each other by joining the YoWiM group as I suggested above, meant that we were all essentially saying 'I am interested in being with you all and working in

this way'. For Ann, feeling that others were actually not saying that - as 'evidenced' by their (lack of) action in the action phase - felt disappointing, and not what she was expecting. In articulating this (another expectation she had of what was possible in our space) she made Norma and Fiona 'feel attacked' as they later told me.

Creating safe 'in-powering' spaces takes time, and the above evidences how, in creating a space where our voices are enabled, they are sometimes used in ways that can silence others. This seemed most evident in our group in the early days of our inquiry, when none of us had developed inquiry skills to any great extent. 'Expecting to be able to do this here' doesn't mean that others have the emotional competencies (Heron 1996) to deal with the hurt it may cause. That said, checking out the degree to which people are prepared to engage is about realising what will be possible for the inquiry group to do in the future. If action research projects have 'change' as their focus, then 'deciding what to do' to use Kemmis' above phrase, is integral to good quality practice. We need to be able to trust that the people in the inquiry group will be engaged sufficiently to help us make good decisions about 'what to do'. And this is what Ann, though perhaps inelegantly, was trying to do.

We might have described this as a 'descent into chaos' (Reason and Heron 1986): Norma and Fiona left the group after this session, though not attributing it to this incident. Despite my invitation for them to do so, neither wanted to come back to the group to tell them they were leaving - asking instead that I tell the group on their behalf; Ann didn't participate in the following three sessions (though after this time she came back and participated fully in all that followed); the rest of us procrastinated about whether we should actively ask Ann to 'come back' as she had not said she was leaving the group, just that she was 'busy'; I wondered if having two group members leave and another in limbo would mean that the group would not survive - that it would be perceived as other people not thinking our group was worthwhile. Reason and Heron suggest that this chaos is due to divergence of thought and expression, which would seem to concur with the above:

From our early inquiries we came to the conclusion that a descent into chaos would often facilitate the emergence of a new creative order. There is an element of arbitrariness, randomness, chaos, indeterminism, in the scheme of things. If the group is really going to be open, adventurous, exploratory, creative, innovative, to put all at risk to reach out for the truth beyond fear and collusion, then once the inquiry is well under way, divergence of thought and expression is likely to descend into confusion, uncertainty, ambiguity, disorder and even chaos, with most if not all co-researchers feeling lost to a greater or lesser degree. (Reason and Heron, 1986:470)

Re-appearing was not only evident in the early days of our inquiry. As we progressed and new skills were developed, new challenges met, and new adventures engaged in, (some of which I discuss in this Chapter) members of the group were 'appearing more and more' to each other. In this sense the whole inquiry process is about re-appearing as our full(er) selves and is also therefore about discovering our invisibility – the parts of ourselves which 'don't fit with or aren't recognised in the way we do things in our organisation'. Re-appearing is about becoming visible, and is one of the challenges of inquiry I discussed in Chapter Two. In re-appearing, some of the YoWiM group members began to talk about themselves as becoming aware of the how silenced they felt.

Noticing I'm²³ silenced

Coming to consciousness around ideas of voice was one of the most important processes and outcomes of inquiry for members of the YoWiM group. This took some time and was realised differently by different women and was, inadvertently, differently engaged with.

The title of hook's text 'talking back' (1989) goes some way to indicating why this was – in many ways it epitomised for me what is at the core of many of the issues

²³ 'I', in this use, refers to the members of the YoWiM group.

I have experienced around my own voice and those of women in the inquiry group. Much of what hooks talks about as 'self censorship' seems to relate to the internal voice that moderates our voices to be respectful to, and mindful of, the context and what is appropriate in it. Questions of appropriateness may be particularly evident for women, as we often operate in environments that are not defined by women, for women and therefore require us to not only edit what we say, but how we say it:

[All of the white women] stressed the importance of aligning their language and their behaviour with that of their peers. Other studies of women above the glass ceiling have found that women modify their speech and behaviour to better fit in with male-dominated corporate cultures. Sylvia Whitaker told us, "You need to understand that companies are bottom line driven. Everything needs to get sold or presented in terms of earnings. You need to be able to speak the language. Basically you need to be able to speak all the languages in the company". (Bell and Nkomo, 2001:171)

As is often the case in learning new languages, we become inarticulate - silent - around issues the culture into which we speak has no language for. So, in the above 'bottom line' example there is no room to sell in an idea based on feeling or belief, no room to express why the product is a good idea. Only room to talk numbers...

hooks defines 'talking back' thus:

"talking back" meant speaking as an equal to an authority figure. It meant daring to disagree and sometimes just meant having an opinion... It was in a world of woman talk... that was born in me the craving to speak, to have voice, and not just any voice but one that could be identified as belonging to me. To make my voice, I had to speak, to hear myself talk. (hooks, 1989:5)

The double bind of the position hook articulates resonated with my experience of my own voice in some relationships/contexts. To create my voice, I needed to speak, and in so doing 'daring to disagree or just have an opinion' meant that my voice was invalidated as I was 'talking back'. So, in being silent I did not have a voice, and in speaking I did not have a voice (at least not 'one I could recognise as my own'), so therefore I did not have the opportunity, as Tarule (1996) puts it, to 'solidify thought':

Out loud or silently, voice animates thinking, produces thought, and enables the thinker to stabilize and expand her thought... [But] it is not enough to speak to an empty car. What animates both voice and listening in "the spaces between us" (Josselson, 1992) is dialogue, and it is dialogue that helps to create and solidify thought. (Tarule, 1996:279)

In placing these ideas in the context of the YoWiM inquiry group, it is important to point out that the organisational context was not described by the group members as one where dialogue - working through ideas with others and in so doing 'solidifying thought' - was valued. Quite the opposite. Members of the group described P&G is an organisation which values your 'decision' - not your ability to negotiate meaning or to consider the opinions of others. As one group member told us:

If you say what you want, and you do it and you get it out and no-one comments back, that's done, you've won it, it's there. If they start asking questions, even if you actually improve your argument, in the P&G world if you enter the discussion phase then you've lost it, you've completely lost it. (YoWiM, January 2001)

Another member of the group described language as a 'shield' - if you knew the language you could belong more easily and protect your self from 'scrutiny, ridicule and doubt' (YoWiM, January 2001). This links us back to the point that Nkomo and Bell (2001) make above on how we moderate our language and behaviour to 'fit in'. The stories from the YoWiM group suggest that in engaging

in this 'moderation', we actively *choose into* systems that effectively silence us. This notion of fitting in was relevant for several reasons in the YoWiM group, ranging from 'having an easier life' (making the now more doable/surviving/avoiding), to wanting to safeguard, where possible, plans of career progression (making the future more likely):

The prospect of belonging may be difficult to resist... When the prize is big enough and likely enough, white women remain in the game and reshape themselves to fit in. They swallow any hurt: "I'd rather die before I cry". Reframed this way, small moves may take more courage than they initially appear to. Because temptation is dangled more fully in front of white women in corporations, their renunciations, even if small, may take more courage than those of black women. (Bell and Nkomo, 2001:186)

Ideas of fitting in - by using an alien, silencing voice - are incongruent with hook's ideas of constructing voice through using and hearing a voice that we identify as belonging to us. If we integrate these two ideas, there is risk that we fail to realise that the voice we use and eventually identify as ours, is in fact not. If however this voice has become the one through which we 'solidify thought', an invitation to (re)gain our real voice can be unsettling, risky and threatening, both to ourselves and to the culture in which we operate.

I suggest this for two reasons:

- Firstly, if we *choose into* mirroring processes that silence us (for example, members of the YoWiM group described themselves as 'choosing to speak Proctoid - the corporate language), choosing to (re)gain our own voice makes evident (if only to ourselves) that we chose to silence it, or invalidate it, at a previous point. If we see our selves as acting with agency, as the women in the YoWiM group tended to do ('I don't feel comfortable or necessarily fulfilled by how I am here, how people work with each other, but I choose to be this way'. YoWiM, April 2001) then this means we, at some point, need to confront the role we are taking in shaping the reality we experience.

