To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Jane Bingham Henry entitled “Scenes from the Margins: A Participatory Action Research Study About the Praxis of Womanhood as a Different Way of Working in Male-Dominated Professions.” I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy with a major in Education.

Katherine H. Greenberg, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

Mary Ziegler_____

Howard Pollio_____

Barbara Thayer-Bacon_____

J. Elaine Seat_____

Acceptance for the Council:

Linda Painter_____
Interim Dean of Graduate Studies

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

SCENES FROM THE MARGINS:
A PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH STUDY ABOUT THE PRAXIS OF WOMANHOOD AS A DIFFERENT WAY OF WORKING IN MALE-DOMINATED PROFESSIONS

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jane Bingham Henry
December, 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank the following for their contributions toward the completion of my doctoral program:

- My Doctoral Committee, in the order in which I met them.
    - Dr. Katherine H. Greenberg, committee chair—amazing educator, innovator, inspiration, mentor, and friend.
    - Dr. Mary Ziegler—as PI for CLS, taught me to love research and showed me how she does it with empathy, insight, and soul.
    - Dr. Howard Pollio—lovely intellect who taught me to see and appreciate diversity instead of dysfunction.
    - Dr. Barbara Thayer-Bacon—treasure-trove of all that philosophical and feminist scholarship that I just soak up like a sponge.
    - Dr. J. Elaine Seat—fellow engineer and traveler toward relational practice with the heart of a gladiator for justice, compassion, and equal opportunity.
- The members of Cohort 3 who made “this road by walking” with me; and the other CL Cohorts I have known and walked with, especially Lorna, Linda, Kim, Martha, Gina, and Dorothy.
- Dr. John Peters—for plucking me from the internet right into the CL program and giving me the vision to start the walk.

- To those who helped with data analysis—Linda and Kathy, and the research group at the College of Nursing; and who helped with the presentation—Celia, Brenda, Martha, Linda, Drew, and Bob
- To my supportive husband who always knows when I need a push to go on. My daughters, Beth and Sara, who are wonderfully strong, relational women and eager to listen to each of my new adventures. To all of the rest of my family and friends who have cheered me on and aided me in distress. I'm so blessed by all of you.
- To Breast Cancer Research that has given me a good chance of surviving Stage 2 Breast Cancer.

A special thanks to Sara for her global, organizational mind and PowerPoint expertise that she is willing to share.

ABSTRACT

"Scenes from the Margins" is about the experience of women working in male-dominated jobs. Jobs are gendered. They are not gender neutral as we had supposed, as the people who hired us had supposed. Jobs that have traditionally been done by men are done in a masculine way. The masculine "way of working" is not a way that women can work: either it doesn't fit them (as in what to wear and where's the restroom) or it doesn't suit them (as in not conditioned to act that way) or it represents behavior expectations contradictory to expectations for female behavior (as in women should be more assertive but shouldn't yell).

This is a participatory action research (PAR) study done by women who work in male-dominated professions. It uses feminist theory, participatory inquiry, and collaborative learning as foundations and participatory action research and phenomenological interpretation as methods. It tells the story of our sense of marginalization in our jobs, not because of our credentials or qualifications or even our opportunities to get a job, but because of our gender. It tells the story of nine women who as media producer, engineer, scientist, minister, and/or college professor discovered a common journey and experience. It's not a story about "what should be" or "how it got that way," though some foundation is provided for these, but it is one of "what is" and "what we want to do about it now."

PAR was an opportunity to reflect with other women about what it means to be a woman in each particular life and practice, from a position of gender complementarity/mutuality, reflecting together on how best to use relational skills toward effectiveness and an integration of public and private, thereby creating a Praxis of Womanhood.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: JOBS ARE GENDERED **1**

The Problem **1**
This Study 5

My Story **5**
My Journey to Feminism 8

The Questions **12**

Purpose of the Study **13**

Significance of the Study **15**

The Rest of the Story **17**

CHAPTER 2: FOUNDATIONAL LITERATURE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY **18**

Foundational Literature **18**

Literature about Gender Bias **18**

Studies That Guided Me **20**

Research Methodology **23**

Feminist Theory **24**
Feminism in Waves 25
Sex Relationships 26
Problems with Defining "Woman" 31
Feminism and Postmodernism 33
Choosing a Position 35

Participatory Inquiry **36**
Relational 37
Feminine 37
Necessarily Acting 38

Collaborative Learning **39**

Moving Toward Research Methods **40**

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODS 41

Participatory Action Research 41
The Feminist Critical Research Component 42
One Out of Many 44
Collaboration Is Key and Dialogue Is Data 45

The Research Process 46
Recruiting the Participants 46
Beginning to Meet 48
The Research Steps 49
Data Collection and Analysis 51
Describe-Plan-Act-Reflect 52
Questions of Validity and Rigor 54

In Summary 58

Moving to the Story 59

CHAPTER 4: TELLING THE STORY 60

Themes 64
Woman as Non-Man: **"I wanted legs"** 64
Alien Environment: **"Why can't you just try harder?"** 68
Response to Environment: **"Turn into a Weak Man"** 72
Awareness: **"When everything changed"** 78
Practice of Womanhood: **"You can find a different way"** 86

Moving to Action 89

CHAPTER 5: ACTION: SCENES FROM THE MARGINS 91

How Can This Be Action? 92

"Scenes from the Margins" 93

Reframing the Problem 108

Moving to Conclusions 109

CHAPTER 6: REFLECT: CONCLUSIONS 110

The Outcome 111

Implications 114
Complementarity/Mutuality 115
Relational Practice 116
Participatory Action Research in the Workplace 118

REFERENCES **122**

VITA **140**

CHAPTER ONE

JOBS ARE GENDERED

> *Her access* [speaking of Simone de Beauvoir's association with the intellectually elite male culture in France] *meant that she could be an independent intellectual, and yet in some ways she over-identified with prevailing, male-based, notions of desirable human qualities, and was unable to see the way she was marginalized as a woman by the ideas she identified with* (Marshall, 2001, p. 438).
>
> *[A] basic premise of feminist theory [is that] gender matters in our everyday lives, and how we experience our everyday lives is affected by gender matters" (Pillow, 2002, p. 11).*

The Problem

Jobs are gendered[1] (Bogoch, 1997; Cook & Waters, 1998; Fletcher, 1999; Kourany, 2002). By that I mean that jobs/occupations/professions traditionally have been occupied by either men or women, rarely both, and, in the past, we as a culture had come to expect, even require, that these jobs be performed by the correct gender. A mere sixty years ago, the job titles engineer, college professor, minister, actor, reporter, dentist, mailman, and cowboy were identified with the male persons who possessed them. Elementary school teachers, beauticians, actresses, nurses, waitresses, cowgirls, and housewives were almost guaranteed to be women. It's just the way it was.

---

[1] "Gender" is used throughout this document to refer to the cultural, physical, behavioral traits of one of two sexes—female or male. The author is aware of the continuing debate over either-or gender identities and comment on some of the issues later in this report.

Since childhood's "Ole McDonald Had a Farm," I have pictured "a farmer" as "a man" in overalls feeding animals. My family didn't farm; but growing up in my white, middle-class, southern culture led me to think of farmers as male even to the point that the word "farmer" was masculine as surely as the words "fireman" or "cowboy." If a woman were farming, I would have felt the need to refer to her as a "woman farmer."

I'm rather short even for a woman, but I used to wonder why all gardening tools were very hard for me to use (this was before the Martha Stewart tools). I felt useless wielding a mattock, plowing with a roto-tiller, or driving an old pickup truck without power steering. One day it occurred to me that if those same tools had been designed for the average elephant or giant, a regular-sized man would have to struggle to use them. The realization for me was that the tools were designed for the "normal" user—the average man. No wonder I felt inadequate and incompetent when gardening. If I wanted to garden, I either had to change the tools or work a whole lot harder than the "normal" user. My husband, on the other hand, looks and feels awkward when he tries to mend a rip in his pants. It is not only that he is not practiced in the art of stitchery or housewifery, but also that everything he tries to use is small, designed for the "normal" user—the average woman. Wouldn't this affect my idea of what I was good at doing and what my husband was good at doing; what I could/should do as a woman and what he could/should do as a man? Are what women and men do and how they do it the same or different?

By beginning with the statement “Jobs are gendered,” I am saying that gender has an effect on what we do and how we do it, and that gender issues will not go away just because they are ignored. Gender affects not only our choices, but our perception of choices; not only our actions, but our perception of actions; not only our knowledge, but our perception of knowledge.

Historically, from a gender polarity point of view, housewifery was a “way of doing,” a set of skills and behaviors, that became associated with womanhood. Everyone knew what it meant to be a virtuous woman or a virtuous man in that world. A virtuous man would do virtuous Work and a virtuous woman would create a virtuous Home (not Work). The valued qualities of the home were those that nurtured its inhabitants for growth and health of the body, mind, emotions, and spirit. The housewife/homemaker had developed and honed skills like “listening with the heart;” including every member great and small in the family circle; feeding body, mind and soul; performing maintenance tasks which nurture; creating an environment both beautiful and functional; and practicing hospitality. We might call these skills empathy, intuition, inclusivity, interdependence/mutuality, cultivation of growth and well-being, cooperativeness, adaptability, aesthetic creativity, friendliness, kindness and generosity. Somehow, these private, “home” values/skills became de-valued outside the home (or at least outside the feminine realm) and weren’t considered “real” work.

On the other hand, the virtuous person in a male-dominated occupation/profession, the public "work" sphere, would need quite different skills. He would act rationally, objectively, single-mindedly, competitively, independently, practically, and cost effectively. His daily tasks would be seen as "real" work (Fletcher, 1999). His unimportant and unacknowledged emotional and physical needs were taken care of privately, in the home, by women (Miller, 1986).

In an effort to achieve gender equity, a gender neutral or unisex view has often been adopted. Many battles have been fought before and since women's suffrage and many gender lines have been crossed such that firemen have become firefighters to include a significant number of women. Mailmen have become mail carriers. Quilters and hair stylists (not just barbers) may include men. Housewives may now be stay-at-home dads, as well as, stay-at-home moms. Hard hats, work boots, mailbags, and rubber gloves have to come in more sizes. Stroller handles have to lengthen.

And yet, it is more subtle still; there is even more to a job being gendered than stroller handles and hard hat sizes. Having the aptitude and freedom to be an engineer, for example, is not enough. Being male is the norm, and being female, with *all* that entails, is not normal. One has to be able to operate in an environment designed by and for men (like finding a women's restroom with urinals) or the environment has to change or some of both.

This Study

This study is about nine women who have chosen to meet together because of our experiences doing "real work" in male dominated careers or environments. We entered our jobs with excitement and enthusiasm ready to work hard but found our paths blocked by **"hidden rules."** No matter how hard we tried, we found that **"The main part of the uniform we don't have is a penis. It's the loud and clear message a lot of times."** There was more to the job than doing our best to act like everyone else around us (mostly men). In the process, we came to realize that, like Marshall said of Simone de Beauvoir (in beginning quote), we had "over-identified with prevailing, male-based, notions of desirable human qualities, and [were] unable to see the way [we were] marginalized as wom[e]n by the ideas [we] identified with." By saying that "Jobs are gendered," I am putting myself squarely in the middle of a Feminist conversation and doing research from a Feminist perspective. Chapter Two will look at some current conversations surrounding these issues.

My Story

> *Conventional feminist wisdom holds that the story behind the story is crucial to understanding research because all research—feminist or otherwise—is value-laden and cannot escape being influenced by the history, life situation, and particular worldview of the researcher* (Fletcher, 1999, p. 7).

In the tradition of feminist writing, I will tell the part of my story that explains how I became interested in this subject and this research. I am a woman. I married at 20, finished college, taught school, and birthed 2

daughters. As a mother and wife then, I went back to college to get an engineering degree, and worked as a corporate engineer. I thought when I graduated from the university with an engineering degree and respectable grades, I had arrived at a place where I could be considered a person with intelligence and competence instead of someone who acted like “a girl.” In my experience, throwing like a girl, driving like a girl, and squealing like a girl were terrible put downs. I didn’t like shopping, gossiping, or giggling which I thought were all things that silly women did. I was making a statement to myself and others that I could be “as good as a man” in a man’s world. I was moving up in the world, at least in my own eyes. Obviously, this was me seeing the world of men from the “outside,” at the time, and thinking that their side of the fence looked better than my side of the fence.

When I landed my first engineering job, I found the task part of my job to my liking. It seemed like important and interesting work. I liked learning technical things, solving problems, and managing projects. The shock for me came from the culture. I found that I was often included with a group of male coworkers in conversations about how extravagant and irrational wives/women are (like “What am I, chopped liver?”). Unfortunately at the time, I was proud not to be like those other women. When the children were at home sick, we, the engineers, were at work. Women take care of children. Or when a family member died, a four-day leave was ample because we, the engineers, didn’t take care of the dying or

make the funeral arrangements or clean out the house. And emotions, like grieving, were not appropriate or acknowledged at work. The emotion of anger, the one permissible to men, was allowed, however. Anger is not seen as weak and sissy. When the work culture judged that the loudest yeller won, then this gently bred southern girl was out of her element no matter how well she did calculus. I had to check my private, "home" values and sensitivities at the door. They didn't belong at work.

As a woman in engineering, I had run head first into the brick wall of gender schemas[2], my own as well as those of others. I was in a day-in/day-out environment that was actively anti-feminine. In order to be the best engineer I could be, I kept trying to ignore the demands my body and spirit were making on me—more sleep, more healthy food, more time with my family—until I was sick. The light in part of my house had gone out. I had "over-identified with prevailing, male-based, notions of desirable human qualities, and [was] unable to see the way [I was] marginalized as a woman by the ideas [I had] identified with" (Marshall's quote as above).

---

[2] The term "gender schemas" has been used by Virginia Valian as a way of talking about these stereotypes or the "set of implicit, or nonconscious, hypotheses about sex differences [and the central role that they play] in shaping men's and women's professional lives" (1998, p. 2). In the academic world herself at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center, she has written *Why So Slow?: The Advancement of Women* in an attempt to make the invisible visible by documenting how gender schemas "affect our expectations of men and women, our evaluations of their work, and their performance as professionals" (1998, p. 2).

To my bosses, co-workers, and the world at large, I appeared to be a fine engineer. But a dreamlike picture came to me one day in the alienation of my first job as an engineer: I was a fish flopping around on the sand. Someone (I could only see legs in the picture image) was standing over me saying, "You just haven't tried hard enough to adapt to your environment." I realized then that there was nothing I could do to "adapt" to that environment where the company president had just preached an attitude of "every *man* [sic] for himself." It left me searching for my place in the world and trying to understand what it meant to be a "fish out of water." If I were a fish, where was my water? I wasn't satisfied being a homemaker or an elementary school teacher. I had tried both of those. Engineering satisfied my need to have an impact on the world outside my traditional role as a woman, but I couldn't seem to thrive in it.

My Journey to Feminism

For me it was not engineering school or my engineering jobs that led me to Feminism, except indirectly. Quite the contrary, engineering led me to the "anti-feminine" of sex polarity—away from a sense of sisterhood with other women, an appreciation of feminine qualities, and a passion for women's voices being heard. My shove toward feminism came from my interim job as volunteer director for an alternative sentencing program for street prostitutes. One morning after I had visited the first participant of our prostitution recovery program in jail, I woke up angry. At first I was angry at the specifics of Ruby's (name changed) particular situation. She was the first

woman who was involved in street prostitution that I had ever met. I wept for what had brought a beautiful, vulnerable woman with "street smarts" to that place of incarceration over 300 times[3].

As I met more women in prostitution and did more research, I began to rage at the cultural practice of prostitution—the injustice of a person virtually being born into the "profession." What appeared to be choices for those women were not choices at all, but often manifestations of the survival skills developed from childhood incest and abuse. The women who were prostitutes belonged to everyone but themselves. The men they served were legion and yet there was no sainthood. Something was tragically and perversely wrong with the system that created and depended on their self-lessness.

Gradually my anger began to creep into the foundations of my own life. In the protestant church that was my world, why had I heard of Francis of Assisi but not a hint of Claire of Assisi; of St. Augustine but not St.

---

[3] In the city I was in at the time, street prostitutes were arrested for petty theft and "criminal" activity around drugs and solicitation. Their sentences were short term--usually several days to several months at a time in jail, not prison. That's how one person could amass over 300 arrests by age 40. Prostitution is one category of crime that the judicial system deals with "repeat offenders." Jail has a revolving door for prostitutes. Their crime of prostitution became a felony, however, if they had sex knowing they were HIV positive. Our program was attempting to short cut the revolving door.

Catherine; of Thomas Aquinas not Hildegard of Bingen? And, of course, there had been my public school his-story classes in social sciences, "hard" sciences, and literature. Could it be a conspiracy against women? So who conspired—my father and mother, my husband, my Sunday school teachers, my English teachers, the mayor, the President of the United States? They probably had never heard of Hildegard either.

I was an engineer and a "respectable" wife and mother, and yet I knew there was something about Ruby's "cultural shame" that was my own. There is what philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1949) and theologian Mary Daly (1968/1986) call "The Second Sex," what psychotherapist Anne Wilson Schaef calls "The Original Sin of Being Born Female" (1981/1992), and what writer Sue Monk Kidd calls "The Feminine Wound" (1996). It had to do with my femaleness. I could not say with the old rabbis, "Thank God I was not born a woman." I WAS born a Woman.

Since there was no future in assigning the blame that righteous indignation craves, I found myself in the midst of a postmodern discourse (didn't know to call it that at the time) where the "grand narrative" I was raised with just didn't work (Wright, 2002). I longed to deconstruct my culture, at least what I could see and imagine of it at any one time. I was in my twenties before I could understand the inherent racism of "flesh" colored Band-Aids and crayons, and even longer before I recognized the sexism in a disparaging statement like "you run like a girl."

Coming out of the 1960's with emancipatory education and liberation theology guiding my young adult years, I should have been better prepared for this cultural landslide of mine. Back then, I had finally become depressed with the oppressed. I knew both the so-called victims and so-called oppressors and couldn't tell which ones had God on their side anymore. "Liberating" myself, which I tried to do by becoming an engineer, seemed like a good idea at the time. I wanted to fix things that were fixable and the culture definitely was not. But more than that, now I understand that my desire was to claim a voice of my own; "to count as a knower." As Lorraine Code says in her chapter asking the question "Is the Sex of the Knower Epistemologically Significant?", "It is no exaggeration to say that anyone who wanted to *count* [emphasis is Code's] as a knower has commonly had to be male" (1991, p. 9).

The almost two-year experience with the program turned my worldview up on its left ear and helped me understand how such a good daughter of the patriarchy like me could be a corporate world misfit. I began reading ravenously to find out how prostitution could have happened to "them." And then I realized that it had happened to "us" (all women)—that prostitution is the logical extension of the position women have in our world.

Women are now free by law to do almost any work they are qualified to do with a certain guaranteed safety and equity. More and more women are entering the male-dominated work world. This looks like progress for women who wish to enter the public work sphere and it is. But as I read

books and talked to other women in male-dominated jobs, I began to find that I wasn't alone in my feelings of "not belonging." I heard other women[4] telling their stories of alienation and marginalization in the public work sphere—a gender gap.

The Questions

The awareness of my own woundedness and alienation in the culture of Corporate America, as well as, the dawning realization that other women also experienced much the same alienation, lead me to try to make some sense of it all. Inspired by Nel Noddings (2003), I chose to explore with other women how we might be intentional about bringing two parts of our lives together—the part of us that believes that caring relationships are of primary importance from our feminine schemas and the part of us that desires to function productively in a male-dominated profession— the private and the public. Within a participatory action research group of women who have felt this over-identification with "prevailing, male-based, notions of desirable human qualities" (see Marshal quote above), we began to ask:

- What experiences have made us as women feel marginalized in our male-dominated occupations? When did we discover that being in our career meant acting like a man?
- How can we improve our practice of being women in the male-dominated public sphere?

---

[4] And some men, but that's another study.

- What do we have to offer from the gender margins so that "desirable human qualities" might be expanded to include those that have been traditionally defined as feminine/private?

My intent was to use collaborative learning in this circle of women to explore and improve the practice of being a woman in the public sphere. By reflecting collaboratively on our practice of being women outside the generally accepted roles of "helpmate" and mother in the private sphere, we would begin to develop a praxis of womanhood.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this participatory action research study was to learn collaboratively with other women how to improve our *practice* of womanhood in the public sphere and how womanhood is shaped by the culture which surrounds it, i.e. socially constructed. To conceive womanhood as my *practice* and the *practice* of other women, I have used several descriptors of *practice* put forth by Kemmis and McTaggart. Practice, from a subjective point of view, they say, is "socially structured, shaped by discourses and tradition," is supported by institutions, and is "intentional action shaped by meaning and values" (2000, p. 576). Even though sexual identity is a role one is born to and proscribes a set of behaviors, attitudes and interactions that are both adopted by and expected of one, I am re-imaging *womanhood* as a practice. I am using *womanhood* as practice in the same way I would use teacher or engineer or housewife. Perhaps I will even say, "I am *womanhooding*" just as I would say that I am teaching, engineering, or

housewifing. When I am *womanhooding*, I am a woman who is intentionally gathering together both the public and the private, valuing qualities that have been traditionally valued and those that have been de-valued, even by my Self. It is what I do. And as a practical knowledge, reflecting on a way of doing, womanhooding becomes praxis. When I try to "engineer," for example, how is the engineering job structured and shaped by the discourses and traditions of being a man; how are many of my contributions as a socially constructed woman in our culture de-valued and even "disappeared[5]" by the values and traditions of the organization; how is what I have to offer an organization and the world improved by my practice of reflective womanhooding?

