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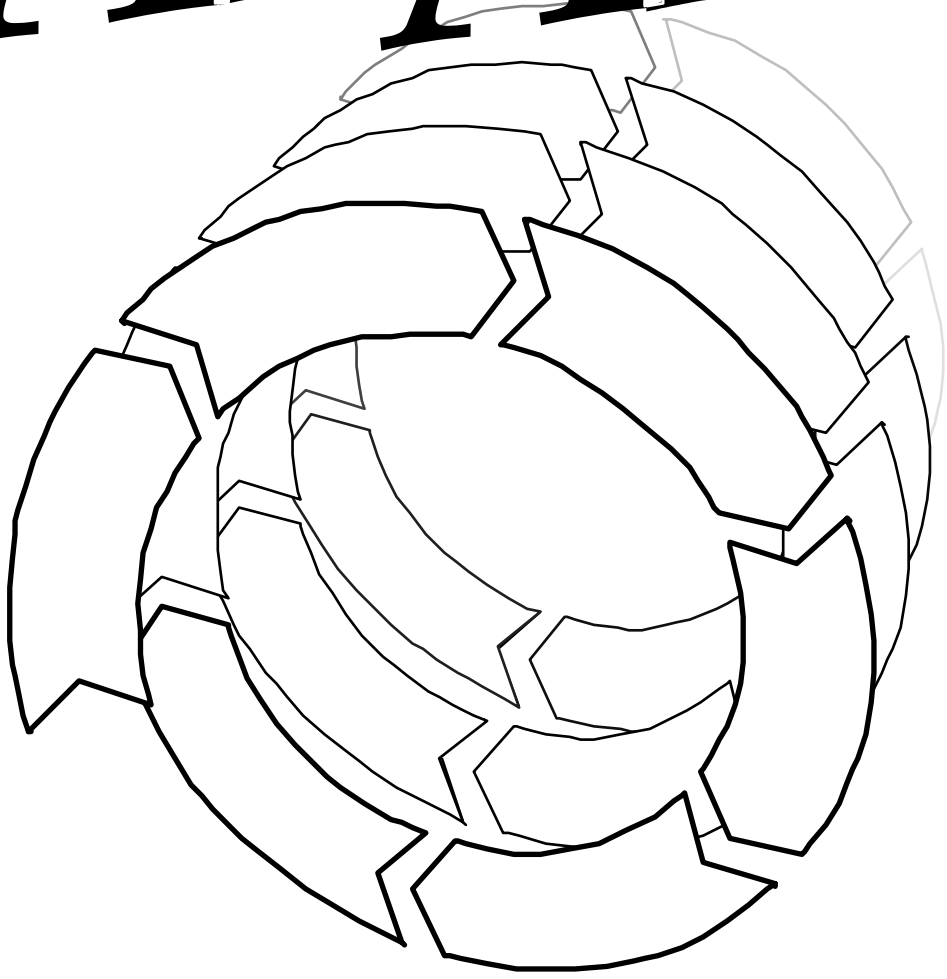

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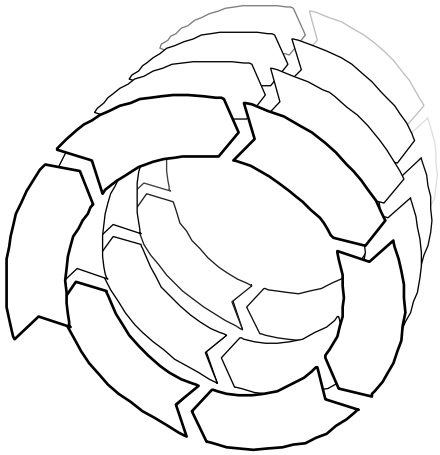

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CONTENTS

Editorial **2**

Dedication
to Dr Bert Cunnington **3**

Managing the energy of thesis writing: A *chakra* perspective
Ron Passfield **18**

A social ecology of participatory action research
Susan Goff **39**

People **63**

The bookshelf **64**

Projects **72**

Noticeboard **74**

Guidelines for contributors **75**

Publications catalogue order form **78**

Information for subscribers **82**

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Editorial

Robert Chamber's book, "Whose Reality Counts?", introduced in "Bookshelf" sets the theme for Volume 2 Number 2 of the ALAR Journal.

This theme is central to Susan Goff's book, "Restraint of Love" (an action research study of domestic violence), reviewed by Jacques Boulet in this issue.

Susan's article on social ecology and participatory action research also challenges us to think more broadly about the reality that counts when we engage in social action through action research.

Ron Passfield's article on managing the energy of thesis writing, questions the dominant research paradigm which denies the reality and experience of the (action) researcher.

We dedicate this issue to Dr Bert Cunnington who died recently from a chronic illness. As keynote speaker for our ALARPM Conference last year, Bert argued that the power elite in organisations define what is "real" and "of value" in a way that denies our essential humanity.

Reflections on Bert's life and work are included in the "Dedication" section.

Dedication - to Dr Bert Cunnington

Learning and Loving through Living

This issue of the ALAR Journal is dedicated to Dr. Bert Cunnington who died on 18 June 1997. Bert was a strong supporter of action learning and a critical theorist. He was a gentle, loving man and an intellectual giant. He was a true scholar in every sense of the word - he sought an holistic integration as he delved the depths of science, art, organisation development, mythology, spirituality and future studies.

Bert refused to accept narrow definitions of his field of expertise and would not compartmentalise himself - he sought to integrate his rational, emotional, mythical, mystical and spiritual self. He was particularly critical of the reductionism of our present society. Like Ehrenfeld (1993), he challenged our obsession with consumerism, power and control. Bert was concerned about life in the new millennium and stressed our responsibility to start re-shaping society through local and global action designed to connect us with each other and with nature.

Bert made a significant contribution to the ALARPM Association through his keynote address at our Brisbane conference last year. His moving and passionate address about the need for the "Loving Learning Organisation" ignited the theme of the conference which was focused on "Energy Switch". Bert's address and the conference theme stressed the need to move from the negative energy of fear, doubt, competition and control to the positive energy of love, faith, collaboration and creativity.

Bert titled his paper, "All You Need is Love: The Loving, Learning Organisation". He drew on global research to support his contention that many organisations today are unhealthy - they are killing people. Bert saw organisations destroying the human spirit and the capacity for love. He maintained that the incessant pursuit of efficiency is a non-sustainable goal; he challenged the introduction of controls that imprisoned people rather than released them; he questioned the definition of commitment that promoted mindless compliance in lieu of the creative pursuit of human values; he asked why we no longer showed care and concern for the individual; and finally, he challenged us to confront the "conspiracy of silence" that enabled all this to happen.

Bert continually challenged the status quo. He argued that the powerful elite in organisations and society at large defined what is real and what is of value in a way that reflected the paucity of their own perceptions of what it means to be human.

Bert was unable to produce a paper on the Loving Learning Organisation before he succumbed to the ravages of a brain tumour. However he left us the overheads and references from his address at the conference. The text that follows is drawn from this material.

THE LOVING LEARNING ORGANISATION

There is increasing evidence that organisations are killing people. This is reflected in what has become known as the "Black Monday Syndrome". More fatal heart attacks occur on Monday morning than at any other time.

The researcher who has done most to bring these Monday morning findings to light is Dr. James E. Muller of Harvard Medical School. In the spring of 1984 he found heart attacks tended to occur around 9am on Monday mornings. Initially, he thought this was a spurious finding. "*I thought it was an artefact*", he remembers. But when he began looking he

found fourteen studies, all published "in obscure journals", suggesting the same thing (Muller et al, 1987; Rabkin, Mathewson and Tate, 1980; Kolata, 1986).

Job Satisfaction

A study done in 1972 in Massachusetts for the Department of Health, Education and Welfare found that the best predictor for heart disease was not any of the major physical risk factors (smoking, high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, and diabetes mellitus) but job satisfaction (*Work in America*, 1973; see also Jenkins, 1971).

A recent study examined the incidence of low back pain in 31,200 employees at the Boeing Company in the Seattle-Tacoma area. Surprisingly, there was no difference in incidence of low back pain and disability between white and blue-collar workers. It did not matter whether the employee stood on an assembly line or sat at a desk. The best explanatory factor was job satisfaction, which had been assessed by job ratings by supervisors within the six months prior to the back problem (Spengler et al, 1986).

The Cure: The 3 C's

A team of behavioural scientists at the University of Chicago led by psychologists Suzanne Kobaska and Salvatore Maddi, studied a group of 200 business executives at Illinios Bell Telephone Company who were subjected to enormous stresses during the AT &T divestiture. Even before the divestiture, stress was a factor: so many executives had experienced heart attacks by age fifty that the company actually had installed a cardiac unit in its corporate headquarters!

Half of the executives in the study reported numerous symptoms and health problems, and half did not. Yet they were subjected to the same job stress. What made the difference? Kobaska and her colleagues found major psychological differences in the two groups. Those who stayed healthy judged their stresses differently and

responded to them differently than the illness-prone group. Researcher Susan Kobaska noted that "stress-hardy" individuals are characterised by a coping style she calls the **'Three C's: challenge, commitment and control'** (Kobaska, 1979; Kobaska, Maddi and Kahn, 1982; Maddi and Kobaska, 1984; Wood, 1987). Those who were stimulated by challenge, were meaningfully committed to their work, and those who felt they could exercise control over their lives and jobs, were by and large healthier.

More recently, a **fourth C** has been suggested: **Connection** (the extent of social support) (Hirshberg and Barasch, 1995).

Social Support (Connection)

Although the presence or absence of social support is finally gaining recognition as a major contributing factor to optimal health, it was recognised decades ago by the pioneering physician Dr. Stewart Wolff.

Wolff was one of the first researchers to document the finding, now often cited, that coherent social support is a major factor in individual health on a par with the more commonly accepted biological risk factors of blood pressure, cholesterol, bacterial and viral exposure, and aging itself.

Social support is not confined to family and friends. In fact, there is some preliminary evidence that social support in the workplace may even be of equal or greater importance than support at home, since most of our waking hours are spent at work. Additionally, a great deal of the sense of personal identity, self-worth, and control is tied to career or professional status.

It is indeed ironic that just as research is confirming the importance of social support, the very ties that bind people together are becoming increasingly frayed or non-existent.

Control (one of the three C's)

Recent research shows that this factor of control, empowerment, or self-efficacy may be the ultimate determinant in human health and even aging. Its meaning has been clearly elaborated in 'The Sound Mind, Sound Body' study of Dr. Ken Pelletier (1994) - an Associate Professor of Medicine and Director of the Stanford Corporate Health Program.

This study focused upon individuals who met three criteria:

- all of the participants are "prominent" in the sense that they are acknowledged by their peers as accomplished in their chosen professions or businesses (attainment of wealth per se was not a criterion)
- all the individuals selected had publicly indicated prior to selection that they adhered to personal health practices that enabled them to sustain the demands of their careers
- either explicitly or implicitly, each participant conveyed the personal conviction that he or she was acting out of a deep sense of purpose and higher or spiritual values.

For the Sound Mind - Sound Body study a total of fifty-three individuals were interviewed. Each session lasted two to three hours and each person was given a complete transcript to review for accuracy after the interview was over. After reading the transcripts, twenty participants requested that their information be used anonymously because of the revealing nature of the discussions, and two asked to withdraw from the study completely.

