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AN EXPLORATION OF WOMEN'S  
INVOLVEMENT IN SOCIAL CHANGE

CURRENT DIRECTIONS IN COMMUNITY  
WORK PRACTICE

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the nature of community work in Aotearoa, specifically women's involvement in radical practice. The research particularly aimed to present a portrait of the elements of contemporary feminist inspired practice, as well as to investigate the significance of ideology in the participants' work.

A feminist research methodology is used, namely multiple, in depth, semi-structured interviewing. Three, two hour interviews were conducted individually with four women who work for social change. The interviews involved a reciprocal process of story telling and self reflection, where the women explored how they understand themselves and what has shaped their commitment to social change.

The women's stories encompass personal and every day aspects of life, an articulation of their vision for the future, and a commentary on aspects of broader institutional change. The research identifies aspects of the social context currently effecting community work, including the impact of libertarian political philosophies, and the ramifications of sexual abuse of children.

The insights gained are examined in the light of contemporary theories of community work and social change, in particular critical theory, feminism and postmodernism. The significance of ideology for community work practice is shown to be highly relevant for contemporary practice. Consequently, the Sayer Ideology Model (1990) of community work can be seen as having potential for the education of those working for social change.

The current directions and issues for contemporary practice are identified, generally focusing on the unique aspects of our lives which are neglected and denied by the dominant patriarchal culture. A strong emphasis on aspects of women's spirituality was demonstrated, and this was strengthened by a feminist analysis and a strong political analysis. The radical agenda in community work is shown to be alive and growing, despite the challenges of the current context.

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## INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this thesis has been to explore the nature of women's involvement in work for social change in Aotearoa, particularly that work which is described as radical community work. Community work can be seen as those activities which are aimed at changing ourselves, our locality and the world towards better ways of living and relating. This work is radical because it takes account of the forms of oppression embedded in the social, economic and political aspects of society (Fook 1993). Women's participation in radical community work is distinguishable by the recognition given to private experiences which are linked to broader political issues (James 1982).

The second aim of this thesis has been to examine the challenges currently faced in working for social change. I have observed that challenges in practice are greater for those working with a radical perspective. It seems that the high rates of burnout and pessimism amongst community workers is evidence of the strength of these challenges.

In this exploration I wished to investigate the significance of ideology within contemporary community work practice. Amidst the different interpretations of ideology, writers allude to notions of complex and often contradictory world views, myths, values, theories and thoughts. My own interpretation includes these notions and concurs with Giroux (1983) that ideology is an active process, where ideas are linked to behaviour.

An understanding of ideology is fundamental to this discussion because of its centrality in the work of feminist inspired radical community workers, who demonstrate a commitment to making their ideological assumptions explicit. Understandings of the world are clearly articulated and linked with action towards social change as opposed to the maintenance of the status quo.

My perspective on community work sees the potential for reality to be transformed through the negotiation of ideology. This does not assume that there is "true" consciousness or liberation found in the adoption of the right ideas, but involves ongoing dialogue, "the encounter between human beings, mediated by the world, in order to name and transform the world" (Shirley 1982:286).

Many community workers have been reported to have been unable to say what theories they used in their practice (Rees 1991). Creed and Tomlinson (1984) argue that community workers who have not developed a clear ideological stance may be eclectic in their selection of tactics and strategies. Kelly and Sewell (1988:91) assert that skills learnt in isolation from head and heart are only "kitbags of techniques". Sayer (1990:300) sees that "action without reflection is performance within ideology not participation in exposing and recreating it". These writers generally conclude that workers are impeded by a lack of analysis and that ideological neutrality is only a myth.

The notion of ideology also helps to describe how we make sense of our worlds, and hence how we behave. People use and act on ideas to realise their interests in every day situations. Ideology, as a set of images and metaphors, is linked to an individual's lived experience and social interaction as well as being connected to emotional responses (Fine and Sandstrom 1993).

Our participation in interpersonal, individual and every day aspects of life is important because it marks the boundaries between informal and institutional practices, making the personal, political. This realisation diminishes the maintenance of silenced voices within the personal realm, but shows how our existence and relationships contribute to the creation and recreation of reality.

In this thesis I draw on the Sayer Ideology Model (1990), a model emanating from a feminist and radical perspective, which uses ideology as a framework for both education and community work practice. The model was developed in the United Kingdom and was highly influenced by the theories of Antonio Gramsci. Sayer's model has important links with my research because it challenges community workers to investigate the current ideological constructs in society and the nature of the discourses being transformed. The model warns that workers may otherwise not recognise their contribution to the change process and may risk oppressing further. The notion of ideology and this model is examined more closely in Chapter Two.

It is hoped that the stories in this research will provide inspiration to others, and that the issues explored will be useful as a lighthouse for those working for social change. This material may contribute to the development of a shared vision of social change in Aotearoa.

### The research and structure of this thesis

In pursuing the aims of this examination, in-depth interviews were conducted with four community workers with an interest in the women's health movement, in Aotearoa. A detailed account of the research methods and an introduction to the research participants is located in Chapter Three. Generally a dialogical research process is used which incorporates interactive, reciprocal self disclosure (Oakley 1981). This study provided opportunities for the participants to reflect on practice and to develop their ideas further. It is hoped that through this study, the participants have gained support and acknowledgment for their work.

Chapter One provides a background to the examination with a review of the literature about social change, primarily focusing on women doing radical community work. The traditions which inform community work such as critical theory, feminism and postmodernism. In Chapter Two the significance of ideology and hegemony for community work is explored. Chapter Two also introduces the Sayer Ideology Model (1990).

Chapter Three explores the feminist methodology used in the research and introduces the research participants. The interview schedule which guided the research is provided. The chapter includes a discussion of my experience of developing this research.

The thesis then documents and analyses the research findings. Chapter Four documents the women's personal experiences and conceptual understandings of the world. This includes the participants perceptions of their families of origin and the communities they were brought up in. This chapter investigates significant personal and work experiences contributing to the commitment to social change and the development of a more formal political perspective.

In Chapter Five I investigate the participants understandings of the current context in which they work, in order to form a picture of the contemporary environment in Aotearoa. The central aspects of the current context identified include the challenge of the prevailing libertarian political philosophies and the ramifications of child sexual abuse.

An understanding of the personal issues and the current context provide a background for Chapter Six which examines the strategies used by the participants in practice. The strategies used with individuals and groups are examined with the individual, local and institutional social change contexts.

Chapter Seven investigates the participants responses to using models of community work in their practice and documents their responses to the Sayer Ideology Model (1990). In this chapter the essence of contemporary community work is explored, covering aspects of spirituality and womens' ways of knowing, as well as acknowledging the learning which comes from indigenous cultures.

In Chapter Eight the participants discuss how they gain support and sustenance for the work they do in the community. They also comment on their experience of formal education. In this chapter the significance of spirituality for these areas, support and education, is highlighted.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by summarising the main messages within the women's stories. These insights are used to make inferences about the nature of radical community work in Aotearoa. The information is also used to predict how education for community workers can be further enhanced in Aotearoa.

## CHAPTER ONE

### LITERATURE REVIEW – COMMUNITY WORK

The literature which informs community work provides a theoretical context for the following thesis. Contemporary community work theory overlaps with general theories of social change and encompasses various feminist, indigenous, critical and postmodernist traditions. There are connections between these traditions, but as Lather (1991:9) explains we end up attempting to "weave varied speaking voices together" and seem to tap into a "zeitgeist of many disciplines" (1991:xx).

Prior to the work of Craig (1991), there was an absence of formal written information about community work in Aotearoa, especially research about women's specific role. Therefore material is primarily drawn from British, American and Australian traditions, transversing publications dated from 1960 through to 1994.

#### Community work introduced

Community work is a broad label for a range of organising and planning activities, which had links to, but became recognisable from other areas of work, such as social work and town planning (Smith 1978). Some writers have constructed definitions of community work (Leissner 1973; Elliot 1978), but most other writers are reluctant to, concluding that uncertainty and doubt abound as to community work's meaning and function (Twelvetrees 1982).

Critical terms such as "community" have been used in an ambiguous way. The lack of an effective definition for community has been mourned by many community workers (Plant 1974, Clarke 1973). The common use of the term has been criticised as referring to a situation which is mythical and idealistic (Smith 1978), where the conservative nature of social activities and the existence of conflict is ignored (Bryson and Mowbray 1981).

In this thesis "community" can be defined as points in the micro levels of society where power relations converge in networks around aspects such as the locality, the family, kinship, knowledge and material production. Power relations emerge from aspects including class, race, history, culture

and gender. Work which considers these aspects and focuses on social change can then be defined as community work.

Although the distinct origin is confused, community work activities are often identified as developing from the social work tradition (Matthews and Ward 1978), firstly as a method of individually focussed case work, then as a method for responding to social problems (Rothman 1974). The linkages to social work are still identified today and activities are often sponsored within welfare oriented agencies. Some community workers argue against the definition of community work as a method of social work, because of a commitment to social change, as opposed to social control (Thorpe and Petruchenia 1985).

Different community work paradigms appear to have emerged as a set of responses to social conditions at any given period of history, reflecting the dominant ideology that explained these conditions (Rothman 1974). Kellner (1978), Rothman (1974) and Twelvetrees (1982) have developed models to represent the diverse and often opposing ideological influences on community work practice. Thorpe and Petruchenia (1986) organise their examination into categories based on consensus, pluralist and structuralist (radical) ideological perspectives. Most of these writers emphasise that such categories are constructed out of analytical extremes, in order to achieve clarity. Twelvetrees (1982) discusses how categories or models are only pure forms and ideal types. The radical perspective more clearly emerged in response to the early conservative and pluralist analysis.

A radical perspective is central to the work of the women interviewed in this research. It is important to emphasise that all community work practice is not radical, for some community work is aimed towards supporting the existing ways of organising, or can be seen as having a social control function. In this examination the literature is examined from a radical perspective of community work theory and practice.

### Radical Community Work

The radical position has also been referred to as a conflict or structuralist orientation. Radical can broadly encompass dissent and protest against the status quo, and a fundamental commitment to social change. This position has been strongly influenced by the analysis that dominated work in the

U.K. Britain and Australia during the 1970s. This period was marked by the emergence of social movements and the rediscovery of poverty (Rothman 1974). The analysis emanates from a Marxist or socialist analysis of society, which locates continuing inequalities within the wider social, economic and political aspects of capitalist society. The first major writers to document theory and to explore practice from a radical orientation were Bailey and Brake (1980), Galper (1980) and Corrigan and Leonard (1978). The growth of a radical analysis in the 1970s emerged in response to the conservative and pluralist directions for social change.

### The Conservative Approach to Community Work

Within a conservative perspective society is viewed as a sound and positive situation for human life (Kelly and Sewell 1988). It is assumed that there is agreement amongst all about desirable outcomes and no recognition of conflicts of interests between certain groups. Community life is presented as the ideal (Rothman 1974). Poverty is seen to be inevitable because the world is made up of individuals who have inherited different capacities for coping and providing for themselves. People's efforts, achievements and therefore rewards are not equal. Success is related to individual effort (Twelvetrees 1982). Failure is individually determined, either through lack of effort or through bad luck.

From a conservative stance, failure is also related to a breakdown in community ideals. Characteristics and circumstances of individuals are seen as transmitted through generations, creating a cycle of deprivation and a "culture of poverty" (Jones and Mayo 1974:162). In this interpretation class is not seen as politically or economically based, but as a reflection of individual success.

These conservative explanations of society and social problems inform the strategies used in some community work practice, particularly during the 1960s. Some writers saw community work as a way to work with individuals but in a group context (Goetschius 1969). The Gulbenkian Report (Caloust Gulbenkian Foundation 1968) recommended ways that society can induce individuals and groups to modify their behaviour in the direction of certain cultural norms. The National Council of Social Service (1962) insisted that community work should attempt to remove sources of temptation and provide tighter controls on public behaviour.

During this period conservative decision makers urged community workers to use community cohesion and self-help strategies. The family advice centres (FAC) in Britain during the 1960s promoted the idea of community networks as an aid to community cohesion. The Seebohm Report (1968) saw a principal role of the community worker was to promote individual changes in the deviant sub-cultures. In America, The Office of Economic Opportunity introduced the anti-poverty programs which emphasised the elimination of poverty and the strengthening of the community.

In Australia, government departments worked towards supporting local initiatives and processes oriented towards increasing community involvement and self-reliance (Bryson and Mowbray 1981). Similarly the New Zealand government philosophy was to foster the wellbeing of the community and to promote community initiative (Craig 1987). In these cases the use of the concept community can be seen as referring to a group of individuals, requiring guidance.

Despite having many social services some communities continue to remain visibly disadvantaged. A conservative analysis highlights the lack of adequate administration and co-ordination of social services as a reason why poverty continues. Community workers are seen to have a role in promoting good administration of social services and enhancing communication. The early Community Development Projects (CDPs) in Britain abound with reference to communication (Jones and Mayo 1974). Through these good administration arguments for community work, there developed an increased emphasis on rational practice and a professional orientation to a career in community work. Skills were focused on rather than the macro level theories of society.

The conservative analysis also explains the continuation of poverty as being caused by the inefficient use of community resources, and through the difficulties in communication between decision makers and communities. The Skeffington Report (1969) emphasises public participation in planning. Increased resources were initially assumed to ameliorate individual and community problems. The Community Development Projects in their early stages involved pumping resources into communities that displayed disadvantage. Developments during the 1960s exemplify this orientation, such as the British Educational Priority Areas and Inner City Projects (Henderson et al 1980).

Radical workers express concern that in this approach attention is focused towards those experiencing poverty and away from much broader structural questions. Similarly Bryson and Mowbray (1981) argue that this position ignores questions of class structure and conflicts of interest. Craig (1987) sees religion as perpetuating the individual blame for problems, and in so doing becomes another form of social control.

Bennington (1972) describes how evaluations of the British CDP experience revealed that problems required more far reaching solutions than more resources and self help programs imposed on the community. The CDP workers found a lack of government goodwill to act on information supplied from the project. The workers were dissatisfied with the way the individuals are blamed when the programs fail. Thorpe and Petruchenia (1985) parallels the Australian AAP with the British CDP, recognising that both programs were steeped in conservative ideology.

#### The pluralist approach to community work

Within a pluralist perspective there is less faith in the idea of a sound community, but a recognition of disadvantaged groups in society (Thorpe, Petruchenia 1990). Groups are seen to be disadvantaged because of imbalances in the democratic and bureaucratic systems, where there is competition for scarce resources and decision making power. Individuals are not seen to be personally to blame for their situation, but are disadvantaged in competition with others. The State is seen to be a neutral arbiter between groups, and consequently well functioning democracy remains highly valued in this position (Kelly and Sewell 1988). Urbanisation and industrialisation are thought to be a major cause of social problems in the modern world. "Urban anonymity...erodes the foundation of democracy and gives rise to destructive forces." (Alinsky 1969:43).

The pluralist position also involves a view of conflict where the different but not antithetical interests of citizens are fought out. Conflict therefore leads to consensus outcomes and not revolution. From this position economic and political power is seen as diffused and fragmented rather than concentrated on a class or elite (Thorpe and Petruchenia 1985).

Community work in the pluralist tradition, is advocated as a way to address imbalances in the system and to remedy social difficulties without major changes to the structure of society. Community workers can become advocates for different groups in order to help the disadvantaged get what they deserve. Bargaining and negotiation is a major community work role, as is the fight for re-allocation and re-distribution of resources.

Theories of participation are strongly supported by community workers informed by ideology in the pluralist tradition. Crook (1974) advocates community participation in social planning, in order to influence the balance of resources before decisions are made. The Skeffington Report (1969) advised local authorities to involve rather than advise. Martin and Rein (1974) conclude that participation does not necessarily increase power, but see the merit in the process if it is carried out more effectively, with local and national governments having more commitment to the process.

Practice techniques which can also be identified with a pluralist position include the use of advocacy and social action (Twelvetrees 1982, Alinsky 1969, Kelly and Sewell 1988). Social action is standing with a group to oppose a system or a group which is blocking access to change. Social action can aim to increase public debate, increasing awareness of the issues and putting pressure on the target group. It may take the form of confrontation, or of compromise. Action can be loud and active such as public demonstrations, or it may be passive such as a refusal to participate.

The techniques involved with social action are to consolidate a group that feels strongly about an issue and to recognise the supports, resources and abilities of the group. Alinsky (1969) stresses the importance of building a strong organisation before taking action.

Radical theorists such as Corrigan and Leonard (1978) registered concern that with a conservative focus attention is directed towards those experiencing poverty and away from much broader structural questions. Similarly Bryson and Mowbray (1981) argue that a conservative position ignores questions of class structure and conflicts of interest.

Radical workers also question pluralist ideology because individuals are still blamed for their own continuing disadvantage. Placing responsibility on individuals means that quality of life, equality of outcomes and social justice are still considered to be their personal responsibility (Craig 1987). Competition between groups continues to ignore the political and economic divisions of class. Groups can not compete with other groups who possess far greater access to wealth and power. Corrigan and Leonard (1978) insist that the state is not neutral but defends the dominant economic interests. So it seems that the groups compete while the ruling class remains intact (Thorp and Petruchenia 1985).

Craig (1987) argues that work which emanates from a pluralist ideology makes marginal groups conform to the standards of the dominant classes; for example unemployed youth are shown how to dress for a job interview, when there are no jobs available. Cockburn (1977) explains how pluralist inspired community work is used by governments as a panacea for social problems, seemingly able to correct the system imbalance. Mowbray (1984) argues that these practices contribute to the function of society, contributing to the conditions under which capital can accumulate and inequalities can be maintained. This lends ideological support for the maintenance of a fundamentally inequitable and alienating system. Bailey (1974) sees community work activities practiced within a pluralist ideology as supportive of the state.

### Criticisms of the radical approach to community work

The growth of a structural analysis in the 1970s provided strong foundations for the development of radical community work. However, some writers have identified gaps in that initial analysis. Smith (1978) claims that the application of Marxism has "fogged" as many issues as it has clarified. The focus on structural issues can be static and can leave the daily individual happenings unaccounted for. Smith (1978) also questions the Marxist description of the state as a monolithic entity, speculating that every political action is not a reflection of the class war.

Other writers such as Shirley (1979) describe a structural analysis as becoming overly deterministic, often leaving practitioners in a state of inaction, with few actions to pursue. The possibilities for action under a structural analysis may be confined to making links with the labour

movement and to becoming involved in political education (Ashcroft and Jackson 1974).

The traditional class analysis was described as limited because it excluded women and "race" from the discussion. Socialist community workers were challenged for placing less importance on community struggles and the position of women (Thorpe and Petruchenia 1985). Mayo (1977) argued that the "masculinist" socialists ignored the local realm because it did not take place at the point of production. At this time Marxists were challenged to model their non hierarchical, anti-racist and non-sexist ideals onto their own organisations (Thorp and Petruchenia 1985).

Presently, there has been a resurgence of the radical ideas that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (Fook 1990). This recent analysis attempts to move beyond the false radical / conservative dichotomy. Contemporary writers, particularly those influenced by feminist and postmodernist theory, have begun to address the limitations of the early radical analysis, in order to advance community work further.

It is important to note that the resurgence of radical ideas and terminology has also been re-interpreted by conservative forces in the current context of economic rationalism. Community development programs have become popular in recent years. These programs use some of the radical rhetoric such as empowerment and community participation without an associated political analysis. However radical shifts in power are less possible within community development programs alone (Dixon 1993).

Despite the influence of conservative reinterpretation there are renewed possibilities for radical practice in Aotearoa, furthered by insights from feminism, Maori development, critical theory, and postmodernism. These traditions are outlined in the following section, as they offer a theoretical backdrop to the work of the participants interviewed in this thesis.

### The influence of Feminism on Radical Community Work

In this section I outline the feminist contribution to radical community work. Fee (1982) questions whether we can have a true feminist epistemology, and Smith (1986) sees that we cannot conceptualise feminism in a monolithic way. However, there can be identified four broad categories within the feminist ideological position, including liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist and black women's feminism. These positions are adequately reviewed in relation to community work in texts such as Marchant and Wearing (1986), Dominelli and McLeod (1989) and Fook (1993). Some forms of feminism are not useful for black women. Black women often identify racial oppression first and then gender oppression (Dixon 1993).

A feminist approach to community work developed alongside the re-emergence of the women's movement in the late 1960s. Generally the feminist analysis acknowledges the importance of women to social change and community work because they are in the front line of contact with the local state, capital and its distribution (Cockburn 1977). Feminist community workers developed an alternative interpretation of contemporary social issues such as domestic violence (see Otter 1986). The decisions informing the choice of social issues by feminist community workers is significant. High importance is placed on issues such as child care and housing that do not traditionally interest male dominated organisations. Many strategies used within feminist inspired community work are similar to those practiced within a conflict perspective, but placing the emphasis on women. Women emphasise a gender analysis when engaging with mainstream political institutions. Feminist community workers have used "reform as strategy" (James 1982), where legislation on abortion laws, child care provisions and family law etc are challenged and alternatives for women are organised, such as women's refuges and women's work co-operatives.

Practice from a feminist perspective concentrates on "making the personal political" (Wilson 1977), with consciousness raising becoming an important strategy. Community workers aim to integrate personal experience with conceptual understandings of the world and time spent on reflection and self analysis is considered important. The process is seen to be as important as the outcome of the work.

A major feminist epistemological principle which community workers echo is that women's understandings of activity and experience are different from men's (Stanley and Wise 1983). Reinharz et al (1983) argue that there are distinctive women's ways of knowing. For example women look to connectedness and relationships rather than separateness (Gilligan 1982). Farginis (1990:209) acknowledges "gendered sociality" where women's existence in the world gives them a different experience. This does not mean that differences between women are overlooked. Indeed, Dixon (1993) warns against any feminist theory which offers universal prescriptions for change. Community workers can use the understanding of difference to identify the distinctive realities of women's struggle and then engage in translating this into a political issue.

The approach of "negotiating new meanings" is advocated by both feminist researchers and by radical community workers. Similarly, both processes concentrate on "probing the enabling conditions which open people up to oppositional knowledge" (Lather 1991b:23). Community workers from a radical perspective and feminists have recognised that a "dual consciousness" or a "dual-vision" (Ruzek 1986) develops, where individuals and groups understand themselves within the dominant perceptions of reality, as well as having a new raised consciousness of oppression. Mies (1983) argues that the "double consciousness" is not an obstacle but a methodological opportunity for women to begin to integrate their experiences in conscious reality. Both community workers and feminist researchers strive to achieve an awareness amongst themselves and participants of these realities.

This emphasis on the personal within feminist theory and practice is adopted within a comprehensive political analysis. As Thorpe and Petruchenia (1985:17) assert "consciousness raising is an essential precondition for structural change". Lane (1990) advocates that certain principles rather than theories of social change should guide practice with women. She highlights principles such as choice, diversity and autonomy. Generally feminist theory helps community workers to develop a sophisticated analysis of oppression and the experience of difference.

Just as the conservative forces have begun to reinterpret radical community work principles, the feminist argument is open to misinterpretation. Many feminist inspired community work approaches are

subject to inclusion in conservative community development practices, for example the emphasis on self help strategies, without the accompanying feminist consciousness raising. It seems that a focus on individual change and group participation can never achieve the changes that come from links to a political and economic analysis.