This was the starting place—problematizing womanhood. With awareness and reflection, the group of women formed around this question began to look at our practice of womanhood through new eyes. As with any practice, there is the possibility to improve continuously, to strive for excellence, and to seek virtue in our praxis of womanhood. We reframe the

---

[5] The term "disappeared" is used by Joyce Fletcher to describe the "off-line, backstage, or collaborative work [many people] do, and the relational skills this kind of work requires, [that] are not recognized or rewarded at work"—"women's work" (p. ix). It is a systematic ignoring, devaluing, and making invisible certain tasks, people, and contributions to the process of "real work," like cleaning staff.

Biblical proverb, “Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price *is* far above rubies.”[6]

Significance of the Study

During the course of the research, I discovered that I had breast cancer that required surgery and chemo-therapy. As I had long hours to sit and think during my chemo-therapy stupor, I began to wonder if my research question was current. Maybe, I thought, all of these problems of marginalization and invisibility have been solved now for the new wave of women in formerly male-dominated professions. Then, low and behold, Larry Summers, former President of Harvard University, made a speech at a diversity conference that removed all doubt about the timeliness of my topic. He was trying to explain why there is still a gender gap in the leading tenured science professors at his institution of higher learning. He described his personal theory as follows:

> The most likely explanations, he said, are that 1) women are just not so interested as men in making the sacrifices required by high-powered jobs, 2) men may have more “intrinsic aptitude” for high-level science and 3) women may be victims of old-fashioned discrimination. “In my own view, their importance probably ranks in exactly the order that I just described,” he announced. (Time Magazine, March 7, 2005, p. 51).

His pronouncement caused a firestorm at Harvard and across the country. In trying to rationalize his explanation, I have to realize that he was expressing the living reality for most men and women, the hegemony of the

---

[6] Based on King James Version of Proverbs 31:10. (Emphasis is mine).

public sphere. For women who haven't chosen "to make the sacrifices required," their sacrifices for high-powered jobs are different from the sacrifices that most men make. Rather than the traditional wife and children that a high-powered man generally has to make a home for him, a woman must often choose no family or waiting until the family is grown to begin her "sacrifices for power." And to his second point, Virginia Valian[7], a professor of Psychology and Linguistics at Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center, wrote

> Summers is not alone in his lack of awareness of the compelling evidence of the power of small differences in how we treat boys and girls, men and women. Yet those differences, I would argue, provide a better hypothesis than innate sex differences to explain the gap between the numbers of men and women in academic jobs in the sciences.
>
> Nor is Summers alone in being unaware of the large set of experiments showing that well-intentioned people, intelligent people, people who believe in a meritocracy—people, in short, just like many successful college presidents—consistently underrate women's abilities and overrate men's. (January 30, 2005, p. B01)

And as to his third point, Newsweek Magazine (February, 28, 2006, pp. 41-42) expressed the hope that Summers might learn from his gaffe and change his "swashbuckling style" to something "softer and less combative."

In order to design a study to include women's voices in male-dominated professions, to answer the research questions above, and to do action with a group of women, certain methodologies were chosen. The rest of this report describes the research design, the methods, and the outcomes.

---

[7] Researcher and author of *Why So Slow?: The Advancement of Women*

The Rest of the Story

In Chapter Two, I will discuss the literature and theoretical framework used to design the study. Chapter Three will discuss research methods, specifically Participatory Action Research (PAR), and the data analysis using phenomenological methods.

There were two outcomes for this study. The first was a phenomenological look at the data collected during the initial sharing of stories by the group. The derived themes will be revealed in Chapter Four. The second outcome was a drama created as the action outcome of the PAR process. Chapter Five will present the reader's theatre-type drama, combining the stories that were told, entitled "Scenes from the Margins."

Chapter Six is a discussion of the conclusions. It compares the two outcomes and suggests implications for a praxis of womanhood. Women gathering together to speak of things that are important to them has promise. As women join the choir of male-dominated professions, perhaps the music will sound quite different.

CHAPTER TWO

FOUNDATIONAL LITERATURE AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

> *We must call a moratorium on further studies that try to document gender bias. While gender bias is not universal, we must accept that it is so common a problem that we must institutionalize the actions needed to guard against it, correct its consequences, and raise consciousness to ultimately eliminate it—in both men and women. (Hopkins, 2000, p. 117).*

Foundational Literature

Nancy Hopkins, a professor of biology at MIT, spoke the above words in a workshop report at the Chemical Sciences Roundtable as a result of her research in the School of Science at MIT. Her study was conducted over a two year period by the tenured women faculty, and the results were reported five years later in the 1999 MIT Faculty Newsletter. From the MIT study, they learned "that the playing field for women in science, even for those who are extremely successful, is not a level one" (2000, p. 110). It is not my intent to portray women as victims and men as villains in this study, however. I think women and men are both producers and products of the same gender schemas. Nevertheless, there is an experience of alienation/marginalization that women in male-dominated professions seem to share, and the story bears telling.

Literature about Gender Bias

As Nancy Hopkins observed, gender bias has been adequately documented for women in science and engineering (Baker, 2003; Brainard &

Carlin, 2001; Committee on Women in Science and Engineering, 1994; Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998; Etzkowitz, Kemelgor, & Uzzi, 2000; Gornick, 2002; Hopkins, 2000; Lee, 2002; McIlwee & Robinson, 1992; Rosser, 2002; Sonnert, 1995). Similar studies have shown similar results for women in other traditionally male professions (Bogoch, 1997; Burke, 1998; Chiu, 1998; Gerdes, 1995; Hull & Nelson, 2000; Laband & Lentz, 1998; Perna, 2005; Toutkoushian & Conley, 2005; Williams, 2004; Zikmund, Lummis & Chang, 1998). The conclusion of these studies--whether about women in law, engineering, academia, ministry, or science--can be summarized by Gornick's statement about women in science quoted in Kourany's introduction: "[Women] had been 'allowed' into science, to be sure, but had then been 'held back, put off, discouraged and demoralized, frozen in position' and rendered invisible" (2002, p. 5). Or as Hopkins describes it "[Women] had come in [as MIT faculty] equal [to men], but you could see that as this marginalization happened, the impact of small setbacks accumulated and made their jobs unequal" (2000, p. 114).

All is not grim, however. One study reminds us that there are "No Universal Constants" and that the number of women in male-dominated professions is increasing. Some women do "make it to the top" and feel proud of their careers. "Doing science is hard work" (Forward by Lilli Hornig in Ambrose, Dunkle, Lazarus, Nair, & Harkus 1997, p. xii) and their hard work paid off (Ambrose, et al, 1997). Also many women have been grateful to the men along the way who were willing to encourage and mentor, as they

were able, even when sometimes the veteran women would not (Sonnert, 1995). The next section will discuss two specific studies that helped shape my research.

Studies That Guided Me

After recognizing the ubiquitous nature of gender bias and also being appreciative of all that has gone before to create progress toward equal opportunities for women, I turn to two studies which have guided my own research past the now redundant documentation of gender bias. Both of these studies are specifically about women in engineering. Both studies began by accepting gender bias as a common problem, as Hopkins requested above, and both studies attempted to describe the issues and provide insights for change.

One of the findings was dissertation research done by J. Elaine Seat entitled *Women Engineers: Expectations and Perceptions* (1996). Her qualitative study used interviews with women engineers and male managers to develop two theories regarding the career limitations of women in engineering. The first finding was that managers experience conflict about recommending women for leadership roles because the managers believe that just when women have enough experience to be promoted, they become involved with starting families and lose their focus on the job. Making poor selections for promotion puts the manager's future advancement at risk so he (all males over 50 in Seat's study) will likely hesitate to sponsor women for promotion. Second, Seat found that as women matured in their jobs,

they moved from an individual task focus, which seemed to give them a feeling of inclusion initially, toward a realization that they achieved the best results by also focusing on relationships. By mid-career at age 35, a woman engineer has begun to see "work as both technical task and relationships [but] she feels more alienated" (1996, p. 138).

Another study that influenced me is Joyce Fletcher's research (1999), *Disappearing Acts: Gender, Power, and Relational Practice at Work.* Her study was ethnographic using observation, interviews, and a focus group to look at women at work as engineers in contrast to "women's work." Fletcher wanted to examine the "masculine bias in organizations from a feminist perspective" (p. 3). According to Fletcher, it's not just women who are "disappeared" but "the feminine." She brought together "feminist poststructuralism, a feminist sociology of work, and relational psychology" (p. 5). She used feminist poststructuralism to understand the "relationship between power and knowledge" (p. 21), the role of language in "the social construction of experience" (p. 22), and the use of resistance as a process of disrupting or deconstructing dominant power narratives (p. 23). A "feminist sociology of work" was useful to her in recognizing how "truth rules" from organizational discourse have worked to support and rationalize an authority structure (p. 25). And finally from psychiatrist Jean Baker Miller's work on relational psychology (Miller, 1986), she was helped to understand and define "the feminine" as relational practice that includes the strength of the qualities from the private "home" sphere.

Joyce Fletcher stated that “the disappearing of relational practice at work suggests that the factors inhibiting women’s progress in organizations are not only problematic for women: They are problematic for organization effectiveness as well” (p. 139). Fletcher is a professor of management. Her research goal was “to add a feminine perspective to organizational theory, one that would challenge masculine standards, not only to promote women within the current environment but to challenge the current environment itself” (p. 12).

My research, like these two studies, started with the recognition that women and feminine qualities are marginalized in the public sphere. I believed, with Seat and Fletcher, that women bring relational skills with them from the private sphere and find these skills ignored but useful in their work.

This study does three things differently. First, instead of focusing on institutionalized gender bias, it problemetizes Womanhood, the *concept of woman,* and how it affects what we do at work. What does it mean to be a woman in the public sphere; is there some essence to it that we can’t leave home without? Second, I included women from male-dominated professions other than engineering, including protestant ministry, academia, television production, and science. I should say they included themselves; the women were volunteer responders to an invitation which I will discuss in greater depth in Chapter Three. Third, instead of using individual interviews as both Seat and Fletcher did or the focus groups where Fletcher was a facilitator from the outside, I was a co-participant in a participatory action research

circle of women. The data include my story and experience as shared in the group, and I am part of the co-construction of knowledge.

The next section of this chapter, Research Methodology, will take a look at the theoretical foundations for my research: *feminist theory* for understanding the "concept of woman" and gender power issues, *participatory inquiry* with its goal of collective action, and *collaborative learning* as a relational epistemology for the creation of knowledge. These foundations help me follow a trail started by my research questions (listed in chapter 1).

Research Methodology

Patti Lather makes distinctions between method and methodology as follows: "method refers to techniques for gathering empirical evidence; methodology is the theory of knowledge and the interpretive framework that guides a particular research project" (1992, p. 1). The purpose of this section then is to describe the theories and interpretive framework that guide my[1] research project. As mentioned in the previous section, the theoretical

[1] I am calling this "my" research in this chapter because the group of women who became the Participatory Action Circle of Women were not gathered as I asked the research questions and chose the method of research. "We" became a group and it became "our" research as we met to tell the stories. In upcoming chapters of the report, the *I*'s and *my*'s will change to *we*'s and *our*'s. The voice of "we" is a critical characteristic of Participatory Action Research.

foundations for this study come from three perspectives—*feminist theory, participatory inquiry, and collaborative learning.* They are the ontological and epistemological glasses (not so rose colored) that I peer through to ask the research questions and to settle on a method of research. I am concerned with issues of gender and about collective action in which women are working together to create new ways of being and doing in our public worlds. As mentioned in the previous section, the theoretical foundations for this study come from three perspectives—*feminist theory, participatory inquiry, and collaborative learning.*

Feminist Theory

> *Feminist theory and research focuses on, questions, and exposes the intricate workings of gender. Feminist theory provides important methodological tools and lenses for challenging what we think we know while continually questioning what seems innate or natural, paying specific attention to gender (Pillow, 2002, p. 12).*

My research is grounded in feminist theory. Feminist theory has a fundamental goal, according to Jane Flax, that is "to analyze gender relations: how gender relations are constituted and experienced and how we think or, equally important, do not think about them" (1990, p. 40). I will try in this section to describe some key issues about feminist theory. First, feminism has evolved since before the days of suffragettes so I will talk about the waves of feminism recognized by some authors. Second, I will visit the three modes of sex relationships found by historian Prudence Allen in ancient and early writings—polarity, neutrality, complementarity--and use

them to help describe more current issues today. Third, I will discuss the problems with defining *Woman* and the contested ground of feminist theory where such categories as *gender, feminine/masculine,* and *woman/man* are criticized by many as essentialist dualities that obscure diversity. Fourth, I will briefly discuss feminism's relationship with postmodernism and some of the issues involved. And finally, in order to act, I have to decide how to act. So after sifting through the previous issues, I will discuss my own rationale for feminist research.

Feminism in Waves

Some feminist authors mention periods or waves of feminist theory in the United States (Nicholson, 1990; Pagano, 1988; Pillow 2002). They don't agree on the naming or timing of the waves necessarily, but they agree that feminist theory has evolved and is evolving. Jo Anne Pagano tracks the phases of feminism through women's contributions in literature. She says that in the first phase women tried to imitate men while accepting the cultural stereotypes of "feminine nature" (1988, p. 269). Pagano's second phase is one of "protest," and the third phase, in full swing by Virginia Woolf's (1882-1941) writings, is of "producing difference, by insisting on differing" (p. 269).

In her article about feminist methodology, Wanda S. Pillow describes the first wave as a movement for equal rights beginning in the 1800's (2002, p. 13). Pillow pegs her second wave in methodology in the 1960's, several decades after Pagano's literary third phase began. According to Pillow, the

1960's began the "consciousness-raising and personal is political stance" (p. 13). Pillow's article is written fourteen years after Pagano's, which allows a wider vista, but since I see writers and artists as the prophets of our culture, I have no doubt that the feminist arts that Pagano discusses led to, at least indirectly, the feminist methodology in Pillow's academic world.

Linda Nicholson talks about the period "from the late 1960s to the mid-1980s"as a time when feminism "tended to reflect the viewpoints of white, middle-class women of North America and Western Europe" (1990, p. 1). Repenting of this homogeneous viewpoint led to Pillow's third phase in the late 1970's which started a growing recognition of the diversity of voices representing "women." Feminism began to question "who is speaking for whom" and to trouble the power relations within itself by examining practices that mirrored racism, classism, heterosexism, and nationalism of the dominant culture (Pillow, 2002, p. 13).

Sex Relationships

While the phases/waves of feminism show an evolutionary process, they remind me that relationships between "woman" and "man" have been worthy of interest and debate to philosophers since ancient times. In more than 25 years of studying written documents spanning the 2000 years between 750 B.C. and A.D. 1250, historian Prudence Allen found three basic themes or modes of gender relationships which she called *polarity, neutrality,* and *complementarity*. They would seem to simplify or provide a model for the complexity of issues, without losing the sense of the issues. As Jane Flax

says, “Gender relations enter into and are constituent elements in every aspect of human experience.…Gender relations thus have no fixed essence; they vary both within and over time (1990, p. 40). I want to use Prudence Allen’s model here to help begin a discussion on the “Concept of Woman.”

Concept of Woman[2]

> *If her functioning as a female is not enough to define woman, if we decline also to explain her through “the eternal feminine,” and if nevertheless we admit, provisionally, that women do exist, then we must face the question: what is a woman? (Beauvoir, 1952/1989, p. xxi)*

I am not a historian, a biologist, or a philosopher to be taking up the task of answering the question “what is a woman?” as Simone de Beauvoir tried to do in her nearly 800 page book entitled *The Second Sex*. However, I think it behooves us at this point not to take for granted the “Concept of Woman” and its importance in this study. This research has, perhaps unwittingly and unwillingly at first, stepped into the ancient and current conversations about what manner of being is Woman. The debate has raged in a formal way, often with tragic results, since the beginning of Euro-western philosophy and philosophers.[3] Do the outward and visible signs of

---

[2] The title of a book by historian Sister Prudence Allen, R.S.M., *The Concept of Woman, The Aristotelian Revolution, 750 B.C. – A.D. 1250*.

[3] This is not only an issue of the Western world, obviously, nor am I saying that the West is worst. This study happens to be situated in the Western world and recognizes the influence of Western thought on its participants.

difference in sex organs, body style, and childbearing roles cause a difference in abilities, wisdom, and virtues, as well?

> A fact immediately apparent about the human race is that it is divided into two sexes. While there are any number of races, religions, economic classes, and nationalities among human beings, there are only two sexes. Therefore, it is an important philosophical task to determine the precise way in which women and men divide human existence… Is woman opposite to man? If so, what might be the nature of this opposition? Is it a relation of hostility, of indifference, or of fulfillment? (Allen, 1985/1997, p. 9)

> Males and females are two types of individuals which are differentiated within a species for the function of reproduction; they can be defined only correlatively. But first it must be noted that even the division of a species into two sexes is not always clear-cut (De Beauvoir, 1952/1989, p. 4).

To help understand the issues involved in gender identity and relationships, as mentioned above, historian Sister Prudence Allen's model of three philosophical camps found in writings from what she calls *The Aristotelian Revolution*, 750 B.C.-A.D. 1250 will be helpful: polarity, unity/neutrality, and complementarity. She looked at the writings of such notables as Sappho, Heraclitus, Democritus, Protagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Seneca, Philo, Plutarch, Hypatia, Augustine, Hildegard of Bingen, Maimonides, and many more. The debates of these writers centered around several essential questions like: Are the apparent male/female personality differences and behaviors caused by sex chromosomes or social construction (using modern terms for old arguments)? Can a woman (or in reverse polarity, a man) be knowledgeable and wise? Is virtue the same for women and men or is it a woman's virtue just to obey?

Those were ancient questions and conversations, but the issues are the same in this study, I believe, and affect the way we go about being women and men at work. If we think in the way of polarity--as Aristotelian thought affected medicine, theology and law (Allen, p. 469-470)--we will believe that women and men are opposites, not only in body, but in mind and spirit as well. We would be in competition, and one sex would be thought superior to the other in every way. Second, if we are to think about gender in the way of sex-neutrality—as Platonic thought influenced the study of philosophy, mathematics, and logic (Allen, p. 469; Thayer-Bacon, 2000)—we would say that gender makes little or no difference in rationality, but we would ignore or devalue materiality, emotions, imagination, aesthetics, and nature. Third, writings before 1200 AD were found by Allen that reflected a philosophy of complementarity. Hildegard of Bingen was one of the best known proponents of this mode, but she was not alone. They held that the different qualities of the two sexes enhanced and enriched each other such that one needed the other. Differences were not in competition but were appreciated as beneficial to each other.

> Therefore, it can be stated as a general hypothesis that the tendency in sex-unity theories is to devalue the materiality of the person, while the tendency in sex-polarity theories is to give too much value to one particular aspect of the materiality…Sex complementarity seems to avoid these two extremes in its earliest articulation (Allen, p. 4).

According to Prudence Allen, the theory and practices of polarity were institutionalized around 1250 AD when the “important position of the University of Paris and the centrality of Aristotle in its curriculum led to the entrenchment of Aristotelian theory in higher education for centuries”

(1985/1997, p.441). Even in philosophy and mathematics where rationality was seen as unembodied, women became associated with that lower emotional body form (Thayer-Bacon, 2000) and were excluded.

Before 1200 AD, women who felt drawn to academic, judicial, or healing endeavors often chose religious orders to obtain the education and separate themselves from family expectations. With the proliferation of the universities in the western world in which only men were allowed, women were separated from the academic study of and influence in philosophy/mathematics, theology, medicine, and law (pp. 468-473). In the religious communities, men became clergy and women laity. The arguments for complementarity seemed to disappear with the disappearance of the women from the conversations (Allen, 1985/1997). In the world where the public work sphere and the private home sphere were separated by the gender dichotomy, women were relegated to the private realm of home and children (Fletcher, 1999; Thayer-Bacon, 2003).

Phase one of modern feminism, as described by Pagano and Pillow above, seems to recognize and oppose a relationship between the sexes of duality/*polarity* where males were assumed to be opposite and superior to females and were culturally separated by public/private space and behaviors. If females wanted to have a "public" voice, they had to play by "public" rules—"the 'he' whose voice we mimic" (Pagano, 1988, p. 262).

In phase two, women imagined an equality or *neutrality* in relationships in which sex differences shouldn't matter. Neutrality often

meant, however, that women's lives, work and experiences remained unvoiced (Pillow, 2002; Thayer-Bacon, 2003). "What has passed as a gender neutral vocabulary of reason, morality, cognitive development, autonomy, justice, history, theory, progress, and enlightenment is imbued with masculine meaning" (Di Stefano, 1990, p. 64).