Control - Directing the Film

The idea of control is neatly summarised in terms of one of the participants of the study - actress Lindsay Wagner:

> *I feel more like the director of the film than an actor in it. Actors are given lines, told where to stand, how to feel, what to say, but the director oversees, orchestrates and exerts*

control over every part of the production…feels like what I experience now.

Ken Pelletier contrasts this form of healthy control with manipulative hostile control:

> *Manipulative, hostile control betrays a need of an individual to dominate himself and others while competing with them at every opportunity. Such a strategy ultimately fails, leading to frustration and increases hostility and fuelling more of the same destructive, heart attack-inducing behaviour.*
>
> *By marked contrast the participants in my study have confirmed the findings from extensive research that individuals can possess a healthy kind of control: an abiding certainty based on past experience that they can influence the course of their lives to a major degree.*
>
> *Participants in the present study who had personal, medical, career, or financial setbacks turned them around by exerting control and creating a positive advantage, even though the process was long, often painful, and not clearly understood at the time. Essentially, one of the skills they learned was an acute ability to remember past successes while in the midst of their difficulties, a perspective that helped them avoid becoming lost in or encumbered by anxiety. Building upon positive memories, they proceeded to exert control, no matter what the crisis.*

The 4 C's Once Again

It will be recalled that the healthy executives:

- did not feel powerless in the face of the external changes but believed they could influence them by their own efforts
- were committed to their work, the community and their family
- viewed life as a challenge rather than a threat
- had strong social support at home, work and from friends.

Control, Challenge, Commitment and Connection may be attitudes but in the work situation their development requires an organisation that cares - a Loving Organisation. Further, the management tools we use and proposed changes should be evaluated in terms of these 4 C's.

It will not be acceptable in the world of the future to pass the costs of physical, mental and spiritual ill-health created within our organisations, onto a society as a social cost.

Values in Organisations and Transformational Change

There are three types of values in organisations:

1. Transcendent values: values that can apply regardless of the nature of the business, functional area or level of the organisation, eg. pursuit of excellence, respect for the individual
2. Strategic Values: values that relate to the organisation's strategy and the nature of the business that it is in, eg. technical excellence
3. Operational Values: values intimately related to the day-to-day operations of various parts of the organisation; such values may be concerned with things such as dress and appearance, safety, meeting deadlines. (refer Limerick and Cunnington, 1994).

The challenge for organisation transformation today is to achieve an alignment between core organisational values (transcendent values) and the values that underpin the 4 C's. These core values in turn need to influence strategic and operational values and be reflected in appropriate "systems of action" (refer Limerick, Passfield and Cunnington, 1994).

The Physics of Love

A Painting Dedicated to Bert Cunnington

In the latter months of his life, Bert turned to chaos theory and Mandelbrot's theory of fractals to capture the essence of a new creative physics that would lead to a new and better society. His thinking in this area was captured by Robert Pope, an internationally renowned artist, who was able to translate Bert's ideas into a painting titled, the "*Physics of Love*". Robert Pope describes the painting in these words:

> *The painting portrays ancient concepts about love, light and life which have been placed into a modern physics format within the work of Dr. Bert Cunnington of the Faculty of Commerce and Administration at Griffith University.*
>
> *The two Egyptian figures [facing each other] portray the ageless wonder of ennobling love. The Mandelbrot set in the upper left hand corner has the Caduceus [the universal health symbol] superimposed upon it to symbolise the use of fractal geometry to establish a new science of life and health for the betterment of the human condition.*
>
> *The adjacent symbols portray a ray of light from the sun being reflected from the moon as polarised light, which has the ability to spin the atom of living carbon in one direction and inanimate carbon in the opposite direction. This portrays an aspect of the 6th century BC life force, the Nous, a fundamental concept of physics during the Golden Age of Athens. The symbol has been placed above the ancient alchemy letters for the seven primordial particles, depicting the power of the Nous to evolve both the material universe and ennobling intellect.*
>
> *The following alchemy symbols explain that through the Physics of Love we can become part of the living universe. The final two symbols represent the name of Dr. Bert Cunnington, whose life's work is dedicated to expanding knowledge.*

The painting was dedicated in Bert's honour at a ceremony at Griffith University on 29 May 1997 (a few weeks before his death). It is currently on display in the University library in fulfilment of one of Bert's last wishes. During the dedication ceremony attended by the Vice Chancellor, family, friends and colleagues, **Professor Emeritus David Limerick spoke of Bert's life and work:**

Love, Light and Life

The Work of Bert Cunnington

All of you who are familiar with the long working and friendship relationship between Bert and I will understand how delighted I am to express the dedication of this painting to Bert's work. That relationship was not without its differences of viewpoint - in fact we alarmed many of our students and colleagues with the vigour of our discussion - you could hear us arguing, happily, four corridors away. You see, Bert can be a very stubborn man (in contrast, of course, to my flexibility). He also has this annoying habit of asking for justification for the grand generalisations that excite others. Even more annoyingly, he always provides justification for his own grand theories, and that makes it difficult to maintain one's own counter-assertions. Yet I have never enjoyed a working relationship more, for in it were the three central themes of Bert's existence - love, light and life.

Bert's thinking and Bert the man are inseparable. To understand Bert you have to understand his history. Bert is one of the cleverest people I know. But there was somebody who was probably cleverer than he - his mother. Bert confided in me once that he did not go to school much: his mother taught him at home. She must have seen something in him that needed early protection - a creativity of spirit and mind that challenges the conventions of our socially constructed realities, that could have been killed by the institution called school. For Bert there are "NO!" labels in thinking. He is able to think the unthinkable and say the unsayable.

There is something more about his history you have to understand. Bert started off as an Engineer. He completed his doctorate with a study of social values. He is a Rosicrucian and a mystic with a deep love for and understanding of symbolism and of the importance of history. What happens when you put these elements together in a creative mind that is determined to transcend them? You get Bert - someone who can articulate the physics of love.

As I worked with Bert form 1984 onwards, in our study of excellence in business and government, we encountered a series of experiences that gave me insights into the themes that underlie his thinking.

First, Bert is intrigued by ***difference and differentiation****. We found that people in our study do not go about reducing dissonance and pursuing congruence at every turn. Those in our study were capable of tolerating enormous dissonance: they could claim there was no conflict in their organisations, but minutes later tell us about their latest attempts to kill the Unions. Not only was each person different, but each lived in and created multiple systems of action that despite their incongruity, existed side by side in parallel worlds.*

Second, despite this (or maybe because of this) differentiation, Bert pursues their ***holistic integration****. What makes him different is that he does not seek an overriding paradigm: his approach is processual: integration lies in the patterning of processes for evolution. In our studies he was much less interested in what people were doing: he was interested in where they were going - and that enabled him to talk about managing the future.*

Third Bert loves ***paradox****. For him, if you really want to understand life (in our case, in organisations) look at its paradoxes. Treat each as an enduring puzzle that provokes creative transcendence. Of course managers sincerely report no conflict in their organisations. Of course they sincerely engage in life-or-death struggles. Of course we create organisations. Of course, we have created organisations that kill us. Of course organisations change slowly and incrementally. They also change in cusp-level leaps.*

*Fourth, the more holistic and transcendent the theory or proposition, the more **tightly** one has to **specify** it if one is to transcend paradox. We enunciated the paradox of collaborative individualism. Yet Bert is not content to merely assert that collaboration is a necessary integrating force in social action. How does it act? What are its dynamics?*

*Fifth, do not parcel your experience into different systems. Do not treat rational science, mysticism and love as separate, parallel systems of thinking and experience. Do not go to Church on Sunday and work on Monday. **Bring these universes into collision** with one another and you may find the unifying principles and forces of life.*

How, finally, does one understand the dynamic, holistic forces of social action? Bert began an odyssey. He turned first to Stephen Gould's theory of punctuated equilibrium. What a lovely paradox! It is small movements that can create transformation. He looked at Maturana and Varella's theory of autopoiesis - of self-organising life. Social action, he concludes, creates itself from its own material. But most importantly, he turned to chaos theory and Mandelbrot's theory of fractals, and here he found a language for tightly specifying and unifying the dynamics of light, love and life. Here at last he could transcend his own disparate history - the engineer, the mystic, the social scientist - and specify the physics of love.

Robert Pope will tell you more about that, and show you how his painting represents this approach. What I want to do is to tell you how much joy Bert has found in this discovery. A fractal is represented by a formula with an indeterminate outcome. It describes patterning and infinite possibilities simultaneously. The effects of the relationships it describes can be studied at a number of levels. It can encompass unity, patterning, and infinitely evolving sets of possibilities of differentiation and creation. It brings together the past and the possible future into a unifying process. For Bert, as for Jean Houston in her A Mythic Life, there is a "supreme fractal wave from which everything branches, out of which everything comes forth. We bear its signature in the wave

forms of our cells". From it we create life and light. That fractal is love, the essence of reality.

Finally, let me argue that Bert is a disappointed optimist. That is, he remains optimistic, despite his many disappointments about social life. He understands more clearly than anyone else that organisations kill. We have created hierarchical competitive systems with narratives that justify the unjustifiable: evaluation of people - evaluation of them by performance indicators that are necessarily narrow and short-term, despite Jacques' well documented theorem that the more complex the decision, the less we can see its outcomes in the short or medium term; pseudo-devolution whilst increasing control and work intensity by criteria specification and prescribed reporting; limiting definitions of "good" action, while confronting discontinuity; eulogising competitive bidding whilst insisting on collaboration.

Yet he still believes that the unifying force of love provides the patterning for the choices we will ultimately make as we evolve. Bert believes that organisations of the future will not be able to continue to kill people: society will demand that their actions are caring and supportive. The serenity of this picture, its transcendence of history, the yet-to-be and the can-be through love - these are a marvellous testimony to both Bert's encouragement, and the artist's perceptiveness and abilities. I have great pleasure in dedicating this picture, on your behalf, to Bert's courageous journey.

It took an artist of exceptional talent and understanding of Bert and his intellectual journey to accomplish this painting. Robert Pope is quintessentially able to do so.

Robert Pope - Artist, Philosopher and Scientist

Robert Pope was born in Bendigo, Victoria on 9th December 1939. He is the Director of the Science-Art Research Centre of Australia and is listed as an Artist Philosopher in the 1997 edition of Who's Who of the World. He has received acknowledgment for his original work on the ethics of

science and is acknowledged as Australia's "leading new philosopher" in Hall's (1996) book "Avoiding Extinction".

Robert's art is exhibited in galleries and collections in Australia and around the world and is featured on the front cover of many books and journals including "Artists and Galleries of Australia". He has received many awards for his art and was the recipient of an award for supporting scientific excellence from the Institute of Basic Research, USA, in 1995.

Through the Science-Art Research Centre of Australia, Inc. authorised by the Australian Government as an approved scientific research institute, Robert and his colleagues have proposed an experiment in which the Centre's artists will collaborate with distinguished scientists (under the auspices of the Scientific and Medical Network of England) to produce an international touring science-art exhibition for the new millennium. Each painting is to portray various scientific opinions that will modify and update the Centre's basic model of world reality. Each painting is to be accompanied by academic text, designed to link into a general theme of a new physics for a new community. The painting dedicated in Bert's honour is the first of these paintings.