Inadvertently, we need to acknowledge the existence of the 'oppressor within':

It is necessary for us to remember, as we think critically about domination, that we all have the capacity to act in ways that oppress, dominate and wound (whether or not that power is institutionalised). It is necessary to remember that it is first the potential oppressor within that we must resist - the potential victim within that we must rescue - otherwise we cannot hope for an end to domination, for liberation. (hooks, 1989:21)

Not only must we consider that we can oppress others (and consider how we do that) in hooks' use, but also how we oppress ourselves and how, in doing that, we generate our reality, create our experience. The YoWiM group told a lot of stories which we came to realise were about times when they had silenced themselves for different reasons, but the desire not to cry was a common theme:

...if I'd have kept going [talking] I've had been in tears, so I stopped.
(YoWiM, March 2001)

In 'moderating their speech and behaviour to fit in with the male norm' (Bell and Nkomo, 2001:171), they were disempowering themselves from crying, and in doing to they had to disempower themselves from talking 'because one leads to the other'. This theme resonated with me as an experience I have had with my own voice. I wonder if, as Goldberger suggests, 'To communicate verbally is essentially the outcome of a decision making process' (1996:346), is crying perceived as other than a process preceded by decision making? Is it perceived as a process that will lead to an inability to make decisions/to be agentic?

I couldn't bear the thought of what would happen [if I did cry] - all those people 'looking at the table' [avoiding making eye contact with me] and me feeling stupid and then someone suggesting we move on... (YoWiM, March 2001)

Voice for me is a lot to do with liberating ourselves from our own oppression, giving ourselves permission to say and do what needs to be said and done. This permission giving, however leads to behaviours that are 'very visible' because they are different, and speaks to the next point.

- Secondly, an invitation to (re)gain our real voice can be unsettling, risky and threatening, both to ourselves and to the culture in which we operate, because choosing to do so makes us visible to others as actively resisting/breaking away from the norm of the organisation. Members of the YoWiM group worked at length to figure out 'what might be possible outside of the inquiry group?' (YoWiM, March 2001). What risks were they prepared to take, and with whom could they take them? The latter question was of particular importance given that many of the issues they considered to be most in need of their challenge were in some way connected with senior organisational members (bosses, board members) - the P&G 'culture carriers' (Schein, 1985).

This is where the building of inquiry skill within the group is of key importance as it enables this shift in voice to happen. Through discussion (itself a counter cultural process that took us a while to freely engage in), testing out ideas with each other, getting feedback and making plans, group members considered that they did not have to take an 'all or nothing' approach, that they could work their identity and choose when to 'have a go at being more me' (YoWiM, March 2001) in contexts where they felt more able to feel at less personal risk (which often meant, initially, less visible to senior figures). They began to consider that some spaces and some relationships within their organisation could act as testing grounds where

new/real behaviours could be 'trialled'. Maher and Tetreault (1996) refer to this positioning as 'double consciousness':

By "double consciousness" they mean the need to situate their formulations of themselves in different ways for different contexts, working through changing forms of representation and self-construction to a point where language and theory, rather than being used to oppress people, can be used to "change meaning, change the way things are". This is an example then of a push from identity politics to positionality. (Maher and Tetreault, 1996:165)

My experience with the YoWiM group suggests that this takes time and emerges as we move through transitions in inquiry practice together - to use Kemmis' (2001) terms, from technical (changing outcomes of practice), to practical ('self education - seeing goals, and the categories in which work is evaluated, are shaped by their ways of seeing and understanding themselves in context'), to emancipatory, where...

this form... aims not only at improving outcomes, and improving the self-understandings of practitioners, but also at assisting practitioners to arrive at a critique of their social or educational work and work setting... to reconstruct not only the practice and the practitioner, but also the practice setting. (Kemmis, 2001:92)

Below I detail an example from Clare, one of the YoWiM group members, of how she used our inquiry group space to 'trial' new behaviours before 'going public'.

- Clare had complained bitterly that her boss, a senior man, referred to her as 'Petal', rather than using her name. Her stories around this were initially focussed on how 'ridiculous' she was to let this 'bother her so much'. She told us how she was probably 'daughter age' to him and as she was the only woman in her work team, 'he probably didn't get the chance to be as casual with the others [men]'. She was trying to accommodate behaviour that was upsetting her. Through seeing the reaction of other group members - they

were not surprised by his naming or her reluctance to do anything about it, but they all felt it was 'wrong' – she asked us if we thought she should tell him. We role played different ways she might go about this - not so we could all decide what she would do, but as she suggested, 'to give me more options to work from, depending on the circumstances I find my self in [when wanting to talk to him about this]'.

Part of enabling the noticing of being silenced is finding ways to access the silenced stories. In the YoWiM group we joined each other in several different activities, including role-playing as above, that did this. Much of our time together was spent working in the presentational form, as this seemed like the most appropriate way to access these stories, as Van Stralen (2002) points out:

Participants valued presentational activities because those activities deepened members' experience of listening to each other.... Kay talked about how sharing through presentational modes promotes an enhanced quality of understanding. "These processes open the door to humanise us... Multiple ways of knowing are a bridge... because they are away from the usual 'talking now and thinking later'. You have to listen to the other side. And they are an offering from the participants. They are really an offering in themselves. They are not normal. They are ways of offering another piece of themselves and that's a bridge. (Van Stralen, 2002:18)

The above adds another perspective to why I suggest that 'noticing I'm silenced' can be a challenge. Finding ways to notice this often means we use ways that are 'not normal' – we go to unexplored territories in unexplored ways – a double dose of challenge. Below I detail three of these 'unexplored ways' we used, in addition to our 'usual' storytelling form. From a methodological perspective these processes focussed on linking the experiential into the presentational, with the aim of this leading, at a future point, to the propositional and practical (Heron, 1996).

1. Empty chairs

In one of our early sessions, only 5 group members attended. There was some general 'polite talk' about the people who 'aren't here' but nothing that really accessed the frustration that people obviously felt. Our meeting space was set up with sufficient chairs for the whole group, so the absent members' chairs were empty. I asked everyone if we could put the names of the absent YoWiM members on the 'empty' chairs with post-it notes, then 'talk to' the person in the empty chair and tell them how we each experienced their absence. The intention here was to get the group members to confront how they were feeling, own this, and then generate ways we might process this. We all joined in writing names and placing them on the chairs.

But 'talking to' the absent members proved to be an exercise beyond which the group were able to engage. Some said they were worried about doing it as it felt like 'talking behind the others' backs'. However, acknowledging this fear of getting beyond the 'polite' prompted one group member to say 'God, why is this so hard, what are we so afraid of doing?' The stories around 'not being used to being mean/saying what we think' spilled out. Unintentionally we had found a way to talk about 'not being polite'.

2. Pictures and stories

We used drawing and collage-making on several occasions, to tell stories through pictures. On one occasion we drew pictures of 'what happens in the school playground' as a gentle and safe way in to talking about how people in organisations behave. We then told the story of them and mapped the themes onto P&G. There were drawings of people in gangs - wearing the same clothes, looking the same; people being bullied; people crying; people playing games; girls and boys kissing and so on. Through the act of telling the story of their pictures, the YoWiM women realised what they had attended to and what they had left out, with the help of the questions of others: 'What are they doing?' 'Why are all the boys bigger than the girls?' 'Why are only the people who are being bullied wearing glasses?' This led to stories about norms and conformity, sameness and difference, group behaviours and gender. Another occasion we drew 'all of the different levels

in P&G' – this led to conversations about the lack of female role models in the organisation. One group member, in speaking her story from her drawing said, 'I just feel that when I look up, I see no one'. This simple exercise sent the group off on two cycles of inquiry about role models in the organisation.

3. *Embodied feeling*

One of the exercises that was still being spoken about at the inquiry closing (see Chapter Eight) was one that arose out of a discussion on power and equality within P&G. On my suggestion, we worked in pairs taking it in turns to:

- Stand facing our partner and tell them who in our lives we meet as an equal and why
- Kneel at our standing partner's feet and tell them who in life we feel looked down on by and why
- Whilst standing, tell our partner as they knelt at our feet who we looked down on in life and why.

Rather than the stories of the people we named above being the silenced stories that we tapped into (as might be expected), the silenced stories that arose from this exercise were about how we experience and know things bodily and how this way of knowing was never talked about or valued.