Some of the literature cautions community workers against subtly reinforcing the social relations which determine women's secondary role in society, by keeping women's issues tied to the home (Meekosha 1978). Community based local struggles can also be exploitative of women because of the strong reliance on volunteers (Thorpe and Petruchenia 1985). Wilson (1977) is concerned that the middle class women's movement style runs the risk of alienating working class women by imposing ideas that are not meaningful. However, Dixon (1993) reasserts the usefulness of a feminist analysis in the face of these criticisms. She emphasises the significance of an analysis of the unequal relations between women and men, combined with a confrontation of the power differentials between women. Generally, feminism can be seen to offer a useful depth of analysis for community workers and to expand greatly the community workers repertoire for intervention (Fook 1986).

The feminist analysis of gender has close links to the analysis of "race". Indigenous approaches to community work are discussed in the next section.

### Indigenous Approaches to Radical Community Work

Just as it is difficult to consider the feminist analysis in a generalised way, there are many approaches to indigenous development and change. In the context of Aotearoa the significance of Maori development is central to a discussion of radical community work. The perspective taken in this discussion is that of a Pakeha community worker. Pakeha knowledge of these approaches increases, as space for indigenous voices are enlarged. 1993 marked the Year of Indigenous Communities around the world. This globalisation of identity continues the fight for those devastated by the processes of colonisation and ongoing racial oppression.

Generally, the literature explores how community workers, both black and white, can help to prepare indigenous people for an indigenously defined future, rather than for integration or assimilation. Social change needs to be defined by the communities themselves:

*Community development... must draw inspiration and power from within the Maori community itself. It is not a gift to be conferred from outside (Walker 1982:87).*

The literature which emerged after the 1970s suggests that workers who are politically aligned with racially oppressed groups need to adopt a "development from below" approach to community work which involves supporting and advising groups whilst encouraging existing leadership (Liddell 1974). Tomlinson (1985) describes ways to encourage natural community leaders in a community work setting. Despite the diversity in debate about how to support indigenous groups in their advancement, writers such as Tomlinson (1985) suggested that there are some commonly agreed upon goals, involving reparation for the past. These can include:

- . The granting of land rights
- . Health issues need to be addressed quickly
- . Economic opportunities have to be developed for these groups.

Some community workers have explored their own racism and work for indigenous communities has involved anti racist education for members of the European community (Ohri et al 1982, Satow 1982). This involves expanding an analysis of the issues such as colonisation and institutionalised racism, and addressing racism in current practice. Practice has also focused on changing the power relationships and decision making structures within their own agencies. The challenge to racism is even more important in the current context of new right agendas. Spoonley (1993) warns of neo racism, where there is the reformulation of arguments to maintain the position of Maori, but couched in non-racist language and argument.

Feminist community workers need to be aware of the different priorities between black and white feminisms, and the potential conflicts between these. For example, black women often defend the family as a site for cultural survival and resistance to white colonisation. There are important

links made with ideology and the workings of racism. It is important for community workers to see how particular ideologies can perpetuate racism and the consequent power differentials. Racism is an ideology, which manifests in a set of practices which overtime produces and reproduces unequally structured power relations (Castles et al 1988).

In Aotearoa, the Maori version of The Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti O Waitangi) has been said to provide a blueprint for the development of relationships between Maori and Pakeha (Ruwhiu 1993). Pakeha community workers can act in the spirit of Maori development from a primary commitment to the Treaty, by supporting Maori sovereignty, stopping the loss of language and by helping to restore Mana. Generally any resistance strategies can be supported by Pakeha individuals and groups. Alongside of this is also a necessity to deconstruct ourselves and our role in relation to community work and to "decolonise our assumptions" (Ruwhiu 1993). Spoonley (1993) argues the importance of a self critical, but celebratory conception of the notion of Pakeha as a precondition for an effective bi-culturalism in Aotearoa.

### The Influence of Critical Theory

Early critical theory was developed by theorists connected with the Frankfurt school, including Habermas and Horkinheimer, Marcuse and Adorno. An outline of the history and the specific content of critical theory has been adequately documented (Fay 1987). In this section it is useful to broadly outline the critical theorists' position and to document the implications for radical community work.

Generally, critical social science proposes a process of ongoing evaluation of the social order, towards emancipatory goals, the main goal being the self-emancipation of human beings from the constraints of domination in all it forms. The early critical theorists explored the way individuals are silenced by the dominant culture and have been socialised as passive rather than critical or active (Habermas 1971). Transformation of ourselves and the world is one of the main concerns of critical theory.

In order to realise these aims the critical theorists have focused on maintaining strong links between theory and practice. In the critical tradition, practice is focused towards overcoming false consciousness,

domination and oppression through education, towards transformative action; or to "understand society in order to change it" (Fay 1987:4).

Generally the practitioner seeks to develop solidarity with those who are oppressed, "by personally experiencing their pains and injustices" (Shirley 1982:286). Dialogue is the principal tool for the ensuing process which is to facilitate self reflection. In this reflection the social and political reality can be interpreted and critically assessed. The practitioner can then begin to present the contradictions of social and political reality, within the precise context of each situation. Transformation then ensues from reflection into action, from individual change to change in the structures and institutions of society.

A convincing example of a community work model to emerge from the critical theoretical tradition is "The Critical Practice Model". This model was developed in the Aotearoa context by Shirley (1979). According to this model, transformation can begin where contradictions and conflict exist in the structures and institutions in society. Conflict is seen to occur in all areas of society, such as within classes, networks, kin, religious, ethnic and political groupings. Community work practice begins where these threads of difference come together, creating situations where many different groups of people (Parties) pursue numerous interests. These circumstances are referred to as "Limit situations" (Freire 1972:56) for the oppressed. Shirley (1979) reminds us that it is important for the practitioner to focus on the situations that are oppressive for the people as they see it themselves.

The role of the practitioner is to facilitate people, to see themselves as actors through helping them to "...translate personal troubles into public issues and public issues in terms of their human meaning" (Shirley 1982:286). The worker can help to summarise and describe the themes and issues that are meaningful for the groups. In this process the groups are challenged "to analyse the content of their opposition and to isolate the constituent elements" (Shirley 1979:148) in order to gain a clearer perception of the world. Shirley uses Freire's term "decoding" (1972:95) to name this process.

When groups are helped to see themselves as actors, "mobilisation" happens, as does "consciousness formation", when interests are

transformed into goals. "Praxis" is the united reflection and action through which transformation is created. The situation for the oppressed can be redefined in this way. As Shirley (1979:155) suggests:

*... the resolution of conflict and contradictions resulting in the perceived improvement in the client groups quality of life... as perceived by the groups themselves.*

The early critical theories were criticised as being overly deterministic and as oversimplifying the patterns of conflict and contradictions that occur in relations of domination. This includes an overestimation of the power of structures and an underestimation of the radical potential of the dominated (Giroux 1983).

However, more recent writers have developed critical theory to include a structure/ agency dualism (Giroux 1983), where account is taken of both the individual and the broader structures of society. Some contemporary critical theorists such as Fay (1987) and Giroux and Aronowitz (1991) assert that the depth and extent of domination can only be understood by looking at the dialectic between the individual and society, especially as it exists within and outside the individual, as well as the relationship between ideas and material conditions.

Fay (1987) has proposed additional considerations to critical theory, which involve the body, tradition, force and reflexivity. Neomarxist theorists have built on critical theory, by redefining false consciousness to include the effects of the unconscious, social relations and material practices. As such, critical theory has an activist conception of human beings, where humans are seen to possess intelligence, curiosity and willfulness. The development of self reflection and awareness is therefore considered important by critical theorists. It seems that as people develop new self understandings the conditions and behaviour changes consequently also. The process is dialectical.

Critical theory has important relevance for radical community work in exploring how ideology functions as lived experience. It offers practice guidelines for ways to balance work with individuals and groups, without losing sight of structural considerations. These include ways to facilitate the development of self reflection or "rational self clarity" (Fay 1987:68)

in individuals, where people know the true nature of their existence. The use of "narrative" (Fay 1987:167) also has potential for community workers. In constructing a historical narrative with individuals and groups, they can be helped to recognise how different personal events can be linked to interconnected episodes that form a meaningful whole. This can help individuals to see how they came to be where and what they are, and to hopefully break through the false stories we have been taught to tell ourselves. Action can lead from here, into collective autonomy (Fay 1987:76), where groups of people determine on the basis of self reflection the kinds of policies and practice they will follow.

Fay (1987:144) also acknowledges that there are limits to critical theory for revolutionary change. Self understandings will not create a revolution. Giroux (1983) also argues that critical theorists did not develop a comprehensive approach for dealing with conflict or contradictions and that there was an exaggerated view of an integrated public. There are important limits to the power of reason and limits made by the power of the material context. Later critical theorists acknowledged these difficulties and suggest areas for the development of theory such as in the area of human consciousness (Giroux 1983). But it is helpful for community workers to have a realistic guide to the limits of their task. Some elements of the social order may have to be accepted whilst others are addressed. As with all theories there are no totally infallible answers, only guidelines for continuing development of our own theory and practice. As Fay (1987:215) concludes:

*Humans are forever in the middle of the way, forced as time passes to revise continuously a sense of their origins and their destinations and required to respond in only partially satisfying ways to the ever surprising contingencies they face.*

### Postmodernism and Community Work

Another theory which offers an analysis of social change and has influenced the direction of community work is Postmodernism. Postmodernist theories emerged as a challenge to the modernist conception of change, where emancipation was viewed as an evolutionary process. A more sophisticated analysis was sought which acknowledged the complexities of power. This approach challenges the over reliance on the grand narratives of traditional theory and argues against the teleological notions of social change. The postmodernist analysis goes beyond class related factors, emphasising the significance of the intersections of gender, race, disability, age and sexuality (Williams 1993). These factors are not seen as uniform categories, but as contributing to the formation of many different identities.

Postmodernist theory still has empowerment as the goal for emancipation and is interested in oppositional resistance to forms of domination. However the postmodernist approach to emancipation emphasises diversity, locality and specificity (Giroux and Aronowitz 1991). The major postmodernist theoretical influence on community work has been to de-emphasise abstraction in the analysis of everyday life and to re-emphasise the plurality of voices and the stories that emerge from historically specific struggles. The voices and stories are useful to explore and question that particular circumstance and the power relations which exist within it. In this way the importance of everyday culture is asserted. Community workers are therefore provided with new ways to analyse individuality, their locality and the wider world. The deconstruction of particular localised sites has been applied in the women's health movement; for example the studies of the female patient/male doctor relationship in the work of Anne Oakley (Oakley 1981).

The postmodernists, especially those also influenced by a feminist perspective emphasise the importance of giving space to marginalised voices to talk about their experiences (Yeatman 1990), noting, however, that there is not a single voice within groups, but complex and contradictory ideas (Giroux and Aronowitz 1991). The goal has been not to ignore power and inequality but to recognise the structured conditions which influence that diversity (Williams 1993).

Discourse theory has developed in the postmodernist context, exploring how the ideas people hold develop out of, and are maintained by, conversations and dialogue. Discourse theory has obvious connections to critical social science, where emphasis is placed on the use of ordinary language for the expression of the felt needs of the oppressed. Theorists assert that the details of discourse can be examined to identify how power relations are produced and maintained (Fairclough 1992).

Yeatman (1990:155) describes a politics of discourse as "language politics" where different voices are allowed to surface, in order to name distinct realities, according to the historical context. She sees that these realities, once named, can help to identify facets of domination and then can enter into the politicised domain of policy consideration.

Discourses are also part of the way individuals construct their identities. Giroux and Aronowitz (1991:93) emphasise the political nature of language in the construction of identity, even though language is not fixed:

*...The construction of meaning, authority and subjectivity is governed by ideologies that are inscribed in language, which offer different possibilities for people to construct their relationship to themselves, others and the larger reality...*

The importance of language for identity construction is that it is constituted subtly through the relations of power and conditions of oppression. As such the dominant and subordinate relations of power become embedded within the individual psyche. Community workers are challenged to see that work to transform the social and material conditions of the oppressed, needs to occur at the individual psychological level as well. Yeatman (1990) sees that each individual has different discursive influences from social places and positions. However this is dialectical, in that work in a psychological capacity must be historically contextualised and ideologically aware as well as looking at the individual.

Community workers also can benefit from being aware of the dominant discourses that operate at the level of policy formulation. Yeatman (1990) reminds us that social policies are often positioned within a problem setting framework and use a metaphorical context that is not debated, but is taken for granted.

In response to the overdeterminism of some early radical theories, discourse theory allows us to see that discursive practice is dialectical, in that it contributes to both reproducing and transforming society. This awareness of the considerable possibilities for innovation in individuals' lives gives direction to community workers. Community workers with knowledge of discourse, pay attention to the minor changes in order to recognise social change at broader institutional levels.

Fairclough (1992) sees that modern power is not imposed from above by classes, upon groups and individuals, but exists in discursive practices. Discourse theorists also assert that hegemonic power is far more complex than can be captured within language. Giroux and Aronowitz (1991:78) assert that:

*...the operations of power work as part of a deeper non-discursive sense of reality.*

Some writers in the critical tradition claim that power is dyadic (Fay 1987). To explain a dyadic sense of power, Rees (1991) describes Fromm's conception of power as either the domination over people or as potency where the use of power is to achieve goals which can be liberating and provide a sense of self enhancing creativity. So people are seen to be both subjects and vehicles of power, with the relationships not being fixed (Foucault 1979, cited in Rees 1991).

The postmodernist notion of difference and "otherness" has been criticised as allowing the relations of power to be abstracted. Giroux (1989) notes that the voices that are constituted within dialogue, rather than in terms of oppositional social struggle, may lack a social analysis of any complexity. In this way postmodernist theory has been unable to link the politics of difference with an oppositional politics. Lather (1991) asserts postmodernism serves as a useful theoretical tool to help analyse the mechanisms of power in a local context.

Some postmodernists have been criticised for a lack of understanding of the willingness of some marginalised groups to participate in discourse. The conditions that may facilitate increased participation have at times been ignored.

Although feminism shares many goals and assumptions with postmodernism, some feminists have argued that emancipatory postmodernist theory has often ignored issues of gender and not included feminist analysis in much of the theoretical development (Weedon 1987). Feminists also emphasise that individuals have demonstrated a capacity to be more self reflexive and politically capable than postmodernist argument alludes to.

Postmodernist theories have been criticised as another theoretical fashion (Giroux and Aronowitz 1991). However it seems that the theory provides a flexible model with which to view contemporary culture and changes. With greater attention to a feminist analysis of theory, the postmodernist theory appears to have relevance as another tool contributing to the development of community work theory and practice.

### Conclusion

In this chapter the literature informing radical community work has been explored. Some general social change theories which inform radical community work were canvassed, including those from feminism, indigenous communities and the critical and postmodernist traditions.

In the next chapter the literature informing notions of ideology and hegemony is considered. Critical education is explored as a radical community work approach which has ideology as its foundation. These initial chapters offer a background to the research which explores the work of radical community workers in Aotearoa.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IDEOLOGY AND COMMUNITY WORK

The notion of ideology is central to this discussion because radical community workers demonstrate a commitment to making their values and assumptions explicit. In this chapter the notion of ideology is introduced and considered in relation to community work. The Sayer Ideology Model (1990) is introduced in the second part of this chapter, as a useful framework which uses ideology as a basis for practice. In the final part of this chapter I explore the significance of ideology within education for radical community work.

In reviewing literature on ideology and hegemony, it appears that ideology is one of the most contested and elusive concepts in social science (McLellan 1986). Writers explore the fluidity in the nature of ideology, explaining that conclusions are always partial and contradictory (Lather 1991). Fine and Sandstrom (1993:22) describe ideology as a "nebulous and slippery concept". Definitions are not often given in the literature, but references are more often made about ideology as a concept, alluding to aspects such as world views, myths, values, theories and thoughts. My own interpretation of ideology includes these aspects and concurs with Giroux (1983:142) that ideology is an active process, where ideas are inextricably linked to behaviour.

There is a body of literature which expands these debates about the nature of ideology such as Althusser (1976). O'Brien (1990) presents an overview of the nature of ideology for research in the New Zealand context. In this examination it is appropriate to investigate the ways in which community workers utilise ideology in their day to day work.

It has been helpful to organise this discussion by using Kellner's (1978) categories of the two main uses of the term ideology. First, ideology as a political "ism" referring to a social or political world view as found in various political philosophies. Secondly, ideology "as hegemony" as the prevailing dominant beliefs of the society.

## Ideology and Community Work

### Ideology as a "political-ism"

For the purposes of this examination the term ideology can refer to a worker's political beliefs, values and attitudes towards society and individuals and an alignment to one or more of the competing theories or explanations for the causes of social problems and the consequent directions for practice.

Many community workers have been reported to be unable to say what theories they use in their practice (Rees 1991), or they proclaim ideological neutrality in their work (Warren 1974). Many such community workers have been concerned that the "Intellectual Ideology" (Billing et al 1988:25), of formalised systems of political, religious and philosophical thinking clouds practice in everyday reality. Specht (1975) wishes to draw a distinction between the community work profession and a social movement. He warns that an ideological base to practice, where alliances are made with one particular section of the community, will not allow a professional to neutrally support the interests of the entire community.

Other writers disagree with purported neutrality, but argue like Shirley (1982:284) that "belief permeates technique". Such writers claim that community workers who have not developed a clear ideological stance may be eclectic in their selection of strategies (Creed and Tomlinson 1984), and that these strategies may be only "kitbags of techniques", isolated from head and heart (Kelly and Sewell 1988:91). Sayer (1990:300) sees that action without reflection is only performance within ideology rather than participation in exposing and recreating it.

These writers conclude that workers can be impeded by a lack of analysis and that ideological neutrality is only a myth. Tasker (1975) insists that claims to value neutrality are not acceptable and should be described as naive and irresponsible. Craig (1987) firmly insists that we can not escape our personal values and that it is impossible for workers to remain neutral. It seems that community workers who do not have an explicit ideological framework still practice in the community with implicit ideological assumptions.

It seems that in clarifying values and ideology we can facilitate a clearer recognition of the issues, struggles and wishes of any social movement. As Giroux and Aronowitz (1991:92) state:

*...theory provides a refuge to think beyond the current forms of practice so as to envision that which is not.*

The notion of ideology is useful for community workers in helping us to understand how various groups and individuals make sense of their worlds, and hence how they behave. People can be seen to use and act on ideas to realise their interests in every day situations. Ideology, as a set of images and metaphors, can also be linked to an individual's lived experience and social interaction as well as being connected to emotional responses (Fine and Sandstrom 1993). These understandings allow us to see how ideology can mark the boundaries between informal and institutional practices, or where the personal becomes political. For example women workers with a feminist perspective regard women's every day lives as critical in the struggle for social change. Changes in self conception determination can be seen to stimulate widespread social action.

#### Ideology "as hegemony"

Ideology as hegemony can be linked to the ideas of writers such as Antonio Gramsci, who saw ideology as being created and recreated through social practices in order to hold society together, like "cement". Gramsci claimed that human consciousness is formed through hegemony, where people accept as universal commonsense, the thoughts, values and goals of the dominant classes. This control is exercised through socio-cultural institutions such as education. However he saw these as not always descending from above, but as constituted through complex negotiation between various groups at specific sites. Dombrowski (1989:12) saw that commonsense assumptions were largely responsible for the perpetuation of systems in civil society:

*A largely uncritical and unconscious conception of the world that cannot be reduced to one or another philosophical system. It encompasses an incoherent aggregate of ideas and beliefs derived from the permanent persuasion exercised on the people by the dominant classes.*

Although the concept of hegemony is difficult to define for contemporary use, Sayer (1990:296) uses the term hegemony as:

*...a socio-political situation a moment, in which the philosophy and practice of a society fuse, or are in equilibrium: an order in which one concept of reality is diffused throughout society in all its institutional and private manifestations, informing with its spirit all taste, morality, customs, religious and political principles and all social relations...*

The total power of social structures over individuals can be challenged, and there can be seen to be much more of a cultural autonomy to ideology. Fairclough (1992) asserted that hegemony is only achieved in a partial or temporary way. Neo Gramscians such as Fairclough (1992) conclude that ideology contributes to both reproducing society and transforming it. Althusser (quoted in Billing et al 1988:31) identified a "dilemmatic approach" to ideological theories, which identifies how individuals can deliberate and not just obediently conform. For change to occur work must happen at both institutional and interpersonal levels of civil society.

Writers such as Giroux (1983) examine self creation and lived experience within class specific conditions of everyday life. It has been argued that there is a possibility for individuals to develop a critical view of the world (Gouldner 1976), and a capacity for self reflection and transformative action (Giroux 1983). Billing et al (1988) argue that the thoughtfulness of individuals cannot be ignored and that argument and deliberation are part of the human condition.

Generally it seems that ideology "as hegemony" exists within complex negotiations between individuals and groups, through action and discourse. Discourse relates to the ideas people hold that emerge from conversations and dialogue (Fook 1993). The terms discourse and ideology are closely related and writers define both terms differently. Fairclough (1992) refers to discourse as the ways we structure areas of knowledge, beliefs and social practice. Ideology can be seen as linked to emotional responses where individuals puzzle over their experiences (Fine and Sandstrom 1993). Giroux (1983:142) adds that ideology is an active process, where ideas are inextricably linked to behaviour. As Sayer (1990) concludes for community workers, the community can be seen as a site for intersecting discourses,

With this conception of ideology as hegemony we can see how people use and act on ideas to realise their interests and purposes in every day situations, whilst attempting to maintain an integrated world view. These world views also consist of myths, thoughts, values and theories as contained in our conception of ideology "as a political ism", but can be extended to enable us to see how everyday life forms the process for change.

Possibly the main importance of ideology for community workers rests on exploring the balance between the micro and macro influences on social life, the importance of discourse in both individual and institutional change, whilst maintaining a firm connection between theory and practice. Fairclough (1992) sums this up by focusing on discourse as complex, heterogeneous and contradictory, where we must make sense of issues as they interact and cross each other.

Having explored the centrality of ideology for community work, the second part of this chapter introduces the Sayer (1990) Ideology Model. This model is identified because it emanates from both a radical and feminist perspective, and uses ideology as a framework for both education and community work practice. The model is used as a basis for discussion about ideology and community work models, with the research participants.

