WOMEN'S CONCEPTIONS OF POWER

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
Department of Counselling Psychology

We accept this Thesis as conforming to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
April, 1991

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Date April 29, 1991
ABSTRACT

This thesis describes women's conceptions of power in the context of an all-woman work group. Research on the psychology of power, which began in the 1950's, has been dominated by particular focii, perspectives and techniques which may have resulted in somewhat narrow definitions of power which tap only factors traditionally seen as "masculine." In reframing these focii, perspectives and techniques, this research focuses on women's understandings; was conducted from a naturalistic perspective, using qualitative techniques; and approached the investigation of power from a position of "not knowing" rather than relying on a priori theory.

The naturalistic perspective used in this study is phenomenography, a relatively new research approach developed in Sweden by a group of educational researchers at the University of Goteborg. Phenomenography describes individuals' conceptions in the form of categories of description which represent people's ways of understanding or conceptualizing phenomena--in this case, power. The findings of this study--the conceptions of power--came out of in-depth open-ended interviews with eight women who comprised the membership of the 1988-89 "gender-fair" counsellors' training team at UBC. These interviews were conducted in the hermeneutic tradition of mutually-constructed meaning, audio taped, transcribed, and analyzed to yield six qualitatively different conceptions of power which appear consistent with feminist theory on women's developmental
perspectives and views of power. The conceptions, in the form of categories of meaning, are organized into an outcome space in which understandings of power move from: (a) an inner focus on self to an outer focus on the other; (b) a view of the process as "being", to acting, to interacting; and (c) a private context to a public context. The six conceptions of power are:

1. personal integrity
1a. entitlement
2. expressing personal integrity/congruence
3. self-determination
4. agency/competence
5. respected standing
6. influence

The implications of these findings for counselling and suggestions for further research are discussed.
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I would like, first, to thank the women who participated in this study—whose open and honest sharing of experiences and thoughts are the bedrock of this research.

Secondly, I wish to acknowledge my committee members, with real appreciation, for their role in my work. Special thanks to my supervisor, Larry Cochran, for your support and encouragement to work out of my inner passion and personal interests and to find a methodology that fit with my convictions. And to Dan Pratt, for your sharing of knowledge and interest—but, beyond that, for your innate understanding and acting out of power in a context of care and connectedness.

Sometimes, I felt that I would never reach this stage of completing my research and look back to acknowledge and thank those who, in some important way, became a part of this endeavour. At those moments, feeling exhausted and discouraged, and still seeing a long uphill climb ahead, the thought of the caring, love and support which I received from important people in my life was an energizer which kept me moving towards completion of this task. Special thanks to Gillian Stronach for your patient inter-judge work which was important in establishing the reliability of this research, and for your caring support and friendship. And to Elizabeth Carriere, my friend, for your work as an independent judge, and for the hours of peer debriefing work and the inspiration of your insights, your curiosity, your enthusiasm and interest in my work throughout. Love and
gratitude to Dana, my life-partner, for your consistent, loving encouragement and support throughout this ordeal. If academic degrees could be shared, surely part of this one would be yours. And to my children: Kevin, Campbell and Kira for whom I've always wished to be the "best that I can be," and whose love moves me in that direction. To Joyce Frazee, who recognizes the connection between theses and feces and whose loving power mothers and empowers me. Thanks to my sister, Laurie, my nephews, Dharma and John, and my very special friends who have also contributed in ways too numerous to mention--emotionally, spiritually, and practically--to the empowering context within which I have worked: Ellen, Gerrie, Marilyn, Ginny, Gail, Dixie and Val.
I. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is on answering the question of how women understand and experience power. This chapter introduces the research question and the particular approaches utilized in this study. The specific question which is addressed is:

What are the conceptions of power held by women participating in an all-woman work group?

This question emerges out of a consideration of a growing body of literature which suggests that women approach power from a unique developmental perspective which includes an emphasis on valuing interpersonal connectedness in a context of empathy and caring (Baker Miller, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Lips, 1991). Feminist theorists are suggesting, in a small but growing body of literature, that in dichotomizing our definitions of social phenomena to include only traditionally "masculine" perspectives, we do all of us--women and men, alike--a grave disfavour. In rethinking our social definitions, at a time when women are moving more and more into claiming economic and political power, and mankind is moving closer and closer to destroying the planet, and perhaps the universe, it seems important to begin to balance our understandings, which have traditionally come out of the examination of men's experience and development, with a delineation of women's experience and understanding. With this balance we hopefully move toward more complete and human possibilities, for women and for men.
A review of the psychology of power literature reveals that, until recently, research approaches were dominated by traditional focii, perspectives and techniques. In reframing these approaches, this study reconsiders the psychological meaning of power.

Since the 1950's, when empirical studies on power were initiated, the focus has been on power as influence and control over others (McClelland, 1975; Winter, 1973). This concentration on power as control over others proceeds from a priori theory, and in approaching power from, as much as possible, a position of "not knowing" and allowing conceptions of power to emerge from the data, this research moves from a focus on traditional definitions of power to an openness to other, largely ignored aspects of this phenomenon. The second dominant research focus which this study reframes is an emphasis on the choice of men as research subjects or respondents. In switching the balance of attention from men's perspectives, to include women's, this research, rather than assuming a homogenous "women's" experience, explores the variation of understanding and experience expressed by the respondents. The third reframed focus here is traditional psychology's interest in behavioural characteristics of the individual. Instead, the focus, in this study, becomes the individual's perspective on, or experience of, the world. The rationale for this lies in the fact that we act in accordance with our beliefs and conceptions about the world. Thus, in better understanding women's conceptions of power, we move into a stronger position from which to understand the ways which women
approach and deal with power in their lives.

In reframing the research perspective, this study moves away from a traditional rationalistic perspective to a naturalistic perspective which emphasizes the social construction of reality by the individual. In recognizing the importance of the individual, and the importance of the context within which individuals live their realities, the naturalistic perspective seems a better "fit" to a field like counselling psychology than does the rationalistic perspective, which grew out of a consideration of the physical and biological sciences.

Finally, a qualitative research technique was adopted here, rather than a quantitative technique. Traditional quantitative studies of power have focused on individuals' need for power which was experimentally aroused in controlled laboratory settings. As Ng (1980), pointed out, this "artificial" approach to the complex phenomenon of power must, necessarily, fail to arouse the full range of experience which individuals may associate with power. In moving to qualitative techniques, this study pays close attention to context, utilizes the researcher as data collector rather than relying on "objective" instrumentation, and describes research results descriptively, rather than statistically. These techniques are consistent with the naturalistic perspective which this study adopts and make the best "fit" to its interest in women's conceptions.

Chapter II frames the research question by expanding this discussion of research focus, perspective and technique. The emphasis here rests on the assumption that choices concerning
focus, perspective and technique affect every aspect of the research, including the questions it is possible to ask.

Chapter III discusses the underlying concepts and methodology which informed the construction and implementation of the study. It describes, in detail, the empirical research approach of phenomenography which was developed to reveal the qualitatively different ways in which people experience and conceptualize various phenomena (Beaty, Dall'Alba & Marton, in press). It discusses data collection in the frame of the "hermeneutic encounter," situated within a commitment to "humane values" (Mishler, 1985) and, in particular, to my personal value of working with women in a way that validates their personal experience. Finally, this chapter discusses the analysis of the research data.

Chapter IV presents the research findings as six qualitatively different conceptions of power. It discusses these findings as outcome space—an ordering of the conceptions which emphasizes their interconnectedness.

Chapter V discusses the implications of the research findings. It begins with a brief review of the relevant literature on the psychology of power and the psychology of women and power. The research results are related to the literature and implications are drawn for counselling and for further investigations.
II. FRAMING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the particular research focus, perspective and technique of this study and to contrast the approach taken here with the traditional or dominant approach. The importance of giving special consideration to the focus, perspective and techniques of research lies in the impact that choices around these issues have, not only on the research design and implementation, but also on the type of questions asked and, of course, on the answers to these questions—and even on the way these are ultimately interpreted and used (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Wallston & Grady, 1985).

A. The Research Focus

A review of the power literature in psychology reveals certain focii which have dominated research into power. These focii not only centre the power research and theorizing in particular directions but, in so doing, reveal certain biases, including androcentric assumptions around power issues. This section of my study examines each of these focii and discusses, in each case, the present study's reframed focus.

One way of examining focii in traditional research is to consider the aspect(s) of power focused on. Since psychologists began doing empirical studies on power, in the 1950's, the most popular research topics have focused on power as influence and control over others. Research on this aspect of power
represents, by far, the greatest portion of the psychological literature in this area. Much of this research has been done on power motivation or need for power—with power, in these studies, defined as "the capacity of producing (consciously or unconsciously) intended effects on people's behaviour or emotion" (Winter, 1973, p. 5); or, "having impact" (McClelland, 1975, p. 7). Thus in measuring the degree of an individual's need for power in these investigations, power motivation was scored if someone was concerned about or took some kind of action about "establishing, maintaining, or restoring...power—that is, his impact, control or influence over another person, group of persons or the world at large" (Winter, 1973, p. 250). One effect of this dominant research focus on "power over" is that other, perhaps equally important, aspects of power have been largely ignored. McClelland (1975) speaks to this when he notes that this research cannot be presumed to represent all the key dimensions of the power experience. Feminist critiques of this dominant focus in psychological power research point out that a priori theory from which this research proceeds is focused on dimensions which are particularly interesting to men and which, for the most part, ignore women's interests or needs. Thus it is possible that the definitions of power used in most psychological investigations are too narrow and tap only factors traditionally considered of male orientation. Some theorists have suggested that men and women not only conceive of power differently, but also express their need for power differently (Gilligan, 1982; McClelland, 1975; Miller, 1986;). Gullahorn (1979) alludes to
this dominant psychological research focus on power as influence/control, when she states, "But there are other aspects of power...that need further attention in the psychology of women" (p. 138). In foregoing preconceived conceptions of power, this study moves from a focus on particular aspects of power to an openness to those "other aspects."

An important aspect of research design is involved in the choice of subjects or respondents. Certainly samples for power research have tended to be composed mainly of men; this is the second dominant research focus which this study reframes. Macauley (1985), in discussing male centrism in aggression research, points out that the number of male subjects in all areas of psychological research far outranked the number of female subjects, at least up until the mid-1970s. In power research several consequences emerge from this preoccupation with men as research subjects. First, this concentration on men as the subjects of study and the focus of our attention limits our understanding of women and power. As Jesse Bernard (1981) points out, our study of society becomes a male study of male society. A second, related consequence of this focus is that conclusions drawn from data originating from the study of men "have tended to regard male behavior as the 'norm' and female behavior as some kind of deviation from the norm" (McClelland, 1975, p. 81). Thus, McClelland contends that women are seen as the opposite of men and often described in ways that are negative or demeaning. Another, less frequently considered result of this focus on men and power is that differences and similarities between men's
experience of power and women's experience of power (or power-related behaviour) have been emphasized, whereas differences and similarities within each group have been deemphasized. Thus, in heeding the frequent calls in power literature to redress the balance of attention from male perspectives to include women's experience (Baker Miller, 1986; Eichler, 1988; Gilligan, 1982; Gullahorn, 1979; Lips, 1981; McClelland, 1975), this study does not simply readjust the focus to women but seeks to explore the variation of experience/conceptualization of power within a group of women, rather than to assume that there is a homogeneous "women's experience" of this phenomenon.

The third focus which this research seeks to reframe is traditional power psychology's preoccupation with the actor. Investigations of power have focused attention on the individual in an attempt to, for example, discover behavioural characteristics which correlate with high/low n Power, or in an attempt to measure the intensity of power motivation. An alternative focus is the one this study embraces--namely, a focus on the individual's conception or experience of the world. This is consistent with phenomenography's second-order research perspective which is discussed, in detail, in Chapter III.

In summary, this study: (a) refocuses the traditional concentration on power as control or influence by allowing conceptions of power to emerge from the data, rather than taking established definitions as the point of departure; (b) refocuses the dominant research's concentration on men, and their behaviour and experiences, to a consideration of women's experience; and
(c) refocuses psychology's traditional interest in the individual actors and their behaviour or personal characteristics to an interest in the actors' ideas about the world, or their experiences of it. "The rationale for this can be found in the idea that actors' conceptions of their world are a basis for the understanding of them and their acts" (Larsson, 1983, p. 356). In adopting these alternative focii in its examination of the variation of conceptions of power held by women within a particular all-women group, this study seeks to explore differences and similarities within that group.

B. The Research Perspective

A discussion of research perspective deals with the epistemological foundations of the research approach and describes paradigms for inquiry, not methods. Although there is some difference in the way that researchers frame perspective, there appears to be agreement that it is possible to identify underlying belief systems or assumptions which support relatively distinct perspectives. Guba (1981) discusses two categories of research perspective; he calls these naturalistic inquiry and rationalistic inquiry.

The traditional or dominant perspective, rationalistic inquiry, is still applied to most social science research, including psychological research. It grew out of the biological and physical sciences in which the observation of phenomena plays an important part. One of the key assumptions underlying this
perspective is that "truth statements" or "facts" can be seen and studied; not only are these independent of each other, but they are also seen as existing independently from the context in which they occur (Firestone, 1987; Guba, 1981). The object of rationalistic research thus becomes the search for enduring, context-free truth statements which can be generalized from the sample tested to a wider population which that sample statistically represents. This approach focuses on developing nomothetic knowledge (knowledge related to or dealing with the abstract, the universal, or the general) and, in so doing, concentrates on the similarities between objects of inquiry. These assumptions around the nature of reality and the nature of truth statements, combined with the idea of a disinterested or objective science, lend themselves to the notion that the researcher can be independent or detached—neither influenced by nor influencing the object of inquiry.

These then are the major concepts around which the rationalistic paradigm of research is organized. This mode of inquiry has dominated psychological research from the nineteenth century, when psychology established its position as a separate discipline, until today. Since about the 1960's, however, there has been a questioning of the tenets of the rationalistic approach to research (Giorgi, 1975; Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The perspective which this study adopts is the naturalistic view of research. This is not because the naturalistic perspective is necessarily a more "correct" paradigm of research
than the rationalistic. Guba (1981) and Marton (1988) both point out that there is no reason to choose one of these perspectives over the other in each and every research endeavor; rather, it makes sense to examine the assumptions underlying each and review these in the context of the particular research inquiry. "Just as it is proper to select that analytic statistic whose assumptions are best met by a set of data, so it is proper to select that paradigm whose assumptions are best met by the phenomenon being investigated" (Guba, 1981, p. 76). In what follows, I will briefly examine the assumptions underlying the naturalistic mode and discuss these in the context of their "fit" with this research investigation of women's conceptions of power.