The Science-Art Centre is also inviting academics and scientists, whose work is important for the betterment of the human condition, to forward symbols of their work for inclusion in a new book, ***Symbols of the New Renaissance***. This book of symbols will be used in association with the international science-art tour and will provide a pictorial representation of the themes underlying global activity to create a better society for the new millennium. **The reader is invited to submit a symbol of their work, with an explanatory text, for potential inclusion in the book of symbols**.

An example of such a symbol is the superimposing of the symbol of medicine, the Caduceus, over the image of the

Mandelbrot fractal set - depicting the Science-Art Centre's use of fractal geometry to identify a new science of life.

Contact details for Robert Pope and the Centre are as follows:

The Science-Art Research Centre of Australia Inc.

PO Box, Murwillumbah NSW 2484, Australia.

Phone: 61-66-795442 Fax: 61-66-795508

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Notes

1. see chapter 8

2. see especially chapter 6

3. see also Chapter 8, "Getting ahead and getting cancer", in this book for the results of Kobaska's studies on a group of attorneys subjected to job stresses.

4. see especially chapters 1 and 3

Managing the energy of thesis writing: A *chakra* perspective - Ron Passfield

Abstract

In this article I identify ways to manage personal energy while completing an action research thesis. The article is based on the assumption that action research is an holistic process that engages the whole person.

I use a framework drawn from the concept of the *chakras* - the seven hidden energy centres in the body - as a way of summarising my ideas. The framework provides the basis for identifying strategies that draw on seven key sources of energy:

1. the energy of existence
2. the energy of activity
3. the energy of control
4. the energy of community
5. the energy of meaning
6. the energy of integration
7. the energy of spirit

The ideas presented in the article represent personal reflections on my recent experience of completing and submitting an action research PhD thesis. Throughout these reflections, I draw on the personal experience and wisdom of my colleagues and "comrades in adversity".

INTRODUCTION

There is a developing literature on ways to conduct and write up an action research thesis in an economical and rigorous way. This literature helps to produce good action research technicians but it ignores the emotional experience and development of the action researcher.

For some time now, as a result of personal experience, I have been very conscious of the ebb and flow of energy that occurs during the course of producing and submitting an action research thesis. More recently, I developed some insights into these fluctuations by exploring the *chakra* perspective as a way of identifying strategies for managing personal energy.

I was introduced to the *chakra* perspective by Paul Tosey from the University of Surrey (Guilford, UK) who uses the framework to explore the issue of organisational change and the role of change agents. I have found this perspective an enriching framework for summarising my own experience and reflections on writing and submitting an action research thesis.

THE *CHAKRA* PERSPECTIVE

The *chakra* perspective is an holistic approach to understanding people and their world as an energy field or flow in a constant process of change. The seven *chakras* are energy centres that act as "energy transformers" and influencers of change.

Tosey (1994b:5) explains the origin of the term chakra as follows:

> *…the word **chakra** is Sanskrit meaning "wheel". The seven chakras or centres are vortices of energy which exist in subtle matter and, according to the Indian or Verdantic theory of physiology, run along the length of the spine to the crown of the head. They are sited at: root of the spine; sacro-*

> *navel area; solar plexus; heart; throat; between the eyebrows; and the crown.*

The concept of *chakra* embraces physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual energy and the seven chakras are seen as interconnected. Tosey (1994a) explains this diversity and interdependence:

> *Different emphases in various sources give rise to a diversity of interpretation of the meaning and associations (with colours, sounds and more) of the **chakras** - they or their equivalent appear in many cultures, and nowadays in many approaches to health and spiritual development. The **chakras** embrace multiple facets of human experience in a holistic way: the rational and irrational, the material and spiritual, the emotional and intuitive, and the aesthetic and the pragmatic. As the **chakras** represent levels of vibration so the higher **chakras** represent higher frequencies. There are developmental aspects to this, yet it is not intended as a strictly hierarchical system.*

Tosey (1994a) proposes the *chakra* framework as a working hypothesis for understanding the experience of organisational life and organisational change. I have previously applied the framework as a metaphor to explain the personal energy, enthusiasm, excitement and heightened consciousness associated with an action learning program (Passfield, 1996a).

In this current article, I draw on Tosey's description of each of the seven *chakras* as a way of discussing my insights on managing the energy of thesis writing.

APPLYING THE *CHAKRA* FRAMEWORK TO THESIS WRITING

While writing my action research PhD I became increasingly aware of the ebb and flow of my energy as I attempted to progress my thesis. I found that during this action learning experience I reflected with colleagues on ways to improve

what I was doing and I developed a number of strategies that helped to increase my energy level and productivity.

On reflecting on these strategies, I found that the *chakra* framework provided a way of summarising my reflections and explaining my experience. It occurred to me that throughout the course of thesis writing **we can either block or activate these hidden energy centres through our thoughts, emotions or actions**. The following discussion is a first attempt to capture some of these insights within the *chakra* framework.

1. Base *Chakra* - the Energy of Existence

This energy is "experienced as earthiness" and is "associated with life and death, beginnings and endings, transitions and rites of passage, the elemental, the primal, raw materials and resources, the 'bottom line' " (Tosey, 1994a:67). This primal energy source is also associated with survival and self-preservation instincts, security and insecurity, groundedness and disconnectedness, and sense of purpose and aimlessness (Ambrosia Publications, 1994).

It seems to me that a major blockage to this energy source is "self-sabotage" which is often experienced as "self-talk". This form of blockage first occurred to me when a colleague indicated that he could not get started on his thesis even though he had the time, resources and support that he needed to make a start. In a moment of insightful honesty, he admitted to me and himself that the real blockage was emotional and not intellectual. He could not progress because he was full of self-doubts and these represented a threat to his self-esteem, to his continued existence as a researcher.

These self-doubts can be experienced at any stage of the thesis - at the beginning or ending, at points of transition such as the first draft, even at the point of submitting the completed thesis to the Research Office. A colleague delayed

the submission of his completed thesis for almost a year before he overcame his need for it to be perfect.

Our self-talk could include all or any of the following messages:

"What if I can't finish or I am not bright enough or it is not as good as others expect of me?"

"Is this thesis up to the standard (of a PhD or Masters)?"

"What if my thesis is not accepted or requires massive revision, what will that say about my ability?"

These doubts threaten our self-image and our sense of security and they tap into our survival and self-preservation instincts. They attack our sense of purpose and may find expression behaviourally in a lack of focus, inability to write, withdrawal, avoidance or procrastination. **The real tragedy is that unless we manage these self-doubts constructively, we can cut ourselves off from the ability to access other sources of energy (such as the energy of activity or the energy of control).**

Strategies for Releasing the Energy of Existence

- **Confront your fear** - get in touch with the self-doubts, make them explicit to yourself, size them up, find out where they are coming from (eg. previous experience of failure) and confront them as a source of self-sabotage (refer Dowrick, 1997:39).
- **Visualise** - use visualisation to picture success rather than failure - imagine yourself handing in the thesis or completing the first draft or celebrating with friends after the degree is awarded to you.
- **Share** - talk to others in the same boat (comrades-in-adversity) and you'll find that you are not alone in experiencing self-doubts; talk to others who have been awarded their degree and you will find that they also experienced self-doubts (I can vouch for that!).

- **Listen to your body** - what is your body telling you? You could have a "neuro-muscular" massage which involves working on the physical (muscular) expressions of hidden emotions. You could participate in a facilitated session with a Reiki specialist or a workshop with someone who can help you get in touch with your body (see for example, Heriot, 1995).
- **Use a crystal** - place a red agate, pyramid shaped crystal on your desk where you work. The pyramid shape symbolises focus and red agate crystal is associated with purpose (Ambrosia Publications, 1994). Novelists often use a physical object (such as a knife) as a way of providing a focus for their story - you can do the same for your thesis.

2. Naval Chakra - the Energy of Activity

This source of energy is experienced as "excitation" and is associated "with 'doing', movement, the entrepreneurial, generativity, sexuality, emotional 'charge', achievement, effectiveness" (Tosey, 1994a:67). It is also associated with confidence and ability to respond.

If we procrastinate or do not do anything to progress our thesis, we block the energy of activity. Our inactivity may be caused by the self-sabotage mentioned above or a perfectionist streak that stops us from writing (often reflected in the need to 'polish' each sentence as we go). The strategies suggested below are ways of facilitating writing to tap into the energy of activity.

Strategies for Releasing the Energy of Activity

- **Write it down** - record your thoughts, ideas, references and reflections as you go. One wise supervisor noted for his own prolific publications always advised his students to "write, write, write!".
- **Aim for a first draft** - many supervisors suggest that you aim for a first rough draft before you attempt to polish

your writing. The secret is to get it down and then polish it. The rough draft can be viewed as a chunk of marble that is subsequently sculptured into a work of art - the thesis. If you do not write the draft, you do not have the marble to work with.

- **Tape your ideas** - if you find that you are blocked in your writing, try using an audio tape to get your ideas down. Then you can key them on the computer and edit from there. This process can help to overcome the tendency to polish every sentence before moving on to the next. If you use a broad outline for what you want to say before you start, you will be surprised with how logical the outcome is.

- **Talk to the computer** - if you experience writer's block at the computer, try communicating with yourself through the computer. I learned this strategy from a colleague who used to key in questions on the computer wherever he was up to, and then attempt to answer them. For instance, he would write:

"what am I trying to do here?"

"what is my main message?"

"how does this bit link to what I have said before?"

"what do I really want to say?"

- **Use commitments to advance your writing** - if you have agreed to do a workshop, seminar or lecture, use this activity as the motivation to advance some aspect of your writing. You might for instance undertake to introduce some new ideas or a new model beyond what you have developed so far.

- **Match your task to your energy level** - if you are a "morning person", you might do all your creative writing in the early hours of the day and leave the more mechanical tasks (eg. recording or entering references)

until the afternoon or night when your energy level is low. A "night person" might do the opposite.

The sense of achievement that flows from writing feeds into other energy sources such as the energy of control and the energy of meaning.

3. Solar Plexus Chakra - the Energy of Control

This energy is experienced as "clarity" and is associated with "the balance of order and chaos, structure, form, design, logic, guidance" (Tosey, 1994a:67). It is also associated with our sense of personal power and self control (Ambrosia Publications, 1994).

We can tap into this energy source by progressively using strategies that capture the logic and design of our thesis, advance structure and form and build confidence. These approaches turn confusion into clarity and chaos into order. They build our sense of control over the task.

The generic strategy suggested here involves the use of information technology and its capability to capture data and ideas for ongoing adaption and refinement. The following strategies are interrelated and utilise the flexibility of information technology to assist the development of a sense of control.