The writers/researchers of the third/current phase, with fear and trembling in the face of accusations of essentialism, seem to be looking for a *complementarity* or mutuality in diversity. As feminism deals with power of women, it "leads immediately to the problem of what is meant by 'women'" (Hartsock, 1990, p. 158). Many writers have recognized great problems with a universalized "concept of woman." (Butler, 1990; Di Stefano, 1990; Flax, 1990; Martin, 1994; McWhorter, 2004; Olesen, 2000: Vintges, 2004). The next section will struggle with the issues surrounding the "concept of woman."

Problems with Defining "Woman"

"In short, women have to be defined as women. We are the social opposite, not of a class, a caste, or of a majority, since we are a majority, but of a sex: men" (Kelly-Gadol, 1976, p. 814). What it means to be a "woman" is contested ground. Feminist writers seem to be on a continuum between the postmodern deconstructed concept of woman and some attempt to recognize and define a group of people who are oppressed. Jane Flax, for example, writing on the issue says "None of us can speak for 'woman' because no such person exists except within a specific set of (already

gendered) relations—to 'man' and to many concrete and different women" (1990, p.56). Or Judith Butler says, "It has been quite important…to know what it is we mean [by the category woman]….for we refer not only to women as a social category but also as a felt sense of self" (1990, p. 324). Both Flax and Butler, with others, warn against deconstructing the old categories just to find ourselves creating a new normative location—jumping out of the frying pan into the fire, as it were (Butler, 1990; Di Stefano, 1990; Flax, 1990; Fraser & Nicholson, 1990; hooks, 1994; Lather, 1991).

On the other end of the spectrum are authors who, though not defending essentialism, are more willing to allow that it may be an unintended consequence of the gathering of any group of people—Jane Roland Martin, for example:

> Given that any recognition of the workings of gender is likely to be misunderstood and construed as an acceptance of fixed male and female natures, it is tempting to adopt the Platonic strategy of ignoring gender entirely….That many traits are genderized—that is, are appraised differently by a given culture or society when possessed by males and females—cannot be doubted (1986, p. 9).

Ladelle McWhorter expresses her personal gratitude to feminist practices and fears that destabilizing and decentering the category woman seems like some kind of verbal trick that defines women out of existence. She continues, "If women didn't exist, all kinds of important political issues (abortion, job discrimination, rape) wouldn't exist either" (2004, p. 157). Susan Hickman defends what she calls identity politics as a way to *reveal* "the social constitution of identities," rather than fixing identities. For her "Identity politics emphasizes that identities are created, not given; it is about

challenging the identity we have been assigned and espousing another" (2004, p. 197).

By retaining the category "woman," do we limit opportunities or open them up? The next section will discuss the destabilizing and decentering influence of postmodernism on feminism.

Feminism and Postmodernism

Linda Nicholson, editor of and contributor to an anthology entitled *Feminism/Postmodernism*, provides insight to the relationship between the two: "For some feminists, postmodernism is not only a natural ally but also provides a basis for avoiding the tendency to construct theory that generalizes from the experience of Western, white, middle-class women" (1990, p. 5). And again in a chapter with Nancy Fraser, "a postmodernist reflection on feminist theory reveals disabling vestiges of essentialism while a feminist reflection on postmodernism reveals androcentrism and political naivete" (1990, p. 20). Postmodernists, they say, have critiqued philosophical theories while feminism has engaged in social criticism. In the best case scenario, they can join each other in an integration of their respective strengths (p. 20).

My feminist and postmodern goals for this research are to deconstruct in my tradition the ways in which "women exercise powers or rights to represent reality only as surrogates for men" (Pagano, 1988, p. 253). The postmodern "world as text" metaphor, gives me some tools to make the invisible visible. It sheds light onto the dubious transcendence of the "view

from nowhere, God's eye-view" (Bordo, 1990, p. 142) of my Fathers in the Faith. "Postmodernists have in common with feminists the desire to acknowledge what is different, to recognize what is left out, and to respect what is queer" (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 42). I begin to understand through feminism and postmodernism that knowledge is power, that a knower cannot claim objectivity or epistemic privilege, and that truth is always interpreted within the context of our own personal experience and culture (Code, 1993; Fletcher, 1999; Longino, 1993; Thayer-Bacon, 2000). "Feminist theories, like other forms of postmodernism, should encourage us to tolerate and interpret ambivalence, ambiguity, and multiplicity" (Flax, 1990, p. 56).

With some feminists, however, I resist the postmodern deconstruction of 'self' and 'agency' (Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock, 1997; Di Stefano, 1990; Engel & Thistlethwaite, 2004/1998), even if I agree that 'self' is constantly in process (Bloom, 1996). "Postmodernism's questioning of the concepts of 'self' and 'agency,' just as millions of people around the world are beginning to cry out for selfhood and historical agency, needs to be confronted" (Engel & Thistlethwaite, 1998/2004, p. 6). Linda Nicholson in her Introduction to *Feminism/Postmodernism* says that perhaps men of Enlightenment can afford a "decentered self and a humbleness regarding the coherence and

truth of their claims" (1990, p. 6). I, my Self, am just getting the hang of this female self and agency.[4]

Choosing a Position

With so many facets to a problem, I find myself in the quandary of right action. I have problematized *womanhood,* after all. I discovered I was part of a movement, a *zeitgeist*, or perhaps a booksellers' sales campaign, carrying me away from an individualized self-reflection toward a more relational paradigm in what was being called a "women's way" by many authors (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986/1997; Gilligan, 1982/1993; Goldberger, Tarule, Clinchy & Belenky, 1996; Miller, 1986; Woodman, 1993). While fearing that *woman* and *gender* are essentialist categories, I welcome Jane Roland Martin's pragmatic approach:

> In other words, the use of any general term be it chair, dog, virtue, mother, family, male dominance, or women's subordination, easily can give rise to the very consequence that feminist scholars have attributed to essence talk. But this, in turn, is to say that the masking of difference or diversity is built into language itself (1994, p. 635).

As I identify myself as a woman and gather with other women, there is a danger of re-reifying identities. Zillah Eisenstein, author of *The Color of*

---

[4] Before sounding too sanctimonious and victimized here, I realize that postmodernism and multiculturalism confront me as the privileged in my middle-class white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant position. I too need to listen to the Other with humility.

Gender, also guides me here in what she says about diversity within gender, "As long as one remembers that no view of gender is total and complete, it is important to call political attention to it. However differentiated gender may be, gender oppression exists" (1994, p. 8).

My research is about drawing attention to gendered experiences in the public work world. This is advocacy research, even as Patti Lather quips that advocacy research "remains an oxymoron to the many who take scholarly objectivity as both a possible and desirable goal" (1991, p. 155). Jane Flax encourages me too when she says that "by studying gender we hope to gain a critical distance [that] can help clear a space in which reevaluating and altering our existing gender arrangements may become more possible" (1990, p. 40). In the next section, I will discuss *participatory inquiry* to this end.

Participatory Inquiry

In a frustrating and futile attempt to find right action, one can become bogged in a postmodern mire of discourse. No action seems worthy. No point of view can have value over another. Because there is value in action, I choose to espouse a participatory worldview described by Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury as:

> . . . .systemic, holistic, relational, feminine, experiential, but its defining characteristic is that it is participatory: our world does not consist of separate things but of relationships which we co-author. We participate in our world, so that the 'reality' we experience is a co-creation that involves the primal givenness of the cosmos and human feeling and construing . . . . as we participate in creating our world we are already embodied and breathing beings *who are necessarily*

> *acting*—and this draws us to consider how to judge the *quality* of our acting (2001, p. 6-7).

I'll discuss the "relational," "feminine," and "necessarily acting" qualities from Reason and Bradbury"s description of a participatory worldview in more detail:

Relational

Unlike the company president's encouragement of competitive self-enhancement in my first engineering job, I see relationships of mutuality and collaboration as good for the company. Like Nel Noddings, I consider "relations, not individuals, [as] ontologically basic. . . . [I value] 'caring'. . .as a virtue, as an attribute or disposition frequently exercised by a moral agent (2003/1984, p. xiii)." I believe that 'caring' relationships are good for the company/organization and good for the individuals within it. Beyond any company, caring is also good for our universal web of existence.

From a *relational epistemology* perspective, as conceived by Barbara Thayer-Bacon, "knowledge [is] something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other" (2000, p. 2). The knower and the known cannot be separated from each other or from their context.

Feminine

A worldview that is feminine brings to the world the strengths of feminine/private/home qualities that Reason and Bradbury describe as: systemic, holistic, relational, experiential, embodied, and participatory. It

means having a sex-complementarity/mutuality vision of relationship between females and males, masculine and feminine qualities (in whatever person these qualities appear). Differences do not mean inequality. One does not seek to oppress, suppress, or destroy the other.

Necessarily Acting

Knowledge of reality, or what is held as "truth" by a community, is continually evolving, being socially constructed (Berger & Luckman, 1966). We are not just involved in the co-construction of reality; we are involved in the co-creation of our world. As my favorite engineering professor used to say when we left the gravitational factor out of our equations, "Gravity is not just a good idea, it is a Law." That is to say that in this participatory worldview, there is a "primal givenness to the cosmos." If the pull of gravity is not real, at least for now, then the word "real" means nothing.

Simply by being, we influence the cosmos as in the butterfly effect. But we also have choices about the quality of our influence. "Not to decide is to decide," we used to say in our 60's fervor. No matter how postmodernly deconstructed our foundations become, "we are beings who *are necessarily acting*" (from quote above by Reason and Bradbury). Not to act is to act. And our action has quality. "Without feminist political actions, theories remain inadequate and ineffectual (Flax, 1990, p. 40).

So I move toward my goal of feminist participatory inquiry with action as an outcome. In order to achieve that goal, I will rely on the power of collaborative learning as a vehicle. Collaborative learning is a tool used to

make participatory inquiry possible. It is about people creating new knowledge by being in thoughtful dialogue with each other. In the next section I will discuss the nature of collaborative learning.

Collaborative Learning

Collaborative learning is a method for achieving participatory inquiry and for practicing a relational epistemology. Relational epistemology is described by Barbara Thayer-Bacon as "a social feminist perspective calling for active engagement, aiming at democratic inclusion, joining theory with praxis, striving for awareness of context and values, tolerating vagueness and ambiguities" (2003, p. 9)

Collaborative learning is the co-constructing of knowledge by two or more people. The group has an "intent to construct new meaning together" (Peters, 1997, p. 67). Collaborative learning assumes that knowledge can be/is *constructed* not just *discovered*. Through the connection and dialogue of the participants, members are energized, knowledge is constructed, and the outcome is greater than the sum of its parts—greater than, and perhaps different from, the original intent/imagining (Armstrong & Peters, 2000). "*Who* (emphasis is Addelson's) makes knowledge makes a difference. Making knowledge is a political act" (Addelson, 1993, p. 267).

Collaborative learning is neither individual learning (though individuals will learn) nor follow-the-leader learning (though there will be a leader of a type). It is group learning and requires a different kind of leadership. "Groups led by a guide are different from groups led by an authority. The

authoritative voice is no longer held by only one person; it is lodged in the discourse" (Tarule, 1996, p. 293).

Moving toward Research Methods

Using the foundational literature and methodology as described in this chapter, I have chosen Participatory Action Research (PAR) as my research method. Chapter Three will describe PAR as a method and explain the research process in detail. It will also tell about data collection, and since PAR does not have its own method for data analysis, it will explain how analysis was done using a phenomenological method.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Based on the research methodologies described in Chapter Two as feminist theory, participatory inquiry, and collaborative learning, I chose Participatory Action Research (PAR) as the research method to pursue my research questions. This chapter will describe PAR as a research method and then explain the research process in detail.

Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a form of critical qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Merriam, 2002b; Park, 2001). It "focuses upon the political empowerment of people through group participation in the search for and acquisition of knowledge and subsequent action to change the status quo" (Merriam, 2002b, p. 10). Peter Park calls it action-oriented "research of the people, by the people, and for the people" (2001, p. 81). It is initiated from among the people, planned and carried out by the people, and acted out for the people's good and improvement. Or as Handel Wright says, "action research is any research that is undertaken for immediate, localized application and utility" (2002/2003, p. 12). Action research, in it's various forms, "assumes that people learn best when they work together and are focused on real problems that impact their work or community" (Ziegler, 2001, p. 3).

The Feminist Critical Research Component

I wanted to explore my research questions with a group of women using Participatory Action Research. What makes participatory action research from the array of qualitative research traditions particularly fit for the study of the practice of womanhood? Our practice of womanhood is "political," i.e. it is "socially and historically constituted, and [can be] reconstituted by human agency and social action" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 576). The practice of womanhood in the public sphere has both "objective (externally given) and subjective (internally understood and interpreted) aspects" (p. 578). It was my intent that, in collaboration with a group of female co-participants, our practice of womanhood would become praxis as we made "explicit connections across the dimensions of 'objective' and 'subjective,' [across] the focus on the individual and the focus on the social, [across] the aspects of structure and agency, and [across] the connections between the past and the future" (p. 579). In the way of feminist critical research (hooks, 1994; Lather, 1992; Merriam, 2002b; Olesen, 2000; Pillow, 2002; Reinharz, 1992) then, we would be questioning and critiquing "the societal, historical, and cultural assumptions about women that have resulted in [our] marginal status" in the world of work (Merriam, 2002b, p. 10).

Action research comes out of a desire to change/improve one's own practice with a group of participants, for example, teaching adults. In her article called "Improving Practice Through Action Research," Mary Ziegler

points out that over time "action research has expanded to include a broad array of action inquiry technologies, making it difficult to provide a simple definition" (2001, p. 3). I am choosing to make a distinction between the action research that is "a powerful tool for continuing professional education" (p. 3) and participatory action research (PAR), which is political action research, even though at times the terms appear to be used interchangeably in much of the literature. In PAR, like in other forms of action research, the action develops out of the collaborative learning of the participants as both individual change and social change, but PAR has the emancipatory component of critical research which openly recognizes and contests the connection between privilege, power, and knowledge (Borda, 2001; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000; Maguire, 2001; Merriam, 2002b; Park, 2001; Quigley & Kuhne, 1997; Treleaven, 2001; Wright, 2002/2003). For PAR then, the question becomes "Is the research really about social improvement, or is it only about efficiency, with basic values unquestioned? (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 567).

In the quest for social improvement, a feminist research group would "trouble," in the postmodern way, accepted practices, roles, job descriptions, hierarchies, generalizations, and dichotomies; especially gendered dichotomies like public/private, emotional/rational, mind/body, masculine/feminine, task-oriented/people-oriented, work/home (Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock, 1997; Fletcher, 1999; hooks, 1994; Merriam, 2002b; Thayer-Bacon, 2003). However, as Denzin and Lincoln ask of postmodern

research “Is it possible to effect change in the world if society is only and always a text?” (2000, p. 17). PAR is one way to go beyond text. Through PAR we can tell “the story through several voices and from several perspectives” (p. 11). PAR, like all forms of action research, is about planning action for the purpose of change.

One Out of Many

Because I would be trying neither to prove a hypothesis deductively nor measure a phenomenon from a positivist perspective, I have chosen qualitative research over quantitative research in order to explore the research questions. Qualitative research comes in many sizes and shapes, however. As Wright says, “Qualitative research is not singular” (2002, p. 9). He joins other qualitative researchers and authors in attempting to describe the scope and breadth of the various qualitative research traditions (Cresswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Merriam, 2002b).

Neither the case study tradition nor ethnographic tradition nor the biographic research tradition fit my research goals. Even though I was indirectly interested in lives and culture, all three require the researcher to stand apart from the client/respondent/informant for observations, interviews, and artifact analysis in order to learn about “their” case or culture or life. I would have been studying womanhood in “them” not in “us.”

> Unlike third-person procedures, which yield a psychology of strangers, and first-person procedures, which yield a psychology of solitary individuals, dialogic methods encourage the self and the other (the I and the You) to clarify for each other the meaning of their dialogue as it unfolds between them (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997, p. 29).

Collaboration Is Key and Dialogue Is Data

Participatory action research is a dialogic method where meaning is constructed in the dialogue. Collaborative learning is a tool used by a group in the creation of knowledge about the issues of politics and power from the margins. This study is not about the case or the culture or the life, per se, but about the experience of women from their perspectives who have worked in male-dominated professions, as a phenomenon (Creswell, 1998). This collaborative, dialogic process would be recorded and used as data from the group. The group data would be analyzed in a phenomenological way for meaning units and themes, instead of coded as in other qualitative traditions. I agreed with Berger and Luckmann (1966) at this point, "The method we consider best suited to clarify the foundations of knowledge in everyday life is that of phenomenological analysis" (p. 20). But this is not a phenomenological study. It would be important to understand the essence of our experiences, as in phenomenology, but the stories would also become the grist for participatory action. Participatory action research does not have traditions of its own for data gathering and analysis so it would be necessary to borrow from other traditions for these purposes, specifically from phenomenological and interpretive qualitative research.

Words of the participants would be used as themes in the phenomenological way in order to tell the story. It was not my intention to

end with a theory as the product, but with understanding and action and change.

The Research Process

After the topic was identified, the methodology was established, and the method of research chosen, it was time to recruit participants. This section will discuss recruiting participants, beginning the meetings, research steps, data collection and analysis, describing-planning-acting-reflecting, and questions of validity and rigor.

Recruiting the Participants

> *If younger women have a problem [with the feminist label], it's only that they don't know yet that there's a problem. The kind of radicalization that happened to my generation when we tried to get a job happens to them 10 or 15 years into the job, when they fail to get promoted. Women tend to be conservative in youth and get more radical as they get older because they lose power with age. So if a young woman is not a feminist, I say just wait* (Gloria Steinem in an interview reported in *Time Magazine,* April 5, 2004*).*

I chose to identify women over 40 as my target group before this Steinem quote appeared, but it speaks to the findings of research done by J. Elaine Seat called *Women Engineers: Expectations and Perceptions* (1996, p. 138). Her study found an increase in engineering women's sense of alienation at age 35. It confirmed my own sense that women were not so aware of institutionalized marginalization until later in their careers. I advertised by email and personal invitation for women over 40 who were working in male-dominated professions. The group of women, which included me, was made up of friends, friends of friends, names on email lists,

and/or fellow students. The women who chose to participate were self-selected using the following invitation:

An Invitation to Become a Participant in a Collaborative Learning Circle for Women

- Are you a woman who is at least 40 years old and has worked in a traditionally male-dominated profession/career/job?
- Have you worked hard to create a place for yourself and be respected in your field but somehow still feel that your "femaleness" is/has been a problem?
- Have you become aware that you have/had defined yourself by the prevailing, male-based "desirable" human qualities (like rational, objective, independent, cost effective, competitive), which you now find don't always fit?
- Have you felt that you have/had hidden or lost a significant part of your "Self" that might be described by traditional feminine qualities (like relational, empathetic, intuitive, adaptable, inclusive, caring) because they were discounted/devalued by your profession?
- Have you noticed that achievement in your field has been described as an individual phenomenon (in a competitive environment) so that relational and support activities have been devalued and ignored?

If you can identify with **most** of the statements above and would be willing to be part of a collaborative learning circle of 7-9 women who will form around the experience of creating something new to replace alienation from our Selves as women and from our professions, please contact [me].

The group that gathered included 2 engineers, a college professor, an engineer/college professor, a geologist, an administrative assistant with an English degree working in an engineering firm, a protestant minister, a college administrator, a television producer. All nine of the women could not be at every meeting, but all are represented in the story created from the

first five group meetings. Regrettably, the participants were all White women, even though the invitation was open. One Black woman was intentionally recruited but had too many commitments to participate. The administrative assistant volunteered to be part of the group and fit all the criteria of the invitation because she was working in a male-dominated office. She became a faithful and valuable member of the group. She provided a view from a different side of the "margin." In spite of the difference in her career path, she shared the experience of having her work even more "disappeared" by the traditional work world.

I began as the organizer and facilitator of the group but quickly moved to a more member-like role as the group became self-propelling. Even though I monitored throughout the task-like focus of the participatory action research, the group process evolved on its own as well.

Beginning to Meet

We met on Tuesday nights in a home setting, and the women were asked to make an 8-10 week commitment. At the first meeting, March 29, 2004, the purpose of the group as a participatory action research group was explored and the basics of collaborative learning dialogue were discussed.

The group that was formed functioned as a collaborative learning group, much as a Study Circle or a Women's Circle. Jungian analyst and author, Jean Shinoda Bolen says "Women as a gender have a natural talent for [Circles]. The circle is an archetypal form that feels familiar to the psyches of most women. It's personal and egalitarian….it enhances

collaborative undertakings and brings people who work together emotionally closer" (1999, p. 6). Perhaps this is an essentialist statement unworthy of a postmodern deconstruction of gender characteristics,[1] but it also represents an appreciation of the private, Home ways of historical women as several feminist writers have done (Belenky, Bond, & Weinstock, 1997; Miller, 1986; Noddings, 2002; Tarule, 1996).

At the second meeting, April 3, we began to share critical incidences[2] of "a personal experience that stands out for you as a time when you realized that being a woman in your career meant 'acting like a man'?" The question evolved as we talked more into "When have you felt marginalized because you are a woman in a traditionally male workplace?"

The Research Steps

One of the qualities that distinguishes action research, in general, and therefore participatory action research, from other research traditions is an iterative process of steps based on some form of planning, acting, observing,

---

[1] See the discussion of this issue in Chapter Two of this study.