As already noted, the rationalistic perspective assumes a single reality upon which research efforts can focus. The naturalistic paradigm, on the other hand, assumes multiple interrelated realities. Closely connected to this, rather than assuming the generalizability of context-free truth statements, the naturalistic perspective embraces the development of idiographic (as opposed to nomothetic) knowledge which focuses on "differences...as frequently and with as much interest as on similarities" (Guba, 1981, p.77). Guba also notes that although most research develops from what he calls the "nomothetic posture" applications are often inappropriately made in idiographic settings. He sees an incongruity in applying rationalistic inquiry to fields like counselling psychology, for example, which, of course, deals with application in individual cases. Application here would be better done from a naturalistic
perspective which acknowledges the individualistic nature of truth and the importance of recognizing the contexts within which individuals experience their realities.

The shift which has recently kindled interest in the naturalistic perspective seems particularly relevant in the study of social phenomena, such as power. Such phenomena, unlike physical objects in the world, cannot be "touched" or "pointed to" per se, but exist mainly in the minds of individuals, and thus there could, theoretically, exist as many "realities" as individuals. In acknowledging the idea that people's behaviour is greatly influenced by the way they experience and interpret their realities, and in moving away from the rationalistic idea of one confirmable reality, the researcher's aim becomes the discovery of the ways that individuals create and maintain their worlds/realities, along with some understanding of these. Further, researchers who might be capable of remaining neutral in the face of physical or chemical phenomena--although as Guba, (1981) points out, even that is debatable--cannot do that when the investigation is centred on people, as it is in this study. The naturalistic perspective accepts the reality that the relationship between the inquirer and the respondent is not one of independence but, rather, of mutual influence. Finally, naturalistic inquiry accepts the proposition that human behaviour is related to context--another reason for seeing difference as being at least as important as similarities.

Thus, because this study deals with people's conceptions of a social phenomenon it appears obvious that a naturalistic
paradigm which (a) holds that reality is socially constructed by the individual and cannot be reduced to enduring "truth statements," (b) acknowledges the interrelatedness of inquirer and respondent, and (c) seeks to understand the phenomenon from the respondent's perspective, makes the best fit here. In arguing that naturalistic inquiry best fits the research conditions described here, and would not necessarily be the correct perspective in every research instance, it is important to honestly acknowledge that naturalistic inquiry best fits my own values, biases and assumptions. Scientific notions of prediction and control are much less relevant, to me, than naturalistic approaches to understanding and meaning. In choosing to work with people (in this case, women), from a personal/political feminist perspective, I am, necessarily, more interested in "how social order is produced by revealing the network of meanings out of which this order is constituted and reconstituted by its members" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 85), than with any view of human behaviour as determined by impersonal, objective laws, operating beyond our control. As noted above, rationalistic and naturalistic paradigms are rooted in different conceptions of the world, of reality and of the uses and aims of research. Many critics of the rationalistic perspective have pointed out that although it strives for value-free, objective knowledge, it is, itself, necessarily rooted in particular attitudes, beliefs and values which it, in turn, sustains (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Kuhn, 1970; Millman & Kanter, 1987; Sherif, 1987).

The naturalistic paradigm is, of course, not without
critics. Those still firmly esconced in the traditional, rationalistic camp put forward objections based on that perspective—mainly around issues such as validity, reliability and objectivity. Since these are methodological issues, I will discuss them in the next section.

C. The Research Technique

So far, we have reframed research in terms of both focus and perspective. Guba (1981) points out that practitioners of the rationalistic and naturalistic paradigms, or perspectives, tend to take characteristically different approaches to the question of "the proper way to do research" (p. 79). He sees the predisposition of rationalistic practitioners to prefer quantitative methods and naturalistic practitioners to work with qualitative methods as so entrenched that "the conflict between the two paradigms had frequently been mistaken for a conflict between quantitative and qualitative methods, a mistake in logic that has led to the generation of a great deal more heat then light" (p. 78). Guba sees this, in some cases, as an unnecessary orthodoxy. That may well be true, but the reality seems to be that tradition and the connection between epistemological underpinnings and technique interwine quantitative techniques with the rationalistic perspective and qualitative techniques with the naturalistic perspective. In other words, it is difficult to separate methodology or technique from perspective, since the epistemological foundations of a study are generally
congruent with its practice. In the discussion that follows, the terms quantitative and qualitative are used to denote research techniques, not perspectives, goals, or underlying philosophies.

Quantitative research technique is characterized by the use of formal instruments to collect information about the phenomenon under study. This use of instruments distances the researcher from direct contact with the "object" of investigation and is focused on an attempt to avoid bias and a belief that bias can, indeed, be avoided this way. Another characteristic of quantitative technique is its use of numbers to provide information about the phenomenon under investigation. Quantitative researchers focus on a single, objective reality, and separate that reality into independently manipulated parts, or variables, which are then singled out for investigation in the belief that they do not necessarily influence the other parts. Quantitative methodologists also prefer beginning with hypotheses, generally in the form of law-like statements founded on a priori theory, which are then assessed through experimentation and observation. Thus, in striving for a mode of inquiry which is characterized by objectivity and rigor, quantitative technique embraces the processes of manipulation, control and quantification.

The majority of psychological studies, including research on power, have used quantitative techniques. Investigations of power have been largely experimental, rather narrowly focused on measurable bits of behaviour emitted by subjects who are tested in a "controlled" laboratory situation. As noted above, the
major work in terms of investigating power, which really began only in the mid-fifties, has been done with a focus on individuals' need for power (power motivation) or n Power (McClelland, 1975; Winter, 1973). In most cases, in this research, subjects were not told what the research was about. In keeping with traditional quantitative methodology, definitions of power, in these studies, originated with the researcher (although these definitions were subsequently modified through the findings). "The existence of the power motive is assumed and taken as the point of departure. The initial question of relevance to them becomes one concerning the experimental arousal and measurement of the power motive" (Ng, 1980, p.135). Marton and Svensson (1979) added that "there is always an implicit assumption that it is known what the quality is and it is necessary only to ascertain how much of it can be found" (p. 476). In n Power research, attempts to arouse the power motive were made through different means such as: hypnosis demonstrations; videoed speeches of John F. Kennedy; and assigning subjects to the role of psychological experimenter. Although these methods show some creativity in terms of determining what McClelland (1975) sees as a necessarily "common-sense" approach on the part of investigators to finding conditions which should arouse the power motive, the experimental techniques employed here cannot be seen as entirely satisfactory since any one method chosen must, obviously, fall far short of arousing the "full range of experience associated with power" (Ng, 1980, p. 136). Once aroused, the power motive was most often
measured through semi-projective tests and questionnaires and, since correlational studies were the norm here, factor analysis was most commonly used on the data. In noting the limitations involved here, McClelland (1975) says:

The factor analytic procedure itself gives cause for uneasiness. A notoriously imprecise tool, it yields different results depending upon which tags are included, how many factors are extracted, and what criteria are used for extraction and rotation. Finally, even after one has discovered which variables load high on a factor, there is a further lack of precision in the way they can be interpreted. (p. 28)

Thus, although these studies have undoubtedly made a significant contribution to the understanding of power, they are not, as discussed above, without their problems. As Millman and Kanter (1987) point out, "methodological assumptions and techniques may limit the researcher's vision and produce questionable findings" (p. 35).

In line with the naturalistic perspective chosen, this research reframes the dominant quantitative research technique to qualitative methods. Qualitative researchers, rather than seeking objectivity through a "layer of instrumentation" between themselves and the subject of study, use themselves as the data collection instruments and, in so doing, move to more interactive modes of data collection. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that this change from non-human to human data collection instruments introduces important elements of sensitivity, responsiveness and flexibility into the procedure. A skilled interviewer is capable of processing and assessing information, to some extent, as it is received, and thus has the opportunity to ask for clarification,
elaboration or concrete examples, as well as to check understanding/misunderstanding of the respondent's meaning. In using themselves as the main research instruments, qualitative investigators cannot claim the distance and objectivity which quantitative researchers strive for; instead, they acknowledge the mutual influence between researcher and respondent and seek, in that, greater flexibility and the opportunity to build upon tacit as well as propositional knowledge (Guba, 1981). Descriptive expression of data is another distinguishing characteristic of qualitative research; this contrasts with the numerical/statistical expressions of quantitative research. In moving away from statistical representations of data, qualitative techniques move from results which emphasize similarities to results which acknowledge variability as being equally significant. Finally, in an attempt to circumvent the problems inherent in firmly fixing the research in a priori theory, and in recognizing that "if we move too quickly toward manipulating one or two experimental variables we run the risk of ignoring the most important variables because we have not sufficiently described the phenomenon of interest" (Wallston & Grady, 1985, p. 11), qualitative methods focus on theory emerging from the data. This is sometimes referred to as "grounding" theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Many of the criticisms of the qualitative approach to research centre on the issues of validity, reliability and objectivity, concepts which actually arise out of the rationalistic perspective. Validity, in this paradigm, is
generally seen as accurate interpretability, or "truth" of the research results (internal validity) and the generalizability of these results (external validity). The reliability of research is focused on the degree to which findings may be replicated; it is traditionally concerned with design and with the consistency of methods, conditions and findings of research. Reliability is a necessary characteristic of validity; a study cannot be valid and lack reliability. Wiersma (1986) notes, "If a study is unreliable, we can hardly interpret the results with confidence or generalize them to other populations and conditions" (p. 7).

Finally, objectivity concerns itself with eliminating bias which might influence results; it strives for methods which "render the study beyond contamination by human foibles" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 293).

The naturalistic researcher, using qualitative methods, is often criticized on rationalistic grounds--particularly in the areas discussed above. Although some researchers argue that the notions of reliability, validity and objectivity are, themselves, problematic (Macauley, 1985; Mishler, 1986; O'Leary, Unger & Wallston, 1985; Sherif, 1987), Guba (1981) stresses the usefulness of addressing the issue of trustworthiness in research. Clearly, however, traditional conceptualizations of reliability, validity and objectivity, which have been shaped by a rationalistic perspective, cannot apply as they stand to this study which is guided by a naturalistic perspective and qualitative techniques.

Guba (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) address the issue of
trustworthiness in a way that seems useful, by reinterpreting reliability, validity and objectivity to fit the naturalistic perspective and qualitative technique and to reflect the underlying assumptions of that paradigm. In their reconceptualization, they suggest four major concerns relating to trustworthiness. The concerns are: (1) truth value—which is involved with establishing confidence in the truth of these research findings, for the respondents and in the context of the study; (2) applicability—which determines the degree to which findings of a particular study are generalizable to other contexts or other respondents; (3) consistency—which is concerned with determining how similar results would be if the research were replicated with similar (or the same) respondents; and (4) neutrality—which determines the impact of researcher bias on the research findings.

Within the rationalistic paradigm, using quantitative research techniques, truth value is demonstrated through internal validity, by demonstrating verisimilitude between the research data and the phenomena represented by those data. As Guba (1981) points out, this is not such an unreasonable expectation if we hold the belief that there exists a single reality as the object of our study. Since even rationalistic researchers do not claim absolute knowledge of the world, hypotheses can never be directly proven, but only disproven--by showing that a plausible, alternative hypothesis could also, conceivably, be true. Within the framework of naturalistic inquiry, which admits multiple realities existing in the minds of individuals, isomorphism is
demonstrated by checking findings and interpretations with the sources (individuals or groups) of data. Internal validity then is translated into credibility, which may be checked by carrying out the research so that the findings will be plausible and believable.

In this study, the following activities were useful in this regard. First, I had ample opportunity and used several methods to familiarize myself with the context and to build a trusting relationship with the respondents. This is detailed in Chapter III. Second, an external check on the credibility of the research findings, in the form of "peer debriefing" was employed to ensure that, as a researcher, I explored my own biases and assumptions underlying my interpretations. Third, all data for this study is fully recorded, transcribed and archived so that the possibility of testing findings and interpretations against raw data is not precluded. Finally, a modified version of the testing method which Guba (1981) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) called "member checks" has been employed. This involved testing the data (and my interpretations) with members of my data source group, both during the study and after its completion.

In the rationalistic paradigm, applicability is determined as external validity or generalizability—that is, the research must generate context-free truth statements that are enduring over time. Cronbach (1975), however, argued that all generalizations decay or break down over time like radioactive material. Naturalists assume that generalizability, of the type referred to by the rationalist paradigm, is not possible because
findings, particularly those which express the research respondent's experiences, are intimately and irrevocably linked to context. As O'Leary, Unger and Wallston (1985) state, "Generalizability may be possible only when we ignore historical and societal context" (p. 6). This, of course, does not preclude the possibility of some transferability between two situations or contexts which "may occur because of certain essential similarities between them" (Guba, 1981, p. 81). Thus, in this study, attention has been paid to relating findings to clearly and fully described context. In order to determine the probability of transferability I have attempted to develop what Geertz (1973) has called a "thick description" of the context. This involved such matters as careful observation, information-checking, and collecting information from those familiar with the context. The context of this study is described in the following chapter.

From the rationalistic perspective, reliability is concerned with the consistency aspect of trustworthiness; it focuses on attempting to ensure that instruments provide stable results. Only then can these results be seen as meaningful. As we know, only if an enquiry is reliable, can it be valid--or, reframed--only if it is dependable, can it be seen as credible. On one level then, demonstrating validity (or credibility) proves reliability (or dependability). Lincoln and Guba (1985) see this argument as somewhat weak, and Guba (1981), in discussing the issue of dependability in a naturalistic enquiry, guided by qualitative methodology, points out:
the concept of consistency implies not invariance (except by chance) but trackable variance-variance that can be ascribed to sources....The naturalist thus interprets consistency as dependability, a concept that embraces elements both of the stability implied by the rationalistic term reliable and of the trackability required by the explainable changes in instrumentation. (p. 81)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that an "audit trail" be established, so that it is possible to examine, in detail, both the process and the results of the study for dependability. To this end, I have documented, in the form of audio tapes, typed transcripts and process/method notes, the procedures whereby data were collected and analyzed in this study.

In their discussion of reliability in phenomenographic research, Renstrom, Andersson and Marton (1988) contend that since categories of description, the main results on phenomenographic research, are "discovered" by the investigator, it would be unreasonable to expect another researcher analyzing the same material to necessarily end up with identical results. Phenomenographers, however, do insist that once categories have been discovered, these should be communicable to others. Giorgi (1975) argues much this same point when he says:

The control comes from the researcher's context or perspective of the data. Once the context and intention becomes known, the divergence is usually intelligible to all even if not universally agreeable. Thus the chief point to be remembered with this type of research is not so much whether another position with respect to the data could be adopted (this point is granted beforehand), but whether a reader, adopting the same viewpoint as articulated by the researcher, can also see what the researcher saw, whether or not he agrees with it. That is the key criterion for qualitative research. (p. 96)

Thus, in this study, I also used inter-judge reliability testing to determine dependability. This process, and its results, are
discussed more fully in the Chapter III.

