Appendix 4

Chapter 6
'Mapping the Territory of Workplace Dynamics Between Women'

Analysis of Interview Findings 1

Contributors identified specific features that they associated with working relationships with women. For each of these they identified they identified contrasting approaches that they associated with men. They also identified generative and degenerative aspects to features of women's relationships.

The first section of this appendix sets out gender specific features they idnetifeid. The second section sets out positive and negative aspects that they identified of women's expectations of each other. The third section sets out key factors they idnetifeid as determining women's interactions.

What women bring to work roles: gender differences identified by contributors

- Bringing (more) emotion and passion into their work and finding it less easy to set these aside where necessary to carry out a task; men tend to compartmentalise (B, C, D).
- Being (more) overly concerned with relationship, being more wholistic; looking at the whole dynamic; where men just get on with the task (B, C).
- Wanting to or being expected to nurture by women and by men: men are expected and more likely to challenge and compete (C).

- Being expected to work within consensus and not being allowed to rock the boat or expected to challenge by women or by men; may be culture based (A, C, E,).
- Having more fluid boundaries between friendship and work, being more likely to make friends or introduce references to 'home' into work relationships; men keep more solid boundaries and are more likely to sexualise friendship or friendly gestures: see also 10 below (B, C, E).
- Seeking to build professional relationships with each other on trust, empathy, shared values/project, collaborative; men more likely to focus exclusively on task withouth attending to process, and less trusting, more sequential division of labour (you draft I will pick apart) (C).
- Women often relate to men in ways they expect: challenge, or 'engineering model' (E)
- Women often move between male and female ways of relating – between shadow and formal systems (C).
- Caring for individuals and caring for process to achieve task; managing the tension when these are in conflict (C, D, F).
- Managing boundaries: juggling social stereotypes and professional roles and setting boundaries when this is necessary to keep to task (B, C, E).

Stories which contributors told suggested that as these features were not valued in their working environments even positive aspects of them were problematic for women. Yet they also showed that these qualities were features of their own working relationships and were the enjoyable aspects of their work with women. The depth with which contributors engaged with the discussion seemed to indicate that these relationships with women were important, but little explored; their stories suggested that risk emanated from the devaluing environments in which they were working.

Contributors' initial ambivalence about the inquiry topic may have signalled fear of being devalued once again by oversimplified negative comparisons to behaviours based on a male norm.

Women's expectations and experiences of each other in professional relationships

Negative experiences

This was a painful and difficult area. Two of the contributors (A, B and F) denied having any specific expectations of women and then moved on to describe painful or negative experiences from which they distanced themselves. C and E owned specific expectations that they held and/or experienced from women, based on stereotypes which had negative consequences and which undermined their authority. D was these only one who described only positive experiences but she too told a story of a black female client losing an opportunity for promotion for the qualities which as consultants she (D) and her male colleague had enjoyed in their own working relationships.

Stories of negative experiences illustrated expectations not being met in the following areas:

- Women not valuing each other's work on women's equality:
    - younger generations of women not appreciating the role feminists have played to make their career progression possible (A);
    - a woman manager devaluing her work with women on equal opportunities (F);
    - women's organisations devaluing their own work (E).
- Women not allowing each other to lead, negative descriptions of women's leadership (A; F; E).
- Women liking each other / needing to be liked given too high a priority and getting in the way of working to goals (A; C; E).
- Women in positions of power more defined by their relationships than their positions; e.g. in hierarchies relationships with other women at lower levels in the hierarchy are experienced as threatening by male peers (C; E).
- Disagreement between women experienced by other women to which they referred as unsupportive - unfeminine and unfeminist (A; D; E).
- Envy and resentment at individual success, in the public sphere (A).
- Competitive dynamics between women when in male presence (B).

- Loss of women's friendship when refused to conform to gendered expectations (C):
    - Women resisting and resenting challenge, expecting to be nurtured by each other (C, E);
    - Hostility from women when not affirmed in 'oppressed' victim / oppositional roles (C).
- Permeable boundaries and a desire to care for the other making it hard to say no or assert task related needs; over-reliance on and clumsy use of formal processes (C; D; F).
- Discomfort with exercising power over, experiencing this as dysfunctional and not a part of themselves they like very much - 'Fuhrer mode' (A; E; F).
- Wanting to be 'one with the girls' – to be liked- friendship or collaboration rather than exercising responsibility or power over (A; B; C; D; E; F).
- Rejection of friendship / love where this was experienced as in conflict with managerial roles.
- Having to be constantly 'on guard' against breaches in authority – from men, from women, from inner voices (C).

Positive experiences

All of the contributors identified and described positive experiences specific to their professional and working relationships with women; without exception they also identified more problematic aspects.

Positive experiences
- Feminists / women working together towards shared goals, challenging, debating and arriving at agreements to work on defined tasks across difference of opinion (A and B) and leadership styles (C).
- Excellent leadership and management by a woman boss in a mixed organisation - corporate setting (B).
- Passion and friendship without losing sight of task focus (all aspired to this model): looking after the individual and the process (B, D, E, F).
- Building relationship through shared values; jointly building something, sharing credit, trust (A; C; E; F).
- Paying attention to the small things: the individual not just the role (D).
- Mixing the personal and the professional (D; F).

- Shared passion for the work and fun (E; D; F).
- Connecting easily with women about ideas, buzz, creativity, shared humour (F).

These positive experiences were identified less easily than the negative. In four cases negative stories were told first to illustrate woman to woman dynamics (A: B; C; E); in two cases (D and F) positive examples were given first, but in one of these (F) it was a surprise to the contributor to associate these with a woman - specific pattern. In the other, (D) the example given illustrated qualities the contributor associated with her own enjoyment of working with a woman client, in contrast to her client's male or female peers who did not appreciate these qualities.