[2] "Critical Incident" is a brief description by a participant of a certain kind of significant event (Brookfield, 1990). In this case, the critical incident is about a time when we had a sense of being marginalized in our profession because we were women, not men. It is discussed more fully in Chapter Two under Research Methodology.

and evaluating (McTaggart, 1991). Those steps were later neatly shortened to **P**lan, **A**ct and observe, and **R**eflect at some point by Kemmis and McTaggart (1995) to match the PAR acronym, I suppose. Other authors have different terms for the cycling steps and different numbers of steps, as many as six or eight steps (Dick, 1993; Jarvis, 1998; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Kuhne & Quigley, 1997; McNiff, 1988; Peters, 1994, Ziegler, 2001). When the research gets to the reflection stage in all of the schemes, a new plan for action is formulated and the cycle begins again. It is a journey of learning and changing, changing and learning.

Inspired by John Peters' model (1994; personal communication, 2001), I have added a *Describe* step to the Plan-Act-Reflect loop of Kemmis and McTaggart above. *Describe* is more than Plan and needs to precede it, for describing is about problematizing and analyzing the topic, as well as, gathering and organizing information. Before the group ever met, I had chosen and researched the topic. The *describe* step was enacted in this study then by each woman in the group telling her story of marginalization. In that way, there became a groupness to our experiences. Each experience became *our* collective experience. The narratives served to describe commonalities of the group so that the action could then be planned/designed.

The group, in the tradition of participatory action research, moved through the describe-plan-act-reflect cycle. As Ziegler observes, "Although these steps are described in a linear fashion, in practice they are much more

like busy intersections, each crossing over the path of the next" (2001, p. 4). The group meetings were recorded and the stories became the data.

Data Collection and Analysis

Transcripts were made from tapes of the group-meeting storytelling and dialogue. The richness of the data was evident immediately. As noted by Elizabeth Allan and Mary Madden in their research with women undergraduates, "…groups have the potential to produce rich, in-depth data about the questions at the center of an investigation…the conversational style enables women to share stories they may have previously thought unimportant or irrelevant. . ."(2006, p. 706).

Chapter Four will be a phenomenological description of the experiences told by the PAR group. This analysis was not done by the PAR group but was done in the year after the PAR group finished meeting. It was done by three different interpretive groups who were experienced in the hermeneutical style adopted at the University of Tennessee. The three different groups helped with different stages of the interpretation. The first group read transcripts and began to identify meaning units. The second group hashed out thematic structure. And the third group, a group that has met for years, helped check the sense of the thematic structure. It was a more in-depth analysis than the PAR group had the time or inclination to do, but the data was too lush to let go without more attention.

As in the tradition of this style, meaning units were identified by reading the transcripts aloud in a group. Then themes began to emerge.

Theme is defined by Thomas and Pollio as “patterns of description that repetitively recur as important aspects of a participant’s description of his/her experience” (2002, p. 37). General themes were clustered from all of the transcripts, the five weeks of storytelling, in an attempt to derive meaning and understanding of the experience (Pollio, Henley, & Thomas, 1997; Thomas & Pollio, 2002).

The participatory action research work was done by the group and ended with an action. Data was analyzed by the PAR group in a more informal fashion, more from memory than from reading transcripts line by line. We had all been there to hear the stories, and, in the collaborative learning way, we had shared memories. The next section will describe the work of the PAR group.

Describe-Plan-Act-Reflect

The PAR group met ten times. The first five meetings were about telling the stories. In order to plan the action, the story had to be told; the problem had to be described. The stories were recorded as they were told. The second five meetings happened almost nine months later after I returned from the netherworld of cancer surgery and chemo-therapy. They were about planning our action, doing our action, and then reflecting. Only four of the women were able to reconvene at that time.

Participatory Action Research is about action. Four of us met for the second five-week period to plan, act, and reflect. Our first week back was mostly about remembering and catching up. Transcripts were shared with

everyone, but they were long and tedious to read so they were just referred to for clarification.

The task of coming up with an action plan was our goal. We brainstormed ideas for action as follows:

- A *Vagina Monologues*[3] type drama
- Poetic or artistic expression of experiences
- Deeper analyzing of structures and themes
- Discussion of a book or movie
- Strategizing together how to speak out about the "important things"
- Share where we have been successful in the environment and learn from each other

Our imaginations were caught by the *Vagina Monologues* idea--probably because of the subject and some of our members had just seen it at the theatre. Telling our story in our own voices is a type of resistance in the way of PAR because of the renaming and revisioning that happens. Joyce Fletcher describes resistance as disrupting or deconstructing the discourse to "challenge implicit dichotomies, reveal suppressed contradictions, and call attention to what has been obscured or made invisible" (1999, p. 23). In this "discursive space," we were able to resist dominant meanings and create

[3] *Vagina Monologues* is Eve Ensler's Obie-award-winning play in the spirit of feminist critical research. Her goal is consciousness-raising for the purpose of ending violence against women and girls around the world.

new ones. For example, there is a whole section on trouble with clothing. No one realized how important the issue was until it came up and drew such a response from everyone. "Power suits" turned into "costumes" and "straight jackets."

The resulting reader's theatre-type drama called "Scenes from the Margins" will appear in Chapter Five. We designed our drama in Scenes representing the themes we arrived at from scanning the transcripts but mostly from our memories of the first five weeks. You could call them "collaborative memories." The group decided to story-board the themes, combining them where appropriate, and then to write a Scene for each broad theme. The writing happened sometimes individually, sometimes collaboratively, and sometimes using the transcripts of actual stories told by the group so that absent members were represented.

The Scenes were read aloud and put together as they made sense to us. We performed/read it together at our last meeting. The ten weeks were up, and everyone needed to move on. We agreed that some additional scenes and editing needed to be done which were mostly completed by me. I have checked them out with the other participants by email. Some of us are still in touch. The action was culminated by a reading of the drama in the defense meeting for this dissertation.

Questions of Validity and Rigor

Postmodernism has created a "crisis of legitimization" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Merriam,

2002a; Wright, 2002/2003). As Handel Wright writes, "the traditional criteria that qualitative researchers had always used to evaluate how rigorous and successful a study was, validity, generalizability and reliability [have now been] challenged" (2002/2003, p. 11). There are some guidelines for determining the quality and rigor of qualitative research, however, that can be applied to PAR and should be applied to my phenomenological interpretation of the data. In this section I will discuss how I have designed rigor into this study. I will specifically talk about validity, reliability, generalizability, and finally ethics as they have been applied to qualitative research.

Concerning validity

Because postmodern research no longer recognizes an objective "reality" for data to correspond with, validity is accounted for differently. For "internal validity," Merriam recommends three strategies that can be applied here: (a) situating the research by revealing the researcher's position involving "assumptions, experiences, worldview and theoretical orientation to the study" (2002a, p. 26); (b) using multiple researchers for collaboration in research; and (c) checking interpretations with participants. *The Story* section of the Introduction to this study covers my assumptions and experiences. The *Research Methodology* section in Chapter Two covers my worldview and theoretical orientations. Selecting PAR as a research method has been discussed in depth at the beginning of this chapter. Collaboration and checking interpretations are inherent in PAR. Merriam says "In

participatory research, where the goal of the research is political empowerment, the participants along with the researcher collectively define the problem to be addressed, conduct the study, and engage in collective action to bring about change" (2002b, p. 25).

Concerning reliability

Reliability, meaning "identical replication, the hallmark of laboratory and survey research, is not possible or desirable in dialogic research" (Thomas & Pollio, 2002, p. 39). One might ask of a qualitative study whether it is relevant and insightful, however. Lincoln and Guba recommend that for interpretive rigor, the researchers ask, "Can our cocreated constructions be trusted to provide some purchase on some important human phenomenon?" (2000, p. 179). For this study "interpretive rigor" was not required for PAR action, but it was required and provided during the phenomenological interpretation of the story data, the results related in Chapter Four. Rigor was provided by using three different experienced, interpretive groups for the data analysis and thematizing process as described above.

Concerning generalizability

Generalizability applied to quantitative research means that findings from a random sample should be able to be applied to a broader population. Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) state that in "participatory action research, the researchers make sacrifices in methodological and technical rigor in

exchange for more immediate gains in face validity: whether the evidence they collect makes sense *to them, in their contexts*" (p. 591). What one might hope for is "reader or user generalizability" in which a reader or user might find application to their own situation in a "case-to-case transfer" (Merriam, 2002a, pp 28-29). To that end, I have tried to provide "rich, thick description" (p. 29) in the narrative.

Concerning ethics

"A 'good' qualitative study is one that has been conducted in an ethical manner" (Merriam, 2002a, p. 29). Trustworthiness of the data is an ethical issue. It is established by a good audit trail or detailed reporting of the research process which I have attempted to provide. Other ethical issues for PAR would be a) allowing all voices to be heard, b) practicing mutuality and reciprocity in the researcher-participant relationships, c) ensuring confidentiality, and d) telling the truth as it is known.

In this study, there were two issues in which a decision had to be made in the most ethical way possible. First was when I had to take the break for surgery and chemo. I had to think about what was best for the participants, including me, and if the study could still be a valid one after a nine-month break. Our PAR group met for the fifth meeting, in which the last stories were told, before I went home to have surgery. (Home was across the state.) I told the group what was happening to me and asked if they would be willing to gather again when I could come back. In the way of a supportive community, they surrounded me with love and hope and agreed

to pick up where we left off, at the point of planning the action, when I was "well." I think it worked just fine for the PAR research even though several participants had life changes of their own that made it impossible for them to make it back to the group.

The second ethical issue has to do with confidentiality versus the audit trail of the data. Since several of the participants in our PAR circle are well known in the academic community where this report will be presented, I not only have not used real names, I have not used consistent pseudonyms that would make it possible to put quotes together in a way to guess who said them. I've only used pseudonyms where there is dialogue to make the different speakers clear, otherwise the quotes appear without pseudonyms at all. That makes it harder for readers to attach quotes to a personality, but it is intentional for just that reason.

In Summary

Pollio et al., in their discussion on the validity of phenomenological studies, suggest that both "methodological concerns" (rigor and appropriateness) and "experiential concerns" (plausibility and illumination) are important to the quality of the research. "Well-executed qualitative procedures that do not generate meaningful results are technique without soul. Brilliant interpretation may have value, but one needs to be convinced of the evidence" (1997, pp. 55-56). Hopefully this study has both "soul" and "convincing evidence." In the end Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) suggest that the quality of participatory action research be judged in terms of its

purpose: “the extent to which it contributes to confronting and overcoming irrationality, injustice, alienation, and suffering, both in the research setting and more generally in terms of its broader consequences” (p. 593).

Moving to the Story

This study, done by our participatory circle of women from male-dominated professions, goes beyond my own gently reared, southern, white female personal maladaptation to the competitive world of business. It seeks to tell the stories of a group of women in order to “raise consciousness” and to do action in order to “correct the consequences” of gender bias (see Hopkins quote beginning Chapter Two). Chapter Four will look at the data through a phenomenological analysis for meaning and shared essence in the experiences identified by the circle of women who met for PAR.

CHAPTER FOUR

TELLING THE STORY

> **"One day a picture came to me of a fish flopping around on the sand at a beach. I was seeing through the fish's eyes. I could see legs in pants standing over me, and a harsh voice was saying to me, 'You just haven't tried hard enough to adapt to your environment.'"** (Bold print in quotation marks indicates words of a participant.)

The dream of the fish on the sand that opens this chapter was the beginning of my own personal recognition that there was something wrong with the corporate environment I was in and not just me. I had come to realize that no manner of trying or working on my part could change the fact that I was "a fish flopping around on the sand." My maladaptation was that basic to the creature I was. Where I thought I was a lone misfit, however, I discovered that I had a significant sisterhood of women who had experienced much the same sense of alienation. As our Participatory Action Research (PAR) circle of women from male-dominated professions began to tell our stories together, we discovered some commonalities. Our lives had developed almost in what could be described as stages in much the same process.

There are five of these stage-like themes, not unlike the five constructs in *Women's Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986/1997). The researchers in Women's Ways of Knowing found five stage-like themes from their longitudinal data collected from interviews with young women: Silence, Received Knowing, Subjective Knowing,

Procedural Knowing, and Constructed Knowing. These themes represented a journey of "the development of self, voice, and mind" (1986/1997, subtitle).

In the story we are telling here, all of us as women had successfully developed what looked like a public voice and the skills of independent, critical thinking. But had we? Our journey too seemed to be one of "the development of self, voice, and mind." It is a journey of breaking out of first one mold--the cultural stereotype of a woman's role--and then a second mold--the cultural stereotype of doing a man's job in a man's way.

> Feminist critiques reveal that this alleged neutrality [by philosophers, in this case] masks a bias in favor of institutionalizing stereotypical masculine values into the fabric of the discipline—its methods, norms, and contents. In so doing, it suppresses values, styles, problems, and concerns stereotypically associated with femininity (Code, 1991, p. 26).

The themes found from the analysis of the data by experienced interpretive groups described our journey out of molds in the following way:

- Woman as Non-man***—"I wanted legs"***
  - Subtheme 1: ***"Oh no, Honey, you can't be a missionary. You want to marry one"***
  - Subtheme 2: ***"So I could run with the boys"***
- Alien Environment***—"Why can't you just try harder?"***
- Response to Environment***—"Turn into a Weak Man***"
  - Subtheme 1: ***"I was uncomfortable in the costume"***
  - Subtheme 2: ***"Almost too Big a Rock to be Turned"***

- Awareness**—*"When everything changed*"
  - Subtheme 1: ***"Suddenly began to wake"***
  - Subtheme 2: ***"So that was the beginning of the end"***
- Practice of Womanhood**—*"You can find a different way"***

Participants' words, the themes, are in bold print; the categories precede the theme and are not bold. The names of the participants have been changed to protect anonymity; and the pseudonyms that are used only for dialogue are not consistent throughout for the sake of local confidentiality (see Ethics in Ch 3).

Figure 1 (below) shows a schematic of this process entitled ***Journey out of Molds***. In the way of engineers, this schematic has an 'x' and 'y' axis to show change over time. The x-axis provides a progression from where we all start as "culturally constructed" beings in our sea of culture. It shows a movement toward "praxis" or reflective practice.

The y-axis has movement in both directions: away from 'Woman' toward 'Anti-Woman' and back toward 'Woman.' The graphic uses a combination of categories and themes to represent the journey. The left side of the schematic shows our beginning as culturally constructed females, "Woman as 'Non-Man'". We travel following the arrow through an "Alien Environment" to become a "Woman as 'Weak Man,' a position of Anti-Woman. We then follow the arrow through "Awareness" toward an

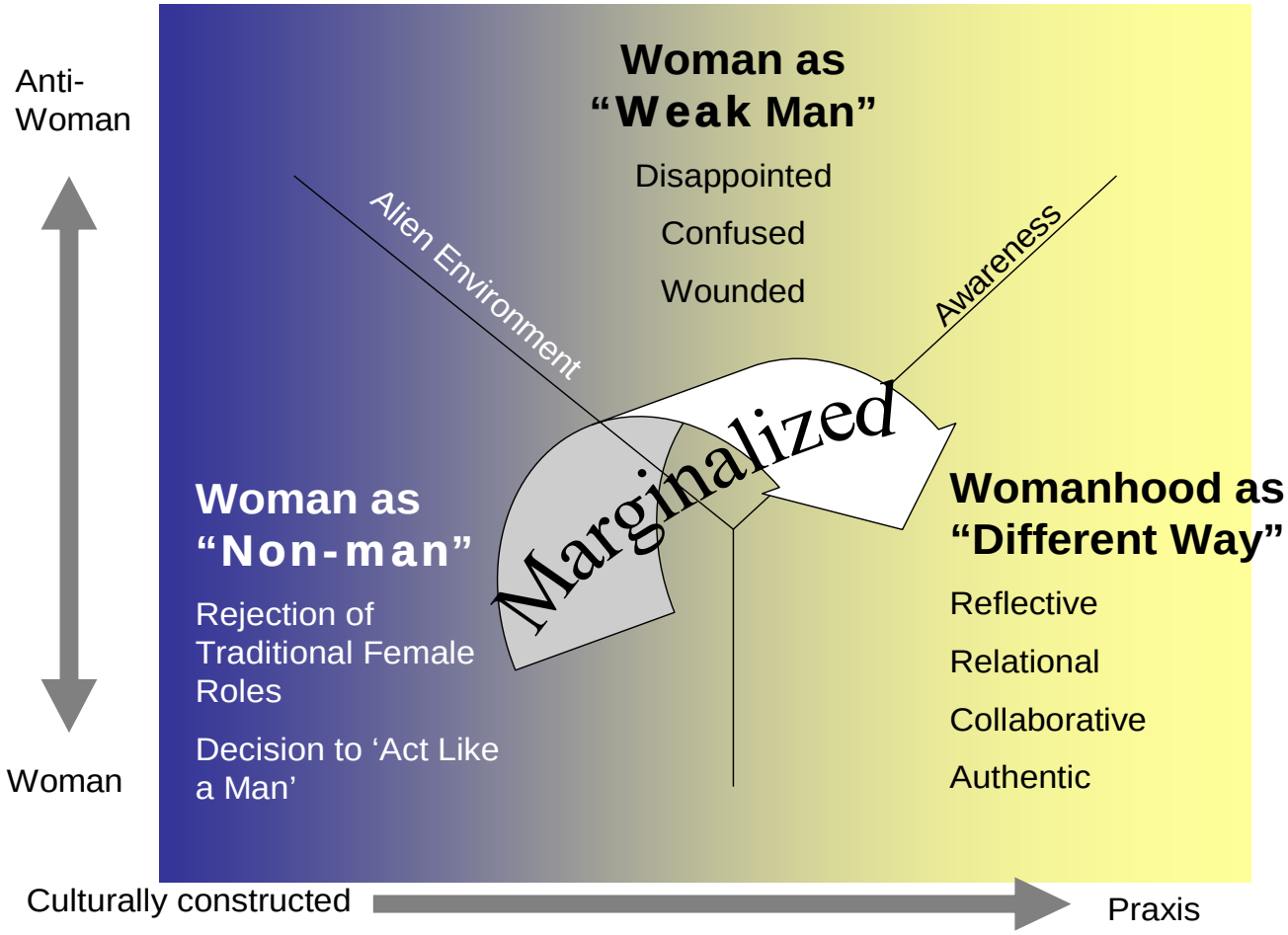


Figure 1: Journey Out of Molds

appreciation of Woman again and a Praxis of "Womanhood as 'Different Way'." The background or ground is "Marginalized." It represents being marginalized as women in a male-dominated environment.

Themes

Woman as Non-Man: ***"I wanted legs"***

This theme represents how we, as women, chose male-dominated professions in the first place. We had a sense that, as children or young adult women, we weren't like other women and didn't want to be.

> **"I didn't fit in [with the other church women my age, but finally I realized I didn't want to fit. I didn't want to wear jumpers. I didn't want to stay home with my child who I loved very, very much, …. So it was so freeing when I realized I didn't have to be like these other women."**

In our "reality," there was only "Man" (a person who does all the fun and important things in the world) and "Non-Man" ("other" as Simone de Beauvoir (1949) described woman). "Yeah, [men] got to have all the fun."

> **Karen: Going back to your fish on the sand metaphor. How did you end up on the sand? Didn't you want to be on the beach?**
>
> **Minerva: I didn't know I was a fish and I didn't know it was sand. I wanted legs, so to speak. Like the Little Mermaid.**
>
> **Karen: You wanted to be the "legs" in your vision, you mean?**
>
> **Minerva: No, *I wanted to have legs*. I'm using legs to mean active, the ability to move, to be mobile. I saw women's roles as passive, as not having legs. …I wanted to be able to accomplish things, to do action, to be able to move about under my own steam.**

For most of us, like the Silent women in Women's Ways of Knowing, the gender schema was that "men are active and get things done, while women are passive and incompetent" (Belenchy et al., 1986/1996, p. 29).

Under this theme, the interpretive group found two subthemes as follows:

Subtheme1: **"Oh no, Honey, you can't be a missionary. You want to marry one."**

This Subtheme is about how we were carefully taught what we, as females, should and shouldn't do—our proper place in the world, as it were. There is what first philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1949) and then theologian Mary Daly (1968/1986) call "The Second Sex," what psychotherapist Anne Wilson Schaef calls "The Original Sin of Being Born Female" (1981/1992), and what writer Sue Monk Kidd calls "The Feminine Wound" (1996). Schaef says "To be born female in this culture means that you are born 'tainted,' that there is something intrinsically wrong with you that you can never change; that your birthright is one of innate inferiority" (1981/1992, p. 33).