Strategies for Releasing the Energy of Control

- **Develop a personal bibliographic data base** - a bibliographical database provides a wide range of facilities that enable you to develop your thesis. Appendix 1 lists the features and benefits of such programs. Through this tool you can progress your thinking and writing as you record your reference material. The data base also serves as an investment for life-beyond-the-thesis as it can be continually developed for your professional work.
- **Create a tentative chapter structure through word processing** - one way to do this is to develop a chapter structure at an early stage and create a document for each

chapter. You can progressively store information under each chapter (in separate documents) - add notes, quotes, ideas, diagrams, tables, reflections, conclusions, cross-references, and potential headings. Information can be downloaded progressively from your bibliographical data base. Ignore the need to make the notes perfect in terms of grammar and spelling. You will find that when you come to write a chapter, you will be confronted with pages of relevant information rather than a blank page. If you need to restructure the chapters, you can use the word processing capacity to cut and paste.

- **Shape your chapter around focusing questions** - you can start each "chapter dump" (2 above) with a set of questions that help you to focus your ideas and sift out what belongs to each chapter. You can refine the questions and your answers as you go. I found Robert Brown's (1995) core questions for structuring writing as a great starting point for each chapter (refer Appendix 2).
- **Develop section headings across your chapters** - you can do this progressively as part of the approaches suggested above. Alternatively, you can develop the chapter structure and section headings for each chapter before you begin writing. This will be helpful for some people and an impediment for others. The key thing seems to be to develop a strategy that best suits your style of working and enables you to progress the structure and form of your thesis.
- **Create a chapter for your conclusions** - in this chapter (developed as part of strategy 2 above) you can store your summary information, key conclusions and your contributions as a result of your thesis. What you write here initially may sound a bit trite but it forces you to focus on the outcomes from your thesis and you will be surprised with how this chapter develops.

These strategies build confidence and energy because they enable you to work on your thesis and progress your logic

and design. They develop a sense of achievement because you are creating written material that you can make use of in your final write-up. They also feed into the energy of meaning and the energy of integration.

4. The Heart *Chakra* - the Energy of Community

This energy is experienced as "rapport (connection through the heart centre)" and is associated with "the interpersonal, the social, the political, negotiation, humanism, openness, compassion" (Tosey, 1994a).

The experience of isolation has been recognised as one of the major reasons people fail to complete their thesis. The dilemma confronting the thesis writer is that you need isolation to achieve the necessary immersion in your topic but isolation cuts you off from the energy of community. The following strategies are some suggestions on how to capture the energy of community while maintaining the necessary isolation to gain the insights to achieve a successful thesis.

Strategies for Releasing the Energy of Community

- **Participate in an action learning thesis set** - you can join with other people engaged in an action research thesis and form an action learning set. Sometimes supervisors will actively encourage the formation of these sets. The composition of sets will change over time as different people progress at different rates. Sometimes you may have to mutually agree to end a particular set and re-form another. Over the course of my own thesis I participated in three action learning PhD sets - as one ended, another formed until I left to concentrate on my final write-up. The norms of challenge, support and advice of such sets (Passfield, 1996b) go a long way to capturing the energy of community.
- **Develop a learning partnership** - this involves actively and regularly sharing-in-depth with one other person who is also experiencing the problem of writing a thesis. As

you build trust in this relationship, you can become more open about your ideas, your feelings and blockages and share strategies for activating your personal energy and power. The reinforcement from this process can help you to engage more effectively in the strategy above and the following strategy.

- **Share with a "significant other"** - this involves active sharing with your life-partner. You may find your partner is not interested in your latest explication of some minute theory which closes a gap in the logical development of your thesis; your partner, however, is usually interested to know where you are at emotionally. Sharing your feelings with your life-partner is one way to keep them connected with you while you engage in the intellectual immersion demanded by your thesis. Sharing the intricacies of content may in fact force them away - they may see this as avoiding the sharing of your vulnerability. Your learning partner, on the other hand, will expect you to share content as well as difficulties.

- **Reconnect through workshops, conferences and networks** - you can tap into the energy of community through participating in activities related to your thesis content or the process of thesis writing. One of my colleagues, who was experiencing a total block at the analysis stage, reconnected with her colleagues at a network conference and found that she was reinvigorated and able to progress as a result. At the conference she gave priority to her personal needs over her intellectual needs and chose workshops that enabled her to reconnect with others and her own self, rather than workshops that advanced the content of her thesis.

- **Take time out to be with your friends** - you need time to rest your mind and body, and being with friends can energise you and them. We tend to drop all our friends when we become really focused on our thesis. There is a

need, however, to maintain a balanced contact for your own benefit as well as theirs.

5. The Throat *Chakra* - the Energy of Meaning

This energy is experienced as "expression" and is associated with "metaphors, beliefs, values, strategy, communication, truth" (Tosey, 1994a:67).

The strategies suggested below are designed to help you clarify your understanding and improve your capacity to communicate it to others.

Strategies for Releasing the Energy of Meaning

- **Use a journal** - journals provide the opportunity to capture our thinking and our feelings as well as help us to clarify the meaning of what we are doing. They also provide a means of reflection on our learnings and contribution. They are a very useful mechanism for helping us to understand ourselves, our research and our world. We can develop a new sense of balance and perspective through the process of journalling. Our journal reflections can be used to form part of our final thesis.
- **Draw diagrams or charts** - they help you clarify what you are trying to say and also help to illustrate your points for the reader. A picture can be worth a thousand words!
- **Use metaphors** - we can use metaphor to generate new ways of thinking about, and seeing, our world. Metaphors help us to "understand one element of experience in terms of another" (Morgan, 1997)
- **Develop concept maps** - "concept maps" and the "Vee diagrams" can help us to clarify the relationships among activities, concepts and principles and help us to develop theories (see Novak and Gowin, 1984). This contributes to our understanding and progressively develops the energy of meaning.

As we gain in understanding and a developing sense of meaning, we progressively tap into the energy of integration.

6. The Third Eye *Chakra* - the Energy of Integration

This energy is experienced as "intuition" and is associated with "holism, the imaginal, irony, art, ecology, aesthetics, wisdom, integration of male and female, left and right brain" (Tosey, 1994a:67). Susan Goff's article (in this issue) on the social ecology of participatory action research, provides an exemplar of the energy of integration at work.

The intellectual pursuit involved in thesis development and writing can create an imbalance in our life. It can also cut us off from our own intuitive power which is necessary to achieve integration of our ideas. We can offset this imbalance and recapture the energy of integration by using strategies that tap our intuition and creativity.

Strategies for Releasing the Energy of Integration

- **Do something creative** - we can tap the energy of integration by doing something creative that we enjoy such as a favourite hobby or creative pursuit such as art.
- **Be still** - sometimes frenetic activity gets in the road of intuition and capacity to integrate. There are times when it's important to stop, escape and just stand still. I have captured my thesis experience of this principle in a previous article where I linked the idea to the concept of heuristic enquiry (Passfield, 1995). Spending time getting in touch with nature and enjoying a beautiful scene can be the catalyst for achieving integration of our ideas and of our life generally. Chris James captures this theme in the song which is reproduced at the end of this article.
- **Take a walk** - the constant sitting, thinking and writing can be an unhealthy pursuit. It is wise to balance this with some physical activity. Some people find that walking

provides both a physical outlet and the opportunity to integrate thoughts and ideas through reflection.

- **Clear the clutter -** a cluttered work and/or home environment can contribute to a cluttered mind and frustrate the energy of integration as well as other energy sources. There are many books, workshops and materials on the energy of space and the ancient art of Feng Shui that may be helpful in this respect (see, for example, Kingston, 1996).

These strategies can help us to access the energy of integration which can lead to the realisation of the energy of spirit.

7. The Crown *Chakra* - the Energy of Spirit

This energy is experienced as "grace" and is associated with "the transpersonal, the sacred, higher purpose, vision, awe, universal love, transmutation" (Tosey, 1994a:67). It is also associated with "the desire to experience the wholeness of life and the universe" and stimulates "inspiration, higher consciousness, wisdom and understanding" (Ambrosia Publications, 1994).

Strategies for releasing the Energy of Spirit

- **Meditate** - meditation helps us to get in touch with our higher consciousness, vision, and purpose. Jarow (1995), for example, offers a step-by-step process for meditative reflection that is based on the *chakra* framework.
- **Learn to use your singing voice** - through singing we can get in touch with our deeper selves. Singing linked with breathing techniques, toning, harmony, harmonics and tonal healing can release emotional energy and help us to experience our own personal power and the enjoyment of our own naturally beautiful voice. It helps us to tap other energy levels such as the energies of existence, control, meaning, community and integration.

- **Revisit your spiritual origins** - there are many ways to link into what is sacred in our lives. You may find that your journey into personal integrity through the action research process leads you to rediscover your spirituality.

The energy of spirit integrates the other energy sources and enables us to maintain our purpose and focus.

CONCLUSION

An action research thesis can drain our energy reserves because it engages the whole person in a process of personal and collaborative change. The *chakra* framework discussed in this article provides a way of summarising a range of strategies for building personal energy at a number of levels while engaged in thesis writing.

The *chakra* framework can be viewed as a metaphor for progressing the thesis. As we progress our thesis, we move towards higher levels of energy - towards higher levels of theoretical and personal integration. If, through self-doubt, we cut ourselves off from the lowest energy level, the energy of existence, we restrict our capacity to activate the other energy centres.

The *chakra* framework also has relevance for the process of "re-entry" as we try to gain renewed energy and perspective in our lives after completion of a thesis.

The following song was written and sung by Chris James who provides singing workshops around the world. He is noted for his ability to have large numbers of people (eg 1,500) singing and harmonising together.

(This material is reproduced by permission of Sounds Wonderful, PO Box 160, Warrandyte Vic 3113 Australia; Phone: 61-3-9844 3933; Email: 106121.1720@compuserve.com)

Standing still (Chris James)

Well there's times when you're standing
Not sure what you're meant to be doing
Let yourself stand still
Cause there's something you know
That's waiting right down the road
If you can just let yourself be still

Know there's a reason - sometimes you just can't see it
Take yourself, look at where you're standing now and be alone
And it's times like that you know you will
I promise you, you'll just come through

There's gardens abounding, and flowers resounding in you
There's always choice - you're something special

And I know that we have got the time -
don't have to speed no more
Just let yourself, just let yourself be

There's a garden in your heart, and it's just waiting to start
Time alone can grow it, don't you know
If you just take a chance or two and let yourself
See this one through, you're in the garden of your soul

So if you find you're on an empty road, well let yourself feel it
It's time to just stand still
There's things that you'll see when you're not on the freeway
Let yourself stand still

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Appendix 1

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL DATA BASES

Computerised storage and retrieval of reference material and research data

There are a number of excellent bibliographical data bases on the market that enable computerised storage and retrieval of reference material (books, journal articles, etc) and research data (interview transcripts, documents, journal/diary notes, etc).

These data bases replace manual reference card systems or referencing systems developed through word processing. The bibliographical data bases **considerably extend the capability of other systems by allowing** ease of entry, multiple cross-referencing, storage of large quantities of information (eg. abstracts and comments), retrieval through multiple search points, automatic sorting of output according to your specifications, flexible output format, automatic generation of citations, capacity to interact with word processing and CD Rom and on-line data bases. A personalised bibliographical data base also represents **an investment in the future** for further research, managerial or consulting work because you can continually add to your data base and build on the work done for your thesis. You can develop new specialisations and build them into your data base. It certainly beats shoe boxes of manual cards which have limited cross-referencing and are difficult to store and access.