A sense of this building of space, of growing into understanding ourselves as powerful, was continual and shifted throughout our time together. However, as illustrated in the earlier story of 'conflict', YoWiM was not a space where we all developed a sense of being able to use our voices. We weren't always getting it right for everyone. As it transpired, 'noticing I'm silent/silenced' was what one group member, Lucy, learnt about her self as her 'result' of the entire YoWiM experience. This learning came about through her experience of being in the group mirroring, though to a much lesser extent, how she experienced being silent in the organisation. This learning about silence, detailed below, was only surfaced when closing our inquiry together in October (see Chapter Eight for a fuller account of closing the YoWiM inquiry).

Lucy was our quietest group member, physically as well as verbally. Throughout our time together, I had been aware that I sometimes helped her into the conversation, as she might start to speak at the same time as someone else but defer to them, or she might look like she was trying to come in to the conversation but was finding it difficult. I had heard myself very deliberately saying 'What was that Lu?' or 'Lu, what do you make of all this?' Lucy had very explicitly valued the way 'people [in YoWiM] often help me into our conversations' on two occasions in our group, so we were aware that she felt helped with something she often did not find easy, but I was aware that our process was somewhat stuck in me/others helping Lucy to join in - that she wasn't doing it herself.

At the beginning of our closing two day inquiry in Bath, we spent some time in pairs discussing what our hopes and fears for the two days were, and what we might do to help these (not) happen. When we fed back to the whole group, Lucy said she was concerned about 'not being able to make room for myself in the conversations sometimes', or 'not saying how I feel'. She said that she planned, if she was 'feeling uncomfortable or bored' or 'this isn't helping', or 'if I'm unhappy' that she would pick up a marker pen to 'signal to everybody just to be noticing' that she was finding it hard to 'get in' to give her thoughts and that she 'really hope[d] someone will say 'hang on a minute, what's up Lu?', 'so I can just say I'm bored, or I don't understand...'

Though I had offered the use of a talking stick to all of us on a couple of previous occasions, it was never something we utilised - at the very early stages, several group members said it would make it feel too much like a 'therapy group'. Additionally, something that we frequently spoke of valuing about our group space was that we all got heard. So by making her intention clear to us all, Lucy, in our very last session together, evidences for me a sense of this building of space, of growing into understanding ourselves as powerful, which I speak of above:

- Firstly, she was confidently stating that she needed structures to help her to be more included in the conversation – something that she had not said in the previous year of working together.
- Secondly, she was taking the initiative to help herself, rather than continuing to be helped by others.
- Thirdly, she chose a structure (similar to one that the group had previously rejected) which was counter cultural to our group space, but which felt useful to her.
- Fourthly, she told us how and why she was inviting us to respond to that structure.

Whilst on one hand we can see that our group space had perhaps not been all it could be for Lucy (here she was, at the last session, telling us she felt that she often couldn't make room for herself in conversations), we might also see at the same time how our group space had been very developmental - in-powering - to her, that it was inviting and allowing Lucy to grow into her own power – she was asking us to be differently after a year of not being that way and telling us very clearly that she needed to be heard without the instigation of this coming from one of us, that she wanted, and was able, to take control. Afterward, she spoke of her action as something she had never done anywhere else, that she had always 'just been quiet', that she was much better at putting her thoughts 'on paper' than vocalising them. For Lucy, this was a hugely important shift.

How does this inform inquiry practice?

We might consider from the above that '**noticing I'm silenced**', in the context of the YoWiM group, has at least two elements:

- Being brave enough to examine the reality we individually experience
- Being enabled to do this by the inquiry group

I suggest that these are possible when the practice of inquiry builds inquiry skills in each of the participants. In the above case, the development of inquiry skills is evident through a raised awareness of a need to find new and different ways of

accessing knowledge so that the silenced stories can 'bubble up'. The extended epistemology within co-operative inquiry raises awareness of the *validity* of a range of different approaches to knowledge and knowledge generation that aren't focussed in the propositional. The practical application of inquiry skill in the above stories is evidenced by:

Co-creating shared experience: 'Practical knowing' is illustrated by joining each other in co-creating a shared experience, from which new stories might emerge. Understanding that the co-operative inquiry methodology embraces a range of ways of knowing, means that accessing knowledge through mediums other than the propositional is understood by the inquiry group as valid thing to do. In this sense, understanding and ownership of the method - making the method 'an approach that we continually negotiate' rather than 'a thing we use' - makes it more possible for a climate of 'co-inquirers/researchers' to emerge. A feeling of needing to be an expert, or to get things right, can inhibit participation, and inadvertently inhibit voice. A full embracing of the principles of the method - an opening up of the whole range of ways we know things - means that as we might 're-vision' (Rich, 1972 as cited in Callaway, 1981) our selves as experts. We are all experts in our own experience, and as experience - within co-operative inquiry - is a valid place from which to 'know', desire to conduct inquiry from the experiential is validated. We can see therefore how co-operative inquiry has the potential to methodologically 'back us up', to bolster our attempts to inquire beyond the propositional, to 'help us feel less as though we are taking risks', to 'feel right' (YoWiM, July, 2001).

Getting to the nub of it: In the example above of 'empty chairs' there is evidence of understanding 'where the inquiry is at' and of assertion of practical skill and confidence in taking the inquiry group to the nub of it. Rather than me, as 'facilitator'/'methodology expert' have my agenda go unchallenged (as it might if real understanding of the method were not developed by the inquiry group), group members knew in the moment that the nub of inquiry was to raise questions about why the process felt so difficult: 'God, why is this so hard, what are we so afraid of doing?'. So, practical knowledge was evidenced by

responding facilitatively in shifting focus to where there was energy for inquiry, and in offering an opening question around this energy.

Naming as knowing (NasK)

As time went on, we came to understand...that the whole nature of the enterprise we had undertaken was to give names to traditions that have no names; to tell the untold stories. (Belenky, 1996:426)

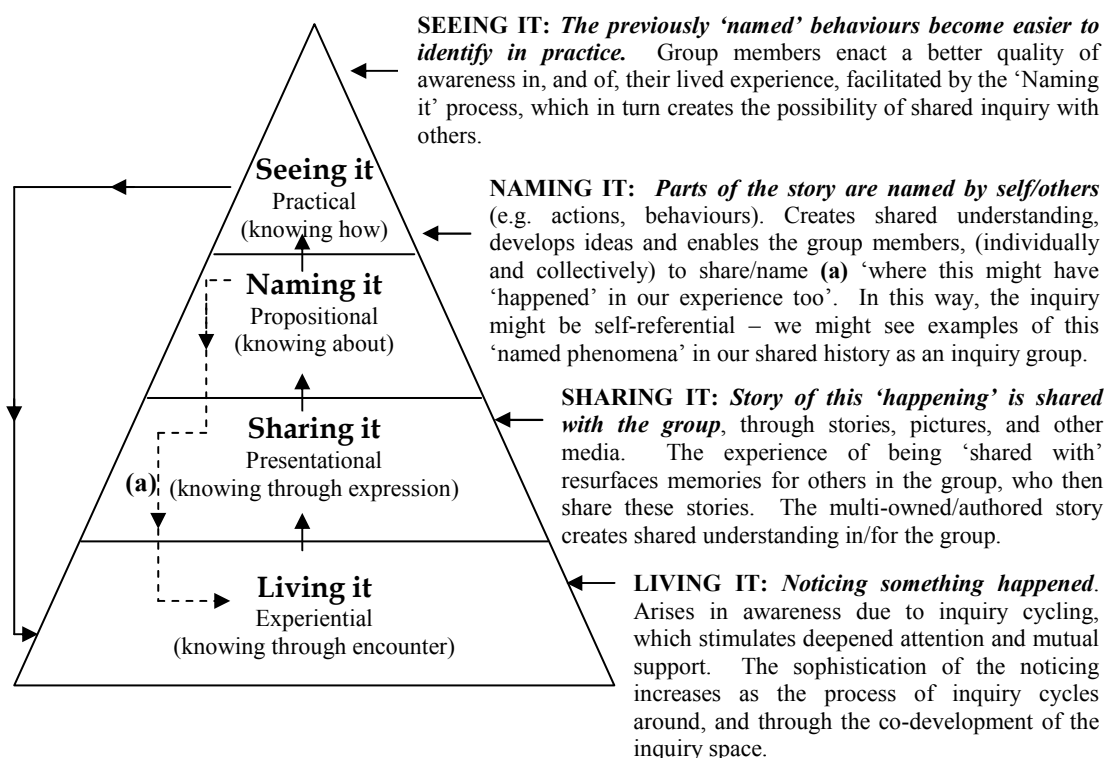
The above discussion about (re)appearing and noticing silence, and how this happened, illustrates that the YoWiM group found value in taking time to talk through their experiences together, joining each other in making sense of their inquiry. Some time after our work together ended, I developed the idea of 'Naming as Knowing' as a way of describing this process and what it enables the YoWiM group to do. I include this here as a way of 'making sense' of our above processes.