Problematic aspects

Why were these positive and enjoyable experiences described with such ambivalence? In the following I indicate how I interpreted the reasons for this ambivalence in terms offered by contributors, and indicate where they have been substantiated by research:

- These ways of working are devalued within malestream cultures (Fletcher 1998; Marshall 1984) and these cultures often predominate in organisations (C and E).
- Process and relational work is perceived to be at odds with effectiveness within performance cultures (F) rather than as enhancing performance (A, B, F, C, D, E).
- In gender-mixed organisations, senior men often closely monitor women to women relationships across differences of power. They often perceive these relationships as either 'breaking ranks' with the order of power based on male hierarchy (E), or as a basis for devaluing the status of the more senior woman by association (B, E, F).
- Women have difficulty with 'power over' and are not good at reconciling this with their preferred way of building work relationships through empathy and collaboration (A; C, D, E, F).
- Working on women's equality issues is no longer valued within my organisation (F).
- Many men and women have an investment in reproducing gendered stereotypes and cannot tolerate women who break them (A, C, D, E).
- Women are threatened by each other's success or exercise of power in the public sphere (A, E): 'unfortunately women do not value each other' (A, referring to women's organisations).

The evidence suggested that my contributors, whose value bases differed widely, all valued the positive aspects of woman to woman interactions they described and shared different degrees of disappointment and pain around the negative aspects. They identified having an affirmative alternative value base (A, C, E, F) and learning from experience how

to use power to maintain their authority in professional settings (A, B, C, D, E, F), as essential to sustain them in their role and position in their organisations. None of them considered either their value base or the attributes they brought from gender role socialisation as adequate to equip them to deal with the realities of expectations and responses from men and women in work based relationships.

What these contributions suggested is that women needed an ability to work against social conditioning, their own and others', in order to access and exercise leadership and position power. They needed this in relation to each other, as well as in relation to men. Their stories suggested to me that women need to navigate between the different worlds of professional work-based relationships and gendered social expectations and to develop a set of competencies that are adapted to that challenge. However this was not stated explicitly by contributors, nor was it a conclusion with which they would necessarily agree. I developed this theme in my own analysis throughout my inquiry.

In the next subsection I summarise what factors contributors did identify to make sense of their accounts of gender difference and woman to woman interactions. I then move back to explore their accounts of their strategies and practice in working with these dynamics with women clients and colleagues.

What key factors did contributors identify as determining women to women interactions?

Political and social environment

For contributor A, key factors determining interactions between women in organisational roles were their political views, the organisational context in which they were operating, and political environment. For B, who was talking about mixed corporate organisations, key factors were other differences through which gender was mediated, such as individual temperament, levels of experience, cultural context, age. In both cases their lens reflected the organisational cultures of which they were a part: feminist politics and the US corporate sector's focus on the individual and diversity. Both made reference to changes in the work environment to which women were adapting. In the US corporation, team based flatter structures meant women and men had learned to be effective team

members. In the UK women's organisation, the performance and contract culture had introduced a move towards service and away from feminist social change and political campaigning which had consequences for organisational structure and roles. Managerial values had replaced the collective while loss of shared values had led to breakdown of working relationships.

Alternative Values

For contributors A, C and E, an alternative value base from which to actively counter normative social expectations of women was key to positive women to women interactions in professional roles. A stated at the beginning of her interview that her expectations and disappointments in relation to women were related to their feminist and not their gender identity.

Earth-based philosophies had offered C and E a way of valuing their own leadership qualities and a framework for development work with women and women's organisations. Both described themselves as working against prevailing norms and expectations associated with traditional gender roles expressed by both women and men.

B, D and F did not refer to holding alternative value frames, but did describe themselves or women with whom they were working as sometimes in conflict with the prevailing organisational values as expressed by women or men. F for example talked about being devalued for being 'out there' and involved with local communities in a culture that valued policy work as 'sitting at your desk'. D referred to the black woman client with whom she enjoyed working as being assertive and 'getting up the nose of fellas'.

Experience, learned behaviour and ways of being

B, F and E each referred to learnt skills as key in knowing how to exercise authority for women – and being new to position power as a disadvantage. C and E described their own process of learning and teaching from a new value base which challenged women's socialisation and gender based expectations from men and women. The latter showed that while leadership skills might come naturally, women needed to learn how to exercise

them in male-defined social and organisational environments where both women and men enacted traditional gender stereotypes and kept them in place.

Gender norms and socialisation

All contributors referred to and illustrated gender difference in professional roles, qualified with a statement of doubt about the validity of making generalisations. It was as if the act of naming the differences was painful, and risky.

Contributors made statements about gender difference as we explored specific incidents. They emphasised that women were as able and as competent as men at performing within norms of effectiveness defined within their organisations. They also referred to aspects of their own work relationships with women that they valued, but which were at odds with or at a tangent to organisational expectations. This tension between what they valued and what was valued in their organisations created tensions that were problematic. As the quotes below illustrate, they spoke of hopes and disappointments – and often isolation:

> In a women's organisation like X for e.g. there is that lack of a shared vision of what feminism is- the most awful things have been going on-women being really nasty to each other in the organisation. Taking grievances against each other as staff members and part of that I think is the professionalisation of voluntary organisations-all now have target in order to get money they're supposed to run like commercial organisations-how many widgets you produce
> Interview with A

> I had these expectation of X because she was a woman and I expected her to behave in a certain way and certainly if there was a conflict with a man I expected her to take my side …..it was only on the very last day of working with her and I……….. took on board what her organisational role was and her position in reorganisation and relationships and how these affected what she could and couldn't do….
> Interview with E.