The final concern for research trustworthiness is neutrality; this is framed as objectivity from the rationalistic perspective and confirmability from the naturalistic perspective. Within a rationalistic perspective, objectivity is assumed to be guaranteed by methodology, but it is now obvious, even in the "pure" natural sciences, that the very choice of a methodology reflects investigator bias. Researchers working from a naturalistic paradigm accept the reality that, as instruments of data collection, their own predispositions have a role to play. Also, the naturalistic investigator is attempting not to uncover or confirm unchanging facts or some invariant truth, but rather to discover the meanings that individuals attach to their worlds and with which they create and sustain their worlds. Thus the focus in this study is on mutually-defined understanding; the data must be confirmable. In the interests of confirmability in this study, I discuss not only the research question and method, but also myself as investigator in terms of the interests and orientations I bring to this study. In doing this, I intentionally reveal myself and my underlying assumptions, which must necessarily affect my findings. Use of the audit trail in terms of a confirmability audit to verify the existence of data which supports my interpretations (as well as confirming that interpretations "fit" that data) has, of course, operated within the framework of defending this study as "thesis." Thus, the content and outcome of this work has been reviewed, not only through inter-judge reliability testing, but also by my thesis
committee.

In proposing the above criteria as checkpoints against which the trustworthiness of naturalistic inquiry can be judged, Guba (1981) points out that these cannot stand as absolute guarantees against untrustworthiness. Indeed, some level of uncertainty is expected by naturalists. Despite this, these criteria constitute the most valid standards, at this point, for judging naturalistic research. Guba (1981) contends that when a naturalistic study is evaluated:

It is inappropriate to apply the rationalistic criteria...under any circumstances. To suggest, for example, that a naturalistic study is unacceptable because controls were not instituted, subjects were not randomly selected, instrumental results were not replicated, or the investigator was not properly objective is simply unjustified. (p. 88)

Thus in reframing traditional quantitative research technique to qualitative technique, this study also approaches the issues of validity, reliability and objectivity from a reframed epistemological framework and assesses these issues from that basis. In paying particular attention to the importance of context, utilizing my own resources as a data collection instrument rather than relying on "objective" instrumentation, and describing research results descriptively rather than statistically, this study utilizes research techniques which complement its interest in women's conceptions.

D. The Research Question

The particular focus, perspective and techniques chosen for
a research project necessarily affect and inform every aspect of that investigation, including the questions it is possible to ask. This research, unlike traditional psychological investigations of power, comes out of an attitude of "not-knowing" rather than emerging from specified, preconceived hypotheses, or relying on a priori theory. The research question is thus much more general than traditional questions and does not imply cause-and-effect relationships. This study was designed to answer the following question:

What are the conceptions of power held by women participating in an all-woman work group?

As noted, this study was conducted from the naturalistic perspective and used qualitative techniques. Its purpose was to explore the variation in the respondents' conceptualization of the social phenomenon of power as they experienced it within their work group.

Chapter III discusses the research design through an examination of phenomenography, the particular naturalistic perspective utilized in this inquiry. Within this discussion, it defines the notion of conceptions as it is used in the research question—a notion integral to the conduct of phenomenographic research. It also delimits the particular context of the all-woman work group. The chapter continues with a description of data collection and analysis and concludes by reflecting on limitations of the study.
III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter is intended to provide an understanding of both the underlying concepts and the procedures that guided the design and implementation of this research study. Chapter II situated this work within a particular perspective (naturalistic) and a particular technique (qualitative). This chapter discusses phenomenography, the specific type of research carried out in this study, and describes the research technique (data collection and analysis).

A. Phenomenography

Inspired by the very old human science tradition of phenomenology, an empirical research approach aimed at discovering and organizing the ways in which people make sense of various aspects of their world has been developed in Sweden, by a group in the Department of Education, at the University of Gothenburg. This approach is called phenomenography, a term which first appeared in print in 1981, in a journal article by Ference Marton, a member of that group and sometimes called the "godfather" of phenomenography (Dahlgren, 1987).

As might be expected, phenomenography is related, in some ways to phenomenology and, indeed, Marton has called it, at times, "empirical phenomenology." It may be useful, then, to discuss the unique features of phenomenography in the context of similarities and differences between it and phenomenology. The
fundamental characteristic of phenomenography, and one which distinguishes it from phenomenology as a relatively distinct field of inquiry, is its second-order research perspective (Gibbs, 1982; Marton, 1981, 1988; Saljo, 1979, 1988). Simply put, a second-order perspective attempts to describe the world as seen through the eyes of the respondent; it is concerned, above all, with "how the world is construed by the actors" (Saljo, 1988, p. 36). Phenomenography holds as a tenet that "the mapping of the hidden world of human conception should be a specialization in its own right" (Marton, 1986, p. 3). It insists that describing the way people view the world is a worthy enterprise in itself and can stand as the respectable "end" of a research endeavour. A first-order perspective such as phenomenology, on the other hand, concentrates on experience.

One way of illustrating the difference between a first-order and a second-order perspective is to consider several approaches to the research topic being investigated in this study. A phenomenologist, in investigating women's experience of power in a particular work-group, for instance, might be focused on learning about the experience of power in that particular setting. A traditional psychological study might be interested in women's experience of power in the group as a way of centering on the process of perception or thought itself, in an attempt to discover general laws of thought and perception which could then be applied to any situation or subject; or, it might define power and then attempt to measure each woman's "need" for power and perhaps correlate that with behavioural characteristics. In this
phenomenographic study, however, the aim is, quite simply, to learn about women's conceptions of power.

A second difference between phenomenography and phenomenology centres on the latter's focus on the essence of experience. The notion of essence, in this case, refers to phenomenology's concentration on that which is common to the phenomenon studied. In an attempt to discover the essence of power, for example, the researcher would look for intersubjective agreement on aspects of power. Phenomenographers, on the other hand, are interested in the variations in experience—both intrasubjectively and intersubjectively (Larsson & Helmstad, 1985; Marton, 1979, 1986).

Although they are interested in variation as opposed to invariant common meaning, phenomenographers do not focus on the idiosyncratic. In phenomenographic studies, researchers have consistently discovered that phenomena are conceptualized in a limited number of qualitatively different ways (Gibbs, Morgan & Taylor, 1980; Marton, 1981, 1986, 1988; Marton & Saljo, 1976; Saljo, 1981). "In between the common and the idiosyncratic there seems, thus, to exist a level: a level of modes of experience, forms of thought, worthwhile studying" (Marton, 1981, p. 181).

It is interesting to note that Marton (1984), in a discussion of this issue of phenomenography's interest in variation as opposed to a first-order research interest in essence, introduces a different interpretation of the term essence. In this less commonly considered interpretation, the underlying structure of the factual variation obtained in
phenomenographic research could be seen as the "essence" of the conception. It is only in this sense, "that we can look for invariance in a set of varying conceptions" (Marton, 1984, p. 62). This is important, because phenomenography is interested in, not merely the listing of different conceptions, but also the discovery of some logical relationship between conceptions of the phenomenon in question. This focus on discovering and mapping the variation of conceptions "in terms of sets of distinctive categories of description, where each category corresponds to a special conception of a certain phenomenon" (Ibid, p. 61) is unique to phenomenography and could be seen as a third difference between this approach and phenomenology. People's descriptions of the phenomenon in question are categorized and systemized and these categorizations are seen as the main outcomes of phenomenographic research (Marton, 1986). This ordering of the categories of description is called an outcome space and could be likened to a map of inner experience in relation to the phenomenon in question.

In categorizing people's descriptions of their experience, the phenomenographic researcher is looking for the distinguishing characteristics in conceptions—the significant differences that emerge in the ways that individuals define or explain the phenomenon being investigated. In this focus on people's conceptions of the world, the phenomenographer takes "an epistemological position where the existence of a 'real' reality, common to all and available through the 'unbiased' observation of the world is not recognized" (Saljo, 1988, p. 37). The term
conception, as used here, refers to the individuals' understandings of the world—the filters through which people see, so to speak. In describing someone's experiential reality, the researcher must explore, with the respondent, the phenomenon in question, as it is understood and experienced by that person. In this way, phenomenographic research is very much an act of discovery (Gibbs, 1982). Marton (1988) compared this with other research approaches:

We might say that when we describe behaviour we are looking at the individual, when we describe the "mental apparatus" we are trying to look into them and when we aim at experiential description we are trying to look with them and see the world as they see it. (p. 7)

Since a conception is a description of "the phenomenon as understood" (Ibid.), it is, of course, not only experiential, but also relational. Conceptions are not "inherent qualities in the mind of the thinker or in the objects/phenomena themselves" (Saljo, 1988, p. 44), but involve both the individual and the phenomenon in question. There can be no understanding without the "understander," and all that she brings to that, and neither can there be understanding without the "what" to be understood, or apprehended. Marton (1984) points out that the relations, then, are between what is being conceptualized or perceived and the one who is doing the conceptualizing or perceiving. He sees one of the researcher's main tasks being the discovery and description of these "distinctively different ways in which individuals relate themselves to various aspects of their world" (p. 45). The phenomenographic researcher seeks to bring to visibility the world as it is experienced by the experiencer
(Marton & Svensson, 1979). Marton (1984) reminds us out that these person/world relationships are often just taken for granted. He believes that research has an important function to play, in bringing to light our unexamined, tacit belief that we see and experience the world as it actually is, and that others see it in the same way.

This brings us to a fourth difference between phenomenology and phenomenography. Traditional phenomenology, although also dealing with person/world relationships, insists that the researcher should attempt to "bracket" and set aside conceptual thought and focus on the world through immediate experience. Phenomenography, in describing the individual's relationship with the world, does not distinguish between immediate experience and conceptual thought in this way, but simply describes the individual's relations with the phenomenon in question. In phenomenography we "deal with the conceptual and the experiential, as well as what is thought of as that which is lived" (Marton, 1981, p. 181).

If we accept phenomenography's relational view of human functioning, it follows that conceptions are also inextricably linked to context. Gibbs (1982) recounts an interesting example of the contextual nature of conceptions; it centres on the 1978 work of Marton and Dahlgren, concerning children's conceptions of price. Two different conceptions were discovered: (a) that price represents a relationship between supply and demand, and (b) that price is related to some innate value of the commodity. In a later investigation, Dahlgren asked two groups of thirty
children each (one group aged 11; the other aged 13), "Why does a bun cost one krona?" Only one child in each group demonstrated the supply-demand conception. However, when the question, "Why does a diamond ring cost more than a bicycle?" was asked, almost half the first group, and more than half of the second group responded with supply-demand conceptions.

This discussion of conceptions as context-related, raises another important point—namely, that we cannot assume which conception of a particular phenomenon an individual will hold. In fact, respondents' conceptions may well vary with the context in which they find themselves (Johansson, Marton & Svensson, 1985; Saljo, 1988). Conceptions may also change with, for example, new learning or experience (Marton, 1981). Thus different conceptions can be held, not only by different individuals, but by the same person, who might hold several, even contradictory, conceptions at the same time. Phenomenographers do not use conceptions to label or judge people, nor do they see categories of description as representative of certain groups of people. Instead, they find it useful to think of the outcome space as "an abstract system of description, a gigantic space of categories, in which the individuals move—more or less freely—back and forth" (Marton, 1984, p. 62). As pointed out earlier, phenomenographic researchers have empirically demonstrated, again and again, that when conceptions are organized into categories of description, a limited number of qualitatively different conceptions are found. "The set of categories is thus stable and generalizable between situations, even if the individuals 'move'
from one category to another on different occasions" (Marton, 1984, p.62).

In regard to the relationship between conceptions and categories of descriptions, conceptions are demonstrated by some one in relation to some thing in the real world. Conceptions can be seen as mental "acts." In depicting categories of description, "a distinction is thus made between the act of experiencing or conceptualizing a phenomenon and the characterization of the structure and meaning of that act" (Renstrom, Andersson & Marton, 1988, p. 12). The act of conceptualizing has psychological reality; categories of descriptions are abstracted from that reality (Ibid). When we turn from discussing conceptions to categories of description, we ignore, for the moment, what Marton (1981) refers to as:

the dynamic-activity perspective...and we consider the categories almost as if they were "frozen" forms of thought. The relationship between conception as an act of conceiving and conception as a category of description resembles the relationship between Lewis Carroll's smiling cat and the smile that is left when the cat is separated from the smiling. (p. 196)

Each conception, or category of description, then, stands as a unique way of viewing or understanding the world, and is qualitatively different from other conceptions of the same phenomenon. It is possible, also, to see variation in the internal structure of the conception. This variation is a result of what the experiencer focuses on or emphasizes; it is a reflection of perspective--of the point of view from which the scene encompassing the conception is seen. "It is a variation in the figure-ground structure superimposed on that scene"
Theman (1983), in his study of citizens' conceptions of political power, argues that each conception can be discussed in two different ways. The noematic aspect of a conception refers to its "what" component, and describes aspects of the phenomenon in terms of what the individual understands it to be. On the other hand, the "how" component of the description focuses on the way in which the understood is apprehended. This is the noetic aspect, and it addresses the logical relationship between conceptions of different phenomena (Marton, 1984). The noematic and noetic aspects of conceptions can only be theoretically separated; in reality, they cannot exist apart from one another (Lybeck, Marton, Stromdahl & Tulberg, 1987).

Phenomenography can thus be seen as a relatively unique research approach. Called, at times, "empirical phenomenology," it shares with phenomenology a relational, experiential approach to discovering the way in which individuals see and conceptualize aspects of their world. Unlike phenomenology, however, it adopts a second-order perspective, focuses on variation rather than "essence," finds it unnecessary to attempt to focus on pre-reflective thinking, and discovers categories of description and organizes these into an outcome space which is a systemization of the variation in conceptions of the particular phenomenon under investigation. This type of research is carried out within a naturalistic approach, using qualitative research techniques. The following sections will discuss this in detail.
B. Data Collection

As noted in Chapter II, methodological procedures, such as those followed in data collection and data analysis arise out of the particular research perspective chosen. Glaser and Strauss (1967) pointed out that the adequacy of results cannot be separated from the processes which generate these results.

1. Context: Participants and Setting

Participants

The participants in this study were UBC women graduate students in Counselling Psychology who were enrolled in the course CNPS 588, and who were members of the "gender-fair" (or "women's") clinic team, as well as the instructor/supervisor of this team. The main research project involved the entire 1989-1990 clinic team: six Master's level students; one Doctoral level supervisor-in-training; and the clinic supervisor—a UBC instructor. In addition to these eight, two women who had been members of previous years' clinic teams were interviewed for the pilot study.