### The Sayer Ideology Model

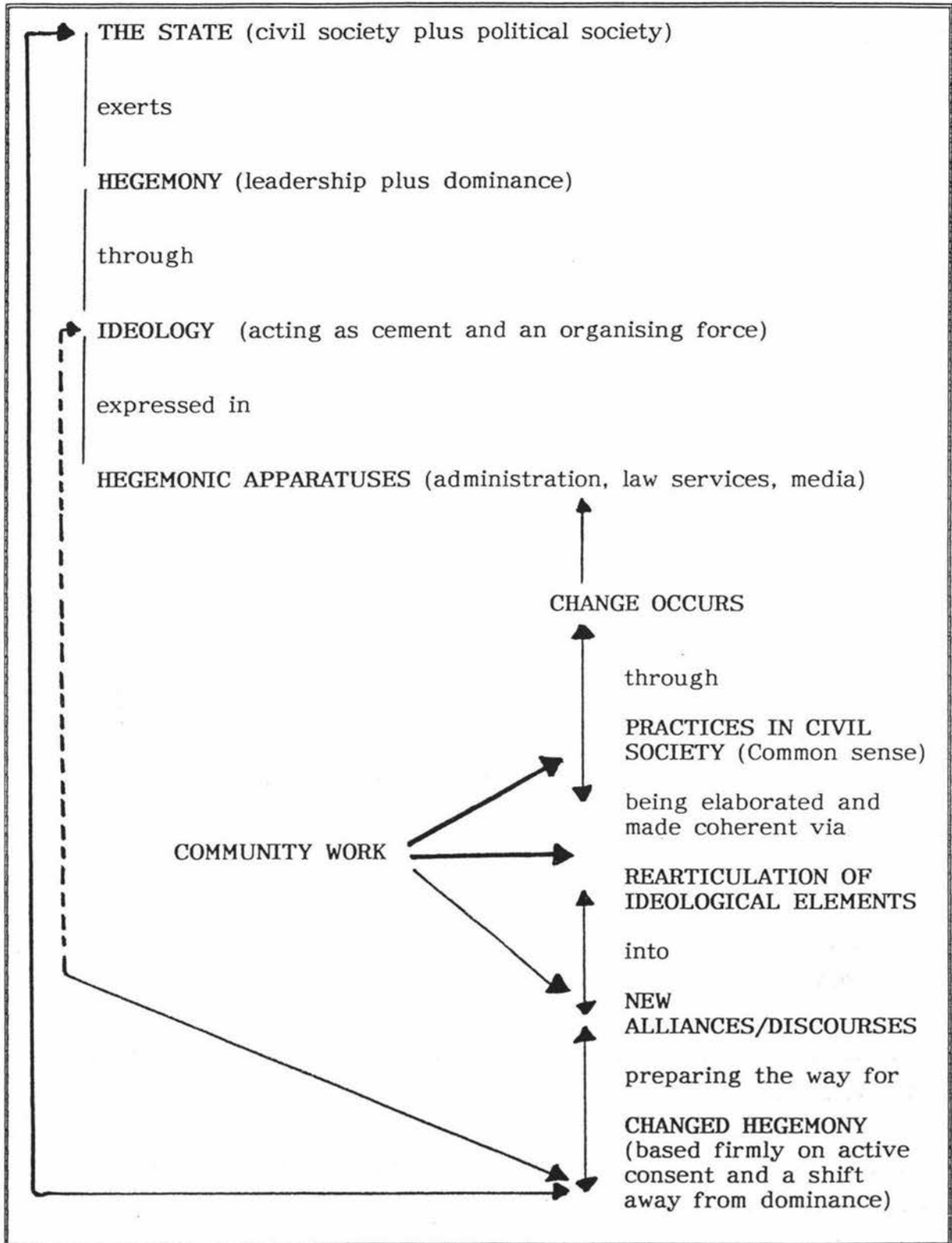
The model (Figure One) was developed in the United Kingdom, by Jennifer Sayer. The development of this model was highly influenced by the theories of Antonio Gramsci. Sayer (1990) defined community as a site of intersecting discourses, the point where institutional practices and interpersonal practices meet, beyond the merely personal and the merely political. Sayer is interested in the rearticulation of the thoughts and practices that exist in a discourse site, with which a community worker is engaged. Using Gramsci's terminology she defines community work as "creating expansive hegemony".

Sayers proposes this model as a way to build from activity to activity on a dialectical model of reflection and action, using ideology as a mediating mechanism for herself and others. In this way a worker is helped to see their role in the intervention process.

Sayer challenges community workers to investigate the current ideological constructs in society and the nature of the discourses being transformed. Otherwise she warns that community workers will not be able to recognise their contribution to the change process and may risk oppressing further rather than liberating. She recommends a range of questions which are useful for directing learning in an educational setting:

- 1) Community Workers need to develop an awareness of the current ideological issues in society:
  - a) Into which ideological field am I entering?  
Which elements are the target for practice?
  - b) Which ideological perspective am I articulating in my work, why?  
What limitations and advantages does this perspective have?  
How do these relate to the discourses being employed by the people and institutions I am working for?
  - c) Where are the points of potential alliance and confrontation?
- 2) Community workers have to promote active conscious involvement in rearticulating ideological elements through practice.
- 3) Community workers need to be able to use activity to actively negotiate and transform ideology.
- 4) Community workers need to work simultaneously at several levels, whilst being able to relate the work to a specific ideological field.
- 5) Community workers should be able to articulate how this work leads to any group's hegemony.
- 6) Community workers have to be able to identify how the work reinforces existing forces and whether this is intentional.
- 7) The sort of change that is stimulated by the community worker's activity should be clear.

FIGURE ONE : THE SAYER IDEOLOGY MODEL



Source : Sayer (1990)

The Sayer (1990) Ideology Model links community work strategies with education for community through the effective bridging mechanism of ideology. However, in the Aotearoa context some workers have been reluctant to engage in mainstream community work training because they do not want to abandon their radical orientation (Craig 1991). In the final part of this chapter the potential of ideology for community work education is explored. Community work and education are linked because those involved in both community work and education ask questions such as what counts as knowledge and whose interests are beings served (De Maria 1993).

### Ideology and education in radical community work

Education which is approached from a critical and structural analysis of society has been called emancipatory education (Freire 1972) or critical pedagogy (De Maria 1993). This approach to education aims to facilitate the ability to question and challenge what is, or what seems to be, in any situation. The literature shows that the field of liberatory education or critical pedagogy is also aimed at social change and uses ideology as a basis for analysis; therefore, these traditions are linked to community work. Just as community work examines the relations of power in various sites, critical pedagogy focuses on the relations of domination between the teacher and the learner in the educative environment. Critical pedagogy also links with emancipatory postmodernism and discursive theory in showing the links between language and power as embedded in the legitimised discursive practices such as the curriculum.

Critical pedagogy also has the main aim of encouraging emancipatory interests in the process. The student who is seeking freedom from oppression in education can be encouraged to identify ways to free others from oppression. Questions can be introduced, such as whose interests are being served within any aspect found in the community. This may lead to an analysis of the operation of these interests. Through critical education the student can become aware of and offended by the structures of oppression (De Maria 1993). Rees (1991) extends this analysis to helping the student to see what might be in a groups interests under different socio-political restraints.

An understanding of language is central to a critical analysis. Writers describe the centrality of language for shaping our ideas. Rees (1991) asserts that a critical look at the language we use can help us to resist other people's interpretations of the world and events. Fairclough (1992) advises the investigation of discourse in relation to social change. He explores the implicit meanings that are carried in the semantic structure of discourse. Contrary and complex meanings can be revealed in everyday language (Billing et al 1988). Giroux (1991) outlines the connections between language and power. Similarly, Yeatman (1990:155) says "discourse is the power to create reality by naming and giving it meaning".

Developing the skills to analyse and interpret, in order to reveal the themes and counter themes, explicitly and implicitly in language, can assist the practitioner to identify the ideological bases to the situation, and the contradictions within these. The "plurality of meanings" can begin to be analysed (Giroux and Aronowitz 1991).

Within critical education texts and other learning modes are challenged and questioned as serving the requirements of production (Galper 1980). The radical theorists attempt to illustrate the ideological interests at work within educational curricula and Broadfoot (1979:132) discusses the ideological role of educational assessment:

*...education as the creator of opportunity and education as the mediator of control, and assessment is vital in both respects. If the education system has indeed been one of the forces of social reproduction in modern industrial society, as well as a major force for social liberation, then educational assessment must be seen as one of the most major means of justifying the continual distinctions between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak.*

The role of the radical educator becomes significant for stimulating people to think about the ways they live and relate to other people and therefore to change:

*...whether we educate students to adapt to existing relations of power or to learn how to read society differently, so as to apply the principles of critical democracy to the creation of new and radical form of community... (Giroux and Aronowitz 1991:96).*

The liberatory educational position does not treat knowledge as fixed, and recognises that students read the texts from the position of their own experiences. Giroux and Aronowitz (1991:109) discuss how to offer students the opportunity to "interrogate their own histories", and argue that knowledge is connected with the students identities.

Such pedagogical principles may seem obvious for the teaching of community work. However, despite the arguments in evidence for the explicit use of ideology in community work practice, community work education appears to be reluctant to embrace ideology in its teaching mission. In Aotearoa, community workers indicate that they are dissatisfied by the absence of training opportunities which are appropriate for their work (Craig 1991). Many radical workers argue that their training needs to be different to that of social workers (Community Work Training Council 1983). Contemporary social work training is becoming increasingly industry driven, and skills based. These directions add to the challenges faced by community workers and can contribute to the structures of domination that presently exist.

De Maria (1993) identifies mainstream social work education as being primarily involved with the transmission of taken for granted facts and as having a purely skills competency and service orientation. Education in this sense appears to have suppressed questions of power, knowledge and ideology (Giroux 1983). Often it seems there is a non-radical approach to teaching radical material.

Similarly, Nash (1987) explored how feminism, as a particular ideology, is resisted in social work education, by those exercising cultural hegemony. In the recent past gender has not been taken into account as a variable in education for social and community work (Smith 1986). Both education and practice can be seen to have been unresponsive to the changing understandings women have of themselves and their action. The dominant educational paradigms are criticised by feminists as reflecting the patriarchy and ignoring women's ways of knowing.

Both community workers and writers warn the re-emergent radical social work movement against neglecting its teaching mission (De Maria 1993), which links theory to practice (Sayer 1990), or more specifically linking a structural analysis with a structural practice (Fook 1990).

The educative domain can be considered an alternative context for practicing community work. I propose that teachers are able to practice radical community work in an educative setting, by working in counter hegemonic ways. Community workers can be encouraged to develop questions about themselves, their world and their consequent action, or work. This questioning begins with the development of a critical analysis of the educative process, or as De Maria (1993:11) explains "deconstructing the natural patterns of domination that have been laid down in teacher student consciousness". The classroom then becomes an arena for struggle between the teacher, the student and the academic culture. Ideology can be central in this process.

In this way the principles explored in the following chapters have relevance for radical education. The fields of community work and education can inform each other, these linkages will be explored in greater depth in later chapters.

### Conclusion

In this chapter the notion of ideology as it relates to community work has been explored. Making ideology explicit is central to the work of community workers with a radical feminist analysis. In the second part of this chapter, the Sayer Ideology Model (1990) was introduced and critical education was used as an example of a community work approach which uses ideology as its foundation. The insights introduced in this review of the literature provide a crucial backdrop for the analysis of the research data in consequent chapters. In the next chapter the research methodology utilised in this thesis is discussed.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The process of conducting the research was given importance equal to the content and the outcomes, for the participants and for myself as researcher. This chapter outlines the feminist research methodology used in this research and introduces the research participants. The semi structured questioning schedule used in the interviews is also provided. Finally, this chapter introduces issues involved in the analysis of the research data and comments on the implications of using feminist research methodology.

#### My experience in developing this research

The experience of developing theoretical and practice approaches to community work and social change has been a journey of considerable personal changes. When I embarked on my program of study and research I was looking for answers to questions about myself, my work and the world generally. In reflecting on this journey I am reminded of Peile's (1990) suggestion about community work, that it is not the content of a position that is as important as the process of arriving at it. He describes a creative process of reformulation and learning through engagement with the world. As my study and community work practice has progressed the exposure to new ideas has led me to reflect on, and challenge my personal values and assumptions. My understandings have changed considerably over the period of the research and considerable shifts in my identity have taken place. This process is not static, but continually developing. As Fay (1987:98) describes:

*Giving up all illusions means abandoning self conceptions and the social practices they engender, the things people cling to because it provides direction and meaning to their lives. It involves acquiring a new identity*

After a review of the literature exploring the theoretical basis for community work and initial experimentation into practice, I began to talk about my research ideas in informal group discussions with community workers in Queensland. I then conducted trial interviews with three

women who worked in the women's health movement in Brisbane. The trial research process allowed me to develop my ideas and to challenge my assumptions further. I involved the Brisbane participants in the development of the research questions. The trial interviews raised my awareness of methodological issues and potential problems.

As part of the ideas we explored together, I made the decision to return home to Aotearoa. This was partly to explore practice in an Aotearoa setting, but mainly in response to the shifts in my identity. The formal research began in New Zealand in late 1993. A preliminary meeting was held with each of the selected participants in order to identify a history and description of each woman's work in the community.

During the preparation for the research I invested considerable personal identity into my relationship with other community workers, and have at times felt the vulnerability of sharing my developing theory and ideas, with a group of highly skilled practitioners. I acknowledge my "passionate scholarship" (Du Bois 1983), where there is little separation between emotion and cognition, or self from work. I am committed to "self reflection" (Smith and Noble-Spruell 1986), and aimed to be fully conscious of my role in the research process.

#### The use of feminist research in this examination

The principal appeal of feminist research methodology is the potential for creating "praxis" as Lather (1991) means, in enabling people to change by encouraging self reflection and a deeper understanding of their situations.

This is in comparison with other traditional research methods, which have been seen as epistemologically and technically destructive to feminist ideals (Jayaratne 1983). Surveys, where questions may be asked in an artificial way and consequent meanings can be misinterpreted, provide a good example. Such quantitative methodologies, relied upon in traditional research, have emphasised rationality, objectivity, detachment and distance (Smith and Nobel-Spruell 1986). Some of these methodologies have become instruments of dominance and legitimisation for power elites (Mies 1983). This can often involve a relationship between the researcher and the researched which is hierarchical and controlling (Fee 1983). Women working in the community are attempting to achieve a dialectical

relationship and to facilitate empowering strategies. In the use of a feminist methodology, attempts can be made to redress the imbalance of power between ourselves and those we study (Gottlieb and Bombyk 1987).

My own perspective seeks to expose the myth of value neutrality, as is often found within traditional research. The claim to neutrality in traditional research was found to be sexist in effect (Du Bois 1983), where the views of a small group of people are presented as objective knowledge (Smith 1978). The feminist research method parallels feminist informed community work which takes an openly political stance to practice. Praxis oriented feminist research also mirrors the aspirations of radical community work to critique the status-quo and to combat dominance towards building a more just society.

Broad epistemological categories within the feminist research tradition have been identified. These include feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint and feminist postmodernism. Stanley and Wise (1990) and Harding (1986) identify these as "transitional" epistemologies because they are part of a developing science. This research most closely parallels the feminist postmodernist approach to research which struggles against claims of totality, certainty and of methodological orthodoxy (Lather 1988), and emphasises individual, historical and cultural specificities.

Most feminists adhere to the proposition that the research should be "for women by women" (Jayaratne and Stewart 1991). I aimed for the research to be a consciousness raising experience for both myself and the participants. I saw my role as facilitator and mediator between my own and the participants self understandings, at once both learning and teaching. I also saw the feminist research method as a way to capture the total complexity of the women's experience of community work, which as Smith and Nobel-Spruel (1986) assert, is difficult to achieve with traditional research methodologies. Reinharz et al (1983) explains that interviewing techniques help the researcher to pick up non-verbal cues or "non-quantifiable subtleties embedded in women's speech".

Reciprocity, as developed within some feminist research, implies a mutual negotiation of the meanings between the researcher and the participants in the research process. In developing individual relationships with the research participants, it was predicted that the data produced revealed

more detail than within a more superficial research relationship. This research process was dialogical as Oakley (1981) sees as incorporating interactive, reciprocal self disclosure.

Lather (1991:15) warns against "spectator approaches" to inquiry where the position of the privileged and theoretical assumptions of the researcher are used to define the issues. However, Belenkey et al (1986 quoting Freire 1979), see that through dialogue, the teacher of the student and the student of the teacher ceases to exist and a new role emerges. This is the mutuality that I have aimed for as a researcher.

### Specific methodology of the research project

There are divergent views about the existence and desirability of describing a methodology for feminist research (Stanley and Wise 1990). Smith and Nobel-Spruel (1986) warn against prescription of distinctive methodological categories. However, it is essential to describe the research techniques used in this examination. Primary research was based on reciprocity and dialogue through multiple in-depth, semi-structured and unstructured interviewing. Value has been placed on story telling. Stories are a form of talking about our experiences, and give shape to our experiences. Christ (1980:1) sees that without stories there is no articulation of experience. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the flexibility for the participants to not just answer questions, but to engage in dialogue which involved telling their personal stories.

### Setting up the research and reciprocity

A preliminary meeting with each participant was arranged. The meeting was informal and untaped, used as an introduction and a time to establish rapport. This meeting enabled participants to describe their work and their perspectives. It was an opportunity to become familiar with the research process and content and allowed the participants to ask questions about the process.

I aimed for reciprocity, by encouraging the participants to be active in the research process. I involved women in the development of the project. The participants were involved in the interpretation of the data produced in the interviews, and together we further developed the theoretical

constructs used as a background to the research. In discussing the research process with the participants, we agreed that the method had been mutually educative.

My intention was that the participants were active and equal in the interview process. I wanted to facilitate this through my own self disclosure. This involved the sharing of personal experiences, fears and understandings, in relation to community work. Reinharz (1992) asserts that self disclosure initiates true dialogue. I also tried to assist reciprocity by encouraging the participants' self reflection. The sequential interviews allowed our relationships to develop over time. I registered increased expressions of trust, over the period of the research.

I stated my value position and perspective to the content, issues and research process. This is an attempt at "conscious partiality", which Mies (1983:122) sees as achieved through some identification with the research participants. In this case I identified with the participants as a woman, as a community worker and health worker. I believe this enhanced the reciprocity in the research process.

### The Research Participants

This research was conducted with community workers who have links to the women's health movement, who describe themselves as working for social change. I am particularly interested in the women's health movement because it provides a clear example of a field of community work practice involving individual change alongside of changes to broader society structures. Four participants were selected in order to set limits to the amounts of data generated within semi-structured interviewing in this topic area.

The selection of research participants was not random. Participants were identified through their association with community work and women's health in Aotearoa. Participants were interested in the research process and had time to invest in the interviews. Contact was made with women who had been thinking and working within different areas in the women's health movement, who were interested in exploring issues and developing their analyses.

It was intentional that all the participants interviewed were women. Women have been identified as having particular ways of working in the community (Wilson 1977). All the participants espouse a feminist perspective of one form or another. This generally refers to the consideration of gender as significant to the way of viewing the world, affecting the ideals, assumptions, values, goals and strategies for achieving these goals.

The participants were of various ages and a variety of marital status and sexual orientation. In a study of Aotearoa community workers it is essential to be aware of both Pakeha and Maori approaches to community work practice in the women's health movement. Canon et al (1991) highlight the problems of a small relatively homogeneous sample, especially the exclusion of women of colour and working class women. The sample of women is intended to present the development of theory and practice in the work of these particular participants. All participants were Pakeha women, and therefore are not representative of a Maori approach to community work and women's health in Aotearoa. All of the participants recognised their Pakeha status, acknowledged racial oppression in Aotearoa, and actively embraced anti-racist strategies. The women expressed a commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi and to partnership models with the Maori community. It is hoped that the insights of these women will aid the development of community work models, and be useful for others working for social change.

I am aware that changes won for women in the white middle class context have at times become the class privileges of elite women. It is hoped that the type of critical analysis which my model of community work practice involves, will also lead to greater awareness of a workers personal value base. This should include a raised awareness of the racism and class bias evident in that value base.

The four women interviewed in this research wanted their real names to be acknowledged alongside of the data. The need for confidentiality was not required. However the participants have checked the content of my analysis and specific permission has been given for publication of any comments made.

### **Judy Strid**

Judy is currently the co-ordinator of the Auckland Women's Health Council and the convenor of the New Zealand Federation of Women's Health Councils. She is an active advocate for many women's health issues. Judy has a long involvement in women's health, particularly in maternity and abortion areas. Judy was instrumental in the establishment of the direct entry to midwifery training in Aotearoa.

### **Paula Foreman**

Paula currently teaches community work at the Auckland Institute of Technology (AIT), in the Department of Community and Health Services, and co ordiates the AIT Community Work Certificate Programme. She has a strong interest in the process of education and in finding ways to allow students to engage in experiential learning. In her teaching Paula draws on her experiences of community work practice in the Coromandel. Paula has a strong interest in personal change and women's involvement in social change.

### **Colleen Ivory**

Colleen is currently the manager of the Health Promotions Unit for Auckland Health Care. She has been eminent in the development of community work and the women's health movement in Aotearoa over the last 20 years. Colleen managed a community development agency for the Auckland Methodist Mission over several years, and most recently established the Employment Generation Fund. Colleen was instrumental in the development of the West Auckland Women's Health Centre. She has a strong commitment to Maori and Pacific Island development and to community work training.

### **Ruth Sumner**

Ruth brings a structural analysis to work with women in individual counselling and in group work. She is primarily a sexual abuse counsellor and is currently developing expertise in working with women with multiple personalities. After working for the Auckland HELP Foundation for three years, Ruth currently practices both privately and from the Auckland Women's Health Centre. Ruth is an active community worker and is currently an strong advocate for general women's health issues.

### The Research Procedure

Three interviews were conducted individually with each participant. These took place over a period of two months. As Reinharz (1992) predicted the ongoing nature of the interviewing process created opportunities for clarification and discussion of the topic studied. Each interview was conducted over two hours, with myself and participants defining the need for breaks. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed for analysis. The interviewing environment was in a relaxed and natural environment, at times in my own home and in the participants' homes, according to their choice. Interviews with Judy were conducted in her office for convenience of location.

Generally open dialogue was the starting point for the interview process. Lather (1991) emphasises the importance of the use of everyday language in order to explain structural contradictions, and to develop a deeper understanding of women's situation. An example of the way this manifested in the interviews was in the use of slang and swearing, as occurs in informal conversation.

### Interview content/questions

The interview questions were open ended in an attempt to maintain the dialogical process as much as possible. In order to encourage discussion, exploration and creativity the sequencing of questions was flexible.

Interview 1 : The first interview concentrated on deriving a description of the worker's framework for practice, including the language and concepts used to understand the social, economic and political contexts and approaches taken in performing their work. This interview aimed at refocussing our definitions of concepts such as ideology and explored how the workers spoke of these concepts in relation to discussion about their practice. The areas covered were as follows:

- . Can you describe your personal orientation to social change?
  - What does social change mean to you?
  - How did you arrive at this conception?
  - What led to your interest and commitment?

- . Can you describe yourself in relation to your role in the community ?
  - How do you see yourself and your work ?
  - Are they linked?
  - What have been the major values and assumptions that have influenced your work? What is your vision?
  
- . How do you define the context in which you work?
  - Global, local, organisational etc?
  - How does your personal orientation, values and journey fit in with the context in which you work?
  
- . Can you describe the major strategies you use in your work?
  - What is your reason for the selection of these strategies.
  - How do these relate to your ideas and values? What is the connection between the two?
  - Can you link the ideas to any theoretical tradition?
  - How do you understand the term ideology?
  - How does this relate to the notion of ideology and work?

Interview 2 Having discussed the worker's broad framework and approaches to practice, the content of the second interview focused on exploring the themes and issues found in the literature in order to identify the links between theory and practice.

- . A common goal of community workers appears to be the empowerment of individuals and groups. What does the notion of empowerment mean for you, in your work?
  
- . How do you understand the concept of power? How does this notion apply to your work in the community?
  
- . In what ways do you locate your work as in the personal or institutional realm ? Are they connected?
  
- . Can we take a moment to discuss the notion of false consciousness. Is the concept of false consciousness useful in your work? In what ways is it applied in your work?

- . Are you aware of existing models of community work? What have been the influences on the development of your own model for community work practice.
- . How easy is it for you to work to your own model of practice. How do you reinforce the vision of your model? What is the place of reflection in your work?
- . As we discussed I have identified two major contemporary models of community work (Shirley 1982, Sayer 1990). Are you able to locate yourself within these models? What are the differences, at which point do you diverge?
- . How do you perceive the significance of the personal and individual identity for social change?
- . Do you have any concerns for your clients, about the ways you facilitate community work in the women's health movement?
- . What rights do you see your clients as having?
- . What are the major difficulties you find as a community worker? What are the biggest dilemmas you have had to work through?
- . Where is your main source of support and guidance?
- . What more support and training would you find useful?