Just stepping out of the roles that were ascribed to us was not an easy matter either. It caused conflict in us and in others when we attempted to resist or change things. "It was like the whole world was in me going, 'Not this! No, you can't do that.'" Berger and Luckmann would describe this role rebellion as "unsuccessful socialization" that "will introduce tensions and unrest into the social structure, threatening the institutional programs and

their taken-for-granted reality" (1966, p. 172). We were rejecting our culturally constructed reality and looking for another reality. We told this story in the following vignettes:

> **"Yeah, when I was about 10 I got inspired by some sermon at the church we were going to at the time and I decided I was bound and determined I was gonna be a missionary right then and there. Told my [kindergarten teacher] at church and she said, "*Oh no Honey. You can't be a missionary. You want to marry one."***
>
> **"I had a youth minister tell me, not that I wanted be a minister, but that I needed to be a preacher's wife because I was so active in the church."**
>
> **"[My husband] liked [cooking]! So when we got married and you know the first time he said, "I'm gonna cook dinner. You go study." … "Oh, gosh." It was like the whole world was in me going, "Not this! No, you can't do that. You're supposed be in there. He's supposed to be in here. You go in there and do that and you be good at that." And I'm just having all this terrible conflict."**
>
> **"We would get to these parties and here would be, you know, Mrs. America homemaker with her perfect clothing and wear all these jumpers. Well I tried to get a jumper (laughing) and I didn't like the way I looked…I didn't fit in [with the other church women my age] but finally I realized I didn't want to fit."**
>
> **"Yeah, [men] got to have all the fun."**
>
> **"That's right. You know after dinner they weren't the ones that got up and went and washed dishes….They sat around the table and talked and that really aggravated me."**
>
> **"I didn't want to come eat lunch with this group of women because all they were gonna do is sit around and yak, and I didn't want to yak. I didn't care about yakking. I wanted to do my little work, and I was gonna be done with it."**

Rather than being passive and "yakking," we wanted legs to "run with the boys." Subtheme 2 describes these feelings.

Subtheme 2: **"So I could run with the boys"**

This Subtheme represents how we didn't like the roles we were assigned so we chose to do ***"manly things"*** instead of ***"girly things."*** We did this in many different ways, but we symbolically chose to ***"act like a man,"*** to identify with power, to claim public voice and agency.

Schaef continues "If one's validation and sense of worth come from 'not being like other (inferior) women, then it is critical to be one of the few who succeed in the superior male world" (p. 48). It's no wonder Freud recognized something that he called "penis envy." I choose to call this female syndrome "privilege envy" or "power envy." No one in this study actually said she wished she had been born a man; we just wished to have the freedom to ***"just run."*** We told this story of not belonging with girls/women in the following ways:

> **" [When I was small] I had tennis shoes in the car and as soon as church was over, I went out there and took those stupid patent leather shoes off and put on tennis shoes *so I could run* around the church building *with the little boys*—not chasing them, just running."**
>
> **"I love football. Football, I've always been a tomboy, I've always played sports; I love football; …… and we talked about cars. And ….I love to talk about cars. I worked on cars and my dad worked on cars, and it was a very familiar thing for me so it was a comforting thing for me to 'act like a man' because that was kind of my personality, in a way, I did manly things. I never really have done 'girly things' so to speak-- to put things in a box."**
>
> **"But I can remember in high school feeling much more lack of acceptance from girls than from boys and so that, you know, may be a part of it….I just felt more comfortable with men and more like I could just be myself with men; maybe that's it. The women I just felt like somehow I didn't quite fit there……"**

"Ahm, I was just pondering that if you made the statement that in high school my friends were guys instead of girls--I mean, I can make that statement."

"And I was good in math, like boys, and …. I wasn't any of the things that girls were and like I didn't enjoy a lot, I mean, I didn't like the cheerleader crowd. (laughing) Ahm, so I never thought I'd get married. I just assumed I would not. So ahm, when I did, I didn't know how to do all these things you're supposed to do called the wifey things."

"…. Women didn't seem to have any power and I certainly didn't want to align myself with the powerless. I mean personally I didn't recognize any power in my life."

So we worked hard, we went to school, and we got our jobs that represented ***"running with the boys"*** and ***"having legs."*** But something was wrong. WE weren't quite right. The jobs weren't quite right. The next category, Alien Environment, describes this next discovery.

Alien Environment: ***"Why can't you just try harder?"***

This theme is about how we eventually experienced the environment that we found in our male-dominated jobs to be alien to us as women. "The main part of the uniform we don't have is a penis. It's the loud and clear message a lot of times." It was as if we just weren't right somehow.

"But the culture is such that it is, I guess, established that way that that's what you do is you yell louder than someone else or you get in their face and stand real close and pound your fist on the table and say, "This is the way we're gonna do it!" And everybody else either backs down or pounds their fist on the table. Very disconcerting atmosphere. I mean I've experienced that myself. I felt the same way that you did. Just alienated and blah, just sort of a fish flopping on the, flopping on the sand. That was a good vision. A fish flopping around on dry land. A fish is not supposed to be there….. Can't live. Can't breathe. Can't do anything. You got somebody

standing there telling you, you know, '*Why can't you just try harder?'"*

The following is a collage of co-constructed characteristics in the category Alien Environment with its ***"very disconcerting atmosphere"***:

"Good morning, Gentlemen"

Many people at all levels feel like they go unnoticed and unappreciated, but at a level of jobs where you have men and women mixed, I think the women are much more invisible

I was working in an alien environment.

Huge room with little cubicle walls—kinda like in a Dilbert cartoon

Every one of them was men. There were no women; matter of fact, I don't remember, I don't recall seeing any women at all

You're supposed to identify with your camp. There was a woman's camp and the men's camp

I was the only woman in an office of 80 men—we had 2 secretaries

Everything was adversarial;

The environment stunk

We were always behind….. everybody was mad; it's constant;

People were yelling at them.

All this brutality

The management literally felt like if people are under pressure all the time they would work better.

It was this lose, lose, lose, lose situation.

Because it was competitive.

Military hierarchical kind of way… being under a gun

Things were set up so that the team work couldn't work

Ah, people were set up to be alienated from each other

This incredible pressure driven by competition or working your way up the ladder

High stress and not fun, working at cross purposes…an untenable situation…under pressure from management.

The two fields that I've been in there was a little bit of softer approach--a human caring field, but I still grieve over the lack of collaboration;

An environment where they're never asked for feedback…

Why stick your neck out if you're not gonna get any credit

The men tried to co-opt them [the good looking women]

Being whistled at every time they walked out of a building, being just condescended to.

"I just can't listen to women preach, [he said]. I look at your legs and I think sexual thoughts."

As a management consultant on gender equity, career development, and work/life balance issues, Deborah J. Swiss has created her own profession out of dealing with this "alien environment" for women and has written a business book called *The Male Mind at Work*. From interviews that she did, she describes the above environment in various ways: "'verbal food fight' culture" (2000, p. 9), "Noisy Boys" (p. 10), "The Testosterone Test" (p. 38), "the old command-and-control model (p. 67), and "The Grown-Up Locker Room" (p. 147). Swiss wrote that one of her male interviewees expressed his need to have home and office be quite separate so that very few, if any, mementoes of home were allowed in his office. If he saw a woman's office decorated like a "cozy family den," it was a message to him that "she would really prefer to be at home" (p. 84).

Researchers have tried to evaluate women's assimilation into these traditionally male professions by counting, surveying, and interviewing to see how the women have fared (Bogoch, 1997; Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998; Etzkowitz, Kemelgor, & Uzzi, 2000; Gornick, 2002; McIlwee & Robinson,

1992; Sonnert, 1995). The results of most of these studies can be summarized by Gornick's statement about women in science quoted in Kourany's introduction: "[Women] had been 'allowed' into science, to be sure, but had then been 'held back, put off, discouraged and demoralized, frozen in position' and rendered invisible" (2002, p. 5). Sometimes this backlash to women being where "they don't belong" takes the form of sexual harassment (Committee on Women in Science & Engineering, 1994; Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Laband & Lentz, 1998). Sometimes women are just discounted or "disappeared" (Committee on Women in Science & Engineering, 1994; Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Fletcher, 1999). On the other hand, if women are too aggressive and male-like in their behavior, they are criticized and shunned (Committee on Women in Science & Engineering, 1994; Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Fletcher, 1999). A woman who decides to go to work in the public sphere, associated with traditional masculine schemas, ends up in a double bind. It is physically obvious that she is a woman, but she is trying to "act like a man" without acting too much like a man.

Interestingly, when women were being counted in the office, female secretaries didn't count to us either. They weren't our kind.

> **"There were no women; matter of fact, I don't remember, I don't recall seeing any women at all except for the secretary."**
>
> **"I was the only woman in an office of 80 men—we had 2 secretaries."**

We had no role models. We were women, but we didn't want to be treated like women: ignored, discounted, whistled at, condescended to.

What were our options. We could "act" like the men, but we could never really "be" men. The next category describes our Response to the Environment and the theme is about just feeling like a ***"Weak Man."***

Response to Environment: ***"Turn into a Weak Man"***

This theme represents our response to and confusion in the work environment we found ourselves in. There was no one to help because no one, men or women, could imagine doing the job in a different way. As Berger and Luckmann described above, we were all thinking that the traditional "reality" was the only True "reality."

> **"For a woman, the antidote to having the patriarchy *turn you into a weak man* is to remember that everyone has a story."**
>
> **"I don't feel like I had pressure like that [to fit in with a competitive environment]. I didn't know how else to do it. I mean that was the job as far as I was concerned and then it was the job as far they were concerned. You know, nobody could imagine it being done a different way…. They [just] wanted me to be an engineer in the company."**

"Matching male styles and behavior may be difficult to avoid when they are presented as organizational expectations and simultaneously proclaimed as gender-neutral" (Ranson, 2005, p. 150). Women's status as good workers is threatened in these supposed "gender-neutral" organizations if they ask for special considerations for safety, for family, or for balanced life (Coser & Rokoff, 1971; Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998; Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Gottfried & Reese, 2003). Role models are limited for women in the male-dominated careers (Committee on Women in Science & Engineering, 1994;

Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Sonnert, 1995). One young woman was quoted in *Athena Unbound* as saying, "The women a generation ahead of us had it so difficult that they are by and large a very aggressive group. [They had to be so aggressive] and that's who got ahead. You have trouble looking at them and saying, "'I want to be like that.' You don't" (Etzkowitz et al., 2000, p. 87).

Not having role models meant we also didn't have anyone to show us what to wear. Male clothes were the most practical because they had had many years to refine "work clothes." But we weren't men. Somehow the "what to wear" issue became a symbol for the whole group about the feelings of not fitting in.

Subtheme 1: **"I was uncomfortable in the costume"**

One very practical and concrete problem for us was clothing. It was very **"troublesome"** about how to dress as a woman doing a man's job. It seemed to symbolize the whole issue of identity turmoil.

Karen: **The clothes thing, feeling trapped in…**

Bettie: **Costume.**

Karen: **The costume, yeah. So you were uncomfortable.**

Jamie: **I was uncomfortable in the costume also (laughing) actually. The blue suit and tie**

"I was dressed in this stupid power suit thing, you know. [group agreeing, laughing]. This was 1984, IBM was big, and this blue suit, navy blue suit. And I had this navy blue jacket/blazer thing and this skirt thing, and I hate skirts. And I'm not a skirt person. I'm a jeans person, and I was really uncomfortable physically being in this suit."

"That should be our action. [Group laughter] We should all bring our power suits. I have one power suit left of the batch….and I was unable to get rid of it. I don't wear suits but it's like IT's SO POWERFUL. [Group laughter]"

"The main part of the uniform we don't have is a penis. It's the loud and clear message a lot of times…"

"And I just have a vision of myself standing there in that costume. … But my recollection is that I was in that costume as much to be in the men's world to be acceptable to men and to women. It wasn't about just fitting in with the men, it was about this is what I have to do to …… meet, you know, the expectations of what I'm supposed to be wearing. And, I frankly was miserable, felt like I had on a costume. …….. dressing is very troublesome…very troublesome."

"[Dressing is troublesome] because it is tied up with your identity."

Paula England looks at why we wear the clothes we do from a "doing gender" perspective. She says that this perspective is grounded in ethnomethodology and "emphasizes that gender is something we actively do, not something socialized once and for all" (2005, p. 269). She contrasts this perspective with an "internalized socialization view," which says we do things because we want to or believe we should, and with a "rational choice view of norms" which says we do things because of a fear of reprisals. According to the "doing gender" perspective, we might choose "normal" clothing, for example, because otherwise our "actions will simply not make any sense to others. In this view, each of us is held accountable to make sense to others in terms of gender norms" even if we don't like them (2005, p. 269). From whatever view, our PAR group found that what to wear was **"troublesome,"** indeed, and seemed to represent a deeper conflict.

Because of cultural norms, earlier generations of women were counseled how to do a man's job like a man, only better (Committee on Women in Science & Engineering, 1994). More recently, women are trying to discover/create a female model for doing their work; they don't want to act like "men" in women's clothing, literally or figuratively (Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Fletcher, 1999; Helgesen, 1990; Swiss, 2000).

Another Response to Environment for us was a sense of being wounded, confused, and disappointed and then being overwhelmed by the feeling of not being able to change anything. We were just one small cog in a very big system, and it was hard not to lose hope

Subtheme 2: **"Almost too big a rock to be turned"**

This subtheme expresses how big the problem/issue is and how hard it is to move—a problem that won't go away, and a wound that "won't heal up"—The Feminine Wound, perhaps (Kidd, 1996). Some of us had gotten **"tired of fooling with it or thinking about it."**

> **Bettie: You know I really don't like thinking about this [issue of being a woman in male-dominated field] and … I'm just tired of being screwed up by this …I've done it for years and ah, you know sort of found a way that is more comfortable than some other ways but I'm just…. tired. I'm just tired of even fooling with it or thinking about it. *It's almost too big a rock to be turned* … I go, you know, from mad to upset to isolated to now and I think I just tried for the last few years just to act like none of this went on because it was so frustrating to me. It's like you're knocking the scab off. (laughing)**
>
> **Jamie: The problem is it keeps coming back.**
>
> **Bettie: Yeah, it won't heal up.**

We women keep thinking that every decade will bring changes. Swiss's business book, *The Male Mind at Work*, (mentioned above) was published in the year 2000. She is still describing behaviors and issues that are no longer from the 1970's. Her book is based on "in-depth interviews with 52 successful men [in business] about how they think and act in the workplace" (2000, p. 1). Her introductory quote is from John, a 33-year-old marketing director at a Fortune 500 company:

> Question: What career advice will you pass on to your son?
>
> Answer: "The system is built for you. So go in there and kick butt."
>
> Question: What will you say to your daughter about her career?
>
> Answer: "Hey, you're coming into someone else's stadium. You'll have to play by a different set of rules."

Swiss goes on to say that,

> In many environments, gender plays a role, defining how we evaluate and react to everyday business situations. The terrain often looks quite different for women because the system to which John (above) refers is designed to support and reflect a male code of work (2000, p. 1).

From our PAR group, we shared:

> **"It made me think a whole lot about now; and there was something in the newspaper this Sunday that reinforced that, from a woman, and how women have to change in order to be successful in the business world. Or they're supposed to change. They're not supposed to go in and change the business world. They're supposed to adapt to it…so thinking about how, how you make that revolution happen was something, I guess, it's seen as a broader cultural revolution but, you know, it's like for so many years it's been fighting to get in the door. And in order to do that you had to, you know, you had to fit into that mold as opposed to going in and going, 'Ok. This mold's gotta change'."**
>
> **"It's not meanness on their [men's] part; you know or even intentional …but there is a privilege that's there that they're just not aware of."**

"I honestly don't think most men realize that in the world that I know, in higher education, that most women will tell you they have to work three to four to five times harder than men to get to the same level"

Virginia Valian, a professor of psychology and linguistics, in her book *Why So Slow?: The Advancement of Women* attempts to deal with the issues of a change that never seems to come and women working "harder than men to get to the same level" (1998). She says that gender schemas, which are held by both men and women, affect our expectations and evaluations of men and women professionally. "Men are consistently overrated, while women are underrated" (1998, p. 2). The small pluses for men and minuses for women add up to an accumulating advantage for men and disadvantage for women.

> Problems remain in all fields for women, who compared to men experience greater movement into part-time positions; slower advancement; lower earnings except at entry level; noticeable underrepresentation at top-tier institutions; and fewer national awards and prizes.
>
> Experimental data demonstrate that we do not see other people simply as people; we see them as males or females. Once gender schemas are invoked they work to disadvantage women by directing and skewing our perception, even in the case of objective characteristics like height (Valian, 2005b, p. 202).

At some point, we came to ourselves. We realized that something was wrong. The next category is Awareness. It is about the theme **"When everything changed."**

Awareness: ***"When everything changed"***

This theme is about a gradual, or sometimes sudden, awareness that changed us and our attitudes toward our work environment. It is a turning point in consciousness. Things were no longer "right the way they were." With Berger and Luckmann, we were asking, "Which reality?" (1966, p. 175).

We needed to change, but perhaps the environment needed to change too. **"Ok. This mold's gotta change."**

> **"I think it's that title ["A Critical Incident"][1] that makes this so hard for me. I keep testing my memories against it. Was that incident really "critical"? Or am I being dramatic? Maybe it was only 'memorable' or 'annoying' or 'meaningful.'** ***It's hard to find a moment when everything changed***.

There were two subthemes here. First was the sense of waking up—"Suddenly began to wake"—and then was the conviction that things needed to change—"So that was the beginning of the end"

Subtheme1: **"Suddenly began to wake"**

This Subtheme is about seeing things with new eyes, with open eyes, like waking up. We began to ask **"Why am I doing this? Why can't we**

---

[1] "Critical Incident" is a brief description by a participant of a certain kind of significant event (Brookfield, 1990). In this case, the critical incident is about a time when we had a sense of being marginalized in our profession because we were women, not men. It is discussed more fully in Chapter Two under Research Methodology.

work together?" Maybe the traditional ways of men weren't so great and the ways of women weren't so useless, after all.

> **"So I [had] just sort of dismissed most women and then *suddenly began to wake* to ah, 'Gee. There's a whole rest of the world out there that I've cut myself off from……..it was through focusing on marginalized people that I began to see women as marginalized and began to open up [to them]."**

At this point in the thematization, the data began to look like the group had shared a stage-type process in order to arrive at a similar Awareness. We were saying things like: **"And just finally you've just reached a point that you know…"; "you begin to say…we should be working together….It would be much better."; "all these women were fascinating …..but I didn't know it until I had found a safe space to sit and experience women in a different way." ; or "all of a sudden … It came to me that there was something good about being a woman…"**

> **"And just finally you've just reached a point that you know you're there because of your skill and your knowledge and stuff.…The thing I finally figured out was that you know I'm not brilliant or anything but I can understand complex things given enough time. You know I can figure them out. I can understand them. That's good enough, you know, and from that I, you know, got in touch with my confidence."**
>
> **"You know, you begin to say, 'What am I doing?' 'Why am I doing this? Why can't we work together?' That would be so much better and I find myself doing that also. We should be working together. We shouldn't just be doing all this. It would be much better."**
>
> **"It was the most uncharacteristic thing for me to go to somebody's house I didn't even know, pay money to do it--to sit in a circle with other women. And I remember I sat in her kitchen watching all these women come in and as they came in the door I would judge them within 15 seconds. I was judging every single woman as she walked in (laughing) and kind of wrote off the weekend by the first**

hour going, "Oh no one here interests me." But sitting in a circle, in a very ritualistic way and telling people's stories, hearing people's stories blew my mind because all these woman were fascinating. But I had no idea that I was doing that. I mean if you told me that to my face I would have gone, 'Ah no, I'm not judgmental. What are you talking about?' ……so I know I am a patriarchal woman. I internalized all that but I didn't know it until I had found a safe space to sit and experience women in a different way. And that was like, 'Oh my God'."

"And all of a sudden … It came to me that there was something good about being a woman and it's different to some extent [from being a man]. …. I don't mean I didn't want to do an engineering job. But I, you know, I realized that I couldn't [do it the same way men did]."

"[The managers] were screaming at [the design engineers] cause they didn't get it out fast enough and then [the managers] were screaming at them cause they didn't get every detail right. It's like, "Is there something wrong with this picture?" We can't have both."

What causes a new awareness? Why did we suddenly or gradually see things in a new way? Could it be developmental? Developmental theorists, in the past, have tried to assume a certain "universality" of learning and change regardless of culture, race, or gender. Carol Gilligan's 1982 publication of *In a Different Voice* challenged the "universality" of the dominant way of viewing stages of "maturity." She pointed out that developmental theories tended to value separation and autonomy while relegating connection and relational considerations, qualities more associated with women, to the status of dependence and immaturity (1982/1993). Later, the four researchers of *Women's Ways of Knowing* imagined that women's epistemological development might differ from men's. They designed a model reflecting their findings (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986/1997). Their work was welcomed as reflecting new voices but

also criticized for acting as if it represented all women of all races, classes, and times, reminiscent of Gilligan's critique of the male-based models. (Bing & Reid, 1996; Goldberger, 1996; Ruddick, 1996; Thayer-Bacon, 2000). "The WWK [*Women's Ways of Knowing*] authors were aware of the dangers of white and privileged parochialism" (Ruddick, 1996, p. 256) from the beginning; but this study of *Women's Ways* did "uncover salient themes (missing or deemphasized in Perry's theory[2]) related to the experience of silencing and disempowerment, lack of voice, the importance of personal experience in knowing, connected strategies in knowing, and resistance to disimpassioned knowing" (Goldberger, 1996, p. 7).