Some of the **features** found in the more sophisticated data bases include:

- **multiple libraries** (eg. a library for your references and one for your research data)
- simple, standardised **input protocols** for each type of reference (books, journal articles, book chapters, etc)
- spaces for **abstracts** and your own extensive **comments**

- **electronic notecards** linked to each reference so you don't have to repeat the reference (used for quotes, key comments, short summaries)
- **global editing** to enable you to correct any line in any field
- both the main reference area and each notecard has the capacity for extensive **cross-referencing through keywords**
- capacity to **search** title, abstract , comments, notecards and keywords for particular terms or words (eg. "hotel management", "team work")
- ability to **display searches** on the screen, **print**, or **transfer** to hard disk or floppy (and edit through word processing)
- capacity to **specify reference list order** (eg. by year, alphabetically, etc.)
- **preprogrammed formats** (up to 200) to line up with the requirements of specific systems of referencing or journal requirements (eg. Harvard System or Australian Style Manual; Journal of Psychology format)
- **preprogrammed formats** (up to 200) to line up with the requirements of specific systems of referencing or journal requirements (eg. Harvard System or Australian Style Manual; Journal of Psychology format)
- capacity to **program your own output format** (if the other 200 don't meet your needs!)
- ability to **import** bibliographical data from searches of data bases such as ABI Inform, Social Sciences Index
- ability to **create annotated bibliographies**
- ability to **generate citations** in your thesis text **automatically** (eg "1" will be replaced by "Jones, 1995")
- capacity to **move material between your database and word processing** documents via the clipboard (eg. you could "lift" a quote from your electronic reference card

and insert it in your thesis chapter in the appropriate place).

Some of the better known sophisticated bibliographical packages are listed below. You can save money up front by buying cheaper ones but make sure you compare the capabilities of the data bases before deciding. The cheaper versions have severe limitations and you can lose a lot of the benefits of the more sophisticated ones - you need to balance initial investment with your purpose as well as your investment of time (some of the cheaper data bases for example will not support "importing" - everything has to be entered manually).

Another consideration is that different universities and educational institutions support different bibliographical data bases (in terms of availability and technical support for staff and students).

Bibliographical data bases

Papyrus - the cheaper of the three listed but with most of the features mentioned above and is supported by e-mail by the publishers in the USA.

ProCite - considered by one of my computer buff colleagues to be the best available

EndNote - widely used and strongly supported by the publisher, Niles Inc.)

(e-mail address: nilesinc@well.sf.ca.us

URL http://www.niles.com/default.html)

(EndNote now comes with EndLink which "allows you to import tagged bibliographical references you download from on-line, CD-Rom or library databases directly into your personal EndNote library"). You will find people who will swear by each of these data bases - however you have to take your own needs into account as well as the support you can get for a particular product.

Appendix 2

CORE QUESTIONS FOR STRUCTURING THE WRITING OF CHAPTERS

a. who are the intended readers? - list 3 or 5 of them by name

b. what did you do? (limit - 50 words)

c. why did you do it? (limit - 50 words)

d. what happened? (limit - 50 words)

e. what do the results mean in theory? (limit - 50 words)

f. what do the results mean in practice? (limit - 50 words)

g. what is the key benefit for your readers? (limit - 50 words)

h. what remains unresolved? (no word limit).

Source: Robert Brown (1995), Write Right First Time, MCB Literati Newsline, MCB Literati homepage, MCB Press - http://www.mcb.co.uk

In our next issue of the ALAR Journal, you will find...

- an article on establishing action learning sets
- reflections on World Congresses 4/8
- more new books and a journal on action research
- network information
- project reports and more...

A social ecology of participatory action research - Susan Goff

ABSTRACT

In this article, Susan Goff provides a critical reflection on her role as a facilitator in a research consultancy with a small private firm. The project involved facilitating the internal audit for the company to describe its core values and purpose with a view to designing its corporate sustainability over the next thirty years.

Susan discusses the constructivist approach she employs for such participatory action research projects. She also explores the implications of the values inherent in this approach in terms of her role and relationship with the client and her emerging social ecology framework.

Susan's reflections centre around three core questions:

In an environment which is inherently hierarchical, how can we demystify the role of researcher without being abused?

How can we introduce new ways of thinking and working without new language to describe it (the difficulty of jargon)?

How can interpretation be inter-subjectively validated by those who dismiss inter-subjective validation?

She concludes that truth can only ever be our singular courage which commits each of us to name our ground with our own voice.

INTRODUCTION

As I begin this paper, I am again challenged to re-think the ground on which I stand, the voice with which I speak. What are my boundaries of action? Of what are they constituted and how do I discover them?

I describe a participatory action research (PAR) project which I carried out with a small private firm. I explain the nature of engagement with a client by means of a learning contract - in fact, a "co-learning" contract. Within a relative position of equity, both the client and the facilitator openly critique the process and outcome of learning within the terms of the project contract. My learning is about facilitation, their learning is about their research question: we learn through each other.

In this case, I focussed intently on the heuristic experience of the facilitator engaged with individuals and a corporate culture. I am investigating the possibility that the heuristic process is at the heart of critical subjectivity[1] - the means of validating action research data. For myself this is a critical question which distinguishes constructivist informed PAR from more traditional applications. While I hope that my words speak for themselves, I should say up front that in the interests of sustainability, I am ever drawn towards the constructivist interpretation of the research methodology.

For many years now I have searched for clarity in that final moment before choice, which facilitators experience very publicly. It is the moment when my on-going propositional understanding of the context becomes one with an intuitively felt "action potential": what I imagine I can do, say, think, write, interpret next. In a facilitated workshop you can't press the delete button, and do a cut and paste - the

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1 Reason, P., 1989, Introduction

facilitator's action reality is decisive with real consequences (and thus open to ethical scrutiny).

In reference to John Heron's[2] model of propositional and presentational knowledge, it is the moment between naive experience and propositional interpretation. I experience it as the evolutionary context from which what could have been and what actually happens takes shape: the focus of action research itself.

In this paper I refer to Moustakas' description of heuristic research methods as a means of highlighting recognisable stages of formulating critical subjectivity.[3] Within the relatively mainstream corporate culture of the firm I was working with, the intensity of this gaze was regarded with curiosity, confusion, animosity and eventually by some, authentic translation into their own practice. The co-learning relationship between myself and the director of the company came to be located within the heuristic moment - as I knew it from formal scientific descriptions - and as he knew it intuitively to be. The eventual success of the project rested in the shared respect for the authenticity of the process which brings together data, experience, analysis and a deeply felt commitment to act with a sense of truth which arises from such a process.

I describe this process quite generally, and I look more closely at three questions which arose from it. I conclude with a personal statement, because I believe that the moment from which action emerges is essentially one of informed personal conviction about one's place in the world.

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2 Reason, P. and Rowan, J., 1981:40-59.

3 Moustakas, C., 1990.

Social Ecology

In using the term "social ecology" I am referring to the following distinctions:

- an acceptance of a recursive (rather than linear) relationship between people and their environments, and that the recursion between "inner" and "outer" worlds *is* the experience of social ecology;
- that the term "worlds" refers to experiences which are defined by boundaries of meaning, as perceived by an individual or group of people, and within which a person interacts with other worlds, as discerned by other people;
- that the boundaries of worlds are arbitrary in that we consciously re-create them through the use of symbol and action to know an aspect of our identity and orientation[4];
- that the symbols we use to create boundaries reflect conceptual and empirical entities (such as values on the one hand and perceived finite resources on the other - there are many more), derived from experience and denoting potential experience;
- in so doing we create closed systems of thought and observable/interpreted action[5]-consciousness of which may be "provoked" through inquiry, boundary transgression, neglect or satisfaction of need[6];
- that our sense of ecology is derived from our powers of perception (observation and understanding of experience) which are physiologically and socially constructed,

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4 Boesch, 1991:91-103.

5 Keeney, 1983:61-109 and Bateson, 1979:159-201.

6 Reference for satisfaction of need, Marrow discussing Lewin's work, 1969:33.

relative to the range and depth of realised experience which exists within our grasp[7];

- that these "powers" are brought forth within the action learning cycle[8] of reflection, interpretation, decision making (or choice), action and evaluation (not necessarily in that order, not necessarily linear/cyclical and possibly co-existent);
- that while this experiential ecology is a human/social construction, humans are natural beings and thus human perception of ecology must reflect natural patterns of manifestation and change. Such patterns must be assumed to exist outside of human perception[9] even though this assumption is in itself, a human construction.

This last point is an example of the persistent ironies of social ecology. The experience of recursion often leads us to embrace the co-existence of mutually exclusive concepts (paradox) which give rise to learning[10]. This, I believe, is the essence of human sustainability, or as Schumacher (1977:44) describes it, that special "effort of self-awareness... that almost impossible feat of thought recoiling on itself - almost impossible but not quite... this is the power that makes man capable of transcending his humanity" . Transcendence is not about some hierarchy of superior intelligence, but transcendence of impediments to actualising our intelligence so that we may gaze on ourselves, on humanity within ecology, with purpose and understanding.

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7 Prenzel and Mandl, 1993:322.

8 Cranton, 1994:142 and Reason, 1988 Introduction.

9 This distinction is informed by the innate value of the natural environment - which does not depend on human construction to be valued.

10 Kafatos and Nadeau, 1990:135.

Context of work

I describe my work as facilitating participatory action research from the position of freelance facilitator. I have been working in this capacity for the last eight years, across community, public and now private sectors. I apply my work equally to social and environmental needs, with a view to increasingly bringing the two together under the banner of "social ecology".

The "theory" if you like is that by observing, committing to and understanding my work as a facilitator of learning within a framework of social ecology, I will participate in my own learning and by so doing, create understandings with which to work with those also engaged with issues of sustainability.

My position

The contracted position within which I work is a key aspect of the world (or context) of the work . This is because it is my recognised boundary within someone else's context - (their place of work, community or issue). I bring this position to a project's inception, and it is within this position that the co-participants and I fashion the project's realisation. It generally remains true to its proposed contracted definition, even though it changes and grows with the project. It establishes consciously held agreements about the relationship between the people, the issue and the context of work. We agree for example on the following:

- a working relationship between the client and the consultancy characterised by equity and co-learning;
- being committed to exploring principles of sustainability in human and non-human terms;
- the quality of the relationship as being inseparable from the "product";
- agreements about intellectual property ownership which distinguish methodology from product;

- agreements about mutual accountability between client and consultant.

I have designed contracts of this nature with clients in Local Government, for example, to train community based research facilitators to consult for an environmental management plan; with a State Government client carrying out several crime prevention research and planning projects; and with a private sector client in the training, implementation and evaluation of an environmental impact consultation with a multi-national client.

Each contract has its own character, but the essential elements described above become the defined boundary within which I introduce myself to a project field, which fashion the "eyes" with which I see, the "ears" with which I hear, the "hand" with which I write and touch, and the "voice" with which I speak.