The naming as knowing practice first took shape as an idea as something that happened through the creation space where stories could be told and experiences could be shared, and then placed alongside the stories and experiences of others. In terms of the extended epistemology, this was about bringing 'experiential knowing' from action phases to the group through 'presentational knowing' (stories, collages, drawings). The 'experiential knowing' created by listening to/watching the presentational knowing of others, led to an evocation of memories. These were then shared in the group - adding another layer of presentation and creating a new experience, and so on, cycling around the experiential and practical modes.

Several rounds of creating experience together and presenting this experience, built up a 'collage' of presentational knowings. Through this process we were able to then create shared meaning and understanding around what we were talking about. This led us to move into the propositional - being able to name

behaviours, processes and actions described in the stories and to feel that we were 'all on board' with what these names meant. When we had developed, for example, new names for these behaviours, we were more able to recognise them in action. Below I illustrate the naming as knowing process by amendment of Herons (1996) model, and then go on to a story from the YoWiM group to evidence how the process I describe 'looks' in practice.

(Re)understanding the extended epistemology: Naming as Knowing



Sarah's story

Sarah had told us several stories over a period of time, about a senior male manager who was in her department. In large meetings he would shout her down, ridicule her, swear at her. He would look bored when she presented her work, and had, on occasion, interrupted her to say her work was a waste of time and then disappear outside to have a cigarette. Sometimes he would come back to the meeting, sometimes he would not. She had raised this with her immediate female boss, who had suggested she didn't rock the boat – explaining that this man 'is like that with everyone'. She told the group how upset she got and how powerless she felt to do anything about his behaviour. She reported getting so angry and embarrassed that she could not respond to him through fear of

bursting into tears in front of everyone in the meeting. And if she did that 'he would have won'.

These stories had led to various conversations about typical characteristics of P&G senior managers, and questions over whether this type of behaviour was normal. Some of us had suggested what she might do differently; for example, approach him on his own and explain how his behaviour affected her. But she felt she needed to be able to 'take it', that his behaviour, whilst unpleasant, was something she should be able to deal with. She had no legitimate reason, as she saw it, to be 'getting upset about this'.

This type of conversation firmly located our process in experiential knowing (our group member had experienced several different situations with this manager), proceeding onto presentational knowing (she shared her stories with the group), propositional knowing (making statements about characteristics of P&G senior managers). I considered that the inquiring nature of the group was very context bound - the group was working within the frame of what was explicitly being discussed i.e. 'the characteristics of senior managers', and our inquiring attention was focussed entirely in this frame. The group was asking questions about 'how life is' and suggesting 'how this might be managed', rather than questioning or exploring the taken for granted assumption of 'how life is' and considering how it might be different.

For our May session, I was asked to lead a theory session so the group could further their understanding of what was 'known' of women's experience in organisations. I began the session by asking the group to work in pairs, drawing together on large sheets of paper on the walls 'what happens in a playground', as mentioned earlier in this Chapter. My (unspoken) intention here was to engage the group in remembering their important stories from school and to see if any of these, or the behaviours evident in these stories, were echoed in their experience of P&G. After all of the pictures were drawn, the whole group gathered around them to hear each member's story from her drawing. One story developed into a group discussion on bullying in the playground and how some of the YoWiM group were glad that didn't happen anymore. This is where, through the telling

of stories in that moment, and the remembering of stories we had heard in the past from each other, two group members had the following discussion:

You can get bullied nicely, I suppose, when you grow up. If you continually keep someone quiet, that's bullying - it's just a different way of doing it. It's more difficult to complain about.

There's your [Sarah's] manager who might be a little bit of a bully because you've told us he always makes you feel worthless and shouts you down in front of everyone. People are less likely to tell him what he's doing because he's far senior and they don't really want to rock the boat because they want promotion or something. You said you couldn't tell him, that you were worried you'd get upset and that he'd make you look even more stupid in front of everyone. (YoWiM, May 2001)

The group considered if what was happening to our group member was actually bullying. By playing back the story we had been told about the senior manager, we were able to reconsider the behaviours in the story in light of the new idea of bullying. In Reason and Hawkin's (1988) classification of stories, this 'playing back' could be understood as an example of a 'reflection' - a story that ponders others.

How 'naming' led to 'knowing'

The process of 'naming' helped us to make the methodology of co-operative inquiry our own as it helped us to understand, in a very practical sense, how we engaged with different ways of knowing and how the cyclical process of inquiry fed into this understanding of what kinds of knowing we were speaking from and so on. It is only since our work together ended that I have been able to build

a more coherent idea of what we were actually engaging with methodologically, as represented in the above diagram.

This process – the shift from telling and hearing stories about past and present experiences ('sharing it') to seeing those stories anew through creating a shared understanding and a shared language ('naming it') was a very important shift for our group for several reasons. The NasK process seems to have six core characteristics:

- 1. NasK legitimises experiential knowing:** The process of NasK legitimised our group member's upset and enabled her to allow herself to feel upset and angry. Rather than trying to push these feelings aside and 'just deal with him', she now found a legitimate reason for her feeling this way. In this sense the naming process was empowering as it led to a sense of self-belief – a shift away from the self-denial which was evident throughout her earlier stories. It led to 'knowing' why she was responding in this way, and to 'knowing' it was legitimate. In this sense, we can consider how 'knowing' through first-person inquiring attention to experience, re-visions us as knowers, and in turn how this re-visioning can be validated in the second-person space.
- 2. NasK increases the potential depth of inquiry:** Developing a shared language around important issues deepened our understanding and insight into each other's stories. The 'bullying' label was not just a shorthand description one of us had attached to something that had happened to us. We had co-created our understanding of what had happened, given it the name of bullying, and we all really understood what bullying meant for us. We owned our meaning. We had a shared 'knowing' of what we meant.
- 3. NasK increases on-line awareness to named behaviours:** Naming led to such behaviour being more clearly seen in practice. Hearing the stories and attaching our shared meaning gave the label of bullying a rich texture. The texture of this – the understanding of 'what bullying is',

meant that when such behaviours were seen in practice, they were recognised as bullying, as something that wasn't okay. As Jessie Bernard states:

Jessie Bernard (1981, p.375) wrote, 'Before we have a name for something, we can hardly see it at all. Once it is named, we see it everywhere.' (Gatenby and Humphries, 1999:283)

- 4. NasK increases the potential of off-line reflection:** A meta-level process which emerged was that of building strategies for the future, for example thinking what it might be possible to do differently in the future; why a particular course of action was more suitable than another; thinking through what might happen if a particular response was engaged with. Whilst the process I refer to can be seen as an in-powering one, it is not by definition one that carries a collaborative intent when enacted in practice - mutuality is not necessarily the desired mode of intervention.

For example, after quite some time Sarah developed plans for how she would act differently. None of these involved inviting the senior manager in reflecting on his behaviour with her, or of them working together to explore new ways he could behave, or even Sarah telling him how or why she was engaging so fully in working on how she managed their relationship. She just did things differently and she didn't invite mutuality.

We could see this story as suggesting that members of the YoWiM group did not develop inquiry skills, that they were not engaging others in genuine inquiry. The latter is certainly true in this case and I believe it is evident of in-powering and choice-full practice. Sarah was very aware of her range of options and she chose not to invite mutuality as a way to bring a cessation to the invasion of being bullied - to keep this process for her and for us, to (re)gain some power in the relationship, to create her own agenda.