Interview 3 : Prior to the third interview I attempted to identify the main themes and issues explored in the previous two interviews. The final interviews began with a collaborative response to my preliminary analysis of the initial interview. The major theme of this interview was to explore the implications of the issues and themes for the development of support and training processes for social change practitioners.

At the end of the third interview the participants were asked to comment on their participation in the research process.

### Research Validity

The validity constructs used for quantitative research methods have to be reconceptualised for feminist qualitative research. I attempted self reflexivity, which is the practice of self-critique about my role throughout the whole research process. Lather (1991) recommends vigorous self reflexivity in the construction of research designs.

I utilised the technique of "member checks" (Lather 1991) which can partly check validity. This is a process of seeking confirmation from the participants that what has been said is correct from their perspective. The participants all had aspects that they wanted changed within the final draft of the thesis.

Lather also outlines the possibilities for catalytic validity which includes the degree to which the research can reorientate, focus and energise the participants. I sought to remain aware of the participants' reaction to some of the ideas, and perceived that there were elements of catalytic validity throughout the interviews, particularly throughout the second interview when we were identifying key themes and issues.

Job et al (1982:9) assert that "rapport lends validity". In self disclosing through out the interviews, I believe that a strong rapport developed between myself and the participants. The opportunity to negotiate meanings about issues such as ideology, also seemed to help develop a strong rapport.

### Ethical issues

#### . Confidentiality

In consultation with the participants it has been established that the use of real names in the documentation of the final report was desirable. In this way participants' knowledge, practice and conceptual development is acknowledged through documentation. As names were used the participants were given the opportunity to approve what parts of the content were included in the final draft of the thesis.

The participants divulged some personal information, especially when telling their stories about experiences and perceptions. Some aspects revealed in the interviews were removed from the final draft on request from the participants.

#### . Conflict and contradiction

In this subject area there were many contradictions revealed throughout the reflections made by myself and the participants. I acknowledged that the contradictions were part of the developing nature of theory and practice. There was at times conflict between my own assumptions and perspective and those of the participants. However it was essential that the participants views were listened to and recorded, no matter how they fitted into my own framework. This issue was particularly discussed in the final interviews. As Harding (1986) asserts, there is value in contradictions.

Lather (1991) describes the possibility of imposition whilst developing women's understanding (conscientisation) during research, as well as researchers positioning themselves as experts on or over women's experiences. She therefore advises that the theory must be very strongly grounded in the self understandings of women. Smith (1986) sees that women should be able to conduct research, as professional sociologists have done in the past, without being experts over women's experiences.

Fay (1987) also warns that we need to differentiate between research participants' reasoned ideas and elements of false consciousness. However, it seems that praxis oriented research can work through problems of false consciousness by emphasising the contradictions in our lives and through progressive dialogue. The interviews offered the participants the opportunities to do this, particularly in the discussions about personal identity and their future in relation to community work.

Problems have been raised by Gottlieb and Bombyk (1987) with regard to the goal of social change and how it may distort our knowledge building. At times the feminist researchers may have ignored certain questions or denied answers because they were not aligned to the feminist aspirations. These writers also assert that feminists may follow up findings that make intuitive sense to both participants and researchers. However, in the keenness to have the ideas accepted, the results may remain invalidated.

Some writers assert that feminist researchers have been selective in the questions they ask and the results they heed. In order to prevent some of these difficulties they advised that feminists follow closely the ethics of research, emphasising that participants have the right to know the purpose, process and outcomes of the research. In the interviews I tried to remain aware of the potential to ignore comments which did not fit with my own ideas. However I acknowledge that I may have unintentionally followed up certain comments rather than others.

The social gap between the researcher and the researched can still have significance for the results. Some writers assert that researchers are still going to be more socially advantaged than the participants. Acker et al (1983) see that at times collaboration between the researcher and the researched is unrealistic in practical terms, such as time. It is also possible that collaboration between the researcher and the participants may actually distort the development of valued knowledge (Gottlieb and Bombyk 1987). However, my commitment to reciprocity should reduce the likelihood of these problems. As researcher I attempted to check out and correct many preconceptions of the participants' world views as Lather (1991) advises. From the beginning of the research I have been clear about my value base. The participants were made aware of my position both personally and in relation to my community work orientation. This provided a self conscious base from which to work, rather than the illusion of being a value free researcher.

I am aware that my interpretation of the issues has coloured the emphasis of certain themes within the analysis of the research data. However when I suggested this to the participants they confirmed that this was also their area of questioning. There appeared to be a commonality in the areas of inquiry.

### Analysis of the data and implications of this methodology

This section describes the procedure for analysing the research data and explores some of the main implications for using the feminist research methodology.

The analysis of the data began after the first interview. Manual text analysis proceeded through identification of particular points which began emerging in our discussions. I aimed for the research to be as much like a natural conversation as possible. In this process the questioning was at times abandoned in preference for a natural flow in the dialogue and story telling. The appraisal of these sections of the interview did not fit obviously into the major analysis categories, but had to be carefully thought through within the context of the overall research. The main task of analysis was to identify the themes embedded within the anecdotal evidence. This process has been described by Opie (1992) as the generation of initial analytical categories which move the data from descriptive to conceptual. I found that it was a challenge to manage the large amounts of data involved in this form of research.

As the interviews proceeded the major themes and issues became evident. These were related to the theory identified in the literature and to themes generated by the participants. Each major theme can be illustrated by the examples of practice given by the participants. I was aware that my interpretation of the data was highly influenced by the perspectives I had. Fay (1987) speculated that the choice of significant categories of analysis involves the interpreter as much as the interpreted.

At the beginning of the second and third interview I recounted some of my initial analysis of the data. I introduced themes that were emerging and these formed the basis for the next interview. Participants made comments on my analysis and extended my first interpretations.

Even though the storytelling methodology and the uninterrupted dialogue allowed the participants to describe their personal thoughts, there are still difficulties in finding the words to describe some of the exact thoughts and feelings that were expressed. This was especially so in discussing aspects of spirituality. As Fay (1987) saw there is an inherent vagueness in the vocabulary which is available to describe the mental life of people. Other writers have relied on poetry to describe some of these aspects. In this examination the participants were skilled in explanations of their thoughts and feelings, but the following chapters cannot do credit to the intimate understandings which were only implied in the interviews.

When the participants were given a final draft of this thesis to review, they expressed concern at how the interviews appeared once they were transcribed as written quotes. They felt the data looked clumsy and at times inarticulate. All the participants wanted some of the passages edited. This presented a dilemma for myself as researcher, not wanting to interfere with the meaning of the quotes through the editing process. After much deliberation we decided together to acquiesce to the participants requests to have the some of their comments edited, taking care to change as few words as possible in order to leave the original meaning intact.

### General implications of the feminist research methodology

Any social movement is going to have powerful opponents. Du Bois (1983) has highlighted the strong negative reactions to the feminist research tradition amongst the mainstream academic community. In a society where the feminine is undervalued feminist research is likely to be marginalised (Smith and Noble-Spruell 1986). Some feminist writers have outlined the nature of the arguments against the feminist traditions, for example the argument that the feminist methods are biased and that the research is only advocacy of a particular point of view (Jayaratne 1983).

Feminist researchers have also been accused of becoming separatist in their orientation, where the research becomes alienated from the mainstream audience, and perhaps sidelined. Harding (1986) raises questions about the effectiveness of individual practitioners, when the research agendas are set internationally. There is evidence that feminist research is published less (Spender 1981), and what is published can be found mostly within feminist journals rather than mainstream publications (Lewis 1981). Similarly, research projects which use traditional methods have in the past been more likely to be funded (Cook and Fonow 1984).

Stanley and Wise (1990) counter that feminist research is not about separation but about removing an existing methodological separation in the positivist sciences. This needs to continue to be insisted on by advocates of the feminist tradition. In this examination the feminist research methodology was highly effective in allowing the research to be exploratory in nature.

Feminist research has been challenged for its inability to translate the ideals into practical sets of research behaviour (Stanley and Wise 1990). Jayaratne and Stewart (1991) observe that the literature on feminist methodology is highly abstract. Transcending dominant ideologies and incorporating structural features to subjective daily experiences is a huge task, with few guidelines. In working with the difficulties, it seems important for feminists to write about their practice experiences in order to avoid the inertia which was experienced by many radical marxist sociologists who, stuck in their theory, became radical pessimists (Corrigan and Leonard 1978). Lather (1991) found that research attempts at theory building have been difficult. However, in this examination the theory linked very closely with discussions of practice.

McRobbie (1982) advised that we need mutual interdependence between those who are involved in the practical tasks and those who are working on intellectual development. This research links these two together. In community work the two seem inextricable.

The participants have stated that the research was helpful and affirming. It was said that the process contributed to enhanced practice, by facilitating reflection on the practice. It is anticipated that strengthened practice will be self-sustaining because workers have the tools for self reflection and critical analysis. The dialogue during the research enabled the women to recognise their contribution to the change process. This can be said to have helped to avoid oppressive practices:

*Action without reflection is performance within ideology, not participation in exposing and recreating it (Sayer 1990:300).*

### Conclusion

The previous two chapters have introduced the literature informing the theoretical basis to this area of study and have described the main tenets of feminist research. In this chapter the specific methodology used in this thesis has been described and the research participants introduced. In the next Chapter the analysis of the research data begins. Chapter Four explores the participants' personal pathways to practice, which lead them to develop a commitment to social change and to become involved in community work.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WOMEN'S PATHWAYS TO PRACTICE

The primary aim of this research is to explore the experience and understandings of women who engage in action for social change. In my interviews with the women I was interested in identifying who we are, what is our history, and what led us to an interest in social change. The participants characterised their pathways to practice through a form of reflective storytelling.

Rees (1991:11) asserts that self awareness, or a personal "biography" is extremely important for community workers. He sees that biography begins with a form of "self referencing", where there is a struggle to make sense of individual circumstances in relation to the dominant constraints and opportunities at any given time. In a similar way Fay (1987) perceives that through recounting the genuine narratives of our lives we can achieve rational self clarity.

In this chapter the women's personal and conceptual understandings of the world are documented. I record the comments made about the participants' families of origin and the communities they were brought up in. The significant personal and work experiences are shown to have contributed to the development of a more formal political perspective.

#### Family, school and community

The participants recalled that their early relationships were highly significant in the formation of their present ideas. The family of origin emerged as the most important in forming early thoughts and expectations of the world. The participants discussed some positive influences, where there was an acceptance and even encouragement of a questioning and an alternative point of view of the world. Other participant's described the aspects in their families which they rebelled against, or were damaged by. Mostly it appears that the participants' ideas were formed in opposition to the families' basic philosophies.

The following comments help to develop a picture of the influence of the participants' families on the development of their ideas:

*I had been brought up in a clan sort of way, an extended family. I was the oldest sister and the second eldest cousin of the clan. There was a lot of responsibility for me. It meant that I didn't see the world as just me or my nuclear family, but I was aware of other processes, I saw the effect of my behaviour on everyone else - Paula*

*My father was from an Irish family, my mother was the only daughter of a Jewish woman, so I grew up with a very strong understanding of justice and peace through my parents. To be poor wasn't a problem, there was no sadness that there was no money, that was just how it was. But to do right by your fellow person, a sense of justice prevailed - Colleen*

*My values were different. My family was very caught up with the Baptist church... so there wasn't always room in the family for different views, but if we didn't hassle each other about it all would be well - Judy*

*My grandmother was completely inspirational for me, she was powerful, a great thinker and reader and a total socialist...she influenced me with her open mind...My father was also a magical person, and we were encouraged to use our imagination. I grew up knowing that there were fairies in the garden and that the trees could talk - Paula*

Two of the participants encountered serious child abuse in their families. The stories indicated both sexual, physical and emotional abuse as children. Ruth's experience of long term sexual abuse as a child and early teenager was the central issue in understanding herself and the world. For her the family held fearful memories. Consequently Ruth's own family is different from her family of origin. Ruth stood strongly alongside other participants in insisting that a nuclear family structure can be damaging to individuals particularly to women and children. For Ruth her working class background and the experience of abuse was significant:

*My sense of family was that we were isolated from each other and isolated from the rest of the world. I didn't go out into the world...I'm still glad I grew up in that family. I know what it is like to experience hunger. I understand things that I wouldn't have, otherwise. We all went to bed because there was no heating - Ruth.*

Three out of the four participants identified themselves as having a working class background, one as middle class. Most referred to an open door policy in their family homes, with strong connections to the local neighbourhood. However Ruth's feeling of isolation continued to influence her experience of community, her family were isolated from the community. All participants had a high exposure to Maori and Pacific Islanders in their early experience of community, perhaps more than many Pakeha New Zealanders:

*I think I was brought up in an unusual way, I think, looking at many Pakeha families... I was introduced to myths and legends from all around the world. I had a great deal of cultural input, my grandmother was a founding member of the family planning, with refugees in the war etc. She influenced me with her open mind. They had spent time in Samoa and Tahiti and always had these friends at their place so that I grew up seeing that there were lots of different people in the world, who looked at the world and behaved in different ways - Paula*

*My father worked as a St John Ambulance person and so all the neighbourhood were always dropping in, this developed a sense of community from early on - Colleen*

All the participants described the difficulties they had in parts of their formal education, identifying school as an abrupt confrontation with institutions and systems:

*I didn't communicate at school. I was initially in a class for retarded children. I couldn't relate to other retarded children, and they couldn't relate to me. Again, I had an experience of isolation. I hated school I felt terrified. I had one teacher who used to strap me - Ruth*

*I don't have an academic background and left school in the fifth form.... I was totally alienated by the school system which I saw as a system which didn't work at all well for me - Judy*

*That was the first time that I came up against a very powerful brick wall, because of the very rigid system with rules and regulations. I seriously was shocked because I had grown up believing that we could respond and talk through issues. I developed a great fear of authority - Paula*

*Secondary school was horrific, I absolutely hated it. It was harsh. I saw abuses in relation to the treatment of my brother who wasn't good at sport. There was an excess of corporal punishment and an incredible unfairness in the system. There was a difference between family life and school life - Colleen*

The participants described that as they became more independent from their families, they built on their initial understanding of community. Ruth felt a strong sense of community with other women. Other participants also came to understand that community was synonymous with women:

*I noticed that women had an amazing understanding of what went on in their neighbourhood. They walk their kids to school, they notice who is at home and who isn't, they see elderly people in the streets they know where everything is, they notice if unemployed kids are around the streets, they know... - Colleen*

*I had some stroppy friends, and women's groups. I met women who weren't just mothers, they had strong ideas and were willing to speak up... - Ruth*

These initial experiences of family education and the community contributed to the participants growing experience of self.

#### Experience of self, identity, wounding and an understanding of "difference".

I have explored how the feminist movement aims to overcome the personal restrictions and the structural limitations to exercising choice and acting freely as discussed in Chapter One. Personal and social liberation can be seen to be entwined (Fook 1993). In this section I explore the participants' reflections about themselves and their stories about the development of a stronger identity. At times the stories described an experience of pain and difference. All the participants perceived that they saw things differently from many people around them. They noticed this from quite an early age:

*Ever since I was a young child my views have been out on a limb...I began seeing that my views were different - Judy*

*I had an awareness that things could be different, but I thought for a long time that it was me that was different, and when I spoke out I knew I would get into trouble, I felt a lot that I was on my own, and hated the unfairness - Colleen*

*Since then I have talked to people who knew me and they thought I was different and I was - Ruth*

These initial feelings of being different developed later on into aspects of their lives that can be considered unconventional and non conformist. Judy travelled with her young children, living in a bus for seven years. Paula experimented with communal living:

*I suppose our lifestyle has always been different from the majority of the people we were around, my husband was a musician...Colleen*

*I am a lesbian woman, this is not the conventional family! - Ruth*

The participants talked about their ongoing need to ask questions and to seek answers, and to find different understandings. The women recall that from an early age they felt anger, outrage and frustration at what they perceived to be happening around them. These comments demonstrate an early ability to be self reflecting and the initial development of a critical analysis of society:

*I remember being devastated because the developers came in and they mowed down all the sand dunes. There was an urapa, and lots of middens, and they just came in with their tractors, and trees went. I felt angry for years, because the place was sacred - Paula*

*I felt a huge sense of unfairness that women didn't have a choice to terminate a pregnancy...Outrage and anger... Judy*

*I experienced incredible isolation being home alone with children. I experienced myself as a second class citizen, and how little was done for women and children. You couldn't even get on a bus. There was no way publicly that people valued you, they left you to struggle in all kinds of ways. So I gradually began to form my opinion - Colleen*

*I met women who helped me to see that it was o.k to ignore what the doctors say - Ruth*

Each women's critical analysis of the way society was organised was intensified through observing how difference was treated. In their early teens the women recognised the different experiences and opportunities varied according to race and gender:

*I became acutely aware of how boys and girls were treated differently at school - Colleen*

*It is an empowering thing to be part of a group where you discover that your experience is not an isolated one and that you can share the pain - Ruth*

*My grandparents had spent time in Samoa and Tahiti and always had these friends at their place so that I grew up seeing that there*

*were lots of different people in the world, who looked at the world in different ways and behaved in different ways - Paula*

*My closest friends were Maori and Polynesian, and we were encouraged to bring our friends home, but as I got older I noticed separations, and it was more difficult to retain friendships - Colleen*

The participants gave numerous examples demonstrating an understanding that those in power had a different experience in society:

*People in power would say such extraordinary things...I soon learnt that there was a real arrogance to some people in power, and their power seems so comfortable to them and their power seems so secure to them - Judy*

*I realised that you just can't trust adults. My mother knew what was going on but she couldn't protect me - Ruth*

These understandings were also evident in the way that the participants recognised structures and systems as problematic for certain groups:

*I was involved with a friend who had a psychotic breakdown, when I was 17, she was hospitalised. It was a real lesson and a dawning of something that I didn't quite understand, it was that people don't have just different cultures and ways of relating, but even within the person there are different realities. I knew that this person was valuable, and that her experience was valuable, but that she was being completely demoralised and undervalued. This set me on a path of seeking - Paula.*

*...and yet my early experiences were that in negotiating with the local council for new services or a new pedestrian crossing etc, I noticed that you weren't taken seriously at all as a woman, because as a women, concerned with children, you were right at the bottom of the priority list - Colleen*

*When I had my psychotic break I was lucky enough to be staying at a friends' house, and they understood. So they helped me to stay outside of the psychiatric system - Ruth*

These perceptions appear to have affected the women on a deeply personal level. As critical understandings of the world unfolded and their realisations of society developed, the women made comments which indicated that they had experienced a challenge to their identity:

*I think that you develop a conception of the world through being working class, you have to cross class boundaries. Someone said to me that coming from a working class family it was difficult to fit in*

*anywhere, because his family didn't understand him, but he didn't fit in with his colleagues either. This happens when women move out of the traditional role and families. There is a loss of identity, I think that people who have moved out of what was expected of them have got an awareness. There is not a belonging anywhere - Ruth*

*I argue against these things, but I had to resolve who I was as a privileged person, I became a bit cornered by this question at this point. What part of the social system will I buy into and who will I oppress? It has changed the way I parented - Paula*

Christ (1980:5) helps us to see that new identity emerges, when we make a rediscovery of ourselves beyond the prescriptions of the patriarchy:

*Women have lived in the interstices between their own vaguely understood realities and the shapings given to experience by the stories of men.*

There can be some distress and loss of identity in the transition period before there is a clear recognition and understanding of new realities, whilst we are seeking new ways to represent the situation. This experience has been portrayed as a void or a "sense of nothingness" (Christ 1980:13). Fay (1987) interprets this period as highly stressful because there appears to be no coherence between the life as it was and the new way of thinking about the world. Giroux and Aronowitz (1991:119) have identified a "border pedagogy" where there is a period of "destabilisation" between the initial change and the consequent action. They see change workers as being border crossers who "cross over the realms of meaning, and maps of knowledge that are increasingly being negotiated and rewritten".