In the case of the major study, access to the group was gained by contacting the supervising professor and meeting with her, in person, to explain my research interest, aims and methodology. She then agreed to approach the group in order to give them a very brief overview of the proposed research project and to ask them if they had any interest in volunteering to be interviewed for a study concerned with women's conceptions of
power. She assured the group that they were, in no way, expected or required to participate in this study, and suggested that, if they were interested, they might invite me to meet with them to give them more information and answer any questions they might have.

The group agreed that they were interested in hearing more about the proposed study; at the same time, they were very concerned about losing valuable "clinic time." Accordingly, I was invited to meet with the group one morning, a half hour before their clinic work officially began for the day. I, at that time, more fully explained the research process; reiterated, again, the voluntary nature of their participation; and answered their questions. The conversation was focused and lively; group members demonstrated curiosity and interest in the project and somewhat spontaneously, unanimously agreed to participate. One group member, who was absent, was later "filled in" by other group members. She expressed interest in talking to me further; I contacted her privately and answered her queries, and she, too, agreed to participate. It should be noted that the supervising professor was not present at the meeting between the group and the researcher. It was understood that she would consider her own willingness to participate in the research and that, whatever her decision, the project would proceed with the rest of the group, if the remaining members agreed to participate. The supervisor consequently decided to participate fully in the study—a decision which has enriched this investigation of women's conceptions of power.
Borg and Gall's (1979) suggestions for improving the rate of volunteering and for minimizing attrition were utilized in this study in the following ways:

1. In addressing the group, I made the appeal as interesting as possible. Since the target population was an all-woman work group, it seemed to follow that a group of women who, for the most part, had chosen to work within that particular group because of a common interest in counselling women, would find the subject of women's conceptions of power an interesting one. These women might also be expected to show some interest in participating in a research study at the Master's level, since most of them had not begun their thesis work and, thus, might anticipate learning something about the research process through their participation.

2. I presented the prospect of participating in the study as being non-threatening so that potential volunteers would not be put off by unwarranted fears of being somehow evaluated unfavourably because of their participation. Thus I addressed such issues as privacy and confidentiality and assured the group that participants would be not be identified and, as far as possible, would not be identifiable. I raised these issues early in our meeting together, and took pains then and, again, when meeting with individuals in the interview situation to assure them that I would treat their disclosures with the utmost respect—for their sakes and for the sakes of group members who might be discussed during the interview. Students were also assured that their transcripts would not be reproduced in their
totality in the thesis itself, and that information which would identify individuals—particularly information of a "sensitive" nature, would not be divulged without the express consent of the individual concerned. This approach seemed, to me, important from an ethical point of view. It also served the purpose of facilitating honest, open communication within the interview situation which, of course, is reflected in the interview data.

3. The theoretical and practical importance of the research was addressed and stressed from a feminist perspective. These were considerations which seemed particularly significant to this particular group of women, most of whom saw their main focus in counselling as the empowering of women in the world and who, without exception, defined themselves as feminists.

4. Further to step number three, I discussed women counsellors' views of power as being particularly important to an understanding of women and power, and to an understanding of how power dynamics might facilitate or disrupt women's work together.

5. Although it was not possible to offer either payment or courtesy gifts to participants, I did offer to share research findings, academic material relating to the particular research method employed, and information which might aid individuals in their own future research. All respondents requested communication involving the research findings; one respondent requested a copy of her interview transcript in its entirety; and, to date, three respondents have requested specific advice or information related to their own prospective research.

6. In keeping with Borg and Gall's suggestion that the
request for volunteering be made by a woman of high status, the initial request was presented by the clinic supervisor/instructor. The researcher's own status was probably enhanced by several factors, including the positive evaluation of both the proposed research and the researcher by the clinic supervisor. Subsequent feedback from volunteer respondents alerted me to the positive effect that this had on their decisions to participate.

7. Although the interviews were time-consuming in the light of graduate students' busy schedules, I made every effort to ensure that the interviews were as non-stressful as possible for participants. Some of my efforts in this direction included: scheduling at the respondent's convenience; conducting interviews, depending on the participant's wish, in her home or office, in the home of the interviewer, or in an office on campus; offering, when possible, refreshments such as tea or coffee; attempting to be respectful of time constraints the respondent might be operating under (although, actually, most interviews went over the initially-proposed time of one and a half to two hours, it was the participant's choice to continue the discussion); and communicating an honest respect and appreciation for the participant—her views and beliefs and, in some cases, her very honest struggles with these.

8. In my meeting with the group, I stressed the normative nature of volunteering for research, particularly for graduate students, who not only would be interested in the research per se, but who also would, in the future, be faced with recruiting
volunteers for their own projects.

9. The initial request for volunteers was presented by someone "known" to the prospective respondents, and she personalized the request by sharing her own regard for the researcher. Although I was not personally known (except by the supervisor and the supervisor-in-training), I had the advantage of being a "senior" student in the same department as the respondents and, further, shared with them the experience of having participated in the women's clinic group as well as a commitment to counselling women.

10. Although Borg and Gall suggest that in situations where volunteering is regarded as normative, a call for public commitment to volunteer is likely to be most successful, I chose to give group members the option of making their choice private. The group, however, took the initiative to opt for enthusiastic, public commitment.

Information gathered through interviews and questionnaires (see Appendix B) portrays the respondents as a heterogenous group in some ways and, at the same time, similar, in certain respects. The participants ranged in age from 27 to 57 years with a mean age of 40 years and a median age of 36. At the time of the interviews, five of the women were married or living with a man; three were not. Two of the married women revealed that they were struggling with serious difficulties in their relationships with their spouses. Six of the women were Canadian born, one was American born, and one was born in Kenya. One woman possessed an Ed.D.; two possessed M.A.'s: (one, in Counselling Psychology and
the other in Sports Psychology); one possessed an M.Ed.; and four possessed B.A.'s. Their professional backgrounds varied. Two of the women had fairly extensive volunteer experience in counselling, while two others (the instructor and the supervisor-in-training) had worked professionally in this area. Other professional experience included: teaching at the College and University level; teaching at the elementary school level; sports coaching; and business-related employment.

Four of the eight group members joined the Women's Clinic as a clear-cut, first choice on their parts. Comments such as, "This is my utmost choice!" or, "It's where I wanted to focus;" and, "For me, it was a natural progression...to go into the Women's Clinic," are characteristic of these women's descriptions of how they got themselves to this particular clinic. Of the remaining four participants, two had come to Women's Clinic as one of several equally attractive choices, and two had chosen Women's Clinic as their second choice.

All eight members of the Clinic Team, even those few who had initially experienced some apprehension, expressed that they were, at this point, happy to have ended up on the Women's Clinic team. F, for example, expressed:

At first, I wasn't sure...if anything I was probably, maybe even a little disappointed. And a little bit apprehensive...I wasn't at all sure...and then--I'm really delighted! I'm not at all regretful that this is the way it's turned out. (F-6,7)*

*Throughout this document, quotes from transcripts are identified by transcript letter (F) followed by page number(s) (F-6,7). Nonlexical expressions and pauses are included here as in the original transcripts. Initials do not correspond to respondents' names.
When asked if their membership in Women's Clinic implied a commitment to working primarily with women, as professional counsellors, seven of the women indicated that this was definitely true for them. C stated her position as, "I choose to work with women because we're so important" and, "I think it's a very viable choice to say, 'No, I don't want to work with men! I want to work with women! I like women" (C-5). Another counsellor-in-training, G, commented: "I think, because of the way my focus is changing, in terms of feminist issues etc., I just think that I have, maybe you could say, more of a calling to work with women than men" (G-7). One of the participants saw herself as evolving in the direction of choosing to work primarily with women but didn't see that as a final commitment at that time. She says, at one point, "I think I feel better about working--focusing--on women, because it has a lot to do with me. Like..this is my journey as well, you know" (F-9). At another point, she states that she plans to work as a special needs counsellor with men and women, for a period of time, and she says:

So, I'll have a chance to test it and sort of have a (sic) opportunity to make..to face that decision again, and to find out if I've made the right choice, because I'll have a chance to see if I enjoy working with men, as well. (F-8)

All eight women expressed that their commitment to work with women was based on their own experience, as women, in the world. D says, "Well, I guess it gets down to my feelings of powerlessness, you know, that I've had in my life," (D-5)
and, "In general, I feel that there's a one-sided power differential in this society...and I guess I'm just expressing my own...outrage is a bit strong...but my own anger at the power differential" (D-8). Another woman, A, expresses her focus this way, "It involves...for me...empowering women. I see myself as uh..coming from a background where women weren't equal...and I've always fought against that" (A-3). C says, "It comes out of my own personal experience of feeling completely powerless in the world" (C-5). And H states:

It comes out of my background..it comes out of my upbringing which...again..is being a woman--one--and being a woman from a different culture. We're taught..very much so, that this is a....man's world..and that we have no place in this man's world. (H-4)

As noted, all eight women identified themselves as feminists. Although their personal understandings of the term varied somewhat, two common themes were: (a) the valuing of women, and (b) some acknowledgement of the need to redress acknowledged existing inequalities between men and women. The main difference among personal definitions of the word "feminist" put forward by women in this group, seemed to hinge on the degree and direction of "action" involved in being feminist. Among team members, this aspect of being feminist ran the following range: "being" (ex. self-respecting, self-nurturing); "affirming" (ex. being a woman); "valuing/respecting" (ex. women; women's worth and resources); "being concerned about" (ex. how women can claim what is rightfully theirs); "supporting" (ex. equal treatment); "acting on--both personally and socially" (ex. valuing the female equally with the male); "empowering" (women); and, "being an
advocate for" (ex. women's rights and equal opportunities).

In summary, the respondents were eight women who comprised the total membership of an all-woman work group—in this case, a team of counsellors and counsellors-in-training. The women ranged in age from twenty-six to fifty-seven years and were a fairly mixed group in terms of life experience, work experience and counselling experience. Although their backgrounds and values differed somewhat, all eight described instances of having experienced powerlessness or devaluation, in some way, as "women" in the world, and/or reported having observed other women in such experiences. All expressed feminist values which included valuing and supporting other women. Since, in phenomenographic research the context is accorded great importance, we will now discuss the group setting in some detail.

Setting

The actual context of this study was a UBC clinical training laboratory for women graduate students in Counselling Psychology. The focus of the work and training was the counselling of women, and the format, an all-woman work/training group, located off campus at a government-sponsored Women's Employment Counselling Unit (WECU). One day a week, for the entire academic year (September-April), the above-described group of six counsellors-in-training, one supervisor-in-training, and their supervisor worked within the larger confines of offices and group rooms occupied by WECU, utilizing a large meeting room and several counselling rooms equipped with viewing windows and video and
audio equipment.

Although this Women's Clinic Group operated, in most respects, very independently of WECU, relations between the two groups were friendly and cooperative. Clients coming into WECU with employment-related issues were initially interviewed and assessed by WECU counsellors, and those clients judged to be dealing with factors not directly related to vocational issues were referred, by the agency intake counsellor, to the Women's Clinic Team for personal counselling. Counsellors-in-training worked with these clients on an ongoing basis throughout the academic year, under the direction of their Doctoral supervisor-in-training and their supervisor, a UBC instructor. In addition to counselling individual clients, the counsellors-in-training designed and ran several day-long group workshops, during the year, on the topic of "Women's Self-Esteem."

Aside from the obvious "convenience" aspects of choosing student respondents, this setting was attractive for several other reasons. First, it provided, in its setup, numerous opportunities for interaction among the individual team members. Being both a work group and a training group (supervised, in part, by a Doctoral student who, like the rest of the group, was supervised by the instructor), it seemed reasonable to assume that opportunities would arise, throughout the year, for various members of the group to experience, in some way, power dynamics. Also, the selected setting provided the opportunity to assess the experience of women who had, for the most part, chosen to work in an all-women setting and to focus on working primarily with women
once they completed their training. Finally, as noted above, all of the counsellors-in-training, as well as the supervising instructor, self-identified as feminists, and accepted feminist norms around valuing and supporting other women. Thus, the setting provided access to an all-woman work group comprised of members who, because of their interests and perspectives, as well as because of their dual status as students and counsellors, would be sympathetic to and interested in the research aims involved and thus be willing participants in this study.

The setting was described by group members from two perspectives. The first involves a relatively factual account of the scheduled and ordered events of a clinic day; this, like the factual information about clinic presented at the beginning of this section, is a first-order perspective, involving "statements-about-reality" (Marton, 1981, p.188). The second-order perspective deals, not with a commonly agreed-upon, verifiable reality, but with individual team members' sense of their personal relations with that setting--their "perceived" reality (Marton, 1981).

First-order information on "how" the clinic team operated was collected from the supervisors, during interviews, and was corroborated by clinic team members. The clinic day officially begins at nine a.m. with the entire group coming together in the large meeting room to get the "administrivia" out of the way. This typically involves dealing with scheduling issues (i.e. new clients; which counsellors are working with which clients; appointment times; assigning viewing rooms etc.). The group then
deals with unfinished business from the week before as well as with concerns that individuals may have around any aspect of their work with clients. This part of the hour usually provides opportunities for the sharing of information among team members. The team instructor commented that she teaches, during this hour, in response to concerns and needs which are expressed by the counsellors-in-training, or in response to issues which may have arisen the previous week. From ten o'clock until three o'clock, the counsellors work with clients. During this time, the supervisor and supervisor-in-training watch sessions from the viewing rooms (trading off so that, ideally, each is able to view at least a portion of each counsellor's sessions). These sessions are also video taped and audio taped, so that the counsellor-in-training (and the supervisors, at times) can review specific sessions as part of the training/learning process. When counsellors are not booked to work with clients, they, too, observe sessions from the viewing rooms and make notes of their observations and/or suggestions, which are later shared with the working counsellor in the form of written or verbal feedback. Ideally, feedback is given by the supervisor and supervisor-in-training immediately after the session in question, but, often, time restraints prevent this. At three o'clock, the team comes together again, in the large meeting room and focuses on feedback and, again, counsellor concerns.

During our conversations together, I invited each respondent to orient me to her clinic group—in particular, by talking about "whatever stands out for you" about the group, as well as by
describing her sense of her own "role" within the group. My questioning, in this area, was purposefully vague (and I often described it to the participants this way) in order to allow the respondent maximum freedom to focus on what was important to her. Thus I used phrasing like: "anything that's really important to you about the clinic group" or, "What's the sort of thing that would come into the foreground, first, about that particular group, for you?" or, "What stands out for you about the group?" or, "Whatever...your gut reaction would be when I say, 'Well, what's this group like for you?'" It is primarily from responses to questions like these that the following descriptions of participants' conceptions of the group itself were drawn. Three themes emerged from conversations with participants: group cohesiveness; the effects of intra-group differences; and safety/support within the group. Conceptions within these themes are presented below. As noted above, conceptions are not mutually exclusive; group members may hold more than one, sometimes even conflicting, conception around a particular theme.