Continuing in the effort to assure more voices are heard, the authors of a paper entitled "The Diversification of Psychology: A Multicultural Revolution" challenged the assumed "universality" of the positivist tradition in psychology by claiming there is an "invisibility of monoculturalism and Whiteness" (Sue, Bingham, Porche-Burke & Vasquez, 1999, p. 1061). In a

---

[2] Belenky et al. used William Perry's research methodology and theory for intellectual and ethical development of college students published in 1970 in which he interviewed mostly college men as a model for their study. "In our study we chose to listen only to women. The male experience has been so powerfully articulated that we believed we would hear the patterns in women's voices more clearly if we held at bay the powerful templates men have etched in the literature and in our minds" (Belenky et al., 1986/1997, p. 9)

study called "'A Fly in the Buttermilk': Descriptions of University Life by Successful Black Undergraduate Students at a Predominately White Southeastern University," the researchers identify in their data what Derald Wing Sue and David Sue (2003) called "five stages of cultural identity…Conformity, Dissonance, Resistance and Immersion, Introspective, and Integrative Awareness" (Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas, & Thompson, 2004, p. 440). Davis et al. continue by saying that these stages appear to be manifested differently in a person of the dominant culture than in a person of a minority culture (Davis et al., 2004).

For a dominant-culture member, "conformity," the first stage, means adopting a cultural chauvinism for his/her own culture, "me and my kind"; for a person of minority culture, "conformity" means also identifying with the dominant culture, but it is not her/his own culture. In other words, a person from a minority culture first appreciates and values the "Not me and my kind."

The third stage in this model, Resistance and Immersion, then reflects a move toward empathizing with or identifying with a minority culture. For a dominant culture person, it becomes appreciation for "Not me and my kind"; whereas, for the minority culture person, it means a new identification with "me and my kind."

In spite of the fact that women represent 51% of the people in the United States, the marginalization and victimization that we experience as the "inferior sex" seems to create a "Cultural Identity Development" similar

to a person from a minority culture (Sue & Sue, 2003). Perhaps in our Theme Four called Awareness, the PAR women are expressing our new awareness and appreciation for our Selves and our own kind as women.

This new awareness became the "beginning of the end" for something. The next Subtheme reflects that sometimes it was the end of enthusiasm for the job; sometimes it was the end of a particular job.

Subtheme 2: **"So that was the beginning of the end"**

With awareness and thinking "critically about our selves and our lives" (hooks, 1994, p. 202) comes learning, change, and transformation or new action (Greene, 1995; Hart, 1990; hooks, 1994; Mezirow, 1990; Miller, 1986). Maxine Greene uses Albert Camus's description of "the weariness tinged with amazement" that seems to usher in the "why." "To move from the mechanical chain of routine behaviors to moments when the 'why' arises…All depends upon a breaking free, a leap, and then a question….'Why?'" (Greene, 1995. p. 6).

There were certain things that we wanted to put an end to--sometimes behaviors, sometimes the job itself. "We acknowledge the harshness of situations only when we have in mind another state of affairs in which things would be better" (1995, p. 5). Our "place" of change did seem to come after the weariness, after a leap, when we could finally acknowledge the harshness. It was described by us in various ways:

"I was shamed and embarrassed…. that tells me that I need to look for another job"; "I began to realize what I was missing… I was cutting myself off from [other women]"; "That's it! But, I basically just threw all the stuff out after that."; "I went into this really deep place of grief… I knew eventually I was gonna get out of [that job]"; "I don't want to do that anymore."

Our awarenesses, in the form of shame, realization, horror, grief, and turning away, all suggested new action. These are the stories of awareness that we told:

"I coordinated all the details and pulled it all together and ah, when it was done, the guys were standing up there congratulating each other, you know and saying, "Let's go to lunch," and ahm, I looked up and it occurred to me that they didn't mean me. And I was just, I was shamed and embarrassed. I think I went in the bathroom and cried because I just realized even though I did all that work I was not included in the group. *So that was the beginning of the end* that tells me that I need to look for another job

"But now …I just don't do panty hose."

"I have a, a childhood friend who, sometime in the mid 90's said, 'Just read this damn book.' It was a book called *The Last Time I Wore a Dress*.[3] … But in it is a young girl who they lock up because she's crazy. But part of the reason they know she's crazy is she won't wear a dress. Their therapy is just to try to get her to wear a little makeup, just to try to get her to dress up a little bit. And she is not, you know, 3 or 4 years difference in my age, and I just see that they could have locked me up too if I had not conformed just a little

---

[3] *The Last Time I Wore a Dress* by Daphne Scholinski, with Jane Meredith Adams, published in 1997 is about Daphne Scholinski's time in a mental hospital at the age of 15 for what her psychiatrist called 'failure to identify as a sexual female.' The doctors used a diagnosis that was brand-new to the medical books: Gender Identity Disorder. Daphne's treatment goals in 1981 were to become more obsessive about boys, to learn about makeup, to dress more like a girl, to curl and style hair, and to spend quality time learning about girl things with peers.

more and that's when I said, 'And this is the last time I wore one [a dress] too. That's it!' But, I basically just threw all the stuff [dress for success clothing] out after that.

"I'm just one of those women I'm gonna have more men friends than women friends. I don't mean romantically; I just mean friends and ah and then I began to realize what I was missing because of even women with a career, you know, they worked. I was cutting myself off from them too. It's really been powerful in my life to open to women."

"And I went into this really deep place of grief and I thought, "I'm grieving more than my cat and [a friend's death]." And I realized I'm sort of grieving my life and that I have somehow gotten myself in a place where I wasn't doing anything I loved and I am someone who's had the experience of doing, of doing what I love fervently….and it's like the light finally did come on. I knew eventually I was gonna get out of it. It's when I said this is not acceptable; it's not acceptable in short term. I mean I need to sing…. I feel I'm back where I should be so it's good. It was just high stress and not fun, working at cross purposes"

"Nag… Cajole and stand there and I mean, ah, you know and I've certainly done that in my day, stand over somebody until they gave [their part of the job] to me, but I don't want to do that anymore."

"[Director] says he has no issue with me [the producer], but is under pressure from management to "ignore the producers" and "allow no overtime". We've both been set up. And it was an untenable situation….Quitting that job was the best thing I ever did!

Awareness certainly seems to fit with the "cultural identity" stage of Introspection as described above in the "Fly in the Buttermilk" study (Davis et al., 2003). The last stage in the "cultural identity" model is Integrative Awareness, or developing a "cultural competence." According to Davis et al. (2003) and Sue and Sue (2003), this stage describes a capability to selectively appreciate people regardless of race. I would like to expand this statement as Sue et al. do in their 1999 paper to say regardless of race, gender, culture, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

After Awareness, there is a need to **"find a different way."** We are women in a male-dominated work world so how do with live there? Perhaps there can a reflective practice of womanhood.

Practice of Womanhood: ***"You can find a different way"***

This theme represents our hope that there is a "different way" and a better way of doing and being for us and the world. This final theme, the place in our life journey we have reached so far, could be said to be about developing a reflective practice of "cultural competence" as women. From a pragmatic point of view, we are embodied as women, embedded in a culture which has both created us and is being created by us. Now we can imagine needing an antidote to being turned into a **"weak man"** in a Harry Potterish sort of manner.

> **"For a woman, the antidote to having the patriarchy turn you into a weak man is to remember that everyone has a story. If you can uncover it, *you can find a different way* of working*."***

Being "culturally competent" is defined by Derald Wing Sue and David Sue in their book for counselors. Their definition of cultural competence for the therapist is in three parts: 1) becoming aware of his/her own assumptions about behaviors and values, 2) actively attempting to understand the worldview of the client, and 3) actively developing culturally sensitive intervention strategies (2003, p. 18). These are useful for a person who is trying to live in a culturally diverse world as well. It was described by one of the women in our PAR circle as **"remembering that everyone has a**

story." There is a search for meaning and understanding in becoming more aware of our own values and assumptions, as well as, trying to be understanding of others. And it is about developing skills and interventions for working in a culturally diverse world as a marginalized person.

We are on a journey without a map. We are "already outside the old social forms looking for new ones. But, [we] do not feel like misfits, wrong again, but like seekers" (Miller, 1986, p. 95). We are beginning to feel more **"authentic."** Sue and Sue say that "cultural competence is an active, developmental, and ongoing process and that it is aspirational rather than achieved" (2003, p. 18).

> **"I guess ah, I more and more maybe don't attribute things so much to men and women as much as to something else that I can't define."**
>
> **"I think that it points up how, especially in the world right now, it's often hard to figure out, you know, what is a male way of being in the world, and what is a female way of being in the world?"**
>
> **"So I'm wondering if part of a practice of womanhood isn't to be able to look more carefully, critically at what's going on and not just accept this invisible role."**
>
> **"When I'm honest, I'm not playing the game."**
>
> **"It's being authentic"**
>
> **"It's like I started speaking up. It has brought such peace to my mind, and I feel more authentic."**

We feel there is a way of being reflective and working collaboratively and not just accepting the traditional values of the dominant culture of the male-dominated work world. Relationships are important, and therefore,

treating all people with honor, respect and kindness is important. Working collegially in teams was something we saw as productive and beneficial.

> **"I now think everybody is prejudiced. You just need to be aware of it and try to relate to people if you believe in being kind, respectful, and in honoring other people's being in the world. And ah, so it was through focusing on marginalized people that I began to see women as marginalized and began to open up and become ah, much, much, much more aware than I'd ever been before and began to speak up about it, not in a hateful way, but in a way that I think some men I work with can hear me."**

> **"You know there are things [the company] could have done to make it better, and it would have been working on relationships, working with teams. ……I don't think it was good for anybody….now the next job I had was different and that's where I learned I liked working with teams and ah, that things could be different."**

> **"Yeah since I'm out of engineering, it's not [so bad]. I'm in the technical computing which is a bunch of computer programmers …but they go off and they do their computer programs and yet, they collaborate. And if they get stuck on something, you know, they'll walk down the hall, you know, "Hey can you help me with this?" and they'll, you know, each of them will get together, beat their heads together in a good way and solve the problem and then you go on."**

Meeting with other women in like situations seems to be a crucial part of this new praxis of womanhood. It helps us support and challenge each other in developing the skills of cultural competence.

> **"We started an annual retreat for the women where we would deal with those exact issues and talk about, ah you know, not being set up against each other, not planning to say you're different from the others. Don't do what they've done. Trying to forge our own political world rather than just falling into the traps that we had seen out there. So it's just, I think a lot of it is just being intentional and having someone to reflect with on that intentionality."**

> **"Ahm, you know [a group of women in ministry] met, we met and talked and talked. We just talked all the time about the things that were happening to us and what it meant."**

> **"I can yak and look forward to it now. But it's a different kind of yakking. You know, it's more of sharing that we do now. We share**

each other's life. We really care about each other … And ah, I'm thankful that I'm in a group of ladies now that we really don't do that, talk about people behind their back. We talk about each other and support and help each other and to get through the day at my company too and all the security and stuff that we have, so it's helpful. It's good."

In spite of some reluctance by women to being associated with the stigma of "women's groups" that Joyce Fletcher found in her study, *Disappearing Acts*, she recommends forming groups that are internal to an organization. She sees the advantages of these internal groups being that "group strategies can be devised around similar issues, a common language can begin to take hold, and the same organization concepts and assumptions can be questioned" (1999, p. 131). Fletcher recommends "practical pushing"—a way of challenging the norms of a "predominantly masculine value system" while keeping in mind the political realities of a male-dominated work world. You strategize for small wins. Whether a group is formed inside or outside of the organization, with or without men included (a possibility as far as she is concerned), she says the crucial point is that "a system of support is essential to sustain a strategy of practical pushing, especially for women" (p. 132).

Moving to Action

The story has been told. The next job for the PAR group was to come up with an action that would fit our story and do it justice. Chapter Five will share the result of the plan, act, and reflect work of this PAR. It introduces

the drama that was created by our group as an outcome. Our action is called "Scenes from the Margins."

CHAPTER FIVE

ACTION: "SCENES FROM THE MARGINS"

The steps of Participatory Action Research (PAR) are Describe, Plan, Act, and Reflect as discussed in the Research Methods in Chapter Three. The Describe step is about identifying and characterizing the problem. Our PAR group "described the problem" by sharing critical incidents[1]. The stories that were told became our collected data. In our case the information was collected over a five week period of collaborative storytelling. Chapter Three explains the method for this process, and Chapter Four talks about the themes that were derived from the data by outside interpretive groups. Chronologically, the outside interpretive groups worked to thematize the data after the PAR group had finished meeting. But since the themes tell the story so richly and telling the stories was the first thing we did in our meetings, I've placed it first in my reporting.

The Plan and Act steps began with the second five week period of meetings as we reminded ourselves about the stories by using the transcripts from the first five meetings. In order to "plan" action, the PAR group had to analyze the information that had been collected. The four women who were willing and able to meet together again began to talk about what we had

---

[1] See Note 2 in Chapter Three for definition and description of "critical incidents."

heard and then to write down the topics. What Mary Ziegler (2001) says about Action Research was true for our group, "Collectively analyzing the information provided by different group members often stimulates people to reframe the problem, seeing it in completely new ways" (p. 4).

At this point we thought about what action would fit our stories and our interests. As explained in Chapter Three, we brainstormed ideas for action and chose to write a word collage in scenes in the form of Vagina Monologues[2]. We gathered the topics together into bigger categories then created a story board of scenes. The categories became the scenes. The narrative that was created became our action. We called it "Scenes from the Margins" because of our own awareness of speaking from the "Margins." As hard as we tried, we could never be on the "inside" from where the men viewed the world of work. We weren't men and would never be men, but we had become aware, at this time of our lives, that being women and joining with other women could be and was becoming a good thing.

How Can This Be Action?

Participatory Action Research assumes that a political action will be the result of the process. What does it mean then to take political action? A political action may be a public confrontation or demonstration, but it can also be acts of resistance. Joyce Fletcher (1999) states that resistance can be "destabilizing strategies that disrupt the [dominant] discourse…[in order]

[2] See Note x in Chapter Three for description of Vagina Monologues.

to call attention to what has been obscured or made invisible" (p. 21). As Patti Lather (1991) observed, "Writing became a process of active change, a 'weapon of defense' against seeing themselves through the eyes of others (p. 159). We PAR women were resisting by writing in order to see ourselves through our own eyes instead of the eyes of others. We were resisting by telling our stories and collaboratively creating new knowledge about ourselves as women in the public work world. And we were resisting just by meeting together with a "gender identity" agenda thereby creating a safe space to reflect and grow.

And Now Presenting*:*

"Scenes from the Margins"

We're worried.

We're worried about how to be a woman in a man's work world. We're worried about how to be a woman in a man's work world without being just "a weak man."

We're worried about how to be a woman in a man's work world without being "just a body."

We're worried about how to be a woman in a man's work world without acting like "one of the guys" or making men feel uncomfortable or being co-opted against other women or losing our own values.

Yes, we're worried.

We're worried about how to be a woman in a man's work world without losing our own sense of Womanhood.

Scene 1: We Must Not Be Like Other Women.

We all began with that sense of not being like other women. We just liked doing things like men did them. We thought that what men did was more important, more valuable, more interesting, more fun, and more powerful. Some of us worked on cars, some of us played serious sports, some of us liked math and mechanical things, some of us wanted more voice and more status, some of us just didn't want to wear jumpers and wash dishes in the kitchen with the other women while the men sat in the living room talking about stories of glory.

"We're as smart as men," we said. "We can do the same jobs that men do," we decided. And so we did.

Scene 2: "Good Morning, Gentlemen"

Joan (with a wistful look): We were so glad to be entering seminary, that traditionally male domain. What a shock it was when the professor stood up in front of the whole group of mostly men, but not all, and said, "Good morning, Gentlemen."

What do you do? Loud and clear message: Why, you do what you can to act like a man. That's why you're here, after all. That main part of the uniform you don't have is a penis so you'll never be quite right. Nobody really knows what to do with you. But we'll all try to make the best of it. Maybe if we pretend you're not here, you'll go away.

It's sort of like the crowd who watched their emperor parade down the street naked. No one would say, "The Emperor has no clothes." No one will say, "This Preacher has no penis." So we used to write satire to help ourselves deal with the ridiculousness of it all, and we would write quips about what churches would say to keep from having a woman as a minister.

Church #1: Well, we would have a woman minister, but if she's not married there would be nobody to mow the yard for her.

Church #2: We would have a woman minister but she wouldn't be able to change the light bulbs when they burn out.

Church #3: We would have a woman minister but she would cry at the funerals.

Scene 3: That Darn Power Suit

So what do women wear?

"Dress for Success," they say. That means the Power Suit.

Chorus: It feels like a costume

Navy blue jacket and matching knee length skirt,

Off-white blouse,

Pantyhose

Navy low-heeled pumps

Chorus: It feels like a costume

And a stupid little bowtie.

Makeup applied just so.

“Attempt to conform, to fit in,” I think.

Chorus: It feels like a Costume. A Clown Costume

But it’s so darn Powerful

Chorus: A Straight Jacket.

How can an engineer work in pantyhose?

Chorus: NO MORE COSTUME!

I’ll NEVER wear pantyhose again!!!

Scene 4: Being Co-opted

Joan: We noticed something that happened, especially with the pretty girls. The men tried to co-opt them; tried to flatter them into being stereotypical and non-threatening. We had learned about the co-opting thing so we could watch it happening to each other.

Lena: Explain more what you mean by being co-opted. I don’t quite follow.

Joan: Being set up against each other. Saying that you’re different from the other women and therefore better than they are. You’re better if you don’t challenge men or don’t try to take credit for anything. They use the big “B” word against women

who are assertive or ambitious in a way that is competitive with men.

Lena: I think this idea of being co-opted is very important because the phrase “you’re not like the rest of them” rings a bell. I have heard that, and I can’t place it but it’s important. I think it’s real negative.

Scene 5: Invisible

When I started my last job, I was honored to be invited to a planning meeting with the Managers (all men). The Branch Manager was reading the RFP (Request for Proposals) and explaining that the proposal shouldn’t be overly “voluptuous.” Well, I had the biggest breasts in the room, but I was pretty sure he meant “voluminous.” While I stared down at the table and after some snickering, he finally realized what he’d said and asked, “Is it hot in here to anybody else?”

I was charged with coordinating the response to the RFP to our customer, which would bring lots of projects and money in the door if we could get the open-ended contract. I gathered information from different Managers and researched the documents, did the graphic final presentations, and met the deadline.

Several months later, I was in the front office and heard the men congratulating each other on winning the contract. Then the Branch Manger said, “Let’s go to lunch.” I’m expectant that someone will recognize my participation but no one says anything to me. I soon realize that I’m not

invited to lunch. I'm humiliated and angry so I go to the bathroom and cry. I was standing right there, but I was invisible.

Scene 6: Or Hyper-Visible/All They See Is Your Body

Martha: When I was in seminary, the more attractive women noticed immediately that they were hyper-visible. You know, the knock out women. I wouldn't have been able to figure out who they were, but the men helped us. These women would have spent more time in tears than the rest of us just because they were being "hit on," being whistled at every time they walked out of a building, being condescended to so much more often than those of us who were not so beautiful.

A few years after we were in the parish, a colleague and I had invited a former professor to be a guest preacher in her church. He said to us, "I just can't listen to women preach. I just look at your legs and I think sexual thoughts." I said to him, "Oh so when we women look at men, we don't have sexual thoughts?"

Of course, it has to be all men preaching because women never have sexual thoughts.

Mary: I had a similar experience in an engineering computer lab for a local company. I walked into the lab and said, "Hi Joe, anybody using this PC?"

He said, "Hey Mary – nope, it's all yours."

“Thanks,” I said. I was aware of how little time I had left on my project and was thinking to myself, “Let’s see, when is this project due? Oh, yeah, next Wednesday and I still have to debug and finish the code and then schedule the user for a user test before then…” Joe interrupted my thoughts with, “Mary, what’s the code for opening a file and writing to it? I’m using C# for this one.”

”Hmm, I don’t know off the top of my head, Joe, but … here, I’ll look it up on Google…let’s see … After a few seconds, I answered, “Here it is: fopen().”

He thanked me and we both went on working.

After a few minutes, I had a question for him, “Hey Joe, do you know how to open a dataSet and …” He interrupted me right in the middle of my question with “Mary, I’m really under the gun and Mr. Greene (our boss) has been breathing down my neck on this one. I really need to focus on what I’m doing.”

“OK,” I thought angrily, “so I can help him, but he doesn’t have time to help me. Am I not under the gun, too?

Mr. Greene suddenly walked in and greeted us, “Hi Mary and Joe. How’s it coming? Anything I can do to help move it along?” But as he got closer to me, I had the feeling he was intentionally trying to smell me and ogle me. I was feeling real creepy.

Joe said, “Hey, Mr. Greene. Are we still on for the golf game tomorrow?”

Mr. Greene laughed real big and said, “You bet. I told my wife I was going on a staff retreat.” There seemed to be some male camaraderie as Joe laughed with Mr. Greene about fooling the wife.

I was feeling pretty invisible and not exactly included in the golf or the joke about wives so I tried to bring the conversation back to the work situation, “Mr. Greene, I need some direction on the Bransford code so I can get a user test done by next Wed.”