As well as a general questioning of their identity some of the participants described phases in their early lives which were painful. The origins of this pain varied, but the impact was the same for each woman. In some women there was the feeling that there had been a "wounding". Wounding can be defined as a deep hurt to a person at a psychic level. For Ruth this resulted in a psychotic break and an addiction to tranquillisers:

*I was so quiet, I didn't take anything in, I wasn't really there - Ruth*

*But I found going to boarding school very painful...I found it incredibly difficult, and I think that on some level a part of me was broken, a part that I am only really healing now - Paula*

Fay (1987) introduces the idea that social science is a medium that people today can use to express their most profound longings. However some participants had observed that perhaps some workers had at times assumed an overdeveloped role, borne of personal distress. This is where community and social workers may get "stuck" in pain, or in wounding:

*In this work there are certain roles that are played out, and get over exposed, like the rescuer, the helper. Sometimes people are not aware of why they are responding, where that comes from, whether it is a need, or whether it is from compassion. You may be attracted to a particular way of working because of your past experiences, you may be very wounded. There is a point where it can become destructive...we can become stuck in a mindset, for example the "good" working class, and the "bad" oppressive other classes. It becomes an overdeveloped role, rather than an understanding or a theory, or an experiential base that is integrated into other aspects of our lives, it becomes a thing on it's own... So we have a responsibility to find ways of exploring what is going on for us personally, and whether we are integrating this information into something useful, or if it is becoming a weapon that we use on the community or could use on ourselves - Colleen*

*I guess I don't have very high expectations about what I expect from people or groups. I am a realist. It comes from experience and disillusionments too. I have learnt that it is unrealistic to expect individuals and groups to meet needs that you have to be responsible for - Judy*

In this situation the importance of support for community workers in dealing with their personal issues is obvious. (Further questions of support are raised within Chapter Eight). In the case of these women, the interviews revealed that the pain and wounding was also offset with a deep sense of self trust:

*I met women who valued themselves for themselves, it was a deeply empowering experience...I realised I wasn't the only one...It confirmed my whole existence and I could hold on to my sanity - Ruth*

*But I had my reality affirmed by my family. It was deeply within me. I believed in myself, and that my way in the world was real, it kept me looking. If something doesn't fit the picture then you just discard it - Paula*

*I always felt that I was a little bit special and that maybe I have got a lot to offer - Ruth*

As the women found answers to questions and moved through pain, they describe an increasing sense of confidence in themselves, over time:

*I always had a sense of that doesn't feel right and wondering if I was the only person that actually saw it that way and then talking informally after a meeting and realising that I wasn't, and that gave me a lot of confidence - Judy*

*I always feel like I was searching, I was scanning, I was scanning to have my reality affirmed - Paula*

*I rebelled... I spoke up, I come from a boisterous family who argued about politics and religion...Colleen*

*It gained momentum once it started, gradually little bits of feeling and understanding came back, and I started to investigate who I really was - Ruth*

By being a woman in the patriarchal world today, women workers experience a commonality of oppression. This process is very similar to that which they then facilitate with their clients. These comments demonstrate the beginnings of practice being mediated through personal standpoints:

*It is an empowering thing to be part of a group where you discover that your experience is not an isolated one and that you can share the pain etc. It validates what happens to you. I see that this is contributing to the women's movement at a different level. It needs to happen on all levels. I see the movement as wholistic which happens at a political level, and a individual level and everything else in between, it is like a continuum - Judy*

*I think that is why a lot of people get into community work because it is a way of affirming their own identity, and often why they are very good at it is because they have acknowledged a process and so they are very good at helping others acknowledge their own processes - Paula*

*At this time, issues were polarising the country, issues about the law, Maori issues, Bastion Point, nuclear ship protests, Springbok Tour, there wasn't much subtlety, it was all on. It was very action orientated I gravitated towards those groups, because of a strong sense of justice and a need for change, and discovered that I could be useful and could play a part in these processes. I started to find that there were places in society where I could work for bigger things - Colleen*

*We don't speak out, and there are very valid reasons for why we don't. We are victims in it. Until we stop being victims are we waiting for some benevolence? A person?, a man? the state? What do we believe needs to change in the state of hegemonic apparatuses before we start changing? Are we given permission? I'm not saying that the state is not powerful, but we just keep silent, we buy into the silence. We don't state our truths enough - Paula*

These general personal experiences and perceptions led the participants to develop a more formal political perspective to their understandings. In community work the process of challenging existing assumptions and questioning the status quo is undertaken first in a personal confrontation (Marchant and Wearing 1986). Generally the women did not use a formal political paradigm to describe their stance, but gave concrete examples of their observations of society. All four women had an orientation that was inherently radical. This can be best shown in the way that they described society's organisational arrangements and institutions:

*I didn't identify with any particular ideology, even though I understand them. I was eclectic, I didn't have a name for my ideas. But I knew that I wasn't pro the free market. I saw that some things were valued more than others. I saw that white is right, money, men, christianity, bosses, decision makers, user-pays, industrial western world, technology, science, linear thinking are right. Thoughts are right feelings are wrong - Paula*

*I noticed that there were a lot of issues around money. Many women were either paid by men or paid by the state. The state's involvement in women's lives was even more debilitating - Colleen*

*Women came to me were describing psychotic episodes, or mental breakdowns, describing their behaviour and reactions that should have been related to their sexual abuse. It was very convenient for doctors to have those labels to use, and that they could drug the women so that they wouldn't have to deal with the symptoms - Ruth*

*But I suppose that when you are prepared to take a stance on all sorts of issues, you could describe it as radical, but when you are actually doing it and caught up with it, you don't think that what I am doing is radical - Judy*

At other times the participants did identify with a particular political ideology to explain the nature of their views. All saw themselves as feminists, although how they defined the term differed. Generally, the women described a high commitment to feminist principles:

*I have a mixture of views that do not fit in with one particular category. I probably fall between radical feminism and anarchy. But my own personal view is that women have not been able to participate in society, economically, and socially, and therefore suffer a lot of hurt. Women have entered mental institutions at an alarming rate, indicating how the pressure has impacted on women as a gender, quite differently than the way it has impacted on men - Colleen*

*I knew the feminist ideology, but couldn't really identify with it. I had friends who were strongly feminist and some strong lesbian friends, and others who felt very threatened by feminist ideas. So I saw that they spoke the same truth, but that they were coming from different places. I describe myself as a fence sitter. I was totally committed to women, but it wasn't a framework that appealed to me particularly - Paula*

These perspectives and orientations were developing alongside the women's participation within paid and voluntary work. The participants all had a variety of jobs early in their paid work history. These included such roles as cleaning and clerical positions. However the initial experience of community work was as volunteers. The women became involved in organisations that dealt with personal areas of interest, such as childcare or maternity issues:

*Having children - political issues about home birth...something about the magic of birth and the whole passion around it was something that really attracted me to the area, as well as the political issues - Judy*

In the interviews the women all conveyed that as they developed a greater awareness of themselves and a critical analysis of society they began to seek specific work that dealt with social change in the community:

*I gravitated to organisations that I knew had a particular stated value system, be it a theology or a mission statement, which was grounded in some kind of social change - Colleen*

The participants described how they actively pursued opportunities for working with women, some particularly in the women's health context. This context offered an opportunity for community workers to use their personal knowledge and an understanding of women's position in society. This drive towards working for change demonstrates how practice becomes mediated by personal perspectives. The development of personal understanding and the process of formulating different definitions, fuelled the passion for change.

## Conclusion

Rather than being a job or occupation, work for social change is an intense physical, emotional and spiritual involvement, which touches on the nature of our own and others' existence. The orientation is about how we live our life itself.

Billing et al (1988) identify this level of involvement as a choice made between the contemplative life and the non-contemplative life. Rees (1991) encourages us to keep pondering our own and others position in the world. The qualities of reflection, doubt, thought, argument and counter argument appear to be the foundations for challenging the status quo. The participants took actions and made choices early in their lives against unthinking conformity.

I maintain that the change process begins with ourselves and that effective social change agents have an enhanced self understanding. Fay (1987:68) describes a "rational self clarity" where people begin to know the true nature of their existence, through exploring their history. Each of the participants was able to articulate easily her pathways to social change in the interviews.

The pathways to social change were similar for the women interviewed. The development of a stronger sense of self and an understanding of how differences were treated in our society appear to be the primary catalysts for their clear commitment to social change.

Rees (1991:12) considers the development of this personal "biography" to be an ongoing process of trying to understand and influence the world. The transitional nature of our self understandings was apparent in some of the comments made in the interviews. There were some contradictory responses within the women's stories. Some of the participants acknowledged that their stories are constantly shifting and in transition, moderated by any new information gathered.

Contradictions also appeared as the participants reflected on their role in social change. They all expressed the combination of feeling hurt and bewildered about the world as well as a sense of hope and inspiration about the future.

In Chapter Six, it becomes more evident how the participants' self understandings interface with the strategies used in practice. In the next chapter I link the participants accounts of their pathways towards practice with their descriptions of the current context for practice.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE CURRENT CONTEXT FOR PRACTICE

The participants' personal understandings were clearly linked with an awareness of the current context within which they live and work. Rees (1991:12) emphasises the importance of identifying this "struggle in context", where individuals work towards negotiating many constraints as well as opportunities. In this way the context can be characterised by the tensions, issues and problems which present "dilemmas" (Billing et al 1988:148) for those interacting within it. It seems that particular dilemmas are a historical reflection of the era and change over time.

The participants reflected on the particular aspects distinguishing the context for living and working in the community in Aotearoa in 1994. In the variety of stories told, the main issues and dilemmas could be associated with the deteriorating economy and the effects of the prevailing libertarian political philosophy. The participants' views of these aspects of the current context are explored in the first part of this chapter.

As well as the dominance of the broader economic and political circumstances the participants identified a variety of other issues which constitute the current context of contemporary women's lives in Aotearoa, including violence against women, and the lack of adequate health care. Child sexual abuse was identified as the most important issue affecting women's health in the current context. This issue was explored in more detail in the interviews as a crucial issue needing attention in the current context.

Child sexual abuse was perceived as having a profound impact on the lives of the individuals concerned, causing personal, social, physical and psychological problems. The problem was also considered to be significant because of the connection to the construction of women's identity and to the construction of gender. In an exploration of social change, the issue of child sexual abuse can offer a powerful example of how individual change and resistance is linked to resistance against powerful social and cultural institutions and discourses. In the second part of this chapter the participants' views about the impact of child sexual abuse on the current context is explored.

### The Deteriorating Economy and the Libertarian Political Philosophy.

The deterioration in the economy is critical to the context in which the participants are working for social change. As the economy moves into a serious downturn, the current context is marked by increased unemployment and major cuts made to welfare spending and provision by the state (Yeatman 1990). There is a weakening of legislative reform and advances made during past years. In this environment there is a deterioration of general social conditions towards increased poverty and lower pay. Williams (1993) claims that the worsening of general material conditions exacerbate gender and racial inequalities.

The participants were aware of the considerable gender implications of this context. They saw that as poverty increases, there is a corresponding feminisation of poverty. Similarly as the general pressures on society increase the pressures on women are compounded, and in this environment it was perceived that women's health issues intensify. A major example given by the participants was how women carry more of the caring responsibility for people who are sick and people who are elderly, when governments reduce support for carers. The problems which women experience in this context can feel insurmountable to those working for change. The participants conveyed that at times they all had felt overwhelmed by the enormity of the field. Judy's comments best exemplify this general feeling:

*In prioritising there are difficulties in women's health because there are so many pressing problems and issues, the dilemma is which priorities to address...sometimes women see that the issues are just too big to cope with... People need to feel that issues are achievable. There is nothing that will put people off more than a sense that there is no point...I wish there were more women doing it - Judy*

The dominant ideologies which proliferate during economic decline present major obstacles for those working for social change. In this context the libertarian philosophies argue economic rationalism. A function of these ideologies is to justify the inequalities. The ideology of individualism, means that social issues become redefined as personal problems. Broom (1991) sees that in this environment services are organised to respond to needs in a manner which is isolated from attention to wider social processes.

The participants observed how the prevailing free market philosophies and the re-emphasis on principles of individualism have resulted in a decrease in public responsibility, particularly cutbacks in public sector investment. These problems are particularly evident within the women's health arena, with the development of the ideology of competition and the advent of user pays in the health system. The participants identified that reductions in funding for community based programmes and consequent reduction in staff and resources had dire ramifications on their present working environment:

*Lately there is the glorification of the individual, as seen in the privatisation and user pays policies, I think it is all an absolute worry. I think that to operate in co operative ways is going to become harder and harder. It only appears that communities are being given more power. This is the context and ideology, of the new right, is only going to get stronger and stronger - Paula*

*I have perfected the art of living on the smell of an oily rag. The challenge is to squeeze out a bit more - Judy*

*Things are just getting tighter and tighter, and more narrow. I find it scary - Paula*

*It is a case of establishing priorities and co-existing with an unsatisfactory situation, and choosing where to put energy in. I am quite a realist and I think that over time I can't achieve a great deal -Judy*

Broom (1991) sees that in this environment social change agencies are converted into social service agencies, where the politically confrontational stance has to be reduced. The participants found that a large amount of their time is spent on funding applications and submissions for funding. They remarked on how their attention began shifting towards dealing with budget constraints, rather than on political developments in the area. The participants understood that in this context they needed to develop management skills, marketing and resource development orientations to practice within the women's health movement. However it was felt that this orientation must be accompanied by a political analysis:

*We are being pressured to develop an entrepreneurial base to continue our work and to give us a secure foundation to continue into the future. I don't have the contacts to generate the funding to employ someone with that expertise. We don't travel in those circles. We need to look at ways to extend our networks in those ways. I'm sure that we will find a way around it - Judy*

The competing ideologies and the global structural changes cause social justice issues to become differentiated. Social justice movements appear to be fragmented, with the identification of highly diverse issues. However, even as economic rationalism flourishes Giroux and Aronowitz (1991) identify a general breakdown of ideological cohesion in the legitimating narratives of our time. The participants felt that there are possibilities for difference to be voiced amidst the diversity and the constraints. It seems that the first wave of radicalism (Fook 1990) has provided a theoretical explanation and language which can be applied to the current issues:

*As much as the new right is getting stronger, so is the new left. There is a new left, and it is about indigenous people and it is about women and it is about the research that you are doing, it is in the work of the woman Sayer who drew up this model. It about people telling their stories. It is about me working with the Maori women so that I can learn about different models. It is profound and powerful, It is probably as powerful as what is happening with the new Right however it needs to be fed. It is the hope for our society. I think what the Iwi authorities are beginning to do is radical community work - Paula*

Alongside the growth in libertarian philosophies there has been the increased promotion of so called "new age" ideas, which tend to reinforce the philosophy of individualism in the guise of being progressive. The "new age" is a term which is used to describe the growth in the recognition of spiritual disciplines and techniques as offering guidance and direction for the way we approach our lives. These ideas, although offering optimism and pathways to change, have become imbued with a market place mentality and can have a political blindness (Goodison 1990). This may be why the participants were particularly sensitised to the dangers of a new age orientation in the current context:

*It all comes down to the ideas of individualism, where people see the individual as primary. I've worked with people who have no idea of the political context - Paula*

*The new right philosophies and the new age speak that is articulated without a political analysis can be dangerous for our goals. Some of these new ways of relating are another way of saying I'm looking after myself and you can go to hell, and that if you have ended up in a bad space then that is your karma and you have invited it, so that is blame the victim stuff - Judy*

In this context the language and vision that has provided the direction for community work has also been reinterpreted by contemporary political interests towards reactionary goals. The participants who have worked in the field over a number of years were beginning to see the language and concepts they advocated being utilised for free market goals and reactionary intent:

*It is a lot greyer now. A lot of the liberation language is being used in areas that are not about liberation...In the new right regime people get confused about what their roles are - Colleen*

*The misinterpretation of values and terms is very worrying. Like the use of the word empowerment. No one understands what the term really means any more. Also words such as consultation, needs, action research. The spirit of the words and the method has been lost - Paula*

In challenging some of the assumptions of economic rationalism and some of the apolitical "new age" ideas, the participants experienced a profound hesitation for co-workers and agency personnel to engage in analysis. The participants also have a frustration with their contemporaries because the energy seems dissipated. Women are seeing themselves as equal, even though the indicators are there for inequity, such as eating disorders and stress. In the past it seems it was easier to identify oppression, but it has become more subtle now. The denial of existing gender oppression, by colleagues, was particularly evident to the participants:

*The idea that the feminist movement is dead - I get angry at this. We are only in a different stage of development and we have to develop different tactics. Strategies have to be different now because we have made gains in some areas, but that doesn't mean that we agree that we have made all the gains that there are to make, or that we have given up the fight, we are just regrouping and learning different ways of keeping the pressure on - Colleen*

*I feel sceptical of comments that the women's movement has died. It has been there since time began. What are these women's expectations? Because they must have set assumptions about what the women's movement should look like. It is different things all the time, it shouldn't be static, women need to be in charge of shaping what the directions are. My challenge is what do you want it to be and to make it look like that. What do you need in your life and in your society. We have to be careful not to be too purist about how to define it. The women's movement doesn't have to look like a mass social action. There are many strategies. We have to be careful that we don't invalidate issues if they don't fit our image of what the women's movement is - Judy*

The participants found that rather than "women's issues" reducing there were greater difficulties confronting women today. In the interviews the women discussed their experience of power differentials whilst relating to men in both personal relationships and in the work environment:

*Some of my relationships with men at work have not worked, there is nothing more in my power that I can do to make them work. One man I worked with was so fearful, that we could not communicate at all. He would sabotage me when I went out of the room - Colleen*

*Personal relationships seem to be insurmountable...partnership is a generous term... I have learnt to do without the support of a close personal relationship, because it is not there, I no longer have expectations for it, I don't know where it would be. I suppose some women have good arrangements with childcare - Judy*

The participants indicated that one of the most difficult consequences of the tight economic environment has been the increase in the gap between theory and practice. Community workers who practice with a radical perspective have traditionally been plagued by difficulties in applying the theories to practice (Fook 1990). Although the contemporary resurgence of radical theory has begun addressing the limitations of theory, the difficulties persist and are exacerbated in the current context.

Despite recognising that theories are only ideal types, the participants found that many theories they were aware of, were naive and disconnected from a contemporary community context. Paula identified that some theories were only useful at times and the analysis needed to change in different situations.

*I think for a lot of Pakeha women it is the feminist analysis which supports their ideology, but that is not the same for other cultures, the feminist analysis is not necessarily useful to them - Colleen*

The participants' difficulty of bridging the gap between theory and practice is also reflected in the community work literature (Giroux and Aronowitz 1991). Generally, the participants saw that the theories and vision they had for social change were useful as a guide to work that promotes partial changes, not total transformation. The critical theorists initially sought a theory that promised to contribute to liberation for all. However, as Fay (1987:214) asserts the ideas and consequent actions are not enough to allow the attainment of visions we have, but are "fragile, unpredictable and limited".

The complexity of issues confronting workers in practice created personal dilemmas for the participants and their fellow workers. Firstly, the work group was often overlooked in the face of increasing demand for services. The participants felt that conflict can be mishandled in this context:

*We are so busy dealing with the politics and strategies needed, and dealing with outside people that we neglect the internal workings of the group and the implications that some decisions have on people. We don't notice when things are going well, but when things aren't going well it is often too late. It is trying to put aside the demands of the everyday. Some of these issues can tear a group apart -*  
Judy

In the present context community workers can have considerable difficulty in defining limits for themselves in their expectations for change. All the participants appeared to have set themselves an enormous task, with few boundaries around what roles they are performing. There is a greater impact of being involved in the realities of women's lives in a tight economic context. It can be a continual challenge to keep the balance between involvement and maintaining distance:

*I had this huge dilemma, I know that they are in pain, I know that there are atrocious things happening in that house but because she is over the age of sixteen, I can't get her out. I sit with this real ethical dilemma, but I can't do anything to help. So I made a pact with the client that she would ring me if she could hear him at the door, and that we would talk. But then where do my boundaries start and finish... I can't afford it emotionally because there are ethical boundaries, because of the way that the whole society is set up I can't do anything about it. Either me or my two supervisors -*  
Ruth

*This means that we have no personal space because the situation is so desperate, we try to do the best we can, to squeeze it in, or accept the consequences -* Judy

*When you are on a roll with the process and the energy is there, I just laugh at the hours, if there is a job to be done you just do it, don't you? you don't write down the hours. I have often woken at two in the morning and grappled for a piece of paper to write down an idea- Judy*

Ruth found that her practice was developing in ways which were difficult to maintain in the current context. In a context which is moving towards a greater separation between practitioner and client, Ruth's innovative therapy approaches (explored in more detail in Chapter Six) may not be financially acknowledged or supported:

*I am having to re evaluate what I am doing. There seemed to be the need to change the traditional boundaries to my practice. These original boundaries are excellent and they work really well, however with multiple personalities it is not appropriate any more. Therapy has to almost be daily... What I have found in the literature is that people working with this area are breaking all the rules. So what I have done is with my supervisor I have worked out different strategies for this client - Ruth*

According to the women there can be a certain marginalisation for community workers continually advocating change. The work is characterised by conflict and contradictions and the nature of the work can begin to feel like continual conflict with little resolution. The participants believed that this conflict become extremely demanding, over extended periods:

*There is a lot of conflict in community work and you learn to kind of go with that or you get wounded by it - Colleen*

Moreover, in the struggle for social change, there may be a tendency for workers to permanently take a confrontational stance. The participants perceived that community workers, particularly women working with a feminist analysis, have the potential for developing a victim mentality whilst working amidst the current pressures:

*There is a lot of negativity in community work at present. There are people looking at who are the enemy, working against the enemy in the struggle. But this doesn't have to be the orientation. Why don't we only look to identify the alliances in practice, but we don't. That's why I like some of the new age stuff, like Shakti Gawain - Paula*

*At the same time, it's like we as women give our power away, we have bought into this, in that we don't speak out, there are valid reasons why we don't, but until we stop being victims we can't move on. Are we waiting for some benevolent man or the state. What needs changing is where we are now. We need to claim it and own it - Judy*

Fay (1987) asserts that there is a certain continuity that will remain in society. Acceptance, or non acceptance of this appears to be a major challenge for community workers. The significant rates of "burnout" which confront workers and their colleagues can be associated with this high level of involvement, with few boundaries or supports. Some of the participants mentioned that sustained action in community work cannot go on for any length of time without respite:

*As women we put the nurturing and caring for ourselves last, whether it is in our work situation or in our families. It is the area which has the most limitations on our work, and the area which brings us into most conflict with each other, undermining the work we do and is causing the most casualties with women leaving - Judy*

In the next section, the effects of child sexual abuse is also shown to have links to the broader social and economic structures of society. The issue of child sexual abuse is discussed as another major element of the current context for change.

### The current context - The significance of Child Sexual Abuse

In identifying the issues and dilemmas for women in the current context child sexual abuse emerged as a highly significant factor. The general issue of violence against women was central to the work of the participants, However they felt that the unmasking of child sexual abuse was an issue which constituted this era more than any other.

The participants identified that problems associated with child sexual abuse manifest in personal, social, physical and psychological and spiritual realms of women's lives, including severe low self esteem, extreme anxiety, social withdrawal, depression and eating disorders. The effects were seen to be insidious and lifelong, where women are trained in self blame and powerlessness.

Child sexual abuse was identified as a major concern for community workers with an analysis which attempts to make the personal political. Child sexual abuse is supported by the myths and assumptions about women in the dominant discourses. In resisting the negative construction of personal identity, the broader social and cultural discourses have to be challenged. It was felt that sexual abuse exemplified where centralised institutionalised power met with the every day experiences of women.

The high incidence of child sexual abuse has begun surfacing in a wide variety of fields, including education and welfare, and for health professionals. The true magnitude of the problem has not been reliably established and methodological problems exist in identifying the extent.

The participants recognised that the current context was exceptional for the high incidences of sexual abuse, and they were at times overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem. The comments demonstrated their frustration at the complexity of the problem, particularly because the issues had a hidden and an insidious nature:

*It is a very big one, it is taking on the whole of patriarchy and a lot of the changes I have been involved in are working around the constraints of patriarchy. I have actually had to put that issue to one side because it is such a big one. It is very difficult to know how to begin... - Judy*

*There aren't all the answers now. We haven't got enough information to be able to access these answers. Maybe we need more accumulated collective information, before we know what all this means and how we are all connected to it - Colleen*

Sexual abuse may be seen as connected with the construction of gender. In this way the participants made links with individual cases of child sexual abuse to the structure of society, to the broader institutional relations and power dynamics:

*It is the same with children and sexual abuse. The society basis has to change. Children need to be valued by society. There is a collusion for silence. You can't have abuse unless there is society that colludes. I think it shows the sickness of society - Paula*

*It doesn't surprise me that men behave in the violent way they do on an individual level, because that is modelled at an institutional level I would see the patriarchy happening at a bureaucratic level. The personal level just acts this level out. Our society and the structures are very violent. The health system, justice system etc are very violent. Our approach to how we corporatise housing is very violent. Violence doesn't have to be physical contact, it can happen in a number of ways, it can happen in coercive ways, undermining ways, in the way that we don't value people - Judy*

The women's health movement has helped to show that healing from child sexual abuse is integrally involved in the women's rediscovery of herself and her sexuality. Healing can help to reconnect women to a positive identity and to her life force. Sexual abuse is a physical embodied confrontation of the patriarchy. In the interviews the participants were able to identify the positive aspects of healing and argued that sexual abuse may be one of the final battles women will fight towards their liberation. The participants felt that the strength that comes from dealing

with it is pushing women forward in every facet of life.

*I think that women are generally recognising that what they thought was normal is actually abusive. They are now stepping away from this. In stepping away from it, then they begin to recognise a whole lot of stuff. Our sexuality is at the basis of who we are, and what defines us, how we are perceived in this society. If suddenly you take another look at your sexuality and that because of it you are being abused. It is at the bottom of who we are, abuse issues are fundamental - Ruth*

*Who we are in the world is connected to our culture. Women who deal with abuse often have a sense that they have lost themselves. Pain. What are the touch stones that you grasp on to give you a sense of who you are? You get these touchstones from your culture. The stories the myths, etc - Colleen*

*Once sexual abuse is looked at, and dealt with and validated, then everything else will fall in to place...If my client can get through this there is nothing that she can't do. There is nothing that will stop her then. That is one of the things that I felt myself at twenty eight, when I left my husband, I felt I could go on and do anything. There has to be acknowledgment of every women who gets through this. This could possibly be the last battle - Ruth*

In the meantime, the participants see that the ramification of child sexual abuse are felt on a daily level with those they work with.