Members' Conceptions of Group Cohesiveness

This section describes team members' conceptions of group cohesiveness. Participants referred to cohesiveness in terms of their sense of its presence or absence in the group. Two dichotomous conceptions were revealed:

Conception 1: The Women's Clinic Team is a cohesive group.

Conception 2: The Women's Clinic Team lacks group cohesiveness.

In holding conception 1, women expressed their sense that
the group was united; they experienced it as a unit, and saw themselves as part of that. These group members described a feeling of closeness between group members—a "belonging" which was often expressed in a sense of common purpose or ease in working together. D expressed, "It's like a very benevolent family to me" (D-10). H says, "We feel very, very close, and we feel we've bonded, or that there is a mutual understanding and respect for each other" (H-6). E describes her feelings about this as, "I have really loved being in this clinic because I do like that feeling of connecting with other women in a common theme...I mean they're trying to do the same thing" (E-16).

Women who held conception 2, saw the group as lacking in cohesiveness and felt themselves somewhat distanced or alienated from the rest of the group. These participants describe the group as a collection of unrelated individuals. G comments, "It's funny, because I don't necessarily see it as a close-knit group...like...I see it as people that are off in their own little worlds" (G-14). F says, "I would say the stage that it's in, right now is basically not one of cohesiveness...but...rather...one of individuals within a group" (F-12).

Members' Conceptions of the Effects of Intra-Group Differences

The second theme about the group which surfaced in conversations with the participants concerned their conceptions about the effects of individual differences within the group. This theme involved an acknowledgement of variation within the group and viewed that as being either complementary or
contradictory. Differences viewed as complementary were seen as being additive to group process; those viewed as contradictory were seen as detracting. Two conceptions related to this theme:

Conception 1: Individual differences within the group are complementary.

Conception 2: Individual differences within the group are contradictory.

Each of these conceptions was focused on from two different perspectives: (a) differences between the supervisor/instructor and the doctoral supervisor-in-training or, (b) differences between group members in general.

In holding conception 1a, participants described perceived differences between the supervisor/instructor (S.) and the Doctoral supervisor-in-training (ST.) as being complementary and beneficial to the group as a whole. Thus, ST., in discussing her relationship with S., says, "We come from different theories...not (different) philosophy...in that we are both really very client-centred... But I follow psychodynamic theory, and she's pure client-centred. But it never got in the way...it just added" (C-4). From S.'s point of view:

We complement each other because of our perspectives, so that we're neither one retreads of the other, you know...So the students are actually...it's additive learning...not repetitive...I learn from her, and she learns from me, and it's fun! It's really fun being there...it's an aspect of the work that gives me pleasure. (B-9)

Another group member, E, describes the relationship between these two:

I have learned a lot from S. And not only have I learned from S, but...I'm really glad that ST's been there...too. S. tends to be pervasive in her influence...and ST. brings in
specific things which I really appreciate. So, I think..uh..actually, the combination has been terrific! And they work together well. (E-12,13)

The group members holding conception 1b focused on differences within the group in general, and saw those as being complementary or additive. G says:

I believe that we have to work with difference, and that we have to make a difference..in any small way we can. I think that...like I said..even if they can pick something up from me..that they wouldn't necessarily get from...and vice versa..that I can pick something up from them and the way they see the world....We're all students together, learning different ways. (G-26)

The student holding conception 2a views the relationship between the supervisors as being not complimentary. Her experience of their differences is that it impacts negatively on the group, rather than facilitating group or individual learning. F comments:

At times, my own experience is seeing their evaluations of my performance as being quite different from one another...My sense is that she (ST) feels she must buffer what input she provides..or at least provide it in such a way that it isn't glaringly in opposition to that which has been provided by the supervisor..So oftentimes..I felt stuck in the middle. (F-16)

The student holding conception 2b views differences in student perceptions as being uncomplimentary and nonproductive. She states:

I realize that's something that really bothers me about the whole thing..I feel that there's that big difference and, I mean...you just know when someone's on a different wavelength...And so..uh..the way I deal with it..is I just don't get involved with it. (G-19)
Members' Conceptions of the Group as a Safe Environment

This section discusses group members' experience of the clinic group as a safe environment. Safety was described in terms of its presence or absence, in these conceptions. The two conceptions, around this theme, which emerged from the data were:

Conception 1: The clinic group is a safe environment.
Conception 2: The clinic group is an unsafe environment.

In expressions of conception 1, group members expressed feeling safe, comfortable, or relaxed within the group. In conception 2, the experience expressed is related to feeling unsafe, afraid or nervous. Within each of these conceptions were found different levels of interpretation corresponding to participants' slightly different perspectives on the same conception: (a) the source of safety or lack of safety is seen in the supervisor(s), or (b) safety has its source in the total group itself. (There is no expression of lack of safety within the group having its source in the group itself.) These two conceptions, with their corresponding levels, are an attempt to portray the range of experience expressed by group members around the theme of the group as a safe place, but cannot be seen as exhaustive of the possible range of conceptions which could be conceived to occupy the outcome space.

Conception 1a expresses a view of the clinic group as a safe environment and sees that safety as being provided or facilitated by the supervisor(s). B says, "I think, in general, they see it as a safe place to grow. They're willing to take risks, and they know they will get feedback, (from the supervisors) but they
won't get clobbered" (B-8). Another group member comments:

The benefits of her style of supervision quickly outweighed everything else, because all of a sudden you were in a safe environment and there weren't any power games going on...and you could grow! And so..when I knew she was doing the clinic this year..that's where I wanted to be..cause I knew that she would treat me with such respect that I would be able to...spread my wings....and learn. (C-1)

Conception 1b involves an experience of the group as a safe place and locates the source of this safety within the group as a whole. C expresses this conception in saying, "But there was always the hand on the shoulder..or the squeeze, or the hug...just to let you know that there was an anchor there, and a safe place to come back to" (C-12).

Conception 2a focuses on the group as an unsafe place, and this expression of the conception locates the resulting danger in the supervisor's control in terms of evaluation. The participant who expressed this conception said, "Because of our positions of being--we are going to be evaluated--I..personally..am fearful of speaking out too loudly about what is disappointing to me" (F-14).

2. Data collection technique

For this study, data collection was accomplished through the use of: (a) a pre-interview questionnaire to collect demographic and personal information; (b) a post-interview questionnaire, administered several weeks after the main interviews in order to give participants a vehicle for feedback concerning their experience of the process; and (c) through in-depth focused interviews with each respondent. Since interviews were the
primary data collection technique used in this study, I will concentrate, in what follows, on describing, first, the epistemological foundations of this portion of the methodology and, second, the actual interviewing process.

The hermeneutic encounter

In Chapter II we situated the research technique of this study within the qualitative paradigm. Quite obviously, even within this, there exist different sources of information through which we could come to an understanding of people's experience of aspects of their world. These include behavioural observation, stories, drawings or other creations of respondents, case studies and interviews. The interview, however, is acknowledged as the primary method of phenomenographic data collection (Marton, 1986).

For me, the movement from a traditional research focus, perspective and technique to a reframed approach, in seeking to answer my research question, is personally situated within a commitment to what Mishler (1986) calls "humane values" and, in particular, in my case, to feminist values in working with women. Thus a standard approach to interviewing would neither fit with the reframed research paradigm described in Chapter II, nor with my own wish to work with women in a way that validates their experiences and respects their right to tell their own stories.

Traditional interview techniques in psychology are rooted in the natural science approach to psychology, already discussed, and the resultant search for causal explanation, prediction and
control. In this tradition, the interview as a stimulus-response situation attempts to standardize both the questions asked and the interviewer's behaviour and also ignores the respondent's personal contexts of meaning (Mishler, 1986). This study, on the other hand, approaches the interview as discourse, as conversation between speakers, with an acknowledgement that "the meanings of questions and responses are contextually grounded and jointly constructed by interviewer and respondent" (Ibid, p. 34). This approach, which is consistent with hermeneutics, satisfies the relational perspective of phenomenography, as well as the social/political position of feminist critics of traditional methodology, who see the attempt to maintain objectivity, detachment and the hierarchical relationship between interviewer and respondent as, not only an impossible aim, but also as "morally indefensible" (Oakley, 1981 p. 41).

Palmer (1969), in giving words to Gadamer’s vision of hermeneutics as an exploration of the nature of understanding, catches the essence of the task of the interviewer:

One is not so much a knower as an experiencer; the encounter is not a conceptual grasping of something but an event in which a world opens itself up to one. Insofar as each interpreter stands in a new horizon, the event that comes to language in the hermeneutical experience is something new that emerges, something that did not exist before. In this event, grounded in linguisticality and made possible by the dialectical encounter with the meaning of the transmitted text, the hermeneutical experience finds its fulfillment. (p. 209)
The conversations

The question of how women experience power in their relationships within an all-woman work group was explored through interview as discourse—through what we might call hermeneutic encounters or speech events which acknowledged the mutual shaping of meaning. It seems appropriate here to speak of these as conversations. Five of these conversations were held in my home and three in the respondents' homes; the setting, in each case, was based on what seemed, to the respondent, most convenient and comfortable for her.

The beginning of our time together, although it varied with individual participants usually involved some sharing of hospitality (often a cup of tea or coffee) and informal dialogue. This occurred in an easy, natural way, and allowed us to easily establish a comfortable connection together as well as some consensus around the context of our meeting. During this time, we discussed issues around confidentiality, I answered questions or addressed concerns that individuals expressed, and a "Consent to Participate" form was completed (see Appendix A). I also stated my interest in understanding how they, as individuals, experienced power, and assured them that I was not interested in any particular "definition" of power.

Participants knew that I shared with them the experience of being a graduate student, and a counsellor-in-training who had also participated in the Women's Clinic Team (albeit several years prior to their own experience). They also knew that we shared the experience of being feminist women in the world, which
implies a common language. This awareness of sharing, to whatever degree, a common language (reflective of a common person/world relationship) created a sense of ease and trust which facilitated our conversations together. I was also aware that it could seduce me into believing that I "knew" what these women meant rather than risking an attitude of not-knowing and engaging myself openly in the dialectical process of understanding in a way which would invite transformation in myself (Palmer, 1969; Titelman, 1979). One way that I dealt with this was to inform the participants that I would take, at times, the stance of "not understanding," in our conversations, and ask for concrete examples and clarification so that I might guard against assuming knowledge and work towards truly revealing her personal experience. Discussing this openly with the participant was also important in that it anticipated and circumvented the possibility of irritation or weakened trust which may have resulted from repeated questioning of the "obvious" which, without explanation, may have left her feeling truly "not understood."

This decision to discuss with the participants my desire to truly understand their experience, as opposed to assuming that my understanding was theirs or attempting to "fit" their conceptions into an already-existing structure, came out of feedback from two earlier pilot interviews. These were also important in that they provided an opportunity for me to gauge the "richness" of data which I might expect, in relation to interview time-frames; allowed me "practice" in actually bringing my own experience into
contact with other women's lived experiences of power; and gave me a sense, not only of the relevance of my questioning, but also of different "paths" to meaning which may or may not be facilitative to a particular individual. These pilot conversations nurtured, in me, a greater awareness of the process of interview as dialogue—as hermeneutic encounter.

The "formal" portion of each conversation began with the question, "Could you tell me about how you got yourself into this particular clinic group (as opposed to some other clinic)?" This initial part of the interview continued by focusing on the participant's view of her clinic group and her sense of her relations with/within that group. Although each conversation branched off on its own unique way, the territory explored was common and included:

- the significance, for the participant, of being involved in Women's Clinic.
- when this involved a commitment to work primarily with women, in the world, the basis of this commitment was explored.
- whatever stood out, for the participant, about the group.
- experience of fitting in, belonging, role.

Discussion of these issues oriented me, as an outsider, to the participant's experience of the group as a whole, and her relationships within/to that group. It also served as a way of contextually grounding the basic question of the individual's conceptions of power within the group.

When the discussion of the group as context felt complete,
...we moved into an exploration of the participant's experience of power within the group. In each case, I began this process by asking the participant to focus on the group and to think of a time when something happened that, at the time, or in retrospect, she recognized as involving the operation of power. "It's like something happened, and you're telling me the story of that. And the story is about one person or more than one person in your group, and power." Each conversation included several recountings of such experience, and each recounting involved discussion of the following issues:

- description of power as the participant saw it operating in that instance.
- source of power.
- effect of power (on the individual; on others; on the group).

I made the decision to approach power in this way in an attempt to make the questioning around this issue as open-ended as possible. Obviously the specific focusing (ex. "What was the source of that power?") represents, to some degree, my own pre-understanding of power or, at least, of possible significant aspects (or perspectives) of power. While acknowledging this, however, I wanted to leave as much room as possible for the participants' unique experiences and conceptions to emerge. To use the map analogy again, I saw our task together being the exploration of the terrain of power and my role that of keeping us on the map. Within that, however, I wanted the participant to feel free to choose the paths, and areas that were pertinent to
her.

I concluded the discussion of each instance by inviting the participant to give the particular story she had just recounted a moral. After we had explored several instances of power operating in the group, I asked her to share any ideas (overarching principles, generalizations) that she might take from her experience with power, here, to other situations where she would be working with women. I also asked her to brainstorm synonyms and antonyms for power (See Appendix E).

Each interview was concluded by inviting the participant to comment, express concerns, or ask questions that she might still have. Informal endings typically involved some brief discussion of common interests—generally around work (counselling) or academic issues.

As might be expected in conversations around social phenomena, there was a tendency for individuals to speak in abstract and generalized terms, or to assume that we didn't have to articulate certain issues because we both "understood" those. My task, as questionner, was to focus the directionality of conversations, and to move the dialogue from generalization to specificity. I found that my training, as a counsellor, in active listening was invaluable in that I had, already at hand, the skills with which to focus and deepen the participant's descriptions of her experience.

The conversations were tape recorded and later transcribed in their entirety. Raw data were thus fully recorded and archived and are available for credibility checks. Although this
approach may seem "common-sense", it is often omitted in standard interview research practice.

Selections from transcripts, quoted in the next chapter, testify to the openness of these conversations. The women involved risked revealing their personal worlds--sometimes, even as they struggled to discover these through articulation of their experience. My own sense of the interviews is that of harmoniousness and a shared rhythm throughout each conversation, of two people enjoying their shared dialogue.