5. **NasK legitimises practical knowing:** The shared meaning-making of the Naming as Knowing process - 'living it', 'sharing it', 'naming it', and 'seeing it' - led to 'taking action' being seen as legitimate, as necessary, as defensible. The last point, the ability to defend the actions taken in response, is important, and reaffirms the necessity of the cycling process of inquiry. Actions become grounded and understood - meaningful - through the process of developing an inquiring capacity within the group, as described above. This is brought about simultaneously through the cycling process of inquiry over time and through exploring different ways of knowing. The entire process can therefore be seen as an empowering one - the balance between action and reflection grounds our actions and our thinking through the creation of an inquiring community, which whilst supportive, is challenging to our thoughts and our actions (both physical and verbal).

6. **NasK enables a different future:** Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the whole process described above shifts the experience of the future, as members of the YoWiM group discussed below...

Well, like we were talking last time about the senior guy who just sits and looks bored and dismisses my ideas. I understand that it might really be just his personality, or how he is allowed to be when he is at work... talking about it and discussing it was really good and it will probably help me deal with it and not think "what am I doing wrong?"... So rather than it being 'am I doing something wrong?' I can start to just sit there and think 'this is the way you are being, you don't *have* to change it but perhaps I can change the way I think about it'. Also it helps me understand and not get quite so upset.

Realising you don't have to be like them as well, just because this guy's senior management in P&G. The fact that everyone else is saying they really don't like the way he acts as well, it's not just you...

I think it's probably the contrast as well, that for somebody like him, his behaviour is probably a reflex action, something he hasn't really thought about. We're in a superior position... Having this space to think about this, talk about it and hear everyone else's thoughts really helps... So rather than just reacting, you can just bring all our experience to the situation.

It only happens here [YoWiM] really. Being young women in the company where you've only just started maybe a year ago, how the hell do you know how to react to that? Are you meant to get up and shout back? Is that how everybody's going to perceive you better - if you stand up to him, or not? It's a complete judgement call at this stage but if you discussed it, you've got a bit more of insight into the different possibilities of how you could respond. (YoWiM, June 2001)

This shifting of future experience moves us from 'seeing it', into 'living it' and so cycles us through the ways of knowing again. Each cycle however, brings new information and new awareness at each level. This is why the cyclic nature of inquiry is important - because it gives us the opportunity not only to make better futures by understanding and trying out alternative ways of thinking and being in the world, but by drawing our attention, through the help of others, to what we already do.

What can we learn from the NasK process?

The process of naming as knowing has parallels with what Rorty refers to as 'redescription'; 'a talent for speaking differently, rather than for arguing well, is the chief instrument for cultural change' (Rorty, 1989:7). We might say in this sense that bullying was a 'redescribed' behaviour, a redescription that enabled us to stop feeling and doing some things and start feeling and doing others. This reflective element of coming to know has been crucial for our group. Moreover, getting a sense for how we came to know things in our group really helps me to see what the term 'community of inquiry' is, in part, about. It is about the relational - the shared meaning making - and the developing expectation or intention of the community in which we work that we will endeavour to build knowledge that way. As Goldberger states:

Knowing is not insular. How one knows is multiply determined within the array of relationships that define the self. Meaning making is not a solitary pursuit, but is interactional and negotiable; that is, knowledge is co-constructed. Persons are "situated" in communities of knowers in which the dynamics of power and status are often controlling factors in how one knows and what one knows. (Goldberger, 1996:15)

The listening for and hearing of many voices and differing articulations of events is central to much feminist scholarship (Harding, 1986; Treleaven, 2001) and in this sense has obvious overlaps with participatory research, where, as Gaventa and Cornwall state:

'Truths' become products of a process in which people come together to share experiences... at the same time they remain firmly rooted in participants' own conceptual worlds and in the interaction between them. (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001:74)

The second point here is important for me as it speaks to what participation/collaboration is in Action Research, from my perspective: whilst we learn as we share and grow with the others in our community,

participation/collaboration is not synonymous with compromise or a giving up of the self as a holder of knowledge – collaboration as a loss of power, or as a behaviour borne of an inability to make decisions, as some might see it. The sense of truths remaining ‘firmly rooted’ in each of us speaks to this – suggesting that we have a sense of understanding, owning and believing in what we know, but that unlike positivist views of the world, our truths are open to change and development, which we will again own.

In light of the above, naming as knowing can be seen as a strongly counter cultural practice - taking time to hear the stories of others in their half-thought-out form, and to offer similarly half-thought-out ideas for what they might do in the future. The structure of such an interaction has obvious implications for the way in which power is situated in the relationship. With the YoWiM group processes, we built a space together which valued the knowledge each of us held, meaning that we could (re)vision ourselves and each other as being powerful, knowledgeable people – and that this power and knowledge was not open for negotiation, it was a given, something that we could come to name and grow into. The sense I have made as to how Naming as Knowing takes shape is as follows:

Inner-group ways of knowing:

Drawing attention to the behaviours we engaged in, in our group space, naming these, and giving them meaning (shared or otherwise), enabled these behaviours to become a recognised part of our group’s inquiry process, rather than being unspoken noticings owned by particular group members.

Outer-group ways of knowing:

‘Naming’ can be seen as a group-based/owned sense-making response to what we noticed in the stories brought into our group space from the wider organisational context of ‘P&G’. This includes a meta-naming; a voiced ‘plan’ or ‘strategy’ for responding to a newly ‘named’ behaviour.

A digression into the process of writing 'naming as knowing'

It seems that there is an important parallel to draw here, between the writing about naming as knowing and the act of writing it. I have realised this parallel as I write and as such I see it as evidencing the process I suggest in the above model – essentially that naming a process enables us to see this process more readily in practice. Let me explain:

Firstly, in the time we spent together as a group, we got into sharing stories of our experience, discussing them, and making plans for future actions based on this discussion and the new understandings we gained through this process. This was a largely unnamed process, but it was something we did which we started to draw attention to, with gentle phrases such as 'I think it's really important that we discussed this as now I understand more', or 'I think being explicit about *who* we are talking about as well as the behaviours we are talking about helps us understand [the story] in the same way as each other'. In this sense, this was the 'living it' element of the above model.

Secondly, when our time as a group was over and I could read through all of our transcripts and all of my notes as a whole story, I began to see a pattern of naming in stories which stood out for me due to the clarity of the process evidenced in them. I started to share these ideas with my PhD supervisor, in a very 'un-thought-out' way – I wasn't clear on what I was seeing, but discussed it as something linked to group processes and how they helped us to make sense of what we were hearing and how we could help each other to be validated in what we were feeling, and in how we could plan for the future to be different. This can be seen as the 'sharing it' element discussed above.

Thirdly, the 'naming it' element of the above model can be seen where I named the process I was beginning to see 'naming as knowing', using the most clear stories to evidence this in my writing.

Fourthly, through linking the ideas of what I was seeing (living it, sharing it, naming it, seeing it) to the stories which stood out for me from our group, my

supervisor asked me to evidence this process where it was 'less fully formed'. This invitation to 'see this process where it is less obvious to you' could be understood as the 'seeing it phase'. By giving our process the 'naming as knowing' label from sharing ideas of when I saw it happening, I found myself able to see it happening more clearly in my notes and transcripts in places where I had not seen it (as clearly) previously.

What I want to show in my thinking here is two-fold: Firstly that there seems to be a very strong process/content link in this piece of writing for me – the act of writing about a process has engaged me in the very process I describe. Secondly, it was the cyclic nature of inquiry that enabled us to engage in naming as knowing in our group as our inquiry skills became (more) developed. So too in the writing of this – the cyclical nature of holding times of action and reflection in the writing process has enabled me to see on a meta-level what process I am engaged in here – how it mirrors the content of what I write and how I can value my own sense-making in the practice of writing.

Why do I believe this is an important point to make? It seems important to me, I think, because it gets to the very heart of what I believe action research is all about – it is about the unplanned, the emergent... the things I only get to make some sense of through having a go *at doing them*, and the things I only get to learn because a process, a way of engaging with my life, enables me to hold some time to have a look at what I am doing and to consider what I am being shown, what I am involving myself with.