Mr. Greene said, “Be happy to do what I can to help.” At that point he started leaning over my back and putting his hand over mine on the mouse. It felt like he was sniffing me and trying to see down my shirt again. He finally gave me the information I needed, but I was very aware that I wasn’t being treated like Joe, and I was really uncomfortable.

Scene 7: You Just Haven’t Tried Hard Enough to Adapt to Your Environment or “What’s Wrong with Me?”

When I was in my first engineering job, I couldn’t seem to get it right. I couldn’t seem to adjust or get comfortable in the job, much less enjoy it. I call it my job from hell now. I was having daily migraines, my blood pressure kept being out of control, and I was

always exhausted. Even though I was spending long hours at it and trying very hard, I felt like a very mediocre engineer and a less than mediocre mother and a failure as a human being. For several years, I was floundering back and forth about whether to quit or to stay and keep trying to do it better.

One day a picture came to me of a fish flopping around on the sand at a beach. I was seeing through the eyes of the fish. I could see legs in pants standing over me, and a harsh voice was saying to me, “You just haven’t tried hard enough to adapt to your environment.”

Surprisingly, it took me awhile to make sense of this metaphor, but I came to realize that I was the fish. And in the same way that it was ridiculous to expect a fish ever to adapt to living on the sand, out of the water, it was ridiculous to expect myself to live in a competitive, adversarial, anti-relational corporate environment that was poison to me.

When I left that job, I thought I would never be able to be an engineer again. But it wasn’t engineering that was poison to me, but the particular environment of that company. I found an engineering job soon that was much better for me, where I could be a fish swimming happily in the water.

Scene 8: Lunch with a Bunch of Yakking Women?

Bettie: My experience with women engineers in the work place is that they don't gather for lunch with each other. They don't see the value of the dialogue around the job because they are saying to themselves, "Here's my job and I'm doing it and I can do it. I want to do it better than anybody else does it, and I have work to do and I haven't got time for this chitty chatty stuff." It's very, very skewed, and I think that contributes to isolation and a lot of probably not good things.

Jamie: It's the very thing that I used to think exactly before you drug me out of my office to go out to lunch. It was really hard for me. I didn't want to come eat lunch with this group of women because all they were going to do was sit around and yak, and I didn't want to yak. I didn't care about yakking. I wanted to do my little work, and I was going to be done with it.

Now 12 years later, I'm the one that sends out the email that says, "Let's go to lunch." We've got an established thing. There's a group of ladies, technical ladies, and we all go to lunch, and we don't really yak. We talk about frustrations at work and frustrations at home and it's just like a little group therapy and I enjoy it and I like the yakking. I can yak and look forward to it now. But it's a different kind of yakking. It's more about sharing now. We share each others lives. We really care about each other.

Before, my experience was being with women in engineering, especially in engineering school. You're focused on the task of getting your degree, and you really don't have time for yakking. But you're also in competition with the other women and men. The relationships that I saw between women in engineering school were very catty. They talked about each other, talked about people behind their backs, and I didn't want to have anything to do with that. I'm thankful that I'm in a group of ladies now at work where we really don't do that talking about people behind their backs.

Scene 9: Feeling Marginalized

Lena: I can't remember any incidences where someone told me I had to conform; it was just that the pressure was there. Where does the pressure come from?

Joan: Yes, we do have to consider that where I feel marginalized there might be another woman with exactly my credentials who does not. What does that mean? I was thinking, "Did somebody tell me I had to wear a jumper?" No, they didn't. It's just everybody else was wearing one.

Lena: In our jobs, we do seem to be going against the entire culture, and there are definite roadblocks along the way. But it's a question that makes me very uncomfortable because it makes me laugh and think, "Well I've collaborated in my own marginalization." I am not a political prisoner; nobody's putting a gun to my head; my rights have never

been totally abridged by the government so maybe I'm doing this. Maybe I'm doing this to myself to a certain extent.

Scene 10: Fascinating Women

Marsha: I was invited by a friend to sit in a circle with other women, and I remember sitting in her kitchen watching all these women come in. As they came in the door, I would judge them within 15 seconds. I was judging every single woman as she walked in and kind of wrote off the weekend by the first hour going, "Oh, no one here interests me." But sitting in a circle, in a very ritualistic way and telling our stories, hearing women's stories, blew my mind because all these women were fascinating.

But I had no idea that I was doing that judging thing. I mean if you told me that to my face I would have gone, "I'm not judgmental. What are you talking about?" So I know I am a patriarchal woman. I internalized all that negativity about women, but I didn't know it until I had found a safe space to sit and experience women in a different way. And that was like, "Oh my God."

Sonya: Yeah, I was at a point, mostly my 30's I guess, when I really didn't want to be around women. I didn't want women friends because most of them were those homemakers in jumpers that I didn't want to be like them so I just sort of dismissed most

women. Women didn't seem to have any power, and I certainly didn't want to align myself with the powerless.

And then suddenly I began to wake to, "Gee. There's a whole rest of the world out there that I've cut myself off from."

Ronda: For me personally, I didn't want to be around most women until I got to be 40. I mean I was a mother and you know there were women I loved around me and I had some women friends, but the gossiping and the shopping and the housekeeping things just didn't interest me. The things that I felt like happened with women weren't appealing to me. I thought men did the important, fun things. Now I feel totally different, and I feel great strength and wisdom from women. Now I have no desire to be "one of the guys."

Scene 11: Hidden Rules

Why can't I be myself? Why do I have to live within a mystery? A mystery with hidden rules. I know when I break these rules because

- Things don't go as I intended.
- Others look at me with tension in their cheeks.
- I don't get public approval.
- I don't get any private approval.
- I feel puzzled, angry, frustrated, mystified, strangled, outraged, confused!

So, I tried learning them. It took a lot of energy. I had to watch for the signs, try something new, watch again. I had to share my vulnerabilities with others I thought could help.

The men I sought out could offer sympathy, but they couldn't recognize my lack of understanding. They had that look of, " I want to say more but you would feel bad if I did." They didn't understand why I didn't know rules that come naturally to them.

Some of the women I sought out were sympathetic and empathetic. Some of them said, "I know exactly what that feels like. I have the same problem!"

Others said silently, "Don't share this with anyone. Don't let others know how you feel. Suck it up and learn to be like men! I did it on my own. If you can't, then too bad."

One said, "You aren't noticing other worldviews. Pay attention and think about it. I will help you. I will tell you when you make a mistake and are insensitive to others." And she did. And it hurt. Me?? I am not prejudiced!! Oh, dear, I can see that I am prejudiced and insensitive. And, oh the guilt!! And, oh, the self-censuring! I can't stand this!! I have to be me AND honor other's worldviews.

She wasn't teaching me about women's worldviews. She was teaching me about marginalized people in general. All of a sudden, I realized I was learning about women's worldviews and even men's! All of a sudden the hidden rules began to surface! All of a sudden I could observe women

breaking rules hidden to them. All of a sudden I could act in ways that honored me and yet didn't break the hidden rules, too much.

Of course, it wasn't all of a sudden. It took most of a lifetime. It took a lot of pain, a lot of overcoming guilt. A lot of letting go. A lot of accepting. A lot of understanding what it is like to not see other worldviews. A lot of experiences stepping into different roles and reflecting on the changed worldview: being a bottom, middle and top in my work setting.

I am more at peace now. I am still sharing my new understanding a lot. I want to shout it from the rooftops—like you do when you first fall in love. But I am still observing others. Women love to talk about it. Men hate it. Some get mad. Some feel guilty. Some laugh and hide their anger. Almost all place me in a box—see peaceful ME as an angry feminist! I think I will share less with them and more with women.

On the plane I heard about one woman trying so hard to combine career with motherhood. She was preparing for an important meeting when the phone rang. Her two year old daughter was crying at day care, saying her tummy hurt. She looked at the clock and saw she had just enough time to pick up her daughter, rent a video, and return for the meeting. She never thought about taking her daughter home. In the elevator on the way back to her office, her daughter threw up all over both of them. She thought, "I have just enough time to clean us up and go on to the meeting!" Then she stopped, horrified! How could she be like this!! How much she wanted to go

home and hold her daughter close! HOW AWFUL TO HAVE TO FIT INTO A MAN'S WORLD WHERE SICK CHILDREN ARE NOT ACCEPTED!!!

So what now? Knowing the hidden rules helps. It takes away the confusion and anger. But what now? How can I give up me as Mother, as Relation Builder, as The One Responsible for The Details, as the Doer?? I can't. For now, at this time, I think I have to accept. I have to look at my life as fascinating. As a mystery without a completely happy ending. AS OK!! We women today are the pathfinders. We have to love the one's that come after us. We have to gently open the door to the hidden rules, so that men can hear and just perhaps see a need to honor their mothering….

The End

(or New Beginnings)

Reframing the Problem[3]

"Scenes from the Margins" is about "reframe[ing] the problem" and "seeing it in completely new ways" (Ziegler quote above). We've been worried about how to be authentically ourselves as women in our world of work. We realized that we felt left out of the action and were wasting time if we hung with other women, those **"yakking women" (Scene 8)**. But when we got to our male-dominated school or work, we discovered it wasn't gender neutral, as we had thought, when the professors said **"Good Morning, Gentlemen"** like we weren't even there. We knew we weren't

[3] From Ziegler quote above.

"gentlemen" so what were we: neither fish nor fowl? If we wore those pantyhose, we were in a straight jacket (***Scene 3***). If we tried to be "one of the boys," we became co-opted (***Scene 4***). We could be ***Invisible Or Hyper-Visible*** in our female bodies ***(Scenes 5 & 6).*** Together, in our PAR group, we learned these things about ourselves and our experiences. We all had wondered ***"What's wrong with me?";*** why can't I adapt ***(Scene 7).*** We realized we'd been, if not the cause of, at least complicitous in our own ***marginalization (Scene 9).*** We began to share our learned appreciation of other women—women at lunch ***(Scene 8)***, ***fascinating women (Scene 10),*** the women in our PAR circle—and how they helped us be our authentic selves. And finally we recognized that there are ***"Hidden Rules" (Scene 11),*** and that there is the challenge and mystery of living with the "ever-unfolding-us" at work and home, with the help and community of other women.

Moving to Conclusions

The next chapter, Conclusions, will discuss how we answered the research questions in the process of PAR. It will reflect on what we discovered about the praxis of womanhood and what some implications might be for the future.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECT: CONCLUSIONS

> *Women who have entered the male-dominated world of work or the professions unaware of their womanhood, unidentified with women, convinced that all knowledge is sexually neutral, not only fail in their duty to other women but perhaps also in their obligation to their own work (Heilbrun, 1979, p. 87).*

This study has examined collaboratively the experience of being in the public "work" sphere from the point of view of women as "outsiders," voices from the margins, workers of the "wrong gender." I have suggested that by developing a practice of womanhood, each of us might become a woman who does the "male" work of engineer, scientist, university professor, producer, or minister without feeling like we are frauds, somehow aping our betters, and without losing an important part of our Selves in "the 'he' whose voice we mimic" (Pagano, 1988, p. 262).

The study used Participatory Action Research (PAR) and began with the following research questions as guides:

- What experiences have made us as women feel marginalized in our male-dominated occupations? When did we discover that being in our career meant acting like a man?
- How can we improve our practice of being women in the male-dominated public sphere?
- What do we have to offer from the gender margins so that "desirable human qualities" might be expanded to include

those that have been traditionally defined as feminine/private?

The Outcome

In a PAR circle of women, we sought to tell our stories of marginalization and mimicry. The story went something like this:

> *We were flummoxed over being women in "men's jobs," symbolized somehow by not even knowing what to wear. We thought that "acting like men" could be enough, but it wasn't. There was a sense of being wrong no matter what we did. In that process of acting a part, we had separated from other women, and along with the culture that was in the very air that we breathed, we disparaged womanhood. We recognized that the relational skills we came to work with were neither seen nor valued. But either gradually or suddenly, we became conscious that the competitive/personal achievement model we all worked with seemed to be counter-productive. It surprised us to find that we knew how to make work go more smoothly and even more efficiently by working cooperatively with others and concerning ourselves with relationships. We knew how to work without yelling or threatening and didn't really like the yelling or threatening at all. But the organization/corporate others couldn't seem to see it our way, except sometimes other women could. We came to value other women. We realized that being with other women who could talk about the alienation we felt at work or in the world was*

good. In fact other women were fascinating; their stories sounded familiar and comforting. Who knew? We realized that being with other women helped us feel supported. If we had gone kicking and screaming to lunch with women before, now we went gratefully and might even initiate the gathering. We appreciate now that even with the hidden rules and roadblocks that were there, we were not mere victims of forced conformity. We had ***"****collaborated in our own marginalization****."*** *To that end, there is still plenty that needs to change in the culture so that all people can contribute fully to the community, but now we know that we can be a part of that change by being aware of the issues of being a woman and by joining with other women to share our lives and values.*

From this story, two sets of themes emerged. The first set was developed by the outside interpretive groups from a phenomenological perspective. They were

- Woman as Non-man***—"I wanted legs"***
  - *Subtheme 1:* ***"Oh no, Honey, you can't be a missionary. You want to marry one"***
  - *Subtheme 2:* ***"So I could run with the boys"***
- Alien Environment***—"Why can't you just try harder?"***
- Response to Environment***—"Turn into a Weak Man****"*
  - *Subtheme 1:* ***"I was uncomfortable in the costume"***
  - *Subtheme 2:* ***"Almost too Big a Rock to be Turned"***

- Awareness**—*"When everything changed*"
  - *Subtheme 1:* ***"Suddenly began to wake"***
  - *Subtheme 2:* ***"So that was the beginning of the end"***
- Practice of Womanhood**—*"You can find a different way"***

The second set of themes was developed by the PAR group itself in the form of scenes for the drama that was the final action step. They are

- Scene 1: We Must Not Be Like Other Women
- Scene 2: "Good Morning, Gentlemen"
- Scene 3: That Darn Power Suit
- Scene 4: Being Co-opted
- Scene 5: Invisible
- Scene 6: Or Hyper-Visible/All They See Is Your Body
- Scene 7: You Just Haven't Tried Hard Enough To Adapt To Your Environment or "What's wrong with me?"
- Scene 8: Lunch with a Bunch of Yakking Women?
- Scene 9: Feeling Marginalized
- Scene 10: Fascinating Women
- Scene 11: Hidden Rules

The two groups chose themes and scenes that represent most of the same ideas. Scene 1, "We Must Not Be Like Other Women," expresses the feeling of being different from women as we knew them, the "mold" represented by the theme and subthemes in the category *Woman as Non-Man*. Scenes 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 talk about the issues found in the themes and subthemes in the two categories *Alien Environment* and *Response to*

Environment of that work world. Scenes 7, 8, and 9 are expressing new *Awareness and* a waking up to our marginalization in the environment. The assumptions we had made about ourselves and other women—Lunch with a Bunch of Yakking Women—were wrong. In scenes 8, 10, and 11, it is apparent that we had come to imagine **"a different way"** of doing and being like the category *Practice of Womanhood*--a way of being intentional, authentic, and reflective about our identity as women in the male-dominated work world.

Implications

The Praxis of Womanhood is about developing a reflective practice of cultural competence as women. It would include a relational practice that is grounded in relational epistemology and ontology. This report is using a model of three possibilities for gender relationships: polarity/opposition, neutrality/no problem, complementarity/mutuality and appreciation of diversity (Allen, 1985/1997). The praxis of womanhood is not about a relationship of sex-polarity or female chauvinism, and it is also not about sex-neutrality that masks gender bias. The aim, we feel, is sex-complementarity or mutuality in relationships--also to include mutuality between races, classes, ages, and anything else that we can imagine to create differences between us—Buber's *I-Thou* in community (Buber, 1923/1970; Arnett, 1986). The praxis of womanhood, supported by circles of women invested in participatory action research, could provide sanity for

participants and change for the workplace. I will discuss the implications of sex-complementarity and mutuality, relational practice, and participatory action research groups in the workplace in more detail.

Complementarity/Mutuality

Complementarity/Mutuality is not just about everybody getting along and respecting each other's differences, though it is about that. It is also about Integration of what has been separated because of gender dichotomies: private and public spheres, work and home life, "feminine" and "masculine" qualities, organizational and psychological models. "Traditional employing organizations were designed as if typical workers did not have family or personal demands that competed for their primary identity and attention during working time" (Kossek & Lambert, 2005, p. 3). Recognizing that organizations have the need to thrive as well as the individual workers, however, Suzan Lewis and Linda Haas (2005) ask the question, "What would help companies achieve win-win solutions, whereby workforce productivity and work-life integration can both be achieved by changes in organizational cultures, policies, and practices…?" (p. 370).

An ideal of Integration is not the same as balancing work and life by "keep[ing] them separate and cope[ing] with the demands of each." Instead it "looks at the issue as a systemic problem, not an individual one." The problem is a problem for both men and women at work, and also "for the quality of the work." The integration task means "relaxing the separation of the two spheres in a way that allows everyone to be involved in both and

that expects that both spheres will change—and both will be improved—by the connection" (Fletcher & Bailyn, 2005, p. 176).

Relational Practice

> *Thus a relational (e)pistemology is supported by a relational ontology….Our fundamental relationality precedes both knowing and gender. I have argued … for the phenomenological irreducibility of human relations. These relations are between; they are mutual and reciprocal, in the sense of mutual interdependence and independence.* (Thayer-Bacon, 2003, p. 125).

I'm using the term "relational practice" as Joyce Fletcher (1999) described it in her study, but also as it comes naturally out of a relational (e)pistemology and relational ontology as Barbara Thayer-Bacon (2003) expressed it in her book. Relational practice does not claim to be gendered—only practiced by women nor that all women practice it—but it does challenge the traditional/dominant discourse. Traditionally, behaviors/tasks that were done with relational motives have been seen as weakness or incompetence. According to Fletcher's definition, "Relational practice is a way of working that reflects a relational logic of effectiveness and requires a number of skills such as empathy, mutuality, reciprocity, and sensitivity to emotional contexts" (Fletcher, 1999, p. 84). It is tacit knowledge that can be used strategically in order to effectively complete a project. This realization by women engineers that they achieved the best results by also focusing on relationships was found by Seat's (1996) research, as discussed in Chapter Two. Fletcher (1999) grouped her research data into the following work behaviors:

1) Preserving – being willing to minimize power and status differences to do what needs to be done for the project;
2) Mutual Empowering – enabling others' achievement and contribution to the project;
3) Self-Achieving – using relational skills to enhance one's professional growth and effectiveness, maintaining healthy working relationships;
4) Creating Team – creating and sustaining group life in the service of project goals (pp. 48-87).

Joyce Fletcher recommends four strategies for "practical pushing"—designed for small wins—three of which I find would be useful for participatory action research (PAR) groups in a workplace:

1) Naming – "calling attention to relational practice at work" by a) using a language of competence for valuing relational skills; b) making "visible the intent and define[ing] it as an outcome important to the organization"; c) calling attention to relational practice that others do;
2) Norming – calling "attention to organizational norms of effectiveness" with their negative outcomes and offering alternatives;
3) Networking – forming support groups to encourage and foster relational practice (pp. 121-136).

Fletcher's findings were of interest in the field of organizational development through a lens of gender and power. My interest here is regarding an individual praxis of womanhood supported by a community of women. I agree with Fletcher that disrupting the dominant discourse by *naming* traditional "feminine" qualities as strengths instead of weaknesses is a powerful tool, and that, in actuality, these qualities do benefit the organization in which they are used. However, this study was not designed to create new organizational theory, except to say that women are strong contributors to an organization without becoming "weak men." The results of this study are saying that there is more than one way to skin a cat, and there may even be a better way than the way we have always skinned it. It is encouraging women to lift their own voices within their own context, whatever that is, to discover together what it is that we/they know that can create a "different way" and a better way of working—a way that involves mutuality and complementarity. Toward that end there is the model of participatory action research we have used for this study.

Participatory Action Research in the Workplace

When I was facilitating interdisciplinary teams using a manufacturing efficiency model called "set-up reduction," one of the people required to complete the team, besides the stakeholders of the process, was a person who knew nothing about machining the part in question. The purpose of this "outsider" was to look at the process with new eyes; eyes that hadn't been

normalized or inured to the “right” way. They were supposed to ask at every step along the way, “Now why are we doing it this way?”

Women, who can never be trained to BE men, can provide the insight of outsiders—a view from the margins. What bell hooks (1990) says in the chapter called “Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness” is the following: “This is an intervention. I am writing to you. I am speaking from a place in the margins where I am different, where I see things differently. I am talking about what I see” (p. 152). Far from leaving defeated or staying in a state of despair, “we are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world” (p. 153).

PAR is the perfect tool. It provides a location of “creative space” not for therapy, but for “intervention.” Support of each of us as individuals is part of it, of course, but PAR is for problem solving and action. Do I mean staging sit-ins or picketing? Only if you’re more brazen and vocal than I am. We do have to deal with the practical reality of keeping our jobs and working together to get the job done. But on another level, there is no “they” to yell at or beg. There is no “Santa Claus” or Father Authority to grant our wishes. As hooks says, we are participating “in the formation of counter-hegemonic cultural practice” (p. 145). I’m suggesting using a PAR group, as we did in this study, for re-naming, re-norming, and practical pushing (see relational

practice discussion above). The resulting action might mean working on policy changes within an organization or the government, but it might not.