I was also aware of power issues which might operate within the interviews themselves. In opting for interviewing techniques informed by alternate perspectives, I chose, in Mishler's (1986) words to:

shift attention away from the investigators' 'problems,' such as technical issues of reliability and validity, to respondents' problems, specifically, their efforts to construct coherent and reasonable worlds of meaning and to make sense of their experiences...to find ways to empower respondents so that they have more control of the processes through which their words are given meaning...and to encourage them to find and speak in their own voices. (p.118)

One way that I checked the effects of my efforts in this direction was through the Post-Interview Questionnaire (see Appendix C), which respondents filled in and returned to me, anonymously, several weeks after the interview. This was an opportunity for the women, after some time for consideration, to comment again on the process and its effects on them. What follows are representative comments:

I found it exciting to discuss my experiences of how I conceptualize power with you. I had never been asked such a question before nor had such an uninterrupted opportunity to explore my thoughts and feelings about this subject. As a
result of my discussion with you, even as I was talking with you, I came to understand more of what I actually believe about power among and between women, and how it operates. It seemed that the more I had the opportunity to discuss these issues with you, the more it led from one idea to another. I am very glad to have had this opportunity....how easy you made it to talk about power.

It was a total delight for me to discuss my experiences with you. It stimulated my thinking about women and power--looking further for definitions and for my personal view of power. I shared some of these thoughts with members of my group.

I was comfortable discussing my experiences with you, even though, initially, I wasn't sure where our discussion would lead me to. Things started to fall into place for me as we were talking--i.e. power, and validation from peers, and how powerful that is in validating us as individuals, and what that does to our sense of self worth.

I was very comfortable disclosing to you--felt the atmosphere to be non-evaluative. Personally, it was empowering to be able to talk about my own philosophy of power. The experience of putting ideas into words solidified much of my thinking.

Your questions raised a number of concerns in me--heightened my awareness. The experience was illuminating.

Our conversation had a great impact on me, even as I was discussing these issues with you. I processed my experience for several days after and still refer back to it often. The opportunity to clarify some aspects of this concept and to open up to other ways of looking at power was very stimulating.

I would see it as a consciousness-raising experience.

Personally, I was energized by the interview as I heard myself voice some beliefs about myself that were, up until then, more vague. The experience made me feel more comfortable with myself in some ways. I would recommend the experience as a validating experience; it helps to generate new ideas, new ways of looking at yourself, and also forces you to put abstract feelings into words, which then allows you to act or think differently about them.

Generally, this experience heightened my awareness of power in groups of women, and I am glad of the experience for this reason alone.
This would be a wonderful way of beginning a women's group—a discussion, like this, of power.

In the hermeneutic encounter, or in what Mishler (1986) calls "interviewing as a form of discourse between speakers" (p.7), language is at the very heart of expression and understanding. Thus there is often a coming to know, or bringing to consciousness, through words—through speaking and listening—for both the interviewer and the respondent. For the respondent, this process sometimes involves moving from unawareness to awareness. This bringing to consciousness through the expression of one's person/world relationship can happen through immediate expression, or through reflection after the conversations and was well expressed in some of the quotations above. The process of gaining insight or conscious knowing was felt in some instances, as "energizing" or "validating," and in others as "disturbing."

One woman, for example, commented:

I was not aware of how uncomfortable I am with the word "power" since I see power abused so much in clients' lives and in relationships, including my own....I also felt chagrined, to some extent, about talking about the levels of "powerfulness" which I had described in the group, i.e. that I had seen some members as more powerful than others...I see myself as a woman being connected to other women in a non-competitive, cooperative way, and then finding myself thinking in terms of hierarchies was disturbing...I will now be aware of this and explore these concepts as I become involved with women's groups more and more.

At another point in her Post-Interview Questionnaire, this same participant said:

I found that it challenged my ideas about power in groups of women, i.e. that I did not think that there was such a thing (as power in women's groups)...so when I found myself thinking exactly this way, it was disturbing, but useful to me. I will now be aware of this and explore these concepts as I become involved with women's groups more and more. This
is of special significance to me, since my research will be done in a woman's group.

In attempting to come to this process with respect for the participants and an honest wish to empower them through our meeting, it was important for me to be sensitive to what I did with both process and content. The Post-Interview Questionnaire, from which the above quotes were taken, provided feedback about participants' experience of the process. In terms of content, whenever possible, I shared with each woman how I "interpreted" and how I planned to use her voiced experience.

However, the reactions of one participant are different from the others' reactions and deserve some comment. During the interview, F, like the others, immersed herself deeply in the conversation. Afterwards, reflecting on the experience, she was a little surprised and frightened at the extent to which she felt she had revealed her experiences. This, for her, triggered concerns about confidentiality and a "personal fear of repercussions" as well as some concern about the "actual purpose" of the study. Although these issues had been dealt with in our initial meeting and also at the time of our interview, we discussed them again, and I attempted to assure her that my research aims were, indeed, what I had stated them to be, and that I would treat her disclosures with respect and sensitivity. I also reiterated her entitlement to veto the use of any material provided by her, in either paraphrased or verbatim form. As it turned out, when F was able to read the portions of her transcript which I chose to include in my work, she saw it not
only as accurate in terms of her conceptions, but also as "safe" in terms of protecting her from identification. In reading her transcript, this woman was able to reflect upon the period of her life which it represented for her—one that she saw as "a very difficult time," but which, in perspective, no longer seemed threatening. In coming to terms with this, it also seemed easy for her to let go of fears she had felt around the vulnerability of expressing herself during the initial interview.

This incident illustrates interview as discourse on several levels. F experienced a coming to awareness, on a number of issues, which was, in her case, painful in some ways and which she had seen as posing a great risk to her. Her concern about this is also a reminder that our reframed interview approach has to do with people, not with "objects" (or "subjects") who could be used for research purposes and disregarded in terms of their own needs. Accordingly, F's concerns were taken seriously, and if after reading the finished "script" she had felt threatened, the text would have been changed accordingly. In a study of this nature, the participant's needs really must come first, and research aims cannot be seen as more important than an authentic resect for the participants involved. At our post-interview meeting I described the data analysis process to her; explained the outcome space; detailed, theme by theme, how her input had influenced and fit into it; and invited her to bring to my attention, any discrepancies between my interpretation of her core meanings and her intent. This meeting also served as an opportunity for her to ask further questions, now that the
research task was virtually complete.

C. Data Analysis

"Taking speech seriously" (Mishler, 1986, p. 47) is a cornerstone of methodology here—philosophically, and in terms of technique. It begins, as discussed above, with approaching the interview as jointly-constructed dialogue, and continues with what Marton (1989) describes as the interpretative, or hermeneutic, analysis of data. Titelman (1979) captures the importance of this focus in commenting that, "insofar as (we) seek to elucidate the meaning of experience and behaviour as it is lived in the everyday world, language as discourse...is the field in which signification emerges" (p. 182).

In the interests, then, both of "taking language seriously," and of creating some reliability in the study, in the sense of leaving a record of "process" and fixing data so that it could be examined and re-examined in a stabilized form, over time, I taped each interview, and then, as the first step of analysis, transcribed each in its entirety. This could be seen as one aspect of designing for consistency by what Guba (1981) calls establishing an "audit trait." Mishler (1986) cautions the researcher, in transcribing, "to pay close attention to linguistic and paralinguistic features that appear in naturally occurring talk but are routinely omitted from standard written texts" (p.47). Accordingly, in transcribing my conversations with respondents, I have included, in the transcripts, details of
speech such as pauses, nonlexical expressions, laughter, obvious changes in pitch or volume, stressed words or phrases, and speaker interruptions or overlaps (see Appendix D for Typescript Notation System). Although this procedure was time-consuming, I saw it as part of the necessary task of creating the conditions for valid analysis and interpretation of the interview data. This process had the added advantage of requiring me to immerse myself in the data; through careful listening and re-listening during the transcription process, I began to become familiar with the worlds of my respondents, as they had expressed them in these conversations. In addition, this care in transcription has resulted in data texts which reflect some tone or quality of the individual(s) in dialogue; there is much more of a "human" quality here than in a standard interview transcript. The repeated listenings to the interviews, necessary in this type of transcription process, also resulted in constant revisions in the transcripts, some of which led to significant changes in meaning. As with other aspects of the research process, there exists some question about when the task is completed. For me, a sense of "completion for now" arose out of three considerations: first, a judgment on my part that I had achieved a level of detail equal to the demands of my study aims; second, a knowledge that my data analysis technique would move me back and forth between transcriptions and taped conversations and thus allow ongoing checks, in this regard; and third, practical considerations involving time and energy constraints.

A phenomenographic approach to data analysis, like the
interview procedure itself, is consistent with hermeneutic process. "The analysis has to be of an iterative and genuinely interpretative nature, guided by what we may call "the hermeneutics of phenomenography" (Beaty, Dall'Alba & Marton, in press). It involved, as mentioned above, a constant movement, back and forth, between the audiotaped and transcribed versions of the data in order to assess the adequacy of transcription and then of interpretation; it involved, too, movement "between the data and emergent categories of meaning, which ultimately resulted in conceptions" (Pratt, 1990, p. 6)—in this case, conceptions of power.

The second step of data analysis here involved reviewing transcripts and tapes in order to determine "units of meaning." In this study, units of meaning refers to quoted text which represents some aspect of the respondents' understanding of the phenomenon of power, as they experienced it operating in their group context. For the most part, these units of meaning were contextually grounded, in that my interpretations around their meaning were made in relationship to their place in the total conversation. Following the example of Carriere, MacKey and McLardy (1990), I found it useful to "tag" these units of meaning, as I pulled them out of the text, by noting the aspect of power addressed by that unit. This level of analysis involved attention to both referential and structural aspects of meaning (Beaty et al, in press) which correspond to Themam's (1983) noematic and noetic aspects of meaning. Referential or noematic aspects of meaning refer to the global meaning of the concept—
the "what" of an individual's understanding. In this case, the eight interviews yielded a total of 241 units of meaning which articulated referential (or noematic) aspects of conceptions.

The structural or noetic aspects refer to the "how" and "why" parts of understanding--the perspective or figure/ground focus of the individual's understanding. In total, 152 units of meaning embodied only structural aspects of meaning (in some cases, structural aspects of meaning were also included in the units tagged as referential). The structural/noetic and referential/noematic aspects of a conception are dialectically related and can only be separated theoretically; in reality they cannot be understood apart from one another. One of the anomalies of researching conceptions of a complex social phenomenon such as power arises out of this interwining of structural/referential aspects of the conception. At times, what appeared to be a clear statement of referential meaning--ex. "Power is having respect,"--turned out, after investigation, to be a statement of one of the structural aspects of the phenomenon. In reference to the whole transcript, for example, the example just quoted referred to the noetic or structural aspect of source of power, while the respondent actually saw the referential aspect as "influence". Thus the same description of power could, at different times, refer to either structural/noetic or referential/noematic aspects of power. Because of the complexity inherent here, as part of this level of analysis, units of meaning were checked with the participant, when necessary, to ensure that I had not misunderstood her words.
The third level of analysis involved pooling the units of meaning. At this stage, the units of meaning were decontextualized from the actual speech events of which they were a part, and from their speakers, and my interest shifted to the meanings embedded in the quotes themselves. "The boundaries between individuals were thus abandoned and interest was focused on the "pool of meanings" ((Marton & Saljo, 1984, p.39). This step was accomplished with the prior assumption that individuals may hold varying, even conflicting, conceptions of the same phenomenon, and the emphasis was on finding all the variations of understanding expressed for each concept. At this point, the focus turned to discovering a pattern of similarities and differences in meaning, and making a decision about the specific level at which the quotes should be seen in relation to one another. At times, even during the part of the process, I found it necessary to return to the transcripts to ensure the accuracy of my understanding of a particular unit of meaning. The end result of the process here was the discovery of a set of six distinct categories of meaning, depicting the qualitatively different ways in which the participants in this study understood the phenomenon of power, as they experienced its operation in their group. This set of categories, along with the noetic/structural aspects associated with each category, is the outcome space.

Pratt (1990) posits, as a final validity test for the emergent or "discovered" categories, that each of the original units of meaning must logically fit within a conceptual category.
In this study, the stability and qualitatively different nature of each category of description, or conception, was established through two independent judge reliability tests using, as judges, two graduate students who were serious about and sensitive to the task (Stalker, 1989). The judges were given descriptions of each conception and asked to place the original units of meaning within these conceptions, as described by the researcher. There was 96-97% final agreement between my placement, as researcher, of units of meaning within the categories and the judges' placement of these. A detailed table of the judges' agreement and disagreement is included in Appendix F.
IV. RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of this research, the conceptions of power derived from the women who participated in this study. It begins with a description of the respondents' conceptions of power, as they experienced its operation in the all-women training group which was the context for this exploration. Marton (1981) distinguishes between conceptions and categories of meaning. Conceptions refer to the actual experienced and/or conceptualized reality of the individuals concerned, whereas categories of meaning are "simply abstract tools used to characterize the conceptions. They represent an attempt to formalize the researcher's understanding of the conceptions" (Beaty, Dall'Alba & Marton, in press). The categories, in the form of the outcome space—which describes the conceptions and serves as an illustration of their interconnectedness—is presented as a simple model of power as a process which moves from "being" to "action" to "interaction" and, correspondingly, from a "private" to a "public" context. This is followed by a brief discussion of the results, including an overview of the complex interconnections between conceptions.

A. Women's Conceptions of Power

The outcome space portrays the range of the respondents' varying understandings of power, as they experienced its operation, in different situations occurring within their training group. In this sense, the focus is on variation, not on
essence or themes—although we do, of course, look at essence within individual conceptions. In working with the data presented by the women who participated in this study, I have discovered six qualitatively different conceptions of power, which are presented below. The referential or noematic aspects of each conception are presented as the global meaning or the "what" of the conceptions themselves. The structural or noetic aspects of the conceptions are revealed in the particular "points of view" through which each conception is seen; this "directedness-of thought" within each conception also highlights the interrelatedness of conceptions. In our discussion of individual conceptions, we pay particular attention to the structural/noetic aspects which either mark transitions from one conception to another, for example: (a) focus, (b) process, and (c) context—or to the structural/noetic aspects which stand out as obvious links between conceptions of power, demonstrating the interrelatedness between the different ways the respondents experienced power; an example of the latter is "source" of power.

Because of the complexity of the phenomenon under study and because different aspects (or "fragments") of conceptions are expressed by different respondents, the conceptions which follow focus on the referential aspect and those noetic aspects, mentioned above, which strike the researcher as most predominant or interesting. This is consistent with the accepted view of the results of phenomenographic research as a "discovery" of the researcher. The ordering of the outcome space is also a construct of the researcher and certainly should not be seen as
the "correct" or "only" way to organize the conceptions. The related categories of description do illustrate a simple progression, but cannot be seen as developmental or hierarchical in any "value" sense.

Nor does any particular conception describe a particular respondent. Each woman who participated in the discussions about power expressed her conceptions in relation to a number of different experiences within the group context, and it thus follows that at one point she would view power in one way and, in another situation, experience it differently. The outcome space could thus be seen as a map of a region of thought and experience over which each respondent ranged to a greater or lesser degree. It portrays intraindividual variation as well as inter-individual variation of thought. As pointed out in Chapter II, the women in this group, as is common in phenomenographic research, held several—even apparently conflicting—conceptions of power.