Perhaps more importantly, I am able to see more value in the process of writing when I notice such things as detailed above. I am able to see that I am not only reporting what we did or what we learned, but that I am actively learning as I do this. The cyclical nature of this process seems unending. It is tantalising to wonder at what might make itself evident next. And this for me is the whole point of inquiry – a constant wondering what I might choose to do next, why and how I might choose to do it, what this may unfold into being and how my understanding may shift as a result. This constant multi-levelled attention is full of learning - as well as being tiring and very open to helping me notice what I am

not paying attention to. I have come to understand the latter as learning-full through reframing - valuing my developing abilities to notice what I am not attending to ('I am noticing that I am not paying attention to process X - what might I chose to do differently next?) rather than only seeing it as evidence of inadequacy ('I am not a good facilitator because I didn't pay attention to process X').

A continual reframing process - a desire to understand things in new and different ways - is central to the practice of inquiry for me. To use Marshall's (1999:156) phrase, it means that 'little is ever fixed, finished, clear cut', but rather is in a continual flux of meaning and possibility - reinforcing the relational, co-constructed nature of the sense we make of what we do. I believe this 'reframing process' is interwoven in the stories in the above discussion and furthermore, that it is important to place this process alongside the context of the organisation within which the YoWiM inquiry was run. P&G was described by YoWiM as an organisation which values your 'decision' - not your ability to negotiate meaning or to consider the opinions of others.

Getting visible

Part of the ongoing process in the YoWiM group, as discussed above, was bringing back observations from the action phase and 'trailing' ideas for action around these. These trialled actions were then moved into the arena of 'going public' - shifting the way the YoWiM members 'did themselves' in their working lives. The degree to which this felt like 'going public' depended upon the degree of visibility the new behaviours had, and inadvertently, the length of time taken in feeling confident in 'going public'. It was essentially a shift from being invisible to actively getting visible. We referred to this shift as 'speaking the silence back to the organisation'.

Speaking the silence back to the organisation

Such critical self-learning is important not only for the weak and the powerless, but also for the more powerful actors who may themselves be trapped in received versions of their own situation. For this reason we need to understand both the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' (Freire, 1970) and the 'pedagogy of the oppressor', and the relationship between the two. (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001:76)

Whilst members of the YoWiM group never described themselves as weak or powerless, the relationship between what we were exploring about their understanding of their experience in the second-person space related to the 'received versions of reality' lived by their bosses and others with whom they worked. Moving into the public sphere in tackling issues for themselves and with those who they worked, was the first step for members of the YoWiM group in speaking the silence back to the organisation. In most instances, 'going public' took some time to build up to. However, when able to do so with an intention to 'inquire into the process as much as to the content' group members felt that it often was a less testing experience than they had imagined it being. As Weinberg Zelman states:

As a direct result of the learning that occurred through the process, some participants were able to take risks in the "outside" world that they would not have considered possible prior to the experience. (Weinberg Zelman, 2002:40-41)

In illustrating this, I pick up on Clare's story from earlier in this Chapter, on how she had used our space to 'trial' approaches she could take in getting her boss to stop calling her 'Petal'. She moved her inquiry into the public arena, ultimately speaking directly to him about it after booking a meeting with him for that purpose. She not only tried out a new way of behaving (confronting) but she also trialled structuring her confrontation with Torbert's (1991) Four Parts of Speech model that I had introduced to the group. In this way she was going into

the conversation with an inquiring attention to the process, as I mentioned above. The below is how she reported what happened when she 'went public':

Focussing on working with the model meant that I had something other to think about than being worried about talking about the 'petal thing'. I felt like I was looking at how I could do it rather than what I was doing, which made me less scared... the best part was that in really trying to do the inquiry part I got to hear from him what he thought, like he couldn't just go 'okay then I won't call you that anymore' and that would be the end of it. We actually got into a conversation about how he'd 'never really thought about it' and hadn't considered I might be upset. When we had talked it through we sat and had a good chat about my work, and we haven't done that for ages. (Clare, YoWiM, April 2001)

This is the kind of practice we invite people to engage in when we believe, as I do, that part of the action research process involves participants in the building of inquiry skill (as I explore in Chapter Six, when considering the qualities of inquiry practice). I suggest that as people become more skilled in inquiry, their attention deepens from 'effect' to 'cause', from 'quick wins' to changes that have 'enduring consequence for others'. For consequences to endure for others, they may have to be situated in the practice setting. Getting into a conversation with her boss about his behaviour begins to move toward changing the system, getting those in powerful positions to engage in the 'critical self learning', as Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) discuss, above.

I discuss later (Chapter Seven) Wadsworth's (2001) notion of 'companioning' as a facilitative capability. For shifts into the type of inquiry practice described above this seems particularly important. In the title of this Chapter I use the word 'enabling' as suggestive of the type of inquiry skills I believe are required of all members of the inquiry group if they are 'to bring into hearing' (Harding, 1996: 447) each others voices, and companioning seems like an appropriate skill in

service of this – the support structure that enables not only hearing, but moving into the public arena.

Though the above is an example of change that ‘was not very visible’ – it was a hugely important shift for Clare as she felt she had achieved an outcome she had not even contemplated previously, and is illustrative, to me, of the behaviour Fletcher refers to...

... it is apparent that many have become quite adept at challenging masculine norms in small but persistent ways, without getting disappeared, exploited or dismissed. (Fletcher, 1999:120)

Below I discuss the two key occasions on which the YoWiM group went ‘very public’ during our work together, firstly by hosting a ‘third-person’ inquiry in September 2001, and secondly by meeting with the Lead Diversity Team (LDT) in February the following year to feed their learnings ‘up’ the organisation. It is difficult to articulate here just how big these shifts were for the YoWiM group. Whilst they had made determined efforts throughout the inquiry to stay linked in with the wider organisation, ‘showcasing’ what they had learned through their experience of inquiry in such public spaces was challenging, but one that ‘makes doing things in different ways in the future a reality, rather than just something I’d hoped for from doing this work’ (YoWiM, February 2002). It validated our time spent in the YoWiM group too, as time that made new futures possible, as Gatenby and Humphries (2000) suggest:

The workshops... have shown us the significance of building communities and of women having the opportunity to identify this kind of community as a way of beginning to change the other communities they take part in. (Gatenby and Humphries, 2000:98)

In addition, hooks (1989) goes further in suggesting the kind of shifts the YoWiM group engaged in are about liberation:

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side, a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of “talking back,” that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject – the liberated voice. (hooks, 1989:9)

I shall now illustrate the experience of these two events: ‘Third-person inquiry’ and ‘Meeting with the LDT’.

Third-person inquiry

The shift in group members’ self-perception from ‘participant’ to understanding themselves as capable facilitators, who can make powerful choices about and who hold grounded opinions about group processes and what kind of group spaces send what kind of messages, was hugely important to our group. Whilst these skills were being developed throughout our practice, it was in the latest stages of the development of our group that they were predominantly evidenced - particularly when developing plans for and running a third-person inquiry with fifty other women from within P&G.

The shift to third-person inquiry was important in more ways than I had envisaged. In the group we had spoken, from quite early on in our time together, that working with a bigger group of women would give us a better sense of the ‘bigger picture’. It was not until the third-person workshop was being planned that the value of it became evident. Making plans for the future group involved us in appraising what had and had not worked in our group to date. By design, this involved us in some rigorous paying of attention to our process and a multileveled naming of what we were engaged in, in our group.