The interests in the client's position

My own commitment to human and non-human sustainability gives rise to a particular interest in the private sector for many reasons:

- even though the political interest in the environment is accelerating in New South Wales, the hard questions are still there - questions which can be addressed most effectively in learning-based research method;
- the private sector is very often the foot that creates the "ecological foot print" in its sub-contracted relationship to government or for its own corporate purposes. There is some obvious advantage in being closest to the "foot";
- framing the environment as an asset rather than a liability is an exercise in changing the meaning of something and

thus a prime candidate for constructivist research[11], rather than positivist research;

- if action research is truly about confronting the constraints to emancipation, within a consumerist-based democracy, such research should be as much the business of those who set the constraints as those who suffer them.

To explain this last point: if I can assume that the private sector's relationship with government shapes the scope of resources available to private and community sector operations, then introducing action research to the private sector could build understanding of the social, environmental and thus economic consequences of that relationship.

For example, the government sets the legislation, even if in very vague terms, for the range of consultation required to establish a telecommunications infrastructure[12]. However, the terms of that consultation process, and the way in which it is interpreted by the private sector is open to the private sector's interests (eg: how little consultation can a telecommunications carrier get away with?). The answer to this question is determined by constraints felt by private sector management such as shareholder returns, the extent of government subsidy, personal ownership of corporate direction and profit sharing as well as established personal relationships. The consequences of the answer are felt directly by local people in local places. Call me naive, but I am hopeful that action research may be able to bring these two currently distanced contexts (government and private sector on the one hand and local people and places on the other) into a relationship of understanding in the interests of sustainability. I excuse my naivety with the rationale behind

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11 I am assuming here, that readers are familiar with this paradigm and its relationship to Participatory Action Research.

12 Telecommunications National Code, 1996, Part 4 Division 2.

the question: what other sustainable option is available to us?

In summary, my interests in the core research components of participatory action research within this context are:

- facilitating an experiential shift of meaning of "the environment" away from consumerism and towards the economic valuing of renewable resources and inter-generational equity in the interests of sustainability;
- building familiarity with the knowledge that shifts in meaning can take place through experiential learning and participatory research in the interests of constructivism;
- engaging in the collaborative contribution to the means by which this is done (ie: the social ecology of the project) which include formally contracted means of research method and the unpredictable translations by facilitator and co-participants of the contract, in the interests of personal and cultural development.

Meeting of boundaries

As facilitator of participatory action research, I arrive with a legitimate "world" as defined by the negotiated contract to research some aspect of the meaning of environment within a corporate context.

The co-participants engage with me and my interpretation of the research method, to question their assumptions about the issue and arrive at new insights. By negotiating between methodology and perception of the issue, we create a unique social ecology within the research project. It is made up of relationships, explicit assumptions, vested interests, research activities and transparent learning. Within this culture we observe our actions about the issue and the research process, translate their meaning to create understandings and, eventually, arrive at decisions which reflect the actualised interpretation of the research method.

I have learnt that my role as facilitator is to accept the responsibility of how I translate the research method within clearly defined boundaries. These boundaries must be designed to promote the client's capacity for self-managed learning (individually and as a corporate entity).

The diffusion of research method and knowledge constructions into actions[13] which directly translate the values and experiences of the co-participants, is the critical evaluation of effective participatory action research. I have always held that imparting learning was the key to sustainability within research projects. However, I am learning that while this is true, the meaning of learning is deeper than I thought.

Application

The project on which I am basing this paper was a strategic planning exercise for an environmental management consultancy. I was contracted to facilitate an internal audit for the company to describe its core values and purpose with a view to designing its corporate sustainability over the next thirty years. There is much detail to this project of course, but there is not the room here to describe it. Instead I want to go straight to the questions which it raised for me, which I hope will be relevant to any one who works with action research.

The questions

There are three questions which I wish to touch on. They concern the following:

[i] issues of equity in order to introduce and work with a new paradigm of thought;

[ii] language;

[iii] validity (again).

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13 Whyte, W., 1991:237-241.

Within the obligations of the contract and the limitations of time I felt a keen pinch. Throughout the project, my companion reader was Clark Moustakas' (1990) work: "Heuristic Research, Design, Methodology and Applications":

> *"The heuristic research process is not one that can be hurried or timed by the clock or calendar. It demands the total presence, honesty, maturity and integrity of a researcher who not only strongly desires to know and understand but is willing to commit endless hours of sustained immersion and focussed concentration on one central question, to risk the opening of wounds and passionate concerns, and to undergo the personal transformation that exists as a possibility in every heuristic journey."* (Moustakas, 1990:14)

I understood the value of Moustakas' work to be a prized insight to how we manage ourselves when we are in equitable relationship with co-participants in a research project. His work goes beyond mechanical descriptions of stages of research, and boldly includes self awareness as a key component to research method.

He begins with a discussion about knowing the core research question through "inverted perspective" which is resonant with Schumacher's question - "what would I see if I could see myself as I am seen?" (1977:95). Schumacher recommends "totally detached, objective observation" of the self which yields the capacity of seeing our contradictions, not as "manifestations of error; more likely manifestation of Truth."

Of course, coming from a constructivist perspective, I do not hold to detached, objective observation, but I do understand critical subjectivity[14] as a means of arriving at a greater

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14 critical subjectivity: deeply immersing oneself in the detail and meaning of the issue as described by those who are living it, and together creating an understanding of how this knowledge is

degree of understanding about an issue so as to intuit a core question. As I moved through the corporation gathering data through interview and group work, I was able to perceive the core question of the organisation by perceiving patterns, but also by sensing the depth of meaning which the data had for the participants.

Essentially the issue was how to reconcile the tension between working for the environmental ethic on the one hand, and corporate profitability on the other - when profitability was generally seen as being achieved by betraying environmental values. The problem was that the question was so fundamental to the organisation, and so integrated with management styles which if challenged, could lead to dismissal of various forms, that very few people could approach it with confidence, even though the data reflected this question over and over again.

I understood the fragility of the process, and committed to complete transparency: "showing yourself so others can perceive you" (Jourard, 1971 cited in Moustakas, 1990:17). I exercised transparency by sharing my thinking and learning about values with the participants, testing my own theories with their experiences. While many people delighted in the exchange, I was confronted on several occasions by participants who were suspicious of my motives. They simply could not accept that my means of operation were as they were presented to be, that there was no other agenda beyond that of researching the issue.

I was later to learn that this assumption had arisen because the research process was having an impact on the organisation, creating new relationships between people, legitimising a different discourse, validating concerns which had been dismissed by management, and introducing a

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constructed and related to within the local context. This understanding should also be put to the test and validated experientially.

participatory culture. This extent of change was read by some of the high stakeholders as corporate take-over.

Real anxiety was felt by many of us, surging even to anger in two cases that I know of. In this potent context of "open wounds and passionate concerns[15]", the following questions took shape in me:

[i] In an environment which is inherently hierarchical, how can we demystify the role of researcher without being abused?

[ii] How can we introduce new ways of thinking and working without new language to describe it (the difficulty of jargon)?

[iii] How can interpretation be inter-subjectively validated by those who dismiss inter-subjective validation?

Considerations

[i] Dismissal and in-dwelling:

Skolomowski (1990) in his paper "the Methodology of Participation and its Consequences" talks about "in-dwelling" (as does Moustakas, 1990). This was a new concept for me. Skolomowski describes it as the knowledge we all have from dwelling within our mothers' wombs: compassionate understanding. Moustakas describes it as dwelling within the implicit aspects of knowledge to reach understanding. I used this idea if "in-dwelling" to help me understand the struggle which others felt within the project.

I was exposed to two direct attempts to undermine my equity within the project. The strategies used were a) to challenge my contracted position of equity by attempting to treat me as an employee within an hierarchical setting, and

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15 Refer back to Moustakas' quotation at the beginning of this section.

b) challenge the research method as meaningless, unproductive and "subjective".

In each case I resisted dismissal by calling on the evidence for their views. I am finding that recycling data is a wonderful management tool. By staying with the person despite their fearsome attacks, we engaged in fearlessness.

Fearlessness means that we don't recognise the validity of threatened control over us. Despite our beating hearts and tight throats, this is not hard to do within a constructivist setting, where it is accepted that control is an interpretation of action or implied action. If we can see the means which the other person is attempting to use against our actions, it is possible to see the context within which the person is creating them. If we can mutually explore this context, clarification can take place which can, if people are willing, lead to understanding.

It's a very sensitive exercise however, because as in each case that I experienced, once the person who would constrain me stopped looking outwards and began to look within, a rapid shift occurred in their vulnerability. This was the moment of "in-dwelling" - of staying with the person's experiences and being led by them through their world. It is absolutely essential that at that point the facilitator invites a meeting in equity at the boundaries of meaning, that there is no act of colonisation (converting others and claiming their legitimate experience within the paradigm) but that mutuality and co-existence is honoured. In this way the co-participants can remain legitimately within their own bounded meaning, but simply recognise it to be so (feel no need to control others).

Another difficulty is that within an hierarchical system, equity doesn't feel like equity, it feels like reversal of power relationships and victimisation. How can people recognise equity if they have not experienced it? Even though one can legitimate one's actions within contracted relationships, if the person in question feels diminished as a result of

establishing equity, there is generally, in short projects at least, a need to reinstate their authority.

The danger of in-dwelling is that it largely remains a tacit form of knowledge and thus given only implied value, open to betrayal. In-dwelling allows us to understand fear and its place in our lives, and by so doing moves beyond self preservation so that we can offer respect for another's perception. The difficulty is that this can be read as weakness, even expected of women in their traditional role of healer and mother. It must be presented as analytical, disciplined, relevant and tough enough to confront the hard questions once equity has been established.

[ii] Jargon

I have always had a problem with "jargon". For a while I followed the "Keep It Simple Stupid" rule, but found it so limiting and patronising that I abandoned it to find my own language while making it clear that it was my language, and that it was up to all of us to question meaning.

In this project, I approached the group sessions without any agenda or format because I wanted every moment of the sessions, including the initial linguistic articulation of the subject matter, to be an actualisation of the company's values rather than my own. This is not to say that I did not bring my own into the room - quite the reverse, I was very transparent about the values with which I was interpreting data. However, I wanted my values to come forward responsively, rather than by my pre-determining the boundary of interaction.

At the start of each group, I introduced participants to the concepts of "value dark and value rich zones" as described by Woog, Dimitrov and Kuhn-White (1997). At the commencement of each session, we were collectively standing on the edge of a dark zone, and I wanted to refrain from imposing any format which would preclude the participants determining their own starting point, language

and questions. However, as we moved recursively through overlapping cycles of reflection, interpretation and decision making, we would create a value rich zone which may never have been created outside this particular discussion, with these people at this time. Having explained this at the commencement of each session, I would then fall silent until someone from the group would break the silence, and begin the dialogue.

The process was challenging. Participants expected me to "facilitate" them with a pre-existing agenda. I changed my title to "interpreter" to avoid this expectation, it was a good move. By working with their statements, I was able to stay within their language until I asked a strategic (open ended[16]) question about their data, which would sometimes mean that words could not be found.

In postscript workshop documentation, I freely included my thinking about their data, using references to constructivist writers and their terms ("jargon"). My intention was to share my interpretations with the co-participants and to expose my references which could offer new words, or at least concepts which could provide the means for further exploration when the words ran out. A few people engaged with these ideas, but many did not. They resented being "out of their depth" and condemned me for challenging them with new language, even though the workshop sessions had clearly not been jargon oriented.