A summary of our findings results in six qualitatively different conceptions of power. These are:

1. Integrity
   1a. Entitlement
2. Expressing Integrity/Congruence
3. Self-Determination
4. Agency/Competence
5. Respected Standing
6. Influence

The Outcome Space: Categories of Meaning

Conception One: Power is personal integrity

Women who held this conception described power as the process of being in touch with themselves at a very deep level,
which involved "knowing" themselves and feeling "whole" and comfortable with themselves. Power, in this sense, was sometimes seen as recognizing and accepting, without defensiveness, personal weaknesses as well as strengths. This conception seems to reflect the inner strength and energy of a self-connectedness which comes from having forged beliefs, values and knowing into a personal unity.

The first thing that comes to mind..is having that strong sense of who I am. (A-8)

So I think there's power in just being..uhm..happy with your self. (G-54)

I feel it (power) right in there (pointing to centre of her body)...coming out of who you are..and..what you can do..and being comfortable with that...uh..... because..we all..there are aspects of our lives that.. despite..Albert Ellis (laughs) one can..I think..one cannot control. (B-61)

If we have..developed..whether through..someone else's nurturing of us..or..through our own self-nurturing..a sense of power within ourselves..so that we feel a whole person. (B-55)

For some women, this self-knowledge included an awareness of their roots or history as an aspect of their personal integration. This aspect of power as personal integrity was felt as a personal connection to women's achievements and strength and might come through knowing the stories of their mothers or other female family members, or through feeling related to women's contributions in the world.

I felt the power growing in me as I..read about..scientists that no one had ever heard of..or just pioneer women...who managed to do tremendous feats with no support..and..and then going back, of course, to the religions..uh..way back..that were based in the power of women. And seeing how these had been changed so dramatically with male Christianity..and just getting in..getting in touch with that whole power base that we have. I thought, "Women have got to understand how powerful we are." (C-7)
And then that..that fits into my philosophy of knowing our continuity as women. As..our personal histories. I wanna know about my female relatives..as well as just our history in the world. (C-12)

Sometimes, the personal integrity, which is the core meaning of this conception includes a strong sense of purposiveness in life. The women who expressed this aspect of the conception described feeling a very strong commitment to their work in life, or their "paths"--a feeling of "knowing" why they are here.

Yeah! It's finding that personal sense of meaning. (B-51)

There's also a very spiritual aspect..to it..uhm..you know..not in any..traditional..really formal way. It's the sense of belonging..being in the right place at the right time..you know, we're here for a reason..and I have work to do. (C-50)

The focus, in this conception is always inward, on personal self-awareness. For some women, that inward focus expanded their experience of power to include a spiritual dimension. This is expressed in the last quoted excerpt above, as well as below, in B's response to my request to explain her use of the word "soul" as a synonym for power. In struggling to articulate her understanding of this, she said:

...I don't know that I'm......spirit..or..uh..spirit in the sense of energy..but..that I see it as self-grounded..not..not transpersonal..you know..I don't think..I don't see this source of spirit or soul coming..from outside oneself..I see it as growing out of..one's self (laughs) I feel it right in there (pointing to centre of her body)..coming out of who you are..and..what you can do..and being comfortable with that...(B-61)

Another respondent says:

It's like..it's not...I know a lot of people talk about higher selves or they talk about....uhm..their spiritual beliefs..like..uh..their..their..something coming from
outside themselves..like a Godcentre or something like that. I don't see it in that way.

Interviewer: You see it more as something that comes out of you?

Yes..Yes!

Interviewer: Central to you.

Right! (F-42)

The process of power here involves "being." It is intrapersonal in the sense that even when there is external input of some type, the individual is always involved in assimilating that in a way that makes it not only hers, but also part of her, and adds to her self-knowledge or self-awareness. An example of this is found in the aspect of this conception which involves women knowing women's history and, through that, strengthening and adding to their self-knowledge. Feedback from others can also be "grist for the mill" in this process of self-knowledge, and that is illustrated in B's words:

If you help people to empower themselves--to feel good about themselves....they can uhm...hear..all feedback.. positive and negative..uhm..and incorporate that into their self-understanding...(B-33)

The "why" of power--its purpose or goal--in conception one is not clearly articulated, but the inference seems to be an intent of the individual to be "true" to herself in experiencing who she really is, in an integrated non-conflicted way. This comes out of such statements as:

...there is also..a sense of power in becoming who you truly are. (H-23).

The data supports my hunch that conception number one is
integral to and included in each of the remaining conceptions of power. This is particularly obvious in conception la and 2.

Conception la: Power is a sense of entitlement

For one woman, the wholeness and self-acceptance implicit in conception 1 included being aware of, and very rooted in the basic human rights which are hers, and every individual's, by virtue of being. Her expression of this encompasses a feeling of belonging, a feeling of deserving to be at home in the world, to take up space and to share fairly in available resources. She describes it as:

...that strong sense of who I am..and..that I have a right to be here. And I have a right to take up space.
...for years, I really believed..that the few crumbs were what was rightfully mine, instead of saying, "Wait a minute! Where's the cake? You're hiding it!...So, yeah, it's very much entitlement . (C-8,9)

The inclusion of conception la in the outcome space illuminates and illustrates one of the strengths of phenomenography--namely, that a focus on the range of conceptions, rather than a search for essence among them, enriches our understanding of the phenomenon being described. In this case, although only one respondent clearly articulated a sense of entitlement as a referential aspect of power, the strength and clarity of her expression of this alerted me to its expression, by several other respondents, as a structural aspect of power as influence (conception 6). In their expression of this, the respondents describe women's power to have impact or influence on others in order to get what they want as severely
limited by their lack of a sense of entitlement, or deserving.

These respondents cite gender-bias resulting in lack of social support as a factor affecting women's sense of entitlement. This seems congruent with the view of integrity and entitlement expressed above as an integration of internal and external into a personal unity, i.e. knowing our history, or incorporating feedback from others into our view of ourselves. Thus, although the focus in conception 1 and 1a is inward and personal, on the "private" self, that self is, of course, at least in part, socially constructed and socially influenced. In discussing women's lack of entitlement, E says:

When it comes right down to...like...attitudes...and...well-entrenched beliefs, and so on...that one has grown up with...socialized into and all that stuff...there isn't much of a shift, I don't think...they're still hanging on...they're relying on those underlying beliefs, and if they're really put in a corner, and...certainly if it has anything to do with...you know...being threatened by...another...certainly a woman's power...I think the real belief comes out...which is...yes...they (men) deserve to be on top. And women...have no right...to be up there. (E-10)

And F, in discussing her opinion that the awareness of women, heightened by the feminist movement, hasn't been translated into personal action by many women, states:

...and certainly women have done a lot of talking about the importance of...equality, and not just equality for women, but equality on a global scale, but...we haven't yet moved...I think a lot of us have not yet moved to a place where...we're really willing to act on...we haven't become personally empowered to a point where we can act on...a lot of the information that we have...I think a lot of women still...are still struggling...with feeling that they have a right...to...put their beliefs about power into action. That still comes from a lot of fear...cause we still have to...have to live in a world which is very uh...you know, patriarchal...(ma)...male-oriented. (F-84,85)
These inferred expressions of conception 1a through noetic aspects of another conception also illustrate the variation among respondents of what is stressed or focused on. According to Marton (1988):

It is a variation in perspective, in the point of view from which the scene defining the conception is seen; it is a variation in the figure-ground structure superimposed on that scene. We may dare to conjecture on the point of departure of this variation; we have here a hypothetical candidate for an internal explanatory mechanism of transitions between conceptions. (p. 51)

This "transition between conceptions" refers to repeated focii within various conceptions which may provide links between them. Since, as pointed out elsewhere in this study, individuals consider a phenomenon in relation to different situations and experiences, the respondents' understandings of power will, understandably, vary according to the particular context in which it is being viewed or experienced. This example of a noetic/structural aspect of conception 6 throwing light on conception 1a is an example of the complexity of expression of conceptions, arising out of the infinite variety of life-world experience and is just one instance of the recurring interrelatedness of conceptions of power which this outcome space illustrates again and again. One implication of the quotes above, which could be seen as "fragments" (Beaty, Dall'Alba & Marton, in press) of conception 1a (at least insofar as they shed some light on that conception and thus add to our understanding of the possible variation in the experience of power) is that entitlement can be seen as a link between conception 1 and the remaining conceptions in this outcome space in that conception 1a
may be seen as a bridge between "being" and "acting" in the world. This carries us from the private, personal level of conception 1 to the social level of conception 2.

Conception 2: Power is expressing personal integrity/congruence

This conception encompasses number 1 (see above) and takes it one step further—from the internal, or personal, private world to the external, or social world. The emphasis here, as in conception 1a, is still on "self" but now it's "self-in the world," as the "knowing" and "self-connectedness" of conception 1 and 1a are expressed in action. Thus, at it's most basic, conception 2 means acting out of and "acting out" self knowledge and personal integrity. For the women holding this conception, it's like a statement of, "This is who I am." It involves coming out of the private realm of the self into the public realm of the world and revealing or showing themselves, through words and/or actions, as they really are—strengths and weaknesses. As in conception 1, the focus is on the self, but the process is now interpersonal at least in the sense of action in the world and sometimes in the sense of actively engaging or interacting with others in some way.

...power for me...uhm..in this...instance...uhm...would be...mostly...a sense...of......responding...with integrity...of responding...honestly...uh...outwardly...uh as an expression of what my...my feelings and my...beliefs are...inwardly. So that to me is power. And there would be a congruence between..what I feel and know...and what...I...express...behaviourally. (F-32)

When I think of power, uh..in that sense, I think of..uh..uhm..feeling good about yourself...feeling confident and feeling strong, and therefore not being afraid...to share experiences...not being afraid to...uhm..to make
decisions..uhm..and give opinions. You know.....being who you are, sharing who you are..sharing your views and your thoughts and your experiences...(H-37)

So, it comes from just this..felt sense..now, that what you see is what you get. This is who I am..I'm not about to change it for you..uh..and I'm not going to play games with you. (C-8)

It's like..uhm..it's a central core of knowingness..and I don't really know how to put words to it...It's like I feel that there's an aspect..of myself..which is constant..and from which..I can express myself..if I can kind of get the..you know..the smoke rays or the cobwebs..or the extraneous stuff out of the way. (F-42)

Sometimes this conception is about assertiveness in the sense of standing up for yourself, or for what you believe--"speaking your truth." The fundamental goal of assertiveness here is always to act or present in a way that is true to the self--to maintain, publicly, the personal integrity of conception number 1. This particular structural/noetic aspect of conception 2 (the "why," or intent of action) is a watershed between the action of conception 2 and that of all remaining conceptions, where the intent of power through action/assertiveness may or may not include the intent to stay true to self but is not limited to that. The following quotes discuss assertiveness as the expression of personal integrity (and entitlement):

Well, in that situation....how I saw power was...uhm.....a couple of ways..one was..having enough confidence for me to speak my mind..on something that I felt was right, or not right..so that was power from within, that I had to feel that it was my..sort of..duty to do that..(So that kind of power is) confidence and...uhm..standing up for what you believe. (G-30)

But it's certainly...a willingness..to take up space in the world. To stand up to be counted..uhm..to take up some space. (C-28)
Conception 3: Power is self-determination

This conception could be seen as an extension of the "action" of conception 2 into a sense or experience of "ableness," of having effect—in this case, on one's own life. B expresses this as:

And..being able..to..uh..control your environment....in a way that..that works for you and for other people. (B-42)

This connection with conception 2 is clearly expressed in many of the noetic "fragments" of the respondents' articulation of this conception, which describe this power as proceeding out of the "inner power" or expressed integrity of conception 2. For example, B says:

...sees options for herself...that come..out of..herself..and not out of imposed choices..or......embedded in society..or others' perceptions..but bedded in women's own..perceptions of themselves. (B-4)

Some respondents describe the connection as movement in the other direction, i.e. the "inner power" of conception 1 and 2 is affected by "power-as-self-determination." In describing her own experience of not feeling this power, H states:

I think in order to have that inner power, or that inner strength...it goes hand in hand with choice. I don't think one would feel..powerful...or one would feel strong, if they had to do something that they didn't want to do....what happened for me in my own personal experience was that I felt I had no choice....and I felt suffocated and I felt stifled....not only powerless, but I felt, uhm..inadequate. I felt insecure..I felt uhm....not liking my situation, not liking who I was..low self-esteem..there's a lot of factors that go into being..or to feeling powerless and helpless. (H-33,34)

These examples serve as a very simple, partial illustration of the structural aspects of conceptions which involve
interconnectedness between conceptions in the outcome space. Often, as in these cases, respondents expressed the connections in the form of one conception as "source" or "influence" on another. An overview of the directedness of these connections between conceptions is presented later in this chapter.

The referential aspect of power here was experienced by the women who participated in this research as a capacity to be in charge of their own lives--to make choices, to see options for themselves, and to have some control over their own affairs. Conception 3 thus involves the intrapersonal/interpersonal processes of self-determination which could be expressed as, "being responsible for myself," or "running my own life." For the respondents who expressed this conception, this often seemed to involve the capacity for independent decision-making and the ability to direct or effect changes for themselves. For example:

You have the choice as to whether you want to uhm...do it or not. So then, handing us that choice, and handing us the power to decide for ourselves what we want to do. (H-35)

...It means so that...women feel good about themselves...uh..feel that they can control their lives and feel they have choices--that they're not under someone else's control..(B-3)

Of course, being autonomous and independent implies being responsible for oneself, and one women expressed her difficulty with that:

Well, the power (she has is) she doesn't need men..you know..she's quite fine without men...and you see, I don't want to feel that powerful because then I have to take more responsibility than I'm willing to take so it's very threatening to me... (D-30,31)
As in conception 2, the focus here is still inward, on self-in-the-world; the process is acting or interacting; and the context is public or social. The "why" of power here, however, expands being true to oneself to an intent to impact one's own destiny.