*It (sexual abuse) will come up in community projects there is no doubt...it can be incredibly raw and open, and exposed issues., Colleen*

## Conclusion

In this chapter the major elements constituting the current context for practice have been outlined. It is important not to overexaggerate the importance of our current context (Smart 1991), but necessary to be aware of the dilemmas for effective practice. The economic and political conditions and the significance of child sexual abuse were identified by the participants as the two most important issues confronting community workers in the current context. Although it is a formidable context to work in, the participants recognised glimmers of opportunity with which to implement social change strategies. The strategies used by the participants are explored in more detail in Chapter Six.

## CHAPTER SIX

### COMMUNITY WORK PRACTICE

The previous chapters have considered the personal experiences of the participants, together with their understanding of the current context for change. These insights provide a background for the analysis of their community work practice.

In this chapter the skills and strategies used in practice are described. I define a strategy as a particular planned action, skills being those personal resources that allow us to carry out the strategy in practice. A model is a more general coherent approach which links strategies with a vision for social change. The participants' exploration of contemporary community work models are documented in the following chapter.

This chapter examines practice as it occurs within an individual, local, or institutional social change context. It is important to note that these contexts are overlapping and not distinct. There was a high degree of flexibility demonstrated in the participants' ability to negotiate change at many different levels at once.

#### Community work skills and strategies

Skills are often emphasised in community work approaches that are inherently conservative and are described outside of any political analysis. The main assumption underpinning this thesis is that ideology is central to the way that we practice in the community. In Chapter Two the significance of ideology was explored, arguing as Shirley (1982:284) does, that "belief permeates technique". The participants conclude that general skills are valuable if they are used within a coherent political analysis:

*All the strategies link to the bigger picture of what we believe...  
What are the ideas that have shaped my practice?...I like the way  
of making things explicit - Paula*

All of the participants were explicit in their radical orientation. It was revealed in Chapter Four that the primary aim for community work practice is to bring about changes in existing social, political and economic structures. The women recognised the need for more equal sharing of power and for greater space for the voices of difference to be heard:

*It is about people being able to participate more equally in society on the basis of equality. This automatically means that you have to work for political change because our society is not fair and equal. In addressing the personal issues that people are locked into we end up working personally, socially economically and politically...It is about a society where the benefits are available to everyone - Colleen*

Although such an ideology was seen as implicit to their work the participants often hesitated about making their position explicit. They described this reluctance as not wanting to alienate the women they were working with, or to be strategic with the power holders in the practice context. The women also described a wariness about the disparity between their own perspective and that of their employing agency. (This issue is also explored in Chapter Seven within the discussion on imposition).

*I have tried to find a balance for myself, when working with groups that aren't where I am at. Your client group are never as radical as you are. If you are contributing and taking a leadership role, you are often isolated in the stance that you are taking, because the rest of the group have not absorbed your perspective. However if they have invited you in, there is obviously something about what you have to offer that attracts them, and was needed at that point in time. I remember in some situations being very quiet about my perspective. - Colleen*

The commitment to social change was what informed the participants use of a highly diverse range of strategies, rather than a politically naive eclecticism. Communication skills, conflict resolution and negotiation skills were considered essential for good community work practice:

*It is helpful to communicate in ways that people don't feel like they are being accused, and communicating your feelings on the matter across to the other person and it's about mutual respect, communicating honestly and listening to people and not backing people into a corner, respecting people's space. These are common sense - Judy*

Generally the choice of issue, and the timing of the intervention was considered crucial for success in community work. Such skills and strategies were applied throughout the participants' practice in a variety of contexts.

### The Individual Social Change Context

Social change strategies were utilised by the participants in work with individuals. The main strategies include counselling, awareness raising, consciousness raising and experiential learning.

In the women's health movement change has taken place as individuals begin to explore the experiences that are not acknowledged in dominant versions of reality. In Chapter One this process was outlined as "naming different realities", or developing "rational self clarity".

The participants felt that encouraging individuals to question their existing assumptions, and to "rearticulate ideological elements" (Sayer 1990), would result in different ways of living in the world. These understandings reinforce the conclusion found in the literature that hegemony can only be achieved in a partial or temporary way (Fairclough 1992).

Ruth's orientation to radical social change and a structural analysis underpins her approach to counselling. This can be contrasted with work with individuals which is aimed at consensus outcomes of community cohesion and social control. Ruth challenges women in counselling to come to a critical appraisal of the basis of their current beliefs. There are the spaces of silence between the dominant ideology and the true experience of individuals:

*I just keep asking lots of questions, about little things, eg, "Why do you need to do that?, who says?, tell me who told you that?, where is that written? Sometimes this is the first time they have considered that there could be another way of looking at the issues*  
- Ruth

In the naming of new realities the participants described a new language that was emerging to describe how women felt. They said that many women use the same words for example the child inside, holes, wholeness, split, waking up the unconsciousness, remembering what you have never forgotten. This observation confirms what Yeatman (1990) calls "language politics". The participants said that one of their strategies in working with individuals was to encourage new expressions for feelings and observations in the women they worked with:

*There is a need to restate the truth, about what women's lives were like, the assumptions held in society about women's lives. So testing assumptions is a strategy. I was part of the feminist movement that was about restating women's lives. Expressing the barriers that were in society and some of the pain - Colleen*

*I see that when women have differing views it is an opportunity to explore another view. I don't see that there is any right view. It is more about women sharing together and using that discussion and debate to try and learn - Judy*

In helping women to develop a new way of seeing the circumstances surrounding their lives, the participants saw that women were empowered to engage in broader action for change. This is different from the conservative interpretation of empowerment, which remains focused on individual self assertion and upward mobility (Lather 1991):

*For any emerging group of people who want to challenge the status quo, there has to be the restating of who they are, the process of change has to do this first, they have to start questioning assumptions about what they can and can't do, then having made some gains, then we can move on to looking at what the next goals can be - Colleen*

The participants describe strategies to facilitate a new way of being in the world, that goes hand in hand with story telling and language politics. These included art therapy, self defence courses, dance, song and role play. These strategies allow social change to occur beyond the realm of discourse, towards the individuals inner consciousness and the body.

The environment for practice was felt to be an important factor for the participants. Ruth worked particularly hard to create the "enabling conditions" (Lather 1991:23), that can open us up to oppositional knowledge:

*You hold clients in a safe place so that they can do the growing, it is providing a container - Ruth*

*We have counselling at alternative venues , such as cafes, when clients are more comfortable with that... The counsellors room is especially not appropriate for counselling young women, I have in the past gone for walks - Ruth*

In Chapter Four the participants describe challenges to their own identity and times of personal wounding. These experiences have been built into approaches to consequent practice with other women. Ruth saw the importance of self disclosure in assisting her practice: \_

*I usually use more self disclosure than in traditional practice, but more and more women are because it is relevant, what we have learnt is very real - Ruth*

Awareness raising with decision makers/power holders:

The participants also considered that awareness raising amongst the power holders and decision makers was extremely important. The literature recognises that the authenticity of the dominant interpretations of the world is often not questioned by the dominant classes (Rees 1991). Freire (1972) also sees that power holders in the act of oppression, are also oppressed:

*The best strategy would be to work at the management level, because the managers and the bureaucrats make the decisions. Until they experience different realities, until their spirit is touched and they begin to come alive with their body, mind, heart, they are not going to make the connections between them and the other person. Consciousness raising amongst decision makers; they need to have their culture challenged. They need to be aware of the power dynamics. There is no vested interest in them changing. But you give me ten decision makers for a week in the same way as I work with ten students and then it could be possible. You put them in positions that allow them to feel the issues. What is hard is who is going to say you need to do this... - Paula*

*You are working on the achievements, and recreating a new reality and building up a whole sense of new history. It is empowering for the people involved in the process and also empowering for those onlooking, including power holders. Other people are moved by the methods and this creates change - Colleen*

There are obviously difficulties in working with groups of powerholders because of their unwillingness to change. Chestler et al (1977) proposes that the ruling class seeks to avoid conflict and are self interested, but that they do so partly out of ignorance. The participants saw that there are both opportunities and constraints in attempting to raise the awareness of those who are resisting change. They also recognised that there was a point when awareness raising strategies needed to be abandoned:

*An inherent belief of those in the medical profession is that this is their professional territory and that consumers have no business being there. It is hard to enter into a discourse and alliance with some one who actually philosophically believes that you have no place being there. Many are not prepared to make this shift - Judy*

*I ask for what I want from decision makers in really concrete terms, I don't believe it is possible to change their views about many things. I am not going to educate them, like I don't expect Maori to educate me in my racism...It's not my job, I may be there available for them if they want to know. I am the protagonist and to make people think - Ruth*

*It is awful when some views are pushed down in a group because there isn't time for that issue etc. There are two avenues, to find the common ground and remove the things that are stopping the common ground. When it is impossible, then we have to part company - Judy*

### Education and experiential learning:

In Chapter two I explored how education can be synonymous with radical community work practice. Both educators and social change practitioners aim to stimulate people to think about the ways they live and relate to others and therefore to change. In the field of education Paula works towards social change within individuals in a similar way to Ruth. The following quotations demonstrate Paula's approach to experiential learning, where she used role play video and film to encourage change in individuals:

*I think that we can experience the spirit of the issues through experiential methods like role playing. Students then can get a sense of the pain of the situation. I think that our culture is very head and cognitive, and as long as we stay working in those realms the vision of society will not happen. You can read everything about racism, but you may not have a conception of the issues - Paula*

*I use video and film if there is a story which is visual. I use lots of different mediums and methods. Hardly ever is it in a lecture format. We use examples in practice, drawing the information out of the group and then filling in the gaps that have been overlooked. I also work with getting the group process going, getting the group to introduce themselves and explore each others positions - Paula*

*At the beginning of each session I use some coming together ritual, like a prayer, a song, an affirmation or reading something out of a book. I like sitting in a circle. I've learnt a lot from my Maori colleagues. We have a mihi and a karakia. I try not to do it in a patronising way, I just want to bring the group together. Let's acknowledge where we have come from and we have come together to do things. I try to work with the whole person - Paula.*

*I'll say to the group "what have each of you heard", demonstrating that each of us has heard the same thing differently. I encourage people to give feedback and to ask questions... I am a process person, I am interested in the interaction between the new information and the person - Paula*

In these quotes education is based on liberation goals of social change. This strategy for change parallels Freire's problem posing model of education (Chapter One), where education is based on the concrete experiences of the pupils and on the reciprocal process of learning and teaching. The strategy of "Conscientisation" (Freire 1972), has been utilised as a strategy in both Ruth's counselling, in awareness raising and in Paula's teaching.

At this point it is important to reflect on the recent critical theorists' acknowledgment that changes in self understandings alone will not create revolutionary change (Chapter Two). Critical theorists recognise the persistence of conflict and that the idea of an integrated public may be exaggerated. The participants discussed the difficulties they confronted in working with individuals for change:

*People are disempowered by having their views devalued when they speak them out, when they make their view known, when they have the confidence to speak up. When you don't have a voice you are disempowered, but when you find one you may also be disempowered - Judy*

The participants recognised that their understandings and consequent action must be linked with a struggle for change in broader contexts. This is demonstrated in the Sayer Ideology Model which maintains that change happens where interpersonal practices and institutional practices meet, beyond the merely personal and the merely political.

### The Local Social Change Context

The strategies for change at the local level primarily involved work with groups. The participants considered groups as a forum for support and self help. The women's work differed from a conservative orientation, which sees group work as a way to work with individuals towards social cohesion. Instead they observed the dual role of group work, firstly as a forum for the naming of different realities. Secondly groups were seen as a base for social and collective action to challenge the gender, race and class structures of society. Given this the groups functioned from a social and political analysis.

The strength and support to be gained from speaking up as a group was recognised, rather than the disempowerment that may come through speaking as isolated individuals. Groups were generally thought of as a basis of strength and as a source of human resources:

*We can use women in groups as resources, some women have different strengths. To recognise and utilise these. Maximise the strengths and minimise weaknesses - Colleen*

All the participants engaged in identifying allies from the community, to support the work of groups:

*It was about being clear about the groups that it is possible to enter into a partnership with and the ones where it is a waste of time, and it was a process of identifying who it is sensible to work with...- Judy*

*I contact those in power through talking, I sit on the phone and ring people, and I encourage people to write letters - Ruth*

Colleen explained that allies did not necessarily have to be in favour of the issue to be helpful:

*I have built up a level of trust with the board where they trust me and my methods even if they haven't fully understood it. I have not tried to educate them about women's experience, but rather I have tried to get the resources and the permission. This allows me to work with people who have views that are sometimes diametrically opposed... I remember the chairman of the board saying "we haven't always understood Colleen, but we have always supported her". I thought I didn't need you to be educated, but I needed you to trust me enough to give me the resources. If you are also educated it is a bonus - Colleen*

All the participants considered that the provision of information was a crucial strategy for work with groups and for community work at the local level. Paula found that gathering information rather than giving it was also very important as a strategy:

*Providing a link to the community and ensuring a debate goes on to ensure that women understand what the information is about. "Beaurospeak" is tedious when simple language can be used just as well - Paula*

*Needs do not need to be seen as only a deficit, but it is also looking at the strengths, what is available in the community, as well as what is needed - Paula*

The social change strategies located in the individual and local context also intersect with work to change institutional structures.

### The Institutional Social Change Context

Structural analysis is a common strategy used by community workers to help those they work with identify how the broader social, economic and political systems, or institutions effect the particular issue. Sayer (1990) asserts that we also need to analyse the discourses used by individuals, as well as those employed by institutions. All the participants found that structural analysis was an integral part of understanding their practice at this level:

*I am quite a conceptual person and I understand systems, so I would often translate what was happening now, using a whiteboard, and putting it into the bigger picture - Paula*

The participants mentioned that they generally start the process of change at the institutional level by looking at the existing legislation. Ruth identified that some legislation is useful for reinforcing change, for example the new Human Rights Act has become a powerful tool to regulate behaviour. The strategies used to force changes to the legislation or policy included making submissions to government, providing comprehensive reports and doing in depth research to raise the officials' awareness of the details:

*I could tell them the numbers of women living in this area. These were the types of services available to them and these were the services that weren't available. I discovered that if you did your homework and you made sure that what you wanted to do fitted into their agendas, they couldn't say no - Colleen*

*Well researched arguments presented in a compelling fashion can gain legitimacy and validity. Familiarity with the subject, through wide consultation has helped consumers to gain recognition and respect for their input - Judy*

Although the participants advocate participatory strategies such as entering into government consultative processes, they also warn of some of the considerable disadvantages of these strategies:

*We recognise that it can actually take power away from the women we are working with. The current consultations are disempowering for our agency because we are constantly responding to the demands of the process. It takes away our ability to define our own agenda and priorities. Because there are so many things to comment on it ends up fragmenting women's groups. The government department would set the agenda...It is a real dilemma that so much time is spent on responding to the call for comments. It is often too strong to boycott the process, because if we don't participate it can be seen to be condoning the issues. So we are drawn into it. So now we write a letter explaining our philosophical basis for opposing the issue - Judy*

*I realised that to gain access, and to participate, there was so much to overcome, there were a lot of personal dimensions to overcome, social conditioning... - Colleen*

*We tell the government that the consultation questions are not appropriate. Other questions can be offered in writing as an alternative. But even then the opportunity to comment does not ensure that the issues are heard, or women's views are reflected ... There is an attitude amongst power holders that the consumer doesn't understand, can't articulate, are incapable of providing an overview and critiquing what is happening. This is certainly not my experience, which is that women are very well informed, that when they are given the information they are very clear -Judy*

Some of the literature exploring participation as a community work strategy arrives at similar conclusions, that participation may be tokenistic and can encourage citizen alienation (Arnstein 1969). Participation is also seen as ignoring the larger structural questions (Cockburn 1977). However, Martin and Rein (1974) conclude that although participation does not increase power to any great extent, there is merit in the process if the government and other decision makers have more commitment to the process.

Judy has found that the notion of "partnership" has been useful as a strategy for developing greater participation for women throughout her community work practice. This involves working towards encouraging some groups to relinquish power, through finding common ground. Judy differs from the pluralist notion of becoming the neutral arbiter between groups (Kelly and Sewell 1988), but recognises the existence of power differentials. Thorpe and Petruchenia (1985) outline the pluralist position as seeing power as diffused and fragmented rather than concentrated on a class or elite. Judy recognises that there is an absence of partnership within the current hegemonic structures and that there is an imposition of one view over another. However she has seen that some gains can be made within certain struggles:

*I find it hard to envisage a situation where there can be total consensus, because my experience has been that it doesn't reach a consensus at all, it results in a compromise. The compromise involves a number of trade offs... This is a risky situation because you end up giving away too much to achieve too little. Generally it is very rare to ever achieve a consensus - Judy*

*In some situations partnership can work well with both parties...people relinquishing power is quite a threatening notion...it is a case of demonstrating in quite a compelling way that it is actually to their advantage to share power - Judy*

*We are constantly saying that there are real benefits of working along side of us in a partnership model...If conflict comes up I always come back to the need for common ground, if we are well focussed, it makes it easier to move in to the tricky areas... the difficulty comes when nobody feels a sense of common ground - Judy*

Sometimes the common ground cannot be met. When there was no response from legislators or policy makers, a powerful strategy identified by all of the participants, was to withdraw from the process:

*Withdrawing from the process is actually a powerful thing to do, we usually make a very public withdrawal and say that the process is antagonistic to our goals - Judy*

After withdrawing from the government defined processes, the participants discussed working towards the creation of alternative structures in opposition to the existing institutionalised forms:

*I am a strong advocate of creating alternatives, you have to have an alternative model that is based in positive health, it can be held up there as a contradiction to the rest of society, once it is there, it becomes part of the reality of the world, therefore the alternative becomes part of our new reality - Colleen*

*There is a place for both partnership and the creation of alternative structures as legitimate strategies. It is not an either or. We have to decide if a partnership is possible. For a partnership to work there has to be a willingness on both sides. There are situations where that isn't possible and where a separate parallel structure is an option. This is something that Maori people have had to address. The opportunities for partnership have been so restrictive that sometimes there is no other way than to set up parallel alternative structures - Judy*

The concept of partnership is more problematic for the participants in considering cultural partnership and racism awareness. Colleen's comments demonstrate the difficulty that all the participants found in achieving the balance between separate cultural development, and the need for partnership:

*It is important at say at the beginning to state that we are Pakeha women and that we need to explore who we are and what our strategies are, and we need to also find ways of working in an empowering manner with Maori and Pacific Island people but first of all we need to work out who we are - Colleen*

*We decided to resource share rather than to work with them within our structure, and to commit a certain amount of time to support Maori and Pacific Island goals. We shared our salary with Maori women, so as to include them in the process of commenting on the Royal Commission analysis - Colleen*

*We had a right to chose who our allies were. Not all Maori women's methodologies were going to work with ours. We supported their right to say what they wanted, we supported their issues, we supported the Treaty, but we reserved the right not to work closely with some groups. We worked with Maori groups that had a similar philosophy, and formed partnerships with them - Colleen*

The participants all identified economic development as an essential community work strategy. They saw that the creation of a different economic base for marginalised groups was a legitimate approach when working with a radical perspective. The participants believed that economic development needs to be aimed at ecological sustainability, self determination and resource sharing:

*Being in charge of your own destiny isn't possible unless you have some power over your own economic survival...Setting up a fund for small business development,..women taken seriously for their development, taken seriously by banks. I've been interested in this lately because women's own economic destiny is so important for the rest of their lives, and is very related to their health - Colleen*

Sayer (1990) asserts in her Ideology Model, that community workers should work simultaneously at several levels, whilst being able to relate the work to a specific ideological field, within which they are operating. The participants demonstrated how in their community work they were required to apply strategies to social change at many levels at once, including the individual, the local and the institutional. In the next section the participants describe the use of models in their practice.

### Conclusion

The preceding chapters describe the context for a discussion of the participants practice, by exploring their personal histories and their perceptions of the current context. This chapter continues to investigate the participants experience of community work, by looking at the specific skills and strategies used in practice.

The participants could clearly articulate their vision for change and could effortlessly describe the broad range of strategies they used in practice. The significant theme which emerges from the analysis of the interview data is the way in which an ideological commitment to women and social change informed the choice and application of these strategies. The strategies clearly originate from a personal understanding of the process involved. The main example of this is that a questioning of our assumptions can indicate ways to facilitate questioning within others.

The participants demonstrated an ability to facilitate change at a variety of contexts at once, including the individual, local and institutional contexts. The levels of change although presented separately in this discussion, are inseparable in practice. One facet of change links to all others. Change in the personal context leads to action for broader social change. In the next chapter these strategies are linked to the participants' conceptions of community work models as well as with the new directions which emerge within the participants' contemporary practice.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### COMMUNITY WORK MODELS

I describe a model as a coherent approach to practice, which links strategies with a vision for social change. In this chapter the models of community work emerging within the participants' practice are identified and discussed. This chapter also explores the participants' ideas about the Sayer (1990) Ideology Model.

Generally the participants were reserved about the application of formalised models in community work practice. Existing models of practice were seen as not reflective of the ways that they worked in the community, unable to encompass the complexity of their experience, or the contradictions evident in every day lives. Traditional models were seen to have a lack of relevance to practice in Aotearoa. Models also were described as linear and male in their orientation. The participants expressed concern that models tended to replace action with words:

*I don't know how useful models are, especially for those who haven't had experience. I'd want to know who has used it, and what has happened in practice? I'd be wanting to bring it back to the practice level ...I have a scepticism about people who are so removed from practice, looking down, and analysing what people are doing, there is an arrogance about that. They are defining it from a distance... My experience is that when you read what is produced it sounds very different from what I recognise in the community...It's hard to have a model which we work to because the situations are so different, there are trade offs - Judy*

*It is a very male model...separating out the actors, as if only some groups take on some issues and act these through to goals. I think that women are much more integrated, less linear, and work on a variety of issues at once. All these things can happen in one day. It is easy for men to be more focused on goals, to form alliances etc. Whereas women may have this as an objective, but things will not be as structured as this, and we also consider what is happening to women and ourselves on a personal level, which can throw us off the pursuit of the original goal - Colleen.*

Although the participants advocated the use of a coherent political analysis they were hesitant about models because of a desire to retain flexibility and responsiveness to an issue. A model is therefore not a static entity, for these community workers.

Despite disadvantages formal models were also acknowledged as being a general resource and a guide to practice. The participants felt that at times models were helpful as a guide for some groups to develop and maintain a vision for practice, and to measure success against:

*It is good to look at a model and then to start placing yourself against it to see if there is actually movement and where the movement is, to register if there has been change - Paula*

*I began to use models at my agency, firstly in a training day, to describe and document our process...We did develop a therapeutic model of working, the counselling techniques we used and we developed an initial contact sheet, which proved very useful, even if we changed some of it around - Ruth*

*Models can be useful when considering the global picture. It is helpful to spend time on an analysis. We didn't look at other models and compare them but attempted to articulate and understand the model that we're using ourselves, and used this to reflect on progress over time -Colleen*

*There are models that I use but I don't stick to them vigorously. There is one I use is the John Rayburn Systems Model. He was a community psychologist. The first part of the model was to assess the need, develop goals and then there is a feedback loop, from doing the work and then back to needs. You don't evaluate at the end point, but are constantly monitoring. It is very simple, but powerful. This model guided my practice, and keeps me close to the people I am working with - Paula*

*Models mean a framework to me. We all operate from frameworks whether it is consciously or unconsciously, we have definite perspectives - Judy*

The women's comments indicate that in practice they would prefer to sketch out models within their work groups, in order to reflect the specific context and presently unfolding circumstances, rather than using existing models developed by others:

*I just make up models all the time. I am a conceptual thinker and relate to pictures and diagrams on the whiteboard. It is to find out what is happening here, what are these things linked to - Paula*

The participants were comfortable with the notion of ideology as a way to link strategies with a vision for social change. I introduced the Sayer Ideology Model in order to collectively explore its potential as a model for practice in the New Zealand context. None of the participants were aware of the model, until it was presented within the interviews.