Our group only met for ten weeks and we were not from the same organization. It was still very powerful in spite of those drawbacks. But forming a group within the organization, like one of the women in our group described her lunch bunch, would be optimal:

> **Now 12 years later, I'm the one that sends out the email that says, "Let's go to lunch." We've got an established thing. There's a group of ladies, technical ladies, and we all go to lunch, and we don't really yak. We talk about frustrations at work and frustrations at home and it's just like a little group therapy, and I enjoy it and I like the yakking. I can yak and look forward to it now. But it's a different kind of yakking. It's more about sharing now. We share each others lives. We really care about each other (Quote from "Scenes From the Margins", Chapter Five).**

An over-identification with masculine qualities through gender polarity, is part of what led us to our male-dominated professions where we discovered that the best we could do was become "weak men." Our expectation of gender neutrality, or the "ignoring it and hoping it will go away" method, did not work so we needed a new strategy. Is there a way to be a Woman doing the job of a college professor, a minister, an engineer, a scientist, or a media producer in a "different way"? PAR was an opportunity to reflect with other women about what it means to be a woman in each particular life and practice, from a position of gender complementarity/mutuality, reflecting together on how best to use relational skills toward effectiveness and an integration of public and private, thereby creating a Praxis of Womanhood.

Perhaps one day, when a certain critical mass is reached, the category "Woman" will no longer be needed. But as Jane Roland Martin says (quoted in Chapter 2, p. 35 of this study), it seems to be the nature of language to categorize. I dare to imagine, though, with Mary Belenky, Lynne Bond, & Jacqueline Weinstock (1997) and with Nel Noddings (2002) that the qualities of the Home (the private sphere) might benefit those hallowed halls/offices/cubicles (the public sphere) where traditional "work" values have ruled. The problem of relational values being excluded from the public work sphere is not just a problem for women, it is also a problem for all of the human beings who are considered human resources there. And armed with this confidence and awareness, a group of women, such as this one, might indeed take a new vision into their workplace. In recognizing that we have an impact on our world and that we can be intentional about the quality of some of that impact, the praxis of womanhood can reward/impact not only the practitioner but her male and female associates as well.

REFERENCES

REFERENCES

Addelson, K. P. (1993). Knower/doers and their moral problems. In L. Alcoff & E. Potter (Eds.), *Feminist epistemologies* (pp. 265-294). New York: Routledge.

Allan, E. J. & Madden, Mary (2006). Chilly classrooms for female undergraduate students: A question of Method? *The Journal of Higher Education,* 77(4), 684-711.

Allen, P. (1997) *The concept of woman: The Aristotelian revolution 750 BC – AD 1250 (2nd ed.)*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eeerdmans.

Ambrose, S. A., Dunkle, K. L., Lazarus, B. B., Nair, I. & Harkus, D. A. (1997). *Journeys of women in science and engineering: No universal constants*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Armstrong, J. L. & Peters, J. M. (2000). The transformative process of collaborative learning. Paper presented at QUIG 2000, Athens, GA.

Arnett, R. C. (1986). *Communication and community: Implications of Martin Buber's dialogue.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Baker, J. G. (2003, Fall). Glass ceilings or sticky floors? A model of high-income law graduates. *Journal of Labor Research,* 24(4), 695-711.

Belenky, M. F., Bond, L. A., & Weinstock, J. S. (1997). *A tradition that has no name: Nurturing the development of people, families, and communities*. New York: Basic Books.

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B.M., Goldberger, N.R., & Tarule, J.M. (1986/1997). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind* (Reissued). New York: Basic Books.

Berger, P. L. & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. New York: Anchor Books.

Bing, V. M. & Reid, P. T. (1996). Unknown women and unknowing research: Consequences of color and class in feminist psychology. In N. Goldberger, J. Tarule, B. Clinchy, & M. Belenky (Eds.), *Knowledge, difference, and power: Essays inspired by women's ways of knowing*, (pp. 175-202). New York: Basic Books.

Bloom, L. R. (1996). Stories of one's own: Nonunitary subjectivity in narrative representation. In S. B. Merriam and Associates (Eds). *Qualitative Research in Practice: Example for Discussion and Analysis*, (pp. 289-309). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bogoch, B. (1997). Gendered lawyering: difference and dominance in lawyer-client interaction. *Law and Society Review,* 31(4), 677-712.

Bolen, J. S. (1999). *The millionth circle: How to change ourselves and the world.* Berkeley, CA: Conari Press.

Borda, O. F. (2001). Participatory (action) research in social theory: Origins and challenges. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry & practice* (pp. 27-37). London: Sage.

Bordo, S. (1990). Feminism, postmodernism, and gender-scepticism. In L. J. Nicholson (Ed.) Feminism/Postmodernism. (pp. 134-156). New York and London: Routledge.

Brainard, S. G. & Carlin, L. (2001). A six-year longitudinal study of undergraduate women in engineering and science. In M. Lederman & I. Bartsch (Eds.), *The Gender and Science Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Brookfield, S. (1990). Using critical incidents to explore learners' assumptions. In J. Mezirow and Asscociates (Eds.). Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning, (pp. 177-193). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Buber, M. (1970). *I and thou* (W. Kaufmann, Trans.). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. (Original work published 1923).

Burke, R. J. (1998, February). Dual career couples: Are men still advantaged. *Psychological Reports,* 82(1), 209-210.

Butler, J. (1990). Gender trouble, feminist theory, and psychoanalytic discourse. In L. J. Nicholson (Ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism*. (pp. 324-340) New York and London: Routledge.

Chiu, C. (1998, April). Do professional women have lower job satisfaction than professional men? Lawyers as a case study. *Sex Roles*, 38(7/8), 521-537.

Code, L. (1991). *What can she know? Feminist theory and the construction of knowledge.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Code, L. (1993). Taking subjectivity into account. In L. Alcoff & E. Potter, *Feminist Epistemologies,* (pp. 15-43). New York: Routledge.

Committee on Women in Science and Engineering (Ad hoc Panel on Industry). (1994). Women scientists and engineers employed in industry: Why so few? A Report Based on a Conference. National Research Council: Office of Scientific and Engineering Personnel. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Cook, C. & Waters, M. (1998, May). The impact of organizations form on gendered labour markets in engineering and law. *The Sociological Review,* 46(2), 314-339.

Coser, R. L. & Rokoff, G. (1971, Spring). *Social Problems*, 18(4), 535-554.

Creswell, J. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Daly, M. (1968/1985). *The church and the second sex* (Rev. ed.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Davis, M.; Dias-Bowie, Y; Greenberg, K.; Klukken, G; Pollio, H.R.; Thomas, S.P. & Thompson, C.L. (2004, July/August). "A Fly in the Buttermilk": Descriptions of university life by successful black undergraduate students at a predominately white southern university. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 75(4), 420-445.

De Beauvoir, S. (1952, 1980, 1989). *The Second Sex*. H.M. Parshley, (Trans and Ed.). New York: Vintage Books, Random House.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., pp. 1-28), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dick, B. (1993). You want to do an action research thesis? How to conduct and report action research. *Action Research Theses and Dissertations*. Retrieved August 2, 2003 from Southern Cross University Web site: http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/art/arthesis.html.

Di Stefano, C. (1990). Dilemmas of difference; Feminism, modernity, and postmodernism. In L. J. Nicholson (Ed.) *Feminism/Postmodernism* (pp. 63-82). New York: Routledge.

Eisenhart, M. A. & Finkel, E. (1998). *Women's science: Learning and succeeding from the margins*. New York: Routledge.

Eisenstein, Z. R. (1994). *The Color of Gender: Reimaging Democracy*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Engel, M.P. and Thistlethwaite, S. B. (2004). Making the connections among liberation theologies around the world. In S.B. Thistlethwaite and M.P. Engel (Eds.) *Lift every voice: Constructing christian theologies from the underside (Rev. ed)* (pp. 1-18). Maryknoll, New York: Orbis.

England, Paula (Summer, 2005). Gender inequality in labor markets: The role of motherhood and segregation. *Social Politics*, 12(2), 264-288.

Etzkowitz, H., Kemelgor, C., & Uzzi, B. (2000). *Athena unbound: The advancement of women in science and technology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Flax, J. (1990). Postmodernism and gender relations in feminist theory. In L. J. Nicholson (Ed.), Feminism/Postmodernism (pp. 39-62). New York: Routledge.

Fletcher, J. K. (1999). *Disappearing acts: Gender, power, and relational practice at work*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Fletcher, J. K. & Bailyn, L. (2005). The equity imperative: Redesigning work for work-family integration. In E. E. Kossek & S. J. Lambert (Eds.), *Work and life integration: Organizational, cultural, and individual perspectives* (pp. 171-189). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fraser, N. & Nicholson, L.J. (1990). Social criticism without philosophy: An encounter between feminism and postmodernism. In L. J. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (pp. 19-38). New York: Routledge.

Gaventa, J. & Cornwall, A. (2001). Power and knowledge. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry & practice* (pp. 70-80). London: Sage.

Gerdes, E. P. (1995, June). Women preparing for traditionally male professions: Physical and psychological symptoms associated with work and home stress. *Sex Roles,* 32, 787-807.

Gilligan, C. (1982/1993). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development, (Rev. ed.)*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Goldberger, N. R. (1996). Cultural imperatives and diversity in ways of knowing. In N. Goldberger, J. Tarule, B. Clinchy, & M. Belenky (Eds.), *Knowledge, difference, and power: Essays inspired by women's ways of knowing, (*pp. 335-364). New York: Basic Books.

Goldberger, N., Tarule, J., Clinchy, B. & Belenky, M. (Eds.), *Knowledge, difference, and power: Essays inspired by women's ways of knowing.* New York: Basic Books.

Gornick, V. (2002). Women in science: Half in, half out. In J. A. Kourany (Ed.), *The gender of science (*pp. 39-60). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Gottfried, H. & Reese, L. (2003, Spring). Gender, policy, politics, and work: Feminist comparative and transnational research. *Review of Policy Research*, 20 (1), 3-18.

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hart, M. U. (1990). Liberation through consciousness raising. In J. Mezirow and Asscociates (Eds). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning,* (pp. 47-73). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hartsock, N. (1990). Foucault on power: A theory for women? In L. J. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (pp. 157-175). New York: Routledge.

Heilbrun, C. G. (1979). *Reinventing womanhood*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Helgesen, S. (1990). *The female advantage: Women's ways of leadership*. New York: Currency.

Hickman, S. (2004). Feminist identity politics: Transforming the political. In D. Taylor and K. Vintges (Eds.), *Feminism and the final Foucault* (pp. 197-213). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

hooks, b. (1990). *Yearning: Race, gender, and cultural politics*. Boston: South End Press.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Hopkins, N. H. (2000). Experience of women at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Women in the Chemical Workforce: A Workshop Report to the Chemical Sciences Roundtable. Retrieved on 6/28/06 from http://fermat.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=10047&page=135

Hull, K. E. & Nelson, R. L. (2000, September). Assimilation, choice, or constraint? Testing theories of gender differences in the careers of lawyers. *Social Forces,* 79(1), 229-264.

Jarvis, P. (1998). *The Practitioner-Researcher: Developing Theory from Practice (A Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series).* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Kelly-Gadol, J. (1976, Summer). The social relation of the sexes: Methodological implications of women's history. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1(4), 809-823.

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (1995). Introduction: The nature of action research. In S. Kemmis & R. McTaggart, (Eds.), *The action research planner (pp. 5-28*). Geelong, Australia: Deakin University Press.

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (2000). Participatory action research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 567 – 605). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kidd, S. M. (1996). *The dance of the dissident daughter: A woman's journey from Christian tradition to the sacred feminine*. New York: Harper Collins.

Kossek, E. E. & Lambert, S. J. (2005). "Work-family scholarship": Voice and context. In E. E. Kossek & S. J. Lambert (Eds.), *Work and life integration: Organizational, cultural, and individual perspectives* (pp. 3-17). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kourany, J. A. (Ed.). (2002). *The gender of science.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kuhne, G.W & Quigley, B.A (1997, Spring). Understanding and using action research in practice settings. In B.A. Quigley & G.W. Kuhne (Eds).

Creating Practical Knowledge Through Action Research: Posing Problems, Solving Problems, and Improving Daily Practice, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (73, pp. 23-40). San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Laband, D. N. & Lentz, B. F. (1998). The effects of sexual harassment on job satisfaction, earnings, and turnover among female lawyers. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review,* 51(4), 594-607.

Lather, P. (1991, Spring). Deconstructing/deconstructive inquiry: The politics of knowing and being known. *Educational Theory*, 41(2), 153-173.

Lather, P. (1992, Spring). Critical frames in education research: Feminist and post-structural perspectives. *Theory into Practice, 31(2), 87-99.*

Lee, J. D. (2002, October). More than ability: Gender and personal relationships influence science and technology involvement. *Sociology of Education,* 75(4), 349-373.

Lewis, S. & Haas, L. (2005). Work-life integration and social policy: A social justice theory and gender equity approach to work and family. In E. E. Kossek & S. J. Lambert (Eds.), *Work and life integration: Organizational, cultural, and individual perspectives* (pp. 349-374). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lincoln, Y. S. & Guba, E. G. (2000). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S.

Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 163 – 188). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Longino, H. E. (1993). Subjects, Power, and Knowledge: Description and Prescription in Feminist Philosophies of Science. In L. Alcoff & E. Potter, *Feminist Epistemologies,* (pp. 101-120). New York: Routledge.

Maguire, P. (2001). Uneven ground: Feminisms and Action Research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry & practice*. (pp. 59-69) London: Sage.

Marshall, J. (2001). Self-reflective inquiry practices. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry & practice*. (pp. 433-439). London: Sage Publications.

Martin, J.R. (1986, June/July). Redefining the educated person: Rethinking the significance of gender. *Educational Researcher,* 6-10.

Martin, J.R. (1994, Spring). Methodological essentialism, false difference, and other dangerous traps. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 19(3), 630-657.

McIlwee, J. S. & Robinson, J. G. (1992). *Women in engineering: Gender, power, and workplace culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

McNiff, J. (1988). *Action Research: Principles and Practice*. London: Routledge.

McTaggart, R. (1991, Spring). Principles for participatory action research. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41(3), 168-187.

McWhorter, L. (2004). Practicing, practicing. In D. Taylor and K. Vintges (Eds.), *Feminism and the final Foucault* (pp. 144-162). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Merriam, S.B. (2002a). Assessing and evaluating qualitative research. In S. B. Merriam and Associates. (Eds.) *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (pp. 18-33). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2002b). Introduction to qualitative research. In S. B. Merriam and Associates. (Eds.) *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (pp. 3-17). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Mezirow, J. (1990). How critical reflection triggers transformative learning. In J. Mezirow and Asscociates (Eds.), *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood: A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning*, (pp. 1-20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, J.B. (1986). *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (2nd ed.). Boston: Beacon Press.

Nicholson, L. (1990). Introduction. . In L. J. Nicholson (Ed.) *Feminism/postmodernism*. (pp. 1-16). New York: Routledge

Noddings, N. (2002). *Starting at home: Caring and social policy*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Noddings, N. (2003). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education* (2nd ed.). Berkley: University of California Press.

Olesen, V. L. (2000). Feminisms and qualitative research at and into the millennium. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (2nd ed., pp. 215-255). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Pagano, J. A. (1988). Teaching women. In Lynda Stone (Ed.), *The Education Feminism Reader*, (pp. 252-275). New York: Routledge.

Park, P. (2001). Knowledge and participatory research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry & practice* (pp. 81-90). London: Sage.

Perna, L.W. (2005, May). Sex differences in faculty tenure and promotion: The contribution of family ties. *Research in Higher Education*, 46(3), 277-307.

Peters, J.M. (1994, Oct 14). Instructors-as-Researchers-and-Theorists: Faculty Developments in a Community College. Paper present at Oxford University.

Peters, J.M. (1997, Spring). Reflections on action research. In B.A. Quigley & G.W. Kuhne (Eds). Creating Practical Knowledge Through Action Research: Posing Problems, Solving Problems, and Improving Daily Practice, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (73, pp. 63-72). San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Pillow, W. S. (2002, Winter). Gender matters: Feminist research in education evaluation. *New Directions for Evaluation*, 96, 9-26.

Pollio, H., Henley, T., & Thompson, C. (1997). *The phenomenology of everyday life.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Quigley, B.A. & Kuhne, G.W. (1997, Spring). "A condition that is not yet": Reactions, reflections, and closing comments. In B.A. Quigley & G.W. Kuhne (Eds). Creating Practical Knowledge Through Action Research: Posing Problems, Solving Problems, and Improving Daily Practice, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* (73, pp. 73-85). San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.

Ranson, G. (2005, May 1). No longer "one of the boys"; Negotiations with motherhood, as prospect or reality, among women in engineering. *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 42(2), 145-166

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2001). Introduction: Inquiry and participation in search of a world worthy of human aspiration. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry & practice*, (pp. 1-14). London: Sage.

Reinharz, S. (1992). Introduction. *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. [with the assistance of Lynn Davidman] (pp. 3-17). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Rosser, S. V. (2002, Fall/Winter). Will EC 2000 make engineering more female friendly? *Women's Studies Quarterly,* 29(3/4), 164-186.

Ruddick, S. (1996). Reason's "femininity": A case for connected knowing. In N. Goldberger, J. Tarule, B. Clinchy, & M. Belenky (Eds.). *Knowledge,*

difference, and power: Essays inspired by women's ways of knowing, (pp. 248 – 273). New York: Basic Books.

Schaef, A. W. (1981/1992). *Women reality: An emerging female system in a white male society* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Harper

Seat, J. E. (1996). *Women engineers: Expectations and perceptions*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

Sonnert, G. (with Holton, G.) (1995). Gender *differences in science careers: The Project Access Study*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Sue, D.W.; Bingham, R.P.; Porche-Burke, L.; and Vasquez, M. (1999). The diversification of psychology: A multicultural revolution. *American Psychologist*, 54, 1061-1069.

Sue, D.W. and Sue, D. (2003). *Counseling the Culturally Different: Theory and Practice*, (4th ed). New York: John Wiley and Sons.

Swiss, D. J. (2000). *The male mind at work: A woman's guide to working with men.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus.

Tarule, J. M. (1996). Voices in dialogue: Collaborative ways of knowing. In N.R. Goldberger, J.M. Tarule, B.M. Clinchy, M.F. Belenky (Eds.) *Knowledge, Difference, and Power: Essays Inspired by Women's Ways of Knowing* (pp. 274 – 304). New York: Basic Books.

Thayer-Bacon, B. J. (2000). *Transforming Critical Thinking: Thinking Constructively.* New York: Teachers College Press, Columbia University.

Thayer-Bacon, B. J. (2003). *Relational "(e)pistemologies."* New York: Peter Lang.

Thomas, S. P. & Pollio, H. R. (2002). Listening to patients: A phenomenological approach to nursing research and practice. New York: Springer

Toutkoushian, R.K. & Conley, V.M. (2005, Feb). Progress for women in academe, yet inequities persist: Evidence from NSOPF:99. *Research in Higher Education*, 46(1), 1-28.

Treleaven, L. (2001). The turn to action and the linguistic turn: Towards an integrated methodology. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry & practice* (pp. 70-80). London: Sage.

Valian, V. (1998). *Why so Slow?: The Advancement of Women*. The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Valian, V. (2005a, January 30). Raise your hand if you're a woman in science... *The Washington Post,* p. B01. Retrieved 6/28/06 from http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/psych/faculty/valian/valian.htm#review.

Valian, V. (2005b, Summer). Beyond gender schemas: Improving the advancement of women in academia. *Hypatia*, (20, 3). pp. 198-213.

Vintges, K. (2004), Endorsing practices of freedom. In D. Taylor and K. Vintges (Eds.), *Feminism and the final Foucault* (pp. 275-299). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Williams, J.C. (2004, Nov-Dec). Hitting the maternal wall. *Academe, 90(6),* 16-20.

Woodman, M. [with K. Danson, M. Hamilton, & R. B. Allen] (1993). *Leaving my father's house: A journey to conscious feminity.* Boston: Shambhala.

Wright, H. K. (2002). Qualitative research in education: From an attractive nuisance to a dizzying array of traditions and possibilities. *Tennessee Education,* 32(2)/33(1), 7-15.

Ziegler, M. (2001). Improving practice through action research. *Adult Learning*, 12(1), 3-4.

Zikmund, B.B., Lummis, A.T. & Chang, P.M.Y. (1998). *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

VITA

Jane Bingham Henry has a B.S. in Education and a B. S. in Engineering. She has taught public school, worked as a corporate engineer, and spent the last several years as a graduate student. As a student she was inducted into Kappa Delta Pi Educational Honor Society; Golden Key National Honor Society; Tau Beta Pi National Engineering Honor Society; and Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society. As an engineer in manufacturing, she received a Distinguished Service Award for contributions to the overall betterment of her department. As a graduate research assistant, she worked for the Center for Literacy Studies contributing research support to several state funded studies. She also worked for Engage 1st, a program to recruit rural high school students into engineering.

Her varied experiences have given her a unique combination of effective analytical/problem solving skills and strong communication/people skills. She enjoys doing research and facilitating learning and change.