I once read a quote from Ethan Cohen (director of the film "Fargo") where he states that he is frequently confronted by people who say they don't understand his work, but he likes the ones who say "so can we go out to lunch and talk about it?". From a constructivist position one assumes that shared meaning of any word is open to question, but to approach a group of people with this as a starting point is simply

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16 Peavey F., 1989.

impractical. I have learnt to purposefully use language to indicate to me how familiar a group of people may be with alternative frameworks of thinking. I cannot assume their degrees of comfort about questioning assumptions. The issue of language is highly sensitive because of the contradictory tradition of devaluing education and learning on the one hand (accusations of "academic" and "high brow") which is accompanied on the other hand by a very soft under-belly of the difficulty of recognising one's own ignorance in a highly competitive professional environment. We are all meant to "know", but our culture inhibits conceptualising how we know.

Given the highly complex, rapidly changing and multi-disciplinary environments in which we work - how can anyone ever be linguistically competent these days? The more I interact with different sectors of operation, the more I am convinced that comfort with language can only be achieved either by [i] reducing information to generalised (meaningless) terms or [ii] by remaining parochial in our habits and thinking. As another participant said: "why don't they get a dictionary?" It's great to ask "what do you mean?" and I look forward to the day when it will not be so embarrassing to ask it.

[iii] Inter-subjective validation.

> *"The heuristic researcher returns again and again to check the depictions of the experience to determine whether the qualities or constituents that have been derived from the data embrace the necessary and sufficient meanings... verification is achieved by returning to the research participants, sharing with them the meanings ... as derived from reflection on and analysis of the verbatim transcribed interviews and seeking their assessment for comprehensiveness." (*Moustakas, 1990:33-34)

Within each group session the participants themselves analysed their data and drew from it patterns or themes, which were then used to create "findings" about values. I

circulated their workshop notes (taken from the whiteboard and written in public view) back to each group, inviting them to correct or add to them. This they did, returning them so that I could edit their texts with their comments before circulating all the edited raw data to the whole company. This document was accompanied by my "ettic view", the facilitator's external perspective which can discern overarching structures of knowledge within which to fit the themes. I developed some graphic maps, to assist with materialising this conceptual data. I made an oral presentation to the whole company, using references to the data and sought their comment. I then asked them to actualise the structure I had proposed by responding to the core research question in terms of the "locally unique" structure of values which I had discerned from their data.

Largely, it was successful in small group settings, but fell victim to competing stakeholding in the whole of company setting. Individuals came to me privately and challenged my legitimacy. I reminded them of the data, asked why they had not raised it in the workshop and was confronted with a shrug of the shoulders. Nevertheless the issue was "it's only your subjective interpretation".

> *"There are no rules to guide verification that can be relied upon in the last resort; the scientist must make the ultimate judgement."* (Polanyi, 1969 cited in Moustakas, 1990:33)

In my business it is important to distinguish that as facilitator I make the "ultimate judgement" about the validity of my translation of research method, not the validity of the participants' data, or my ettic interpretation of that data. In this sense, I differ with Polanyi's view - in the end it is those who are living the outcomes of the research initiative who must make the final judgement. If a group of people cannot make a judgement because of internal disharmony, the facilitator cannot drive an outcome. I attempted to do this to fulfil my contract - and lost the confidence of the participants as a result. The gravity and

liberation of my judgement about my own work, is something which I am increasingly coming to understand.

For those who objected to the research process on the basis of "subjective judgement", the issue was that although they disagreed with my interpretation they could not offer any alternative in the absence of a model. Participatory research is explicitly designed to be culturally authentic to the "local participating community". The data which it produces speaks with their words, not abstracted numbers. Words can and were in some instances dismissed as "mere semantics", not worthy of exploration and for some reason evidence of inaction, an accusation which numbers rarely suffer[17]. (It is important to state that this response was not across the board; in this paper I am only attending to a critique of my performance).

Within the recursion of co-participation (the social ecology of the research method) the data is designed into constructs which are uniquely theirs, not grafted on to them from some "objective and theoretical" proposition which they are passively expected to adopt. The ethical issue at stake here, is that the process of actively creating one's own knowledge is personal as well as cultural, and in the end demands a personal and culturally valued decision, based in a conviction about one's own and collective relationship with the world.

The capacity for a community to design its own systems of knowledge is a capacity for sustainability. To devalue this capacity is a serious error. I am reminded of Vandana Shiva's words with regard to the intellectual colonisation of non-Western cultures by Western society:

> *"The first level of violence unleashed on local systems of knowledge is not to see them as knowledge"* (1993:10)

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17 Perhaps numbers escape this criticism because they represent potential handles in the causal fulcrum.

The West can do this to non-western societies, it would seem, because it does it to itself through the assumption of positivism as truth (perhaps an act of intellectual suicide). It uses generalised and theoretical frameworks to control the means of self and collective knowledge ("it" being each of us failing to question the generally assumed way of doing things).

A group of people who are unfamiliar with, or reject a constructivist position (which recognises the need to co-create locally grounded means of building knowledge) necessarily assume the viability of an imported and imposed model. The facilitator's position is not one of equivalent colonisation of their assumptions, but an ethically grounded task (within the difficulties of maintaining equity, personal expression and the validity of critical subjectivity) of building the participants' capacity to question the assumed way of doing things and through the process of questioning release a range of local resources for creating new answers.

In arguing against this assumption, I am not promoting parochialism, but a new found valuing of local resources - personal and collective experience - and a local accountability for their use and extension. All of our actions, be they corporate, government or community based, take from and feed into our social and environmental context. We can choose to create these actions from a knowledge base which is derived from the local social ecology and which is driven by self perpetuated inquiry in the form of applied learning, or we can continue to adopt imported models based upon unquestioned assumptions in the name of financial expediency and the preservation of existing power bases.

Including private sector clients within action research projects has led me to believe that if western corporate culture is to be active in achieving some degree of sustainability in our future, it must first value the individuality of internal corporate cultures, build unique

systems of knowledge from this rich human resource and, when translating this knowledge within local sites of action, accept corporate and personal responsibility for the social ecology which they engender.

The bottom line

At the project's conclusion, I sought validation from the company's director, and wisely he resisted my unspoken request and described instead the various activities he had been carrying out since my departure.

In this business of research we make something visible which was unseen before. My concern is that it will become invisible again, once the facilitator has left, if heuristic engagement is not included in the research outcomes.

Before I arrived there was no formalised dialogue about the question of environmental versus profit values, no culture of participatory learning and research. I introduced the organisation to itself, in a way, a collection of people made contact with their own ecology as described by collective values structures and processes. They were at once knowing of their collective identity and quite unfamiliar. They were shocked by their own truth and yet fully aware that no-one had said anything particularly new. They had engaged with me in an exchange which had delighted them as much as it had disturbed the very foundations of their thinking, relating, working and valuing. Through using the methodology, they were able to see the multiple contradictions as the truth, to transcend the interiority of the corporate culture, and look back at it (themselves) with understanding and purpose.

But for a while, they didn't know what to do with it. When I delivered my final report, the director commented that none of his competition in the field was "even at first base with this stuff" - but he was left with the business of interpreting the outcomes into the local context of the next day's operations. He facilitated his own workshop to negotiate the

report's statements with the rest of the company, and then completely restructured the company around sustainable learning systems. He had not studied Moustakas, but he engaged with the project through intense dialogue, seeking the collective experience within his company with which to determine collective knowledge.

He had the personal ability to commit to his own truth (self knowledge) within the project. He always knew there was a truth there, and his genuine acceptance of not knowing what it would be made it possible for him to become part of a vehicle for creating it. The vehicle was the interpreted research method which invited a collective truth to be created and recognised. This collective truth was the locally constructed system of values and their means of actualisation - which he used to reconstruct his operation. I remain hopeful that each member of the company, when they engage with this new structure in some way, will continue to recognise their personal experience within it, and consequently be open to their individual and collective extension of knowledge. I am hopeful that the heuristic method brought forth a structure and process which cannot fail to include the minds and will of those who created it.

My introduction of this particular form of research, my interpretation of it with the participants throughout the project, these were all conscious choices which I made, on my ground, with my voice. I was knowing of my intentions, I was acting fearlessly and transparently, but in the end it is only a piece of paper, a map, a memory of a conversation, a momentary illumination, before the day rolls back in and the facilitator leaves. The sustainable research outcome has to be so intimate to each participant, so eloquent, so recurrent in all aspects of action within the context that it can resist the power of the pendulum swinging back, and support the principle stakeholders as they realign the pendulum into cycles of learning and renewal.

Perhaps intimacy can be found in in-dwelling, eloquence in the unique poetry which arises from equitable dialogue, and recurrence from the validated perceptions of meaning as expressed in our actions. Truth however, can only ever be our singular courage which commits each of us to name our ground with our own voice.

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People

Susan Goff

Susan Goff is the author of the lead article *A social ecology of participatory action research* in this issue of the ALAR Journal. This article is drawn from her recent text on facilitating action research titled *Restraint of Love* which is soon to be released by Southern Cross University Press. Details of this book and a review by Jacques Boulet are included in the Bookshelf section of this issue. Susan's work has also been published in several professional journals.

Susan is director and principle researcher of CultureShift, a small private action research company which specialises in participatory action research. The company is based in Sydney. Susan has a Batchelor of Arts (1976, WAIT, now Curtin University), a Graduate Diploma in Social Ecology (University of Western Sydney - Hawkesbury [UWS-H]), is presently completing a second year Masters in Applied Science (Social Ecology, UWS-H). She is also a trained and experienced mediator (Noarlunga Community Services Certificate). She is a member of Action Learning Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM), the Australasian Evaluation Society, the Centre for Peace Studies (Sydney University) and the Conflict Resolution Network. Susan's work in crime prevention was awarded the Prime Minister's Non-Violence Award in South Australian sector, 1994.

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The bookshelf

Whose Reality Counts?
- Robert Chambers

In this sequel to *Rural Development: Putting the last first* Robert Chambers argues that central issues in development have been overlooked, and that many past errors have flowed from domination by those with power. Development professionals now need new approaches and methods for interacting, learning and knowing.

Through analysing experience - of past mistakes and myths, and of the continuing methodological revolution of PRA (participatory rural appraisal) - the author points towards solutions. In many countries, urban and rural people alike have shown an astonishing ability to express and analyse their local, complex and diverse realities which are often at odds with the top-down realities imposed by professionals.

Whose Reality Counts? presents a radical challenge to all concerned with development, whether practitioners, researchers or policy-makers, in all organisations and disciplines, and at all levels from fieldworkers to the heads of agencies. With its thrust of *putting the first last* it presents a new, exciting and, above all, practical agenda for future development which cannot be ignored.

Table of Contents

1 The Challenge to Change

2 Normal Error

3 Professional Realities

4 The Transfer of Reality

5 All Power Deceives

6 Learning to Learn

7 What Works and Why

8 Poor People's Realities: Local, Complex, Diverse, Dynamic and Unpredictable

9 The New High Ground

10 Putting the First Last

Postscript: Past and Future

The book is available through:

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ALARPM's vision is that action learning and action research will be widely used and publicly shared by individuals and groups creating local and global change for the achievement of a more equitable, just, joyful, productive and sustainable society.