For going forward, the group felt the following things from our practice were important:

- **A circle of chairs:** the group felt this was important for two key reasons. Firstly, that it was a 'great leveller', that it sent a message of a more equally distributed power than, for example, chairs in a horseshoe shape with space for nominated people to stand at the front and 'tell you things'. One of the key sentiments of being in our group was that people felt valued, and they felt we had communicated this in lots of ways, not just verbally.
- **A visually stimulating space:** a desire to recreate this was due to several factors. Firstly, in our group, having our drawings on the walls had created a sense of history, which often helped us to remember things we felt were important and to link our ideas together. The group suggested that they may be helped in their facilitation if they had these familiar objects around them. Secondly, they felt that if we were going to ask people to come into an inquiry space and share something of themselves, we could, in a way, match that sharing by displaying our thoughts, and ideas through having our pictures and some themes we had discussed on big sheets of coloured paper on the walls.
- **Creating a space where 'people can really meet each other':** This was not just about wanting to develop an opportunity to network, though this was named as a valuable and largely absent process for women in the organisation. The group sought to create a space 'where people don't feel the senior women have been brought in to tell them all the answers' but a space where 'we can bring a spirit of each group [senior women and peers] wanting to hear from, learn from and share with the other'.
- **Inviting people who will join us in the spirit of our work:** This was to be the first time the group members had facilitated such a group and they decided they needed to take care of themselves when they were deciding who to invite. With so very few senior women in the company, there was a temptation to invite all those from the UK – until one group member responded to the suggestion of a particular senior women's attendance

with 'She terrifies me'. Some of our group members responded to this as follows:

'If she frightens you, we don't want to invite her.'

'Is that fair though?'

'Well, maybe it's not, but we don't want her to frighten them [other workshop participants] either'.

- **Creating safety:** The group felt that we had to enable people to feel safe to get them to 'open up' to each other and to tell the really important stories. They considered that we did this in various ways in the YoWiM group - by hearing from everyone, by not letting people hijack the conversation, by explicitly asking each other to question our own assumptions, rather than encouraging others to criticise what we had done. Many issues such as these would need to be paid attention to on a moment to moment basis. In addition, after reflecting on how we had worked and the details we had delved into over matters that were important to us, the group decided that they should build-in time, very early on in the workshop, to work in pairs and small groups 'so that everyone starts to feel comfortable with opening up, rather than being asked to speak straight into the bigger group',

The most important point to make here is that the group were evidencing a growing facilitative attention, borne of their own experience and understanding - that they were making choices based on what had (not) worked for them. They were carrying through the attention to practice that we had developed in the YoWiM group second-person space with the explicit intention of helping others to feel safe, so that the workshop participants also might experience tapping into their own silenced stories.

During the workshop the group were careful to attend to the dynamic between senior women and young women. They explicitly (on occasion) pointed out that the senior women were being related to as experts, rather than as people who had interesting stories to tell *and* interesting stories to listen to and learn from. In Fletcher's terms, choosing into such behaviours can help to 'make visible the

current organisational norm' (Fletcher, 1999: 122). The mixture of large and small group spaces meant that the YoWiM group could attend more carefully to encouraging everyone to speak in ways that they felt safest in doing so. Key themes were flip-charted and fed into the larger space to enable a wider sharing of experience.

As I suggested with the beginning stage of inquiry, it seemed to me in 'going public' it was 'how' the group held the space and the kind of experience they created for participants that was most important. People fed back after the workshop: 'I had never worked in such a friendly way before', 'I learnt a lot from people I had never met before, it was great to meet and work with so many *women*', 'the YoWiM girls kept our energy up and I think that's because we weren't doing boring things - we were being asked to get to know how each other felt about working here and that's important', 'I was shocked when I walked in - no tables! But it turned out to be good as we could work in different sized groups', 'it was very different not being 'told things'', 'in the two weeks since the YoWiM workshop I've noticed that I now know many more women here - that is the best outcome for me'.

Holding a space in such a counter cultural way was not only about engaging the wider system in an inquiring way. It was about exploring the YoWiM members' practice in their 'action phase', to see if it had shifted in ways that could be sustained outside of our group space and to see if any shift was noticed and responded to well by participants. The feedback above suggests this was the case.

Additionally, we might see the act of 'going public' in such an inquiring way as an 'outcome' of the YoWiM group's inquiry process. The consummation of Heron's (1996) extended epistemology is the evidencing of practical skill 'knowing how to do something', and the above was a test of just that - did the YoWiM group know, through their own experience of inquiry, how to create and hold inquiring space for others? I would offer an emphatic 'yes' in response to this question. This links with Reason and Bradbury's (2001) suggestion that a mark of quality in inquiry is whether it has enduring consequence. Living in

new ways in the world is part of what I consider such enduring consequence to be.

'Meeting with the LDT'

Between the third-person workshop and the meeting with the Lead Diversity Team (LDT) in February 2002, the YoWiM group had 'ended' (October 2001), as I discuss in Chapter Eight. This ending marked the end of the twelve month period we had initially contracted to work together. I moved out of the group at this point, but other members decided to continue working together, more loosely, for a time. This time ended when the group got together for one last time to meet with the LDT, a team of the most senior managers in the company who led the company's diversity initiatives. The YoWiM group invited the LDT to 'join them in a conversation' about their YoWiM experience. They invited me to attend too - an indication of the shift in membership that had taken place. Jon, the senior sponsor of YoWiM, was a member of this team, and our junior sponsor Anna was also going to be invited. The purpose of the meeting was to review the YoWiM research and to make recommendations for the future based on this. The YoWiM group had called the meeting and they were to lead it.

My purpose in telling this story is to pay attention to the shift that occurred in our group space over the fourteen months that had elapsed since the first open work-shop in December 2000. To notice how the group had evolved from wondering if it was okay to talk to each other about things that mattered in ways that mattered, to being able, as the story below shows, to talk about these things in these ways to a level of manager that they might only otherwise 'present things to' in meetings. In hooks's terms, they got to a place where they were "talking back" - 'speaking as an equal to an authority figure' (hooks, 1989: 5).

It strikes me that this sense of equality is brought about by the knowledge that the ideas that they were going to discuss had been given time to become fully formed and interrogated through the practice of inquiry - these were owned by the group. This ownership gave them the confidence to discuss their ideas, and

the rationale of these openly and with people who they usually do not discuss things with. Not only were they able to hold a discussion and share their ideas, but this was carefully held. There was just enough 'P&G language' to make people feel safe, and just enough careful illustration of new language and ideas to help people to be interested and to engage in learning about what we had been doing. The idea of pacing and leading seems appropriate here - how much do you choose to stay with the group where they are, and when do you pick up the pace to take them somewhere beyond what is current. How do you strike that balance?

For example, the group were discussing notions of 'voice' - the idea itself being unfamiliar in the P&G context. It would have been easy to 'talk a talk that was in itself a silence' (hooks, 1989:7), to not be heard because of being 'too far ahead', pacing beyond what could be kept up with. One of the YoWiM group brought everyone's understanding of this concept right back into the moment by saying;

Even this meeting is an example of voice - that you're here, that you're interested, that we're telling you this stuff we've never told you before. (YoWiM, February 2002)

This kind of educational intervention was 'new turf' for everyone who attended and was indicative of the totally different type of conversational space the YoWiM group were holding and inviting us into. It echoed our time in the YoWiM group in that it did have a conversational quality, rather than the usual 'defend/attack' context members of the group had described. Notions of 'defending/attacking' in P&G life and language were discussed and led the group on to speak a lot about 'how being in the YoWiM group felt':

Our group was a safe place. I was empowered to act by understanding different stories, and we were empowered to act in different ways - hearing other people's stories created new ideas for acting in new ways. (YoWiM, February 2002)

Additionally they spoke about how our ways of being together enabled that:

[One of the key things we learnt was] the importance of review, we call this reflective practice, because we get time to pay attention to what we have done, how we feel and what it means. (YoWiM, February 2002)

With all of the above statements by the group members, I think it's important to notice the way the group framed their ideas in a positive way and that this was choice-full. In our time together, we had worked a lot on framing interventions, and I found it really interesting that they didn't say 'I sometimes don't feel safe in the way we do things at P&G' - they chose to say 'our group was a safe space'. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, they were prepared to say, albeit by implication, that 'you all being here and being interested (listening) and me feeling safe are important things'. This was new conversational territory, and the speaking of it was shared by the whole group - they would help each other out, fill in gaps, illustrate ideas with stories. But then in the next sentence, they would go back to 'P&G speak' and talk in terms of business benefits. For example, when we were discussing the learning of 'co-facilitating' a process like this, one of the women responded by saying; 'Practical knowledge of how to do this is a huge organisational win' - the kind of conversation which I found myself completely unable to partake in as fluidly.