Generally the participants felt that the Sayer (1990) Model offered an innovative way to understand the change process. They recognised that the use of ideology as the principal change concept was appropriate to their radical orientation. The participants commented that they found it refreshing to see a model that was developed by a woman, and one that linked personal to political (practice in civil society to changed hegemony).

The model was thought to reinforce existing hierarchical societal structures by graphically representing the state at the top of the diagram. Caution was expressed by some participants about the language used in parts of the model. It was felt that phrases such as "rearticulation of ideological elements" could have been simplified. Other participants felt familiar with terms such as hegemony and were more comfortable with the language:

*I am used to seeing lots of these words. I don't feel alienated by these. But you have to remember my privilege, words are familiar to me. I know a lot of people that would feel completely alienated by language like this - Paula*

Some parts of the model were seen to be more useful than other parts. For example Judy felt that change in one part of the model did not necessarily produce changes in other parts:

*I get sceptical about the model here. We have no trouble rearticulating ideological elements, through to creating changes in the hegemonic apparatuses, however the creation of new alliances and discourses even when legislation has changed is far more problematic. The alliance may be formed at the political level, but it breaks down in practice - Judy*

Some of the participants liked the way that they could locate themselves at a variety of points in the model's change process. The model was seen to allow the recognition of change as it occurred at many levels, including the local and the institutional. Most of the participants thought that the flexibility needed in community work could be incorporated into this model:

*This model is useful for people to look at what it is they are wanting to do and where they will locate themselves to do it. Most people understand strategic planning, a model like this would be useful for planning. It is really helpful for critical analysis to look at the rearticulation phase and to ask if we are not rearticulating the ideology, which ideology are we supporting? - Paula*

The most useful application of the Sayer Model came from the set of questions used alongside the model (Chapter Two). These were thought to be good guidelines for practice. For example constantly referring back to the question "what ideological perspective am I articulating in my work?" Although the participants were all able to relate their practice to parts of the Sayer Model, they did not see that it would specifically assist them in working in the community.

### The essence of contemporary community work

The previous section sought to explore the role of community work models in the participants' practice. In this section rather than identifying new models to emerge in practice, it is more appropriate to identify the participants' new strategies which are linked with a continually evolving vision for change. The essence of contemporary community work can be understood through those aspects of the participants' practice which distinguishes this historical era from others.

The participants reported that the interviews helped them to reflect on new directions in their practice. Subtle shifts in practice appear to happen in ways that we may not be immediately aware of. The participants felt that words to describe the changes may not be in the language structures at present. New strategies seem to be emerging in ways similar to the way that early community work practice developed:

*When I used to work years ago in these areas, there wasn't really a name for it, it was community work but it wasn't a discipline, and it had no theoretical base. There was no training, and it was an approach and a philosophy that you take with you whether you were a psychologist, or whatever - Paula*

A theme that consistently emerged in the interviews was that acknowledging differences is a fundamental part of community work practice. This involves emphasising the "other culture" beyond the dominant ideology. By recognising and affirming difference the participants recognised that power differentials are changed and immediately the dominant ideology is impacted on. Paula best describes this orientation in a statement about her community work practice:

*The framework that I would use is culture, like the culture of women so that we will have ways of working that validate us and make us feel safe. And once we have acknowledged who we are and validated ourselves then we are able to work more effectively with others. Maori people have a different way of working. A feminist analysis may not be useful to indigenous ways of working - Paula*

The participants' accounts of current practice were made distinctive by the references to matters of spirit and soul and to women's ways of knowing. Women's ways of knowing relate to the different ways that women view reality and draw conclusions about truth, knowledge and authority (Belenky et al 1986). It appears that in Aotearoa, during this era, there is a heightened interest in spirituality and a strong re-emphasis on the personal role and values of the community worker. Associated with the recognition of the value of women's voice and spirituality is a deeper appreciation of the understandings which come from the Maori community.

In the latter interviews, the participants comments expanded on issues of their consciousness, their sense of self and their identity. There was a general recognition that their identity and understandings are continually changing. The participants saw that the original understandings which formed their first commitment to social change were not static:

*...Community work is part of a process. Community work is about facing our own stuff, with other people, facilitating their process through and thereby facilitating our own process through. Getting to a point where we can be who we are. Maybe it is not that way for everybody, but it seems that way for a lot of people. It is about finding out how we got to be who we are, to be this person ...We will still be seeking knowledge, for too long we have been taught to look outside, and really it is this body and this life that is the most important thing and we need to look inside as well - Ruth*

Yeatman (1990:163) maintains ours is "an era which ensures that our consciousness of who we are keeps changing, and that these personal pronouns, 'our' and 'we' become both fundamentally contested and problematic". She identifies that there is a much more complex relationship with our own identity and that acceptance of this allows the acceptance of the "diverse and multiple selves" of others.

I ended Chapter Four concluding that rather than being a job or an occupation, the work for social change was an intense physical, emotional and spiritual involvement. Comments made in the latter interviews suggest

that community work is less an intervention than a way of living our own lives. There is a general shift in focus from the external world of doing, or interventions, to a deeper recognition of our own identity, hopes and desires. Daly (1986:113) reflected the participants' approach, in describing feminism as "not merely an issue, but a way of being".

*A lot of people think that change is a doing to, or an intervention of some kind. I used to believe this too. But I think that the more clearly we define ourselves then the change reverberates through. Change is something that we are in constantly - Paula*

*I am moving right out of the field in the sense of working as a community worker, I am moving away from working in a system that is about making changes out there, towards working with myself as a whole person in relation to all else. It is the personal within the political, it is moving away from the dualities. I am interested in working on metaphysical realms - Paula*

As this theme was explored the participants made strong links between self reflection and a developing spirituality. The participants used the term "spirituality" to refer to metaphysical realms of our identity, our body, birth, death and our connectedness to each other and to the environment. Christ (1987) defines spirituality as the connection to all that is and all that is changing. The notion includes those aspects which go beyond the commonplace but still link to aspects of the everyday. The participants referred to concepts such as "consciousness", the spirit and the heart as central to the involvement in social change:

*Understanding your own reality, being able to tap into your own reality and being able to heal yourself...we have moved a long way in a short space in time with our own consciousness - Colleen*

*I believe that community workers need to become aligned to the spirit, the heart and the idea. You have to be open to the challenge and the risks - Paula*

The way that the participants described spirituality removed the notion from any link to formalised religion. Spirituality was not seen as a glorification or worship of a power outside ourselves. The participants were highly wary of religious dogma or holiness:

*I have a pragmatic view of my own position in the world, I have given some thought to the role of religions and spiritual thinking and it intrigues me how much control they have over people - Judy*

*Maybe the word spirituality gets mixed up with the word religion. I have no time for any of the dogmatism shit, but I am very spiritual, and know that is the part that I need to explore more. I am very interested in women's spirituality. It is not dogma, or hierarchy. Our lives are full of ritual anyway, even if it is making a cup of tea. Maybe there is confusion around the words, we just need to keep defining them, redefining the words - Ruth*

The participants' position refers more to the sacred dimensions of women's experience. Women's spirituality is linked with feminism in honouring the way we see ourselves and the world around us and this understanding is different because of systems of oppression where the culture devalues women's lives. Traditional psychology has minimised the differences in understandings between the sexes. Women are beginning to value their unique understandings which have been neglected and denied by the dominant ideology. When women begin to break the silence to talk and to tell their stories a different kind of knowing is produced:

*Women are getting back to where we were four thousand years ago, when women were wise. They gave birth to children that they wanted, they healed them themselves, they enjoyed being in their bodies what ever shape they were and they enjoyed each other. This isn't so much progress it is actually going back - Ruth*

*After a particularly bad experience in the community, we shut our doors and spent time trying to recover. We got involved in alternative health, motherwit and healing circles, and talked about how we were feeling - Colleen*

*There is me within the cosmos. And I have a sort of a cosmos inside me. Then I live with my significant others, or I am affected by them and affected by the different communities where I am impacted upon and impacting on. It is a spiritual thing really, change happens by me living, wherever you are, you carry you where you go - Paula*

The participants identified ways that women's ways of knowing are acknowledged more in contemporary society. These include networks that are based on women's psychology, such as the International Co-counselling conference and networks of women working with multiple personalities:

*Women's ritual groups and self help groups and women's community centres are becoming more powerful. We need to look for the commonality of women and to find a centre for women to look to, and we have to practice it for a while so that our daughters grow up thinking that it has been this way for ever - Ruth*

*Ritual is very important, I believe in reclaiming and honouring our own rituals, what ever they are. Ritual is not acknowledged, but it should be talked about. The context should always be acknowledged and addressed - Paula*

An appreciation of a women's way of knowing begins with valuing ourselves as women. This knowledge can then be built on and the learning can be transferred to others. There is significant reciprocity in the process of change, where women are learning and teaching together. The process appears to be more a style of living rather than a strategy as such. It is not a model for practice but an orientation for life.

*...understanding your own reality, being able to tap into your own reality and being able to heal yourself...we have moved a long way in a short space in time with our own consciousness - Colleen*

Christ (1980:131) suggests that women's spiritual quest gives women the strength to create alternatives to personal relationships and social institutions where women's value is not recognised.

*Women are networking separately. Look at the sisterhood of the shields, this is a spiritual network, which is as old as time, and is now becoming more well known. The networks are not traditional and so you have got to look for them, lateral, look around and figure it out. we are connected. It is like the collective unconscious that is happening - Ruth*

Although the participants were united in their feminist approach to honouring women's understandings, they also registered concern about how the notion of spirituality can be misused. In the interviews cynicism was expressed about "new age" movements which stress spirituality within a conservative ideology. "New age" has been used to refer to the philosophies and practices which explore the spiritual realms of human knowing. However, the delivery of these philosophies can be criticised as being sexist, consumerist and reactionary. The values and assumptions underlying the movement also tends to be imbued with competitiveness and elitism. Goodison (1990) identifies some "new age" disciplines as being based on a hierarchy of consciousness where certain people are defined as more spiritually evolved than other. Feminists working for change within existing structures criticise the perpetuation of existing class, race and gender inequalities within the so called "new age" agenda:

*A lot of the new age stuff is actually oppressive. I don't buy it. That women choose to be victims, I don't buy that. -Ruth*

*The issues that are more significant than this are the more practical issues, such as childcare and trying to juggle the demands of being an activist and demands of family life and running a home... Identifying the barriers and obstacles, rather than the warm fuzzies. It is all very nice, but when we step outside of the room nothing has actually changed - Judy*

Caution was also expressed about the political and the practical being lost in the quest for deeper understanding. In the past the participant's felt that political action has lacked a spiritual component. However spirituality is in danger of lacking a political grounding. The participants were keen to maintain a radical analysis, whilst undertaking action in the community:

*...the new age speak that is articulated without a political analysis can be dangerous for our goals. Some of these new ways of relating are another way of saying I'm looking after myself and you can go to hell, and that if you have ended up in a bad space then that is your karma and you have invited it, so that is blame the victim stuff...there really isn't a spiritual bone in my body, the resources from Starhawk are from purely a practical and political aspect rather than the spiritual aspect - Judy*

*I am much more practical and I've never really been able to get off on the very mystic sort of stuff, but I don't deny that it is useful for some people - Colleen*

Some of the participants saw that it may be their role to introduce a political analysis to the "new age" directions emerging in contemporary society. As Goodison (1990) notes the development of our individuality and our human powers is not a distraction, but an objective of political emancipation. After years of front line community work, the participants are currently building upon their strong political analysis and combining this with an increased sense of the spiritual and a movement towards a greater valuing of self. The main priority appears to be the changing of the self and this is understood to bring change to other areas of contact:

*It is really interesting that once we have taken care of this stuff we have done our three years at the front, or done our term. I do need to contact the spiritual more, something for myself - Ruth*

*Forget about being a little ant, scurrying from this pile to rearrange things in that pile, and think deeper and bigger, in fact that maybe the best thing that I can do is to live my life with integrity and love and to deeply explore who I am, and in relation to other people, in relation to gods and ghosts. This the best thing that I can do for myself and for others - Paula*

The participants accentuated doing what we love, as a way to mark the next steps towards the future. When asked about their future the participants did identify the major changes still desperately required in the current political, social and economic structures. Their priority now appears to become more self conscious, and critically aware of their role. The current orientation of the community workers interviewed appears to be a combination of a movement "within", with a very strong radical political analysis. This is a resurgence of the original feminist doctrine of "the personal is political" :

*There is stuff that I want to do just for me. Me and my partner, she and I are going to have another baby. We want to live on our farm. Maybe that is what it is, that sexual abuse chases you out of your body and that we need to be in our body and enjoying who we are - Ruth*

*I am looking for my own understanding and I don't believe that I have particularly anything to teach. I am certainly not interested in telling people what to do. I am on a learning curve again - Paula*

### Learning about practice from indigenous culture

Alongside of the valuing of women's voice and spirituality in the quest for change came an increased identification and appreciation for other marginalised understandings. The interviews reveal that contemporary directions in practice are also increasingly informed by a recognition of indigenous culture, particularly the Maori approaches to change and development:

*Things like ritual and cultural learning from the Maori community. The most powerful learning in the last two years has come from Maori people that I work with. I just think that they have a deep understanding that is so different and there is so much potential for peace and balance and equity through those models - Paula*

The values and orientation perceived to be part of a Maori approach to development and change, were seen by the participants to be connected with the increase in women's spirituality. They identified that many of the concepts and ideas were similar, such as seeing the connectedness of everything to each other and in honouring the environment.

The colonisation process and institutionalised racism are inextricably related to patriarchy and sexism, as forms of oppression. These links were also clearly made by the participants. Colleen's comment was common to all the participants:

*In talking to women in one particular group they related very strongly to the colonisation process, the rape of their women and the rape of the children, they were very connected to the colonisation process - Colleen*

The learning from others begins with a simple listening and a recognition of other realities. The participants saw that acknowledgment of other cultures did not involve a denial of their own identity and culture, but as an added complexity to understanding, particularly an understanding of the context within which we live in this country:

*I talked about issues that were important for me. We had to listen to each other and hear about other realities such as things Maori - Ruth*

*It is important at say at the beginning to state that we are pakeha women and that we need to explore who we are and what our strategies are, and we need to also find ways of working in an empowering manner with Maori and Pacific Island people but first of all we need to work out who we are - Colleen*

According to the participants there was continual insight to be gained from others. Different cultures can inform the epistemology we employ in our understanding, offering diversity and new tools for analysis:

*I am also interested in how others view reality, particularly the Maori I want to move right away from my socially constructed reality, I want to explore how other cultures construct reality and to explore how we used to be before industrial society, to get a different sense of what the world is and who I am in it and to work on healing levels. I am looking for new understanding ...Paula*

*I think that our culture is very head and cognitive, and as long as we stay working in those realms the vision of society will not happen - Paula*

*We can't progress and I knew that we have to develop models of working cross culturally. It is not a matter of us just understanding another point of view, their position, their understandings, theories, views, ideas and strategies are changing all the time - Judy*

## Conclusion

Traditional models of community work practice were seen to be difficult to apply in practice and lacked the flexibility or sensitivity to women's ways of working in the community. The participants were more comfortable with the notion of ideology as the main guide to practice. Consequently, parts of the Sayer Ideology Model (1990) were considered to be helpful.

The interviews provided a chance for reflection and allowed the participants to recognise themes which characterise contemporary community work practice, in Aotearoa. The valuing of women's ways of knowing link with the acknowledgment of other marginalised ways of understanding the world, which go beyond or challenge the dominant ideologies. The importance of spirituality for contemporary practice is identified in this chapter:

*...with the best that I have from my world as a twentieth century women and from what I have learnt from our foremothers and fathers and from the Maori people, because this is where I live, in Aotearoa - Paula*

The community workers interviewed appear to value ongoing self conscious reflection of their roles and identity. Spirituality is explored further in the following chapter as an aspect of support and training for community workers.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### THE SUPPORT AND EDUCATION OF RADICAL COMMUNITY WORKERS IN AOTEAROA

This chapter uses insights from the interviews to consider the support necessary for surviving radical community work in Aotearoa. The support processes examined include supervision, peer support and networking. Experiential learning was also thought to be supportive, particularly apprenticeship models and mentoring, where more experienced people assist other in developing their ideas and practice. This chapter also explores the participants experience of formal education for community work practice.

The importance of the personal and the spiritual in the participants' feminist inspired community work can be a major orientation for support and education for contemporary practice. In practice which is so strongly based in the personal and spiritual standpoints of the women, in this chapter I also explore the potential for imposition.

#### Support Processes

Supervision was universally acknowledged by the participants as a highly useful practice. Supervision refers to a regular meeting with another who offers guidance, advice and support. All of the participants were using a supervisor throughout their practice, as well as acting as supervisors. Supervision was seen as a way to protect themselves against burnout and to guide their practice. Supervisors were also seen to be aware of the challenges found in the current context, such as financial restrictions in community groups. Supervisors were currently providing support for many issues that the participants were facing both personally and in practice:

*Supervision is about your own mental health, it is about off loading...I have three supervisors over the month, they provide training also and hands-on advice - Ruth*

*I always set up something formal to reflect on the work I am doing because I realise that time just goes, and I get too stressed, or I ring up a friend and they aren't available. Even though it is a little artificial at times, it actually is more valuable to have it built into my life...It used to be a lot more politically focussed, but now*

*I have to confess that my supervision is more with friends that have been in the field for years and now our family and personal issues are much more integrated, as well as laughing and food - Colleen*

*Peer support is very important. We need it for support. It helps keep our feet on the ground. It keeps me from becoming too liberal, it prevents me from moving into the realm of ideas, it keeps my consciousness alive and real. I have informal supervision with friends and colleagues as well as paid supervision - Paula*

The relevance of supervision is not always structurally acknowledged, so it seems we need to be telling community workers to suggest this to their agencies themselves:

*I always had really close colleagues...to talk about issues, but this often needs to be paid for - Colleen*

An ongoing meeting with the work group was also considered important by the participants, who were working in an agency base. The women also identified networking as highly beneficial. Just talking to others in the field was useful. Networking could be facilitated in a variety of ways including informal meetings, conferences and through formal networks, such as the Community Workers Association and the Waitangi Network.

The sharing of information in a case study format was also considered important. Case studies can give examples of how goals can be achieved in practice in the community. It can base theory and experience in reality:

*There can be a lot of learning from those who have been on the journey for more years, sharing the experience, and passing on the wisdom of the mistakes and the hit and misses, so that we can come on board too - Paula*

*I would be interested in sharing with other activists, the strategies they use, and their successes. This would be useful both as learning and for affirming what we are doing. We do this to a limited extent with conferences and networking, but there are more opportunities...to look at ways that we can share resources and networking better - Judy*

*The Community Workers Association was an important infrastructure for new workers coming through, to connect them into a reality which is different in this profession, and colleagues, to gain a sense of belonging and recognition - Colleen*

*We can become isolated from other women. It would be useful to continue these links, sharing strategies, tossing ideas around, and*

*looking at the implications of these - Judy*

*We need to have the opportunity for supportive challenge and feedback. I pick up things from women that I respect, you know, picking up things second hand - Paula*

As well as peer support and supervision the participants felt that experiential learning was essential in the field of community work. They saw that learning would come through practice, if it was guided by those who are already experienced. Some participants spoke of apprenticeship models or mentoring to encourage the process of experiential learning:

*Apprenticeship models can be useful, based in practice. A good example of how this works well is the midwifery standards review committee process, where women who are interested in the issues can sit in on the methods and then can discuss the issues and process afterwards. The best sort of training is to work alongside of other women who feel confident about taking on strategies that are new to other women and allowing them to observe a range of different strategies. I encourage women to come and observe the ways we deal with these things. We need to provide more opportunities for women to participate - Judy*

*It is important that when people have done a course, to realise that they do not understand all there is to know about the area. Learning comes in very different forms. I am very sceptical of distance education in this area. Where there is no opportunity for processing, doing and understanding - Paula*

*Consumer groups have supported a mentor system for midwives. Midwives that are experienced in the whole continuum of the process can act as mentors and help to bring midwives up to form in areas where they may be less experienced. In this case women can share their ideas and experiences - Judy*

*I pick up information and then practice it on my pupils. I lap up knowledge from just living our lives - Paula*

As well as these general support processes the participants reflected on their experiences of formal education, in relation to their community work practice.

### The participants' experience of formal education

Many community workers have not been involved with formal education, but have developed their community work practice through daily experience and through direct immersion in their community, and with the

issues they work with. There are many community workers who argue that formal education may lead community work towards greater professionalism, and in doing so may distance the practice from the central values upon which it is based.

All the participants had tertiary educational opportunities. However their experience of these differed. Judy was sceptical about the usefulness of "long term academia". The others were not entirely positive, but saw that their own academic experience was useful for developing a critical analysis and that it had contributed to their ability to challenge authority. Ruth values what her study within the Education Department offered:

*I think that some of my Bachelors degree was helpful, it gave me a framework, it fed into my vision, it taught me how to learn, it taught me how to question. I liked learning how to pull things apart. The Education Department was very useful, I gained less from the Psychology Department where a lot of the papers were very sexist and closed. I lost the awe of academia - Ruth*

*University was good in helping me to develop a critical analysis. Sometimes a degree is a stepping stone to going out and doing what you want to in the community - Ruth*

There was a general recognition of the importance of education for enhancing choices, but the participants considered that education had become a middle class privilege. There was a scepticism about academia and the status and power that is connected to it:

*I spent a lot of time at university but I don't regard myself as an academic - Paula*

*Yes I read, but not in an academic context... some of it I look at a bit disdainfully, like intellectual wanking - Judy*

When questioned about their experience of social and community work education, the participants criticisms were directed to two major areas. Firstly they were critical of the high focus on community work skills, without an adequate accompanying political analysis. They were also concerned about the lack of Maori cultural content in the curriculum:

*I feel that in relation to training, that some courses are breaking training down to skills, to the lowest common denominator, and building the training up from that. And as much as universities are ivory towers, and I agree with the criticisms of them, there is a lot to be said for spending time looking at the philosophy and looking*

*at the theory behind action. It is absolutely critical that this happens. So that we can realise that there are not truths and one way of looking, that things are socially constructed - Paula*

*In the planning committee for training courses.. We decided that it must have a bi-cultural focus, unless we could demonstrate that in the course it would be a waste of time... It is a predominant, primary issue that community workers are facing, how they relate to the Treaty and Pacific Island issues...We have to find people to teach in these papers who are very comfortable with these issues and who can demonstrate partnership in this area - Colleen*

Structural analysis can be seen as a process which facilitates us to become self consciously political, rather than an elitist intellectual activity. The participants were united in seeing the usefulness of education which has been based within a structural analysis of society:

*I did courses on structural analysis, because I felt it was important to understand a model that had been used to bring about social change because I was coming from a background that was just basically working from ignorance and gut feeling, and through the experiences of other women and from my own experience - Judy*

*I am concerned about the skills training that has no critical analysis...Critique and challenge, critical analysis is imperative, reflection and debate... - Paula*

*I talked about issues that were important for me. We had to listen to each other and hear about other realities such as Maori etc. Re-evaluation Counselling looks at oppression. It helps to see things in structures - Ruth*

*The challenge of community work is to make things more explicit, we need to ensure that people have got an analysis. We need to have greater political analysis. Otherwise they don't rearticulate the dominant ideology, they don't even know what the dominant ideology is, they just become movers for the state - Paula*

The focus on analysis does not underestimate the importance of skills. Skills are an essential basis for community work practice. The participants pointed out that they required more skills training in the areas of conflict resolution, evaluation, economic management and in ways to monitor stress in an organisation. The emphasis on a structural analysis can enhance and build on the use of skills. It is proposed that skills can be more effectively implemented when practiced within a consciously articulated ideological framework or with what Lather calls practicing with a "politically sensitive ear" (1991:157). Reflection and analysis also helps to remove the possibility for imposition.