Restraint of Love: Participatory Action Research into Family Violence

- Susan Goff and Associates

The Workplace Research, Learning and Development Institute (WoRLD) at Southern Cross University proudly presents its inaugural volume in the research series on Workplace and Community Development. The aim of this series is to publish high quality case studies which focus on community or organisation development and which use action research as a philosophy, a methodology, a theory of learning and a strategy for problem solving.

It is envisaged that this series will include qualitative studies into organisational innovation, development or change in:

- primary industry (agriculture, fishing, mining),
- secondary industry (manufacturing),
- tertiary industry (education and training),
- quinary industry (tourism and service industries), and
- quaternary industry (information technology).

These examples may apply to regional, national or international companies, public and private sector organisations (councils, hospitals, government departments), and local communities. The latter could include research into family violence, youth unemployment, rural women's issues, Aboriginal concerns, etc.

Restraint of Love is the first volume in this series, devoted to the issues of family violence and youth at risk. Susan Goff and her associates present the results of a large project entitled *The Young People and Family Violence Participatory Action Research Project 1992-1995*, funded by the Crime Prevention Unit of the South Australian Attorney General's

Department and supported by the Australian Youth Foundation Incorporated.

This book is a significant contribution to community development, because it:

- links 'family violence' and 'youth at risk';
- provides a case study of the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in this context;
- includes the 'voices' of both 'survivors' and social workers; and
- provides an integrated handbook for PAR interventions.

As far as we know, this is the first book of its kind. It will be of particular interest to any action researcher, victim of family violence, social worker, primary health worker, doctor, teacher, mediator, counsellor or voluntary worker in church or social organisations. Indeed, we cannot envisage anyone who would not be effected in some way or another by the stories, themes, strategies and principles presented in this book. We all have to learn - whether as victims or fellow human beings - how to overcome or help others overcome the hurt, anger and psychological damage caused by family violence.

Table of Contents

Foreword	Dr David Russell University of Western Sydney
Introduction	Susan Goff
Chapter 1	The Authority of Experience: Liz's Story, interview with a survivor
Chapter 2	A Shape to Hold: a science of change described by Susan Goff
Chapter 3	Freeing Myself: a survivor's evidence of change by "Joy"

Chapter 4	Rosebud: a service provider's evidence of change by Margaret Nippert
Chapter 5	Stepping Stones: a guide to applying a science of change by Susan Goff and Giovanna Iuliano
Chapter 6	The Courage to Change The Things I Can: a facilitator's journey towards a science of social change by Giovanna Iuliano
Chapter 7	Surviving a New Research Method: the funding organisation's perspective by Jane Fisher
Chapter 8	Power, Control and Abuse in a Hostile Environment: constraints to initiating change by Geoff Fry
Chapter 9	Revisited - New Horizons: the opportunities to initiate change by Trina Capurso
Chapter 10	With My face Up to the Glass: a facilitator's application by Susan Goff
Chapter 11	The Space Between: analysis of a facilitator's role by Susan Goff
Chapter 12	Through My Black Eyes: an experience of race and change by April Lawrie Smith
Chapter 13	Searching for Equity Through Friendship: an experience of race and change by Stephanie Jarrett
Chapter 14	Be Still and Listen, the Canary Is Singing: an experience of compassion and change by Di Fischer
Chapter 15	The Realm of Opportunity: participant evaluation of the project, edited by Susan Goff

Chapter 16	Snakeview: critical subjectivity by Susan Goff
Illustration	Critical subjectivity, designed by Jennifer Shanley

Appendices

1. The value of constructivism

Principles for Participatory Action Research: Robin McTaggart, Deakin University, Australia

Restraint of Love will be published this year by Southern Cross University Press. Contact details are as follows:

Southern Cross University Press
PO Box 157, Lismore NSW 2480, Australia
Phone: 61-66-203 824

"My learning came from knowing that others were concerned and thinking about family violence. To pass this message onto others may be all they need to know. All it takes is a bit of thought and 'talking our thoughts' to give a better understanding. To learn life within the stress of violence is a very, very hard thing. I have learned to understand what I take to be the real meaning of life by taking all life - for good and bad.

It's not too late, especially if we all make it our business to know better" (James Pomeroy, 1995).

Book review
- by Jacques Boulet

Restraint of Love by Susan Goff and participants in the Young People Family Violence Action Group

This is an important book and I would like to congratulate all those who had their hand(s), heart(s) and mind(s) in realising it. It is rare to encounter a work which covers so many aspects of human experience, practice and understanding and integrates them almost seamlessly into a powerful statement about human suffering, human survival and about ways of getting from the former to the latter.

More specifically, (and as skilfully outlined in Ch. 2), the integration of oral history / reminiscing work, participatory enquiry, reflection about interventions, theoretical and personal understanding, and therapy / healing (in the best of all possible meanings, ie. "becoming whole") is quite unique and makes it rather difficult to "locate" the work in any one tradition or area of (social/psychological) investigation. In that sense, Restraint of Love is transdisciplinary and points the way towards a more meaningful and productive conversation between research and people's everyday lives and experiences as well as between researchers, research and workers, in the latter instance so much so that the traditional boundaries seem irrelevant, counter productive and, indeed, "academic".

I'm also particularly struck by the work as a terrific example of productive transgressions in the "personal is political" borderland; productive, because all the parties involved could and can use the improved understanding gained for "changed actions in their respective worlds" as well as between those worlds. If "empowerment" still is to have a meaning after the inflationary overuse it has been exposed

to, this would be "it", I think. Especially the addition of the reflections of a member of the funding agency, illustrating the difficulties as well as the possibilities of the PAR intervention within established and bureaucratic organisations, is useful.

I have especially appreciated the implicit and explicit trialogue between workers, researchers and survivors; the need to insert reflection deep into the "folds" of practitioners' everyday work experiences certainly does not need any more arguing (or so one would hope) and *Restraint of Love*, using participatory enquiry, does provide a practical as well as epistemologically and methodologically well grounded approach which could be easily adapted to other realms and areas of social intervention. In that regard, the methodological reflections (and "prescriptions") in some of the chapters as well as in the reflective notes after each "experiential" account are quite exemplary and are a major feature of the work, powerfully illustrating the dialogue / dialectical unity between "method" and "substance".

Finally, the ultimate reflective chapters (15 and 16) provide, each in their own ways, a sort of "hermeneutical" closure, in that they sum up the "emic" learning inside the project (Ch.15) and provide a social ecologically grounded ontological/epistemological foundation, allowing the account of the process in the previous chapters to be "translated" into many other realms of application. It is difficult and dense stuff, and, given the restriction of space, needing and deserving close reading and, like a really good red wine, slow assimilation on the intellectual palate.

A book, which deserves to be widely read, savoured and tried out.

Projects

In "projects", we provide reports of work-in-progress or information about completed projects. There are many ways to use action learning and action research and many different disciplines and locations in which a project can be pursued. We are inviting people to provide reports so that we can all become aware of the wide variety of options available to us.

Tikiri - An adult learning experience
- Hobart Institute of TAFE

The *Tikiri* project team have created a training and management development tool which illustrates best practice within the context of vocational education and training. By focusing on a particular Child Care Studies project at the Hobart Institute of TAFE, as an example, *Tikiri* demonstrates the action learning method in process.

The project was based on the implementation of adult learning principles. By monitoring a group of adult students as they progressed from a given problem to its resolution, it was possible to identify certain adult learning principles at the crux of the project, an analysis of which gave rise to *Tikiri - An action learning experience*. The *Tikiri* project evolved from theoretical problem solving to action based learning.

The package includes a video, book and worksheets, to guide users through the action learning process.

The video follows a group of Child Care students through the various stages of an action learning project. It is self explanatory with students and teachers telling their own stories.

The accompanying book analyses the process and highlights the various stages experienced by students and teachers. Aspects of adult learning principles are discussed in more detail as they are implemented in the *Tikiri* project.

The worksheets can be used as a practical teaching, training or management development tool to guide learners through the action learning process. The worksheets are accompanied by a Microsoft PowerPoint 7 program, providing visually stimulating overheads to promote discussion of relevant issues.

For further information contact:

The Flexible Learning Centre
Hobart Institute of TAFE
PO Box 949
Rosny Park Tas 7018
Australia

Phone: 61-3-6233 7397
Fax: 61-3-6233 7997
Email: flc_hit@dvet.tas.gov.au

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Noticeboard

In "Noticeboard" we bring you information about impending activities or resources, such as conferences, courses and journals. We welcome member contributions to "Noticeboard".

Learning - The Treasure Within
UNESCO International Conference
30 March to 3 April 1998

Education for the 21st Century
in the Asia-Pacific Region

UNESCO International Conference
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Albert Park Lake
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For more information contact:

Bob Finlay
Lecturer
Faculty of Education
Australian Catholic University
29 Lamorna Avenue
Beecroft NSW 2119 Australia

Fax: 61-2-9873 5916
Email: bfinlay@ozemail.com.au

Guidelines for contributors

Contributions to this journal

Through the ALAR Journal, we aim to promote the study and practice of action learning and action research and to develop personal networking on a global basis.

We welcome contributions in the form of:

- articles (up to 10 A4 pages, double spaced)
- letters to the editor
- profiles of people (including yourself) engaged in action research or action learning
- project descriptions, including work in progress (maximum 1000 words)
- information about a local action research/action learning network
- items of interest (including conferences, seminars and new publications)
- book reviews
- report on a study or research trip
- comments on previous contributions

You are invited to base your writing style and approach on the material in this copy of the journal, and to keep all contributions brief. The journal is not a refereed publication, though submissions are subject to editorial review.

Contributed case study monographs

Contributions are welcomed to the Action Research Case Study (ARCS) monograph series. The case studies in this refereed series contribute to a theoretical and practical understanding of action research and action learning in applied settings. Typical length is in the range 8,000 to 12,000 words: about 40 typed A4 pages, double spaced.

Types of case studies include (but are not limited to):

- completed cases, successful and unsuccessful
- partial successes and failures
- work in progress
- within a single monograph, multiple case studies which illustrate important issues
- problematic issues in current cases

We are keen to develop a review and refereeing process which maintains quality. At the same time we wish to avoid the adversarial relationship that often occurs between intending contributors and referees. Our plan is for a series where contributors, editors, and referees enter into a collaborative process of mutual education.

We strongly encourage dual or multiple authorship. This may involve a combination of experienced and inexperienced practitioners, theoreticians, clients, and authors from different sectors or disciplines. Joint authors who disagree about some theoretical or practical point are urged to disclose their differences in their report. We would be pleased to see informed debate within a report.

You may have interesting case material but may be uncertain of its theoretical underpinnings. If so, approach us. We may

offer joint authorship with an experienced collaborator to assist with the reflective phase of the report.

Another option is to submit a project report initially for the ALAR Journal (1000 words) with a view to developing the report into a full case study.

Detailed guidelines for case studies are available from the editor, ALAR Journal. The first case study in the series, by Vikki Uhlmann, is about the use of action research to develop a community consultation protocol.

The cost of *Consulting on a consultation protocol* is listed in the following Catalogue order form.

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