And back again we would go to the texturedness of our process in YoWiM. One of the LDT was speaking about further developing the web site the group had set up about YoWiM, so it would become an information store on issues of interest to women in the company. She saw this as a possible alternative to groups such as ours. She discussed this for quite some time and seemed to think this was a good idea. Then one of our group members said:

The internet is very static, our stuff is relationship based. I couldn't ask personal questions to an email forum, and that's what we do in our group. We've built a relationship over time, and it's that time which makes it a mutually respectful environment, and makes the kind of questions you are talking about possible to ask. (YoWiM, February 2002)

The focus of the conversation then switched to what had been good about what we had done – the group didn't let 'their meeting' get hijacked by other agendas focussed on 'action steps' for websites. Instead they named 'relationships' and 'mutual respect' as being inter-dependent and important, and what we had done as being done relationally (Fletcher, 2000). This may not seem like such a big deal, but the truth is that senior level managers in the company are listened to and their ideas are considered, if not always followed through on. Laying them bare as inappropriate in front of other senior managers is not normal practice. But the knowledge of them being inappropriate was grounded in our time together – they were opinions from lots of people that had been considered over time (the YoWiM group and people who participated in the third-person inquiry) and this seems why the response was so positive. Invitations to new conversations were possible as a result of in-depth understanding of, and engagement in, practice.

This again makes the point that third-person inquiry is not only a way of the smaller, face to face group getting an idea of what other people think, and in so doing, feeding their own second- and first- person inquiry. It is a way of politicising the act of knowledge generation and of being heard. The organisation where the YoWiM inquiry was based was not described as one in which people were acting in inquiring ways. The YoWiM group needed to 'follow' to some of the 'rules' of the organisation in order to get heard. They knew that whilst they were able to re-vision themselves as knowers, the organisation valued 'data' that was grounded in larger numbers of people. Engaging others in third-person inquiry enabled, among many other things, the

group to be heard by people with the power to help them change their future experience of P&G.

The experience of 'doing inquiry' meant that the YoWiM group knew people who were unfamiliar with the process and content of our work could get 'left behind in their understanding' because we had got lost at times. Therefore, they knew there would be both times to pace and lead, and from the experience of doing it in our group, they were confident in imagining how they might do this with the LDT. The notion of the 'tempered radical' (Meyerson and Scully, 1995) fascinated the group, and helped them to have conversations around some of the choices they were making. This notion was key in the meeting described above. The YoWiM group had often discussed wanting to speak-out what, how and why our process was important to them, and how it could be for others, in ways that would bring about change both gently and carefully, and in ways that shocked the system. Put another way, Meyerson and Scully describe this as:

[creating change] through incremental semi-strategic reforms and through spontaneous, sometimes unremarkable, expressions of authenticity that implicitly drive or even constitute change. (Meyerson and Scully, 1995:594)

The group left the meeting feeling they had struck a balance between suggestion, conversation and assertion. They had 'talked back'.

Aftershock: When too much is not enough

The YoWiM group had agreed to end their work together as a formal group following the meeting with the LDT. This meeting symbolised their 'final act' of collectively 'speaking their silence back to the organisation' and was something that had been prepared for over a long period of time.

During the inquiry, as illustrated throughout my thesis, the members of the YoWiM group had stretched themselves to develop inquiry skills and to use

these skills to make changes to how they experienced their organisation. All of them are clear that the 'official' time commitment to our group - 'half a day every four weeks' - in no way represented the amount of time they actively spent on 'doing inquiry': tracking their first-person inquires, preparing for and taking actions in their work setting, and so on. The LDT meeting represented, for them, a time to feed forward what they had learnt, and then take a step back. In the fifteen months since we had first met, working lives had 'become unrecognisable' with incredibly heavier work loads, more time spent away from home, and less time for development work 'outside of the P&G frame'.

After becoming visible as a group, YoWiM members wanted to be less relied upon (by themselves) to be visible for a while, so they could regroup their individual energies and figure out what might come next, as individuals. This was where the group experienced push back from the system, via Anna, the junior sponsor.

Two of the senior women who had participated in the third-person inquiry the group had run were on the LDT. They spoke highly of what the group had learned and evidenced in the third-person inquiry, and commented that they had received a lot of excellent feedback from both other senior and junior women who had participated. They recognised that what the group had achieved had not been easy, that it had taken time and commitment (in most instances) on top of their workload. This position was also held by the group's senior sponsor Jon. Anna however was clear that 'stopping now is a waste' and that 'the group really should continue'. Within the meeting, the YoWiM group members gently pushed back, saying time was needed for them to decide what they wanted to do, if and how they wanted to go forward. The conversation between YoWiM members and Anna carried on outside of the LDT meeting.

The YoWiM group and I had arranged to meet for drinks after they had finished work that day to celebrate the YoWiM group and acknowledge its end, so I had to wait around after the LDT meeting for the working day to end. Anna came and found me during this time and asked me if I could find out from the group

why they had resisted continuing to work together, saying she would phone me the next day to hear what I had learnt.

What happened next is not the point (I told her they had been clear that they needed time to decide what to do and that pushing them would not help anyone, and she did call the following day and I told her the same thing again).

The point is that by choosing to become visible the YoWiM group members were now holding a position of being interested in changing P&G for other young women and Anna was trying to make them hold it, to take responsibility in building on the changes they had already affected. In this way the group members saw their - up until now exploratory - process being in danger of co-optation, of being *taken* into the mainstream.

Meyerson and Scully's idea of the Tempered Radical (1995) was again useful in helping the group to figure out what was happening and why they were so resistant to Anna's agenda. The idea had been picked up on by the group on and off during our inquiry - they had struggled with the idea of being 'radical', saying that they were 'just doing what lots of young women in the company would like to be able to do, but they don't have the support for it'. They suggested that it was our group that 'stimulated them to challenge the status quo' (Meyerson and Scully, 1995:585). However, in the face of their resistance to Anna's agenda, suddenly the idea made sense.

Some acknowledged that they had felt a sense of isolation (Meyerson and Scully, 1995) in their work as YoWiM - like they were the only ones challenging dominant patterns, that this made them different from other young women with whom they worked, that their attention to challenging agendas meant they carried this intent for other women. They each felt like they were no longer 'just another invisible young woman'. They also acknowledged that they did not want to be co-opted into Anna's re-launch of WIBs (Women in Business, as detailed in Chapter Four) and considered that she might 'just see us as a resource to do her work'. They did not want to 'become visible' as a Proctoid carrying a diversity change agenda. They wanted generally to remain in a space

less defined, and were determined to resist any moves to alter this. This decision was not about 'disappearing again'. From the perspective of the YoWiM group members it was about being visible on their own terms.

Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) illustrate this in the below:

...the danger will be that existing power relations may simply be reinforced, without leading to substantive change in policies or structures which perpetuate the problem being addressed. In this sense, participation without a change in power relations may simply reinforce the status quo, simply adding to the mobilization of bias the claim of a more 'democratic' face. The illusion of inclusion means not only that what emerges is treated as if it represents what 'the people' really want, but also it gains moral authority that becomes hard to challenge or question. (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2001:75)

Summary

Through the experience of engaging with inquiry practice over time - the process of sharing their stories, listening to experiences both past and present - the inquiry group members developed the skill of seeing behaviours of their own and those of others (both inside and outside of our inquiry group), differently. This led in turn to a re-naming of what was being done, said, and felt. Re-naming is a process through which new subjects can be spoken about - it is not a matter of simply giving a new label to something we are already talking about. It is about seeing and understanding old behaviours in new ways. This process became possible through developing our practice of engaging with all of the different ways of knowing that co-operative inquiry methodologically embodies. By this I mean because we made space for different ways of knowing in our inquiry, these ways in turn made space for new processes.

In this way, the process of engaging with a breadth of 'knowings' becomes a methodological necessity in instances where we aim to create new discursive spaces in organisations. Additionally, drawing attention to how these new conversations are coming about, from a methodological perspective, enables (re)understanding of the epistemology of co-operative inquiry, and conscious attention being paid to the process of learning - or to put it another way, that the process of learning has been learned (Greenwood and Levin, 1998). This makes evident the importance of the inquiry process we went through in the YoWiM group - it is necessary that we *engage in practice* so we own a shared understanding of theoretical concepts (such as the co-operative inquiry model), enabling them to be meaningful to us - not just a medium through which to speak our ideas to the academy.