Although there was some hesitation registered about too much time spent on analysis, the women saw it is a process which facilitates one to become self consciously political and able to facilitate the development of a critical analysis in others.

The aspects of self reflection and spirituality identified by the participants can be usefully employed within the support and education of radical community workers.

### Self-reflection and spirituality: support and education for community workers

The identification of women's ways of knowing and a spirituality is seen by the participants as nourishing and sustaining and can provide directions for action in the world. Spirituality not only appears to be an integral part of contemporary practice, but can also provide essential motivation and sustenance to community workers.

*I think we do it for spiritual reasons, I think we want to do it because we empathise with injustice deeply and profoundly and we want to rebalance, or redistribute or realign things - Paula*

*Spirituality can sustain us, create a vision for what we do, and be connected with a political analysis... - Colleen*

The participants demonstrated an active involvement in examining themselves and recognised the importance of ongoing self reflection. In questioning personal relationships, conflict and pondering our own position in the world we may develop an increased awareness of the work we do. This at times meant obtaining formal counselling for ourselves, or just talking issues over with friends. Counselling for community workers was seen as highly valuable:

*I think it is really important that community workers particularly women do explore personal issues as well as the broader analysis - Judy*

Feminist inspired education can facilitate ongoing self reflection, the questioning of personal relationships, questioning the nature of conflict and pondering our position in the world. Education needs to encompass the developing spirituality that was identified in Chapter Seven:

*A lot of people think that change is a doing to or an intervention of some type, I used to think that too, but what I think is that one of the best things to have come from a feminist analysis is that the personal is political, is that the more clearly you define yourself and own your issues, the more clearly that this change reverberates through. Change is something that we are in constantly - Paula*

Overall it seems that training needs to include components which are aimed at "sustaining us and creating a vision for what we do" (Colleen), as well as "being grounded within a political analysis" (Judy), by generating an environment which allows the investigation of our own identity and can facilitate our self expression. It is about enhancing what workers are beginning to do anyway, reinforcing and encouraging what workers want within their whole lives:

*Any new way of thinking is a potential tool, and it should be explored, you won't lose a political analysis by exploring new ideas - Colleen*

*Training and support means opening up their own spiritual pathways. ... What community workers need is both some reflection and understanding of their own values and belief systems - Paula.*

With an orientation to social change which is based on intense personal and spiritual involvement, it is appropriate to acknowledge the potential for becoming impositional in practice. Support for community workers can help to reduce the possibility of imposition.

### The potential for imposition

*So, I suppose what you are saying then, is how do you share about the views that you hold dear, without actually imposing it, and seeing it as the right way of thinking... - Judy*

The social change literature presents firm warnings about the dangers of liberatory intentions, such as the potential for domination (Foucault 1977), imposition (Lather 1991), and "dogmatism degenerating into tyranny" (Fay 1987:105). Guba (1989) recognises the close parallel between transforming the world and predicting and controlling it.

Lather (1991:13) asserts that "no discourse is innocent of the will to power". Similarly Spivak (1989) cautions that the will to understand and

change are as much symptomatic of the will to power as they are revolutionary. In this situation it seems that power is something done "to" rather than "for" the as yet unliberated other (Ellsworth 1989).

The participants were aware of the dangers of imposition. This potential was something that they understood and had talked about with others throughout practice. Paula's comment illustrates the nature of some debates around this issue:

*Quite frankly, on some level it is just a bloody waste of time, one person going out and fiddling around. As my sister Kit said who's business is it? How come you're the one who has all the best ideas. What gives you the right to go out and do interventions, with other people in the community. I argued against this vigorously, there is still a part of me who thinks that you can facilitate change - Paula*

A main strategy in the participants' practice is to facilitate the questioning of existing assumptions (Chapter Four). Within this approach people are challenged to overcome a certain false consciousness. This is a concept used by some writers in the literature (Gramsci 1977, Lather 1991, Fay 1987) to refer to the beliefs that are entrenched in our ways of thinking, our language and our identities, that become embedded in us through the dominant ideologies and perpetuated through hegemonic structures. These beliefs become what the person may see as a common sense view, but in actuality are what contribute to our powerlessness. Friere (1972) calls this concept the mystified conception of reality, where people do not see that they have the power to intervene in the social world and transform it. Again Paula's comment best illustrates this understanding:

*I'm not talking about the ones who can't speak out because they don't know, there are lots of people who just don't know, and they are not so much victims at this point they are just living within it. But there are a lot of people who are victims who need help to state their truths. We are silenced, we buy into the game - Paula*

Although the participants recognised the power of false consciousness, they were uncomfortable with the term. They spoke of the care they took to honour the existing views that women had. The participants suggested that some goals could be achieved without needing to change fundamental views:

*Ouch! I feel very uncomfortable with the idea of false consciousness, it is actually making a judgement about different views of the world. I think we have to be very careful about saying that my way is the right way... I think we have to really resist strongly the temptation to define false realities. The only way to avoid this is to acknowledge that we all do think differently and have different experiences and the value of working as women is that we can be accepting of our differences. I don't have an expectation that any woman would change her views...plus what I do is say we will never agree on these issues, so lets concentrate on what we can agree on, in order to make progress towards our goals. In some groups we have had to state that for today we are not going to discuss this issue - Judy*

*The means don't justify the ends, the process is important, and you can be aggressive with your ideas, but you must always be gentle with the people, we don't want to just change society into a different pattern of what we have now, we have to demonstrate in our means the process of change. So at times I would not be as forceful as what I would like to be, because I've never been prepared to step completely away from the group that I was working with - Colleen*

*I don't believe that I have particularly anything to teach. I am certainly not interested in telling people what to do. I am going into a learning curve again - Paula*

*It is a case of definition. I see that naming different realities is just validating a particular world view that was rendered invisible and suppressed, rather than a case of false consciousness. I do have a problem when some views are presented as this is the right way, because you are validating your view by invalidating another's. This is purist thinking and look at the problems that this caused the women's movement in the eighties. I sometimes think it is a case of people not listening and talking past each other - Judy*

The literature also considers the importance of at times maintaining false consciousness. What is often referred to as alienation and ignorance can be important facets of comfort, mental health and happiness which provide direction and meaning to our lives. There are positive aspects of not challenging our realities, such as psychological relief from constantly having to make decisions, and a sense of continuity, stability and coherence. Fay (1987:82) quotes Ibsen in illustrating this point "deprive the average man of his vital lie and you have robbed him of his happiness as well". Similarly Foucault (1977, in Lather 1991:78) warns of the violence of a position "which sides against those who are happy in their ignorance, against the affective illusions by which humanity protects itself".

The participants were aware of these considerations but they generally were committed to supporting positive change in those they worked with. Reflection and dialogue were thought to be the best strategies to approach these changes. Reflection has been proposed as a protection against overly instrumentalist strategies (Lather 1991). The participants argue that dissatisfaction expressed by individuals is sufficient to warrant starting the process of demystification. Colleen describes the women she works with as frustrated and therefore looking for a fresh way to analyse their situation:

*If they have invited you to be in their group or to talk, there is obviously something about what you have to offer that attracts them, and was needed at that point in time - Colleen*

Practice does not have to rest on the assumption that there is a true consciousness which is accessible via correct theory and practice (McLellan 1986), but can involve a progressive dialogue where "the encounter between human beings, mediated by the world, in order to name and transform the world" (Shirley 1982:286). The participants commented that women have internalised the other definitions or truths into the self, but that the contradictions embedded in these confront them in their involvement in the world. It is these contradictions which are a starting point for change:

*Education is one way, because it involves information that people haven't thought about before and it has been my experience that when people have the information, they begin to feel very strongly about the issues, and have been mobilised into certain action. I don't see the two in conflict, by saying that I've just discovered something that you may be interested about, this is what it has meant to us, what is your reaction?...so it is building on someone's view of the world without it taking away, there is no trade off necessary, it doesn't mean that anything has to be given away. I guess that in a campaign it is important to identify where that is possible and where that isn't - Judy*

*I just keep asking lots of questions, about little things, eg, "Why do you need to do that?, who says?, tell me who told you that?, where is that written? Sometimes this is the first time they have considered that there could be others way of seeing issues - Ruth*

*I don't get the students to role play pretend situations because of this concern, we never begin there. We need to prepare the ground, getting students to explore their own stuff... I use lots of getting information out of the group, using existing information, and pushing them on that level - Paula*

There appear to be complex negotiations and choices made by individuals to ensure their survival. Kant (in Cooley et al 1987:138) asserts that there is "no perception without conception". This alludes to the individual's capacity to develop links between their own reality and with new knowledge, through dialogue.

Generally the participants saw that the influence of their personal integrity and heartfelt commitment was a protection against imposition, as these quotes suggest:

*This women mentor of mine, she would go into a situation and it would be like she was rooted to the earth and touching the sky. I used to see her going in with her self, which was kind of naive, honest, totally respectful and integrity. She would take this into the community and live it. These issues brought out the same reaction in those she dealt with in the community - Paula*

*Maori people have te tika, te pono and me te aroha - With integrity, truth and honesty, if you come from those two places always you will have love. It doesn't matter how difficult, or how much anger there is, there will always be love. I am much more interested in looking at other frameworks. I am interested in community work, a framework that involves these things. These basic things are firm and strong, that guides. We can wear these things as a cloak, and then any sort of intervention can happen - Paula*

### Conclusion

In this chapter the support necessary for surviving radical community work in Aotearoa was examined. The education of community workers was also explored, emphasising spirituality, which is linked to a structural analysis, as central to the process. With such a highly personal orientation to practice the participants were aware of the potential for imposition and have identified strategies which protect them from this potential.

## CHAPTER NINE

### CONCLUSIONS

The primary aim in this thesis has been to explore the nature of radical community work in Aotearoa, through discussions with four women who work for social change. The information gained from these discussions is not intended to be representative of all women working for change but has been presented as a portrait or a mosaic, offering insights into the personal lives and actions of some particular women.

The data in previous chapters contain the participants' stories about themselves, their encounters with others and the systems in which they live. Although they are personal stories, the women's accounts raise some central issues and points of debate for general community work practice and about women's involvement in social change. This final chapter summarises what has been identified in the women's stories and explores the questions raised by this research.

#### Significant themes

This exploration began with the women reflecting on their histories and the development of their basic understandings. The participants' families of origin and the communities in which they were raised were highly significant for the development of their present ideas. Generally the women's ideas can be seen to have formed in opposition to the families basic philosophies. School was also seen as the first major confrontation with institutions and systems.

The women's stories depicted periods of self reflection and questioning in which they described feelings of pain and confusion. From these times of "wounding" the women searched for and found new ways to understand themselves, and to understand the ways that difference was treated in society. This contributed to the development of a stronger identity as women, and an identity as women who are seeking change, within the current patriarchally structured society.

The significant personal experiences and their initial experiences as volunteers in the community sector, contributed to the development of a more formal political perspective and to the participants developing a strongly articulated commitment to social change.

The participants' personal experiences have involved attempting to make sense of their worlds. This process is linked to emotional responses. It seems that changes in self conception leads to ideological shifts and contributes to greater opportunities for self determination. Rather than being a job or an occupation, the work for social change is shown to be an intense physical, emotional and spiritual involvement. As the women developed more experience and their confidence increased they described that their orientation to work was aimed at changing the oppressive structures identified within a critical analysis of society.

#### The nature of radical community work

This research offers insights about the nature of contemporary radical community work in Aotearoa, rather than offering a prescription of ways for others to practice. The intention is that themes can be identified in order to learn more about women and social change and to explore the practice of particular women interviewed.

Chapter One identified the resurgence of radical ideas in the community work literature (Fook 1990; Thorpe and Petruchenia 1990; Dixon 1993). It seems that the radical agenda is indeed very much active in the philosophies and practice of the women interviewed. However the nature of this radical agenda has shifted away from the radical/ conservative false dichotomy of the 1960's and 1970's (Fook 1990), to encompass insights from a broader based orientation. These insights can be interpreted by a developing postmodernist tradition (Williams 1993), which goes beyond a class based analysis, to emphasise the intersections of other factors such as gender, race, disability, age and sexuality. This removes the "us and them" dualistic orientation as embodied in much of the early social action traditions.

The postmodernist emphasis on diversity, locality and specificity (Giroux and Aronowitz 1991) can be identified in the participants' practice. This practice is focused on the specific struggles of the everyday lives of those they work with, whilst however, linking these issues to a broader analysis of the wider macro and structural factors. The participants' practice involves recognising many different identities and cultures. They displayed a clear understanding of the complex facets of these.

The postmodernist approach is also reflected within the participants' practice through the acknowledgment of difference, and in stressing the importance of giving space to the complex and often contradictory marginalised voices which lay beyond the dominant discourses and paradigms. The participants were acutely aware of the importance of personal identity in those they worked with, and they explored how personal identity and ways of knowing are developed, maintained and transformed through dialogue.

The understanding that community work must ensure that change occurs within the individual identity and psyche as well as within the broad hegemonic structures and apparatuses meant that the participants used a highly diverse range of strategies aimed at individual social change, to those required within a local or macro context. The participants demonstrated that they move quickly between a variety of strategies focused at different levels.

The participants were committed to advancing the objectives of women within the process of social change. The feminist contribution to radical community work appears to be well embedded in the participants' practice, which is based on a strong analysis of gender in all issues they worked with. The emphasis on the personal is strongly adopted within a comprehensive political analysis. A broad feminist theoretical analysis can contribute to contemporary radical practice.

Although the feminist analysis can be seen to conflict with parts of Maori development goals, the participants felt that community work in Aotearoa needed to embrace both a feminist approach as well as to recognise indigenous approaches to development. The participants realised the similarities of Maori values to their own developing spiritual and political values.

Aspects of feminism and indigenous approaches to development can be seen to have influenced the participants developing awareness of spirituality as a basis for their practice. From the data obtained in this thesis, the radical agenda appears to also incorporate spiritual aspects, include the metaphysical realms of our identity, our body, birth and death and our connectedness to each other and the environment. The participants referred to concepts such as consciousness, the spirit and the heart as central to the involvement with social change. These aspects were carefully located within a critical, self-consciously political, structural analysis. The participants appear to be working with a consciousness of their physicality and emotions as well as these spiritual aspects.

The term spirituality was used as a way to describe a developing consciousness and of honouring the sacred dimensions of women's experience. Women's spirituality is linked with feminism in honouring the ways that we see ourselves and the world around us and that these understandings are different because of systems of oppression where the culture devalues women's lives. The directions of spirituality and of women's ways of knowing were seen by the women to be nourishing and sustaining and as able to provide the directions for action in the world.

From the data obtained in the interviews it is evident that contemporary community work is moving away from being just a method of intervention towards being a reciprocal process of supporting our own and other's personal growth. The participants are committed to personal growth which is firmly established within a clearly articulated political analysis which takes account of the social and economic inequalities in society and recognises the structures of power and oppression.

The strategies used in practice clearly originate from the personal experience of the processes involved in the participants own individual change. The ideological commitment that the participants have to women and to social change was what informed their application of these strategies.

### The significance of ideology

The significance of ideology was evident within the participants' community work practice. This research has demonstrated that ideology is a major mechanism bridging the personal with the political in radical practice. The participants were explicit in their ideological assumptions and value base. They were openly political in their stance, promoting a feminist analysis in their own work.

The self-conscious and critical analysis as contained in the participants' comments can be said to protect community workers from naive and irresponsible practice which can occur within work which aims at value neutrality. This confirmation can be linked with arguments against community work as a value free profession, as discussed in Chapter One.

The participants recognised the centrality of the competing ideologies involved within the specific issues they were working with. They were also aware of the control exercised by the socio-cultural institutions through the transmission of commonsense assumptions, ideas and beliefs to those they worked with. Ideology was acknowledged as functioning at an institutional level as maintaining and supporting the dominant paradigm as embedded within the hegemonic structures.

The emphasis on ideology is not only asserting the value of ideas as in a Fabian socialist vision, but links ideology to notions of power differentials, the construction of language and identity, discourses and then linking these to action.

### The implications of the research findings

The high importance placed on the development of self conscious practice, which incorporates enhanced self understandings, means that community work principles can increasingly inform, and be informed by multi-disciplinary fields of knowledge, canvassing areas such as psychology, cultural anthropology, studies of religion, political science as well as sociology. Social change can be encouraged to become part of an understanding which incorporates many areas of society, rather than remaining the specific domain of community workers and other marginalised groups of change agents.

The major themes of self reflection and structural analysis in current practice need to be reflected within contemporary education and support of community workers. Community workers indicate that they are dissatisfied with the lack of training opportunities appropriate for their work (Craig 1991), and many radical workers argue that their training needs are different from those of social workers (Community Work Training Council 1983).

If radical community work incorporates aspects of spirituality, personal identity, self reflection, as well as an acknowledgment of the subjective diverse realities which are located in various sites of power, these aspects need to be acknowledged and explored further by those supporting and teaching. Both community workers and writers warn those in re-emergent radical social work movement against neglecting its teaching mission (De Maria 1993), which links theory to practice (Sayer 1990), or specifically linking a structural analysis with a structural practice (Fook 1990).

Despite the arguments in evidence for the explicit use of ideology in community work practice, community work training has displayed a reluctance to embrace this issue. Training has most often suppressed questions of power, knowledge and theory (Giroux 1983). De Maria (1993) identifies mainstream social work education as being primarily involved with the transmission of taken for granted facts and as having a purely skills competency and service orientation. Similarly, Nash (1987) explored how feminism is resisted in social work education, by those exercising cultural hegemony. In the Aotearoa context, some workers have been reluctant to engage in mainstream community work training because they don't want to abandon their radical orientation (Craig 1991).

Community work education has been addressed by the Aotearoa Community Workers Association and the New Zealand Social Work Training Council (Craig 1991). However, consequent government commitment has been limited, either financially or in principle. Although this is the context it remains important to still explore ideal educational principles which could enhance the current directions in practice. Community work education which can respond to the themes in current practice can be informed by critical pedagogy, feminism, postmodernism, as well as by ideology, as explored in Chapter One and Two

Education for community work which is influenced by critical pedagogy, not only incorporates a critical analysis of the educative process, but encourages emancipatory interests through creating time for self disclosure. It can lead to the dialogical identification and construction of shared realities (Freire 1972). As was identified in Chapter Four the development of a personal "biography" (Rees 1991), or "narrative" (Fay 1987), is an ongoing process of trying to understand and influence the world. De Maria (1993:12) suggests the educational site becomes a community of inquirers "fired by a spectre of their own and of other peoples suffering and driven by vision of humanitarian emancipation".

Therefore the critical pedagogical approach to community work education will use strategies such as consciousness raising and awareness raising, as identified in Chapter Five. The strategies involved in the educative process and community work strategies are synonymous. Teachers can facilitate this process by helping the community work student to experience themselves and the world, in a way that leads to a commitment to change. Education can become a reciprocal process of sharing, learning and teaching, using strategies of community work practice and community work can be practiced in an educative setting.

Smith (1986) identifies a number of feminist principles which can inform social work education. One of the main principles from this extensive list proposes that learning needs to provide the space for women together to develop their sense of personal and political power. This involves the development of a critical awareness of personal issues. The strategies identified in community work practice, as discussed in Chapter Five, are just as relevant in the educative setting. Critical pedagogy and feminism offers an opportunity of overcoming a common failing, namely a non-radical approach to teaching radical material.

Overall it seems that education needs to include components which are aimed at "sustaining us and creating a vision for what we do" (Colleen), as well as "being grounded within a political analysis" (Judy). Education can be enhanced by a focus on personal assumptions and beliefs, or on our ideology. Despite the disadvantages outlined in Chapter Seven, the Sayer (1990) Ideology Model of education and practice appears to offer a useful framework for understanding and applying the notion of ideology in an educative setting.

### Further questions raised by this research

Whilst reflecting on the significance of their own understandings, the women explored what the main elements in the current context were, which effected their community work practice. They saw the deteriorating economy and the rise of the new right ideology as highly challenging. The effects of child sexual abuse were also identified as a major issue for women working for change in contemporary society. These aspects were shown to present significant challenges for those working for social change. Such challenges show no signs of decreasing, but are in fact becoming more strident. It is important to monitor the impact of this context on community work in the future. There is a major question of what lies ahead for women working for change. A follow up of the same participants over time, could begin to assess how these initial community work directions have manifested amidst the challenges.

As the research interviews revealed, spirituality can be seen to be central to contemporary practice. This area of enquiry needs to be further explored. There appears to be some literature available on women's spirituality, however community work can be further informed by exploring literature which tempers spirituality with a radical political analysis. The tensions surrounding the issue of spirituality and a radical political analysis also needs to be further explored.

Critics of the ideas explored in this thesis may claim that such ontological concerns are a middle class privilege. Food on the table appears to be a more urgent priority than observing the aspects of the development of our personal identity! Although there was some hesitation registered about too much time spent on analysis, ideology and matters of spirit, the participants saw these aspects as part of the process which facilitates us to become self consciously political and able to facilitate the development of a critical analysis in others. The exercise of being in the world, developing a stronger identity and answering our personal ontological questions leads to a transformation in knowing which then relates to changes in action. The participants equally emphasise the importance of a social, economic and political analysis, or a critical analysis of society.

In addition to these issues the ramifications for adults of sexual abuse as children was identified as an important issue of the contemporary context. There are gaps in the literature which explores the impact of child sexual abuse. Although in recent years, literature has appeared which addresses personal healing from abuse, both individually and within groups (for example Bass and Thornton 1983), some areas require further investigation. These areas include further analysis of women's healing from sexual abuse in the context of broader processes of women's transformation and social change.

The results in this research are not attempting to be representative of all women working for change. The stories of a wider sample of women would be interesting in order to compare these initial conclusions. There is a need to acknowledge the importance of the stories of Maori women and Pacific Island women in Aotearoa.

#### A final Word

The story telling approach in this field of inquiry has proven to be successful as a valuable method of sharing ideas and knowledge. When stories are shared in the context of dialogue there can be a reciprocal development of ideas.

It is hoped that the stories in this research will provide inspiration to others, and that the issues explored will be useful as a lighthouse for those working for social change. This material may contribute to the development of shared vision of social change in Aotearoa.

The future for community work education and practice lies in the naming and valuing of our own and each others realities, whilst embracing the current political realities. This process is never static, but was seen as being a continual embrace with the world as it is, and as it is changing.

*"The quest for the good self and the good society exist in an unbreakable dialect" (Reuther 1987:76).*

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