Conception 4: Power is agency/competence

A commonly-expressed conception of power involved its operation in the process of getting things accomplished through the use of skills, knowledge, or expertise, or gainfully utilizing one's personal resources. For some women this meant acting in a competent and responsible manner to "get the job done," or to do things "well;" more dramatically, it sometimes meant "saving" a situation or "knowing what to do" when others were stumped. It is not surprising, considering the context of a training group for counsellors, that competence and success were, for many of the respondents, associated with professional ability. This is expressed in the following statements:

Well...I...had the power of the session..in knowing it went well whether (the supervisor) hugged me or not. I had the power. (D-35)

My power would be...my strength as...as...as a counsellor..as a student counsellor--my competence, I guess. (E-44)

Yeah..I felt like I'd done my job right. (C-37)

Power is skill. (E-45)

I..I feel power is to be able to take over in an emerg-not in an emergency but a crisis--that's a little too strong..but to....sometimes to know what to do when others are sort of sitting around. (D-20)
I could be relied upon, and she saw me as a reliable, responsible person who would get the job done. But I guess... I... I see... power in that. A person is powerful if they are reliable and responsible and get the job done. (E-56)

At times, this conception is concerned with confidence in the sense of a woman's belief in her capacity to be instrumentally successful or to make personal gains in some way. One respondent describes it this way:

Yeah, yeah! I felt power because I... I was not afraid of this situation, you know... D. just threw out this idea, and then I went with it, and I ran with it, and succeeded at it... was successful. (D-20)

Another expression of this conception implied "stretching" to do ones very best. This could mean meeting a challenge, getting through a crisis or surviving an ordeal and somehow getting something out of that experience, no matter how unpleasant it had been. The gains in these cases generally involved learning or personal growth, as illustrated in the following examples:

It could also... you could also say, you know, "What have I learned from this?" and increase your personal power, because... it... you could feel, "I'll never make this choice again, and here's what I've learned from it." And so, "It wasn't fun while it lasted, but... I get... you know, I can take something away from it." (B-59)

... power... part of... of being in power is... is... using your... your... ability to the fullest... (H-24)

I think things are put in our path... so... the the... horrible black period in my life... I look back at, and say, "Thank God!" It was the best thing that happened to me... or I'd still be (unclear).... so that was, you know... the most empowering experience in my life... was... looking death in the face! (C-51)

The focus here is on self, the process involves acting or interacting, and the context is public or social. The "why" of
the process here, however, is to be "successful" or to make gains. The emphasis here is always on the ability of the individual to gainfully utilize her personal resources. Unlike conception 5, which may also involve competence or skills, conception 4 does not imply comparison with others.

Conception 5: Power is respected standing

Another expressed conception of power among the women taking part in this research project, centred around the experience of power as gaining or holding a respected position vis-à-vis others. This conception describes the experience of power as being regarded as a person of significance—being validated, or at least acknowledged by others, although it could centre around a woman's own perception of her position or standing in the group. At any rate, it's always about being seen (or seeing oneself) as at least "equal" to others and, sometimes, as "more equal." The focus here is on the perception of the individual by others, since, at least by inference, the individual is always considered in comparison to others.

In that instance..uhm..she feels powerless..uhm..she probably looks at her skills in relationship to the rest of us....and..probably in comparison, she just feels so diminished. (F-70)

A strong statement of the "in comparison" theme which runs through this conception is found in the description of power as a hierarchical structure. E says:

...some time in the last two or three minutes I was..suddenly it occured to me...I wonder....if I had to arrange people in (laughs)..in levels of power in the group..how would I do that? Cause I did start off towards the beginning..saying..that I see us..sort of working as a
group...you know...as equals.....I guess when you take all the outer wrappings off....and uhm..be honest..If I take all the outer wrappings of and be honest about it, I would see a kind of..uh..from my perspective..a kind of hierarchy of power...((E-68)

E expressed this process, in another situation, as "eliciting respect."

Well, to me, I guess, it's (power)...commanding respect..from others..or not commanding it..i..it..it sounds like such a military word..uh..elicits respect from other people. (E-32)

Her expression is interesting as one of the few that focused on the individual concerned as "actor" and not, as most expressions of this conception as "recipient" of the power. This outside focus on the "other" is a movement from the inward focus on self inherent in all previously described conceptions. With this change, power is sometimes described as though it were an object which is "given" to another, as in the following examples:

Power's having respect...here's an instance of her giving me power..because she respects my opinion. (F-70)

And by doing that, I give them power, because they feel like, "No, she's not above me. She's not acting like she's above me." (G-45)

I give power to those who have my social approval. (D-27)

The "why" of power in this conception seems to be the perception of self as having value in comparison to others--being "as good as" or "better than," being a person of significance. The context is public and the process is acting or interacting--the self is always seen in relation to others. Thus the focus is on the other or, more accurately, on the other's view of the actor.
Conception 6: Power is influencing others

This conception revolves around the experience of power as an interpersonal process of influencing others. Thus power is operating when one person is influencing another or others, in some way. The respondents described a very wide variance of meaning of influence, or impact here. This ranged from controlling, manipulating or "wielding power over" others at one pole; to teaching, inspiring, facilitating, nurturing, helping or empowering, at the other. Although the forms of power vary here, what holds constant is its public expression as interpersonal impact. In this conception the "why" of the process is revealed as the most important noetic aspect. The respondents' experiences of power here, as well as their attitudes towards it are strongly mediated by goal, or purpose. All the women expressed negative reactions to power as influence when the goal was to control or manipulate in order to maintain "the upper hand" over others or to make personal gains at another's expense. The differences here are illustrated in the following examples:

...because again, as I say...I see it...it depends on how the power is used...that's the big...thing....If it's for facilitative, beneficial purposes...then, I'm fine with it. But if it's that overpowering, manipulative, controlling stuff..I don't want to have anything to do with it...though I know it goes on all the time. (E-61)

So it can be a real positive thing, or it can be a really black type of energy..uhm..and I've worked with people like that in my life, when I was in the corporate world...I mean, they would..they would kill their mother to get what they wanted. So I've seen that energy operate on the darker side of life. (C-26)

...it's..pow(er)..<i>it's</i> sort of authority that she's been...given..<i>that</i> she can wield over other people. So it's a kind of power over. (F-39)
Without exception, the women interviewed in this study described the power of influence as positive when the goal was to benefit another person—for example: to facilitate learning or growth; share; nurture or empower. This pole of the variation of meaning in conception 6 was described as follows:

...but it's a positive power to...uh...to hear the need...and meet that need....and...uh...watch...watch the fruit of the...you know...of having heard the need and met it. (B-21)

...that facilitating role that counsellors and therapists play, and that nurturing and caring and stuff...to me, that's very powerful. (E-53)

...she's not afraid to uhm...to clearly articulate some of her...like her technical expertise....in terms of suggesting that this might be...what's wrong....and maybe you should try this or that kind of approach.... and that she's not afraid to take action and sort of...uhm...facilitate learning. (G-39)

I think it's her power as...as a role model...she's had the power, certainly, to...to uhm...through her modelling...to...oh! facilitate us having really respected each other. (H-27)

Thus, structuring this outcome space as a movement in the respondents' experience and understanding of power—from power as "being" to "action" to "interaction;" from a private to a public or social context; and from a focus on self to a focus on other, conception 6 stands as interactive, social and other-focused.

B. Discussion: The Outcome Space

The six conceptions of power depict the different experiences of power expressed by the women who participated in this research. As noted elsewhere, the focus in phenomenographic research is on variation, not commonality, and what has been described above is the variation within and between conceptions.
Table 1 summarizes the outcome space and transitions between conceptions.

**Links Between Conceptions**

The data reveals strong evidence of the interconnectedness of conceptions of power expressed by the respondents. As noted, these connections were expressed, at times, as referential aspects of one conception becoming, in another expression of power, the noetic aspect of that conception. What this involved was a change in the directedness-of-thought, or figure-ground, so that the process expressed as the global meaning of one conception is seen, in another case, as the source of another conception of power—or, sometimes, as a mitigating or expanding influence on power. For example, at one point feeling whole and comfortable might be experienced as power (referential p=integrity), whereas, in another situation, the referential aspect of power might be seen as having an influence on another person, and the noetic aspect in terms of source of that influence seen as the influencer's "personhood," or her strong sense of who she is in the world (referential p=influence/source of p or noetic p=integrity). An examination of the respondents' transcripts brings to light a myriad of these connections between conceptions which are summarized in the Table 2.

**Power Systems**

Sometimes respondents discussed conceptions feeding into one another in such a way that, for example, acting out a particular
Table 1: Outcome Space for Conceptions of Power

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Context</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Being</td>
<td>Private</td>
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<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Entitlement</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Being</td>
<td>Private</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Expressing Integrity/Congruence</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Acting/Interacting</td>
<td>Public/Social</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Self-Determination</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Acting/Interacting</td>
<td>Public/Social</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Agency/Competence</td>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Acting/Interacting</td>
<td>Public/Social</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Respected Standing</td>
<td>Other's View</td>
<td>Acting/Interacting</td>
<td>Public/Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Interacting</td>
<td>Public/Social</td>
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Table 2: "Source" of Power as Links Between Conceptions

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<th>#</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Personal Integrity</td>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Entitlement</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Self-Determination</td>
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<td>Agency/competence</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Respected Standing</td>
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<td>Influence</td>
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<td>1a</td>
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<td>2</td>
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conception of power leads to another aspect of power which reinforces or adds to the original aspect of power acted out. One such system was between conception 1 and 2 and 4. Thus the power of feeling good about oneself and having a sense of purposiveness in the world and acting on that leads to agency/competence which, in turn, increases the power of feeling good about oneself. Another intrapersonal system involved power as personal integrity, leading to acting out of that, leading to competence/agency which, in turn, gave the actor a sense of power in terms of being self-determining in her life, and that fed back into and increased her personal integrity.

Sometimes power was described as a dynamic interactive system. For example, one individual might use power as influence to facilitate another person to the power of congruence—or acting out their personal integrity in the world. In valuing this latter expression, the original actor facilitates the second individual's power in the sense of feeling acknowledged and respected within the group. In the meantime, the second individual is increasing the original actor's power by allowing and appreciating her influence. This is an example of a power interaction over which each party has some control and which, in the end, results in mutual influence. Power was frequently described this way—as a dynamic system of mutual influence in the sense of women mutually nurturing, validating and supporting one another. One respondent said, of this type of power system, "When power is used for...good...it's sort of catching. It's contagious! It gives other people power" (D-36). Another
respondent commented: "When you share power..if anything..it's added to..because..it engenders more...I guess I want to say self-power..and more..other-power" (B-41). Thus, in the operation of power when it involves mutual influence, "it's not like two plus two is four...it's exponential..it just takes great leaps!" (C-46) An interesting aspect of this is that sometimes respondents described this process of power as, not only raising the power thresholds of everyone involved, but also lessening or removing the power differential between individuals which may have existed at the beginning of the interaction. Power as an interactive system is described further in Chapter V.
V. IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

In order to discuss the implications of the research findings of this study, this chapter sets the context for discussion by briefly reviewing some of the relevant research and theory concerning the psychology of power, focusing, first, on the literature dealing with definitions of power and, second, on women and power. This is followed by a discussion of the research results as they illuminate and are illuminated by this literature. The chapter concludes with implications for further investigations and implications for counselling.

A. Research/Theory: The Psychology of Power

For the purposes of this study, the literature in this area is discussed as two main topics: (a) definitions of power, including traditional and current understandings of the nature of power, and (b) women and power—focusing on women's developmental issues and the impact of these on their attitudes toward power. The nature of power is discussed first.

The Nature of Power

Power has traditionally been defined as the right or ability to control resources—material and human—and to control core social institutions, resulting in the capacity to influence others' behaviour (French & Raven, 1959; Perlman & Cozby, 1983; Sherif, 1982). Social psychologists have focused on
the latter half of this definition in describing power as the capacity to affect other people and to get them to do what one wants, even if they demonstrate initial resistance to this (Cartwright & Zander, 1968). These views of power see it as a right "which one is able to possess like a commodity" (Foucault, 1980, p. 88). Thus a person or group could collect power and have it for their own use.

In this frame, power is seen as "power over" and the capacity to use or wield this power over others is based on characteristics of the individuals involved—that is, the power-holder's power resides in some base (ex. a role such as president of a company), and the one being influenced must accept, or be forced to accept, the other's domination or influence. Most theorists agree that there are multiple bases of power, and French and Raven's (1959) early typology is still seen as a valid model of power viewed this way. They listed five bases for one individual's power over another. These are: reward power; coercive power; referent power; expert power; and role power or legitimate power. Power generally rests in some combination of these bases, which are described below.

In utilizing reward power, influence is based on the perceived ability of one person to give another something the latter wants. This could range from personal rewards such as affection or regard, to status rewards such as marks for a university student, to material rewards such as money. Of course, it follows that the rewards must be perceived as important and desirable to the person being influenced. Coercive
power is the flip side of this coin in that it rests on the ability of one to punish the other for failure to comply. Coercion, in this sense, could mean demotion, fines, disapproval, or even physical injury. Again, the strength and effectiveness of coercive power will depend on how dire or undesirable the negative consequences to be meted out appear to the individual being influenced. Homans (1974) emphasized the differing emotional reactions to reward power and coercive power, noting that being rewarded is usually felt as a positive experience, whereas being coerced, for most people, calls up frustration and anger.

Referent power is based on the ability to influence another to act in a desired manner because the target of influence likes, identifies with or admires the powerholder and wants to be like that person. Thus individuals may willingly conform to the standards of those they want to be like without any overt rewards or punishment from the referent individuals. An attempt to employ this power could be seen, for example, in the use of famous sports figures or music idols to advertise particular brands of clothing or soft drinks. Referent power is also operating when a child behaves to please an admired parent, or students adopt the style of a respected mentor. Judith Bardwick (1979) called this "charismatic power," and described it as "a quality that enables people to create authority by virtue of their appeal, because they are responded to" (p.140).

Expert power rests in the presumed possession of superior knowledge or skills. Thus, many of us would tend to accept the
advice of someone we see as having acquired expertise in an area we are interested in or concerned about, particularly if it is an area we know little about. Finally, role power or legitimate power refers to power accrued through one's position and based on cultural and social norms. For example, a professor may be seen as having a legitimate right to demand particular behaviour from students in the context of the academic programme, or individuals might attempt to demand particular behaviour from their spouses on the pretext that this is what can legitimately be expected from a husband or wife. Whatever frame this power is exercised within, both parties involved must acknowledge the right of one person to expect the desired behaviour from the other.

The above views of power, although obviously reflecting an interactional element, emphasize "the intentional exercise of one individual's will over others" (Lips, 1991, p. 5). Indeed, power could even be seen as an attribute, or possession, of the powerful—a kind of magic wand which can be picked up and waved to call up obedience.

David McClelland's (1975) view of power could be seen as somewhat of a watershed between notions of power as commodity and power as interaction. McClelland defines power as "having impact." His portrait of power is leader-centred, but he also discusses the expression of power as a progress toward maturity and, although this term is not specifically defined, it seems to involve flexibility employed in the selection of behaviour which is appropriate to specific circumstances and considerate of others. McClelland described the power style of dominance and
compulsion of others as immature. His preferred leadership style involves the use of influence and education, rather than force, to set group goals and to create confidence in group members that these goals can be achieved.

Janeway (1980), while acknowledging the dichotomy of the "powerful and the weak," focused on power as a process which involves an active, two-way relationship. She sees power as "one aspect of ongoing interactions among human beings of all stations" (p. 84). Viewed this way, power is part of the process of any relationship, and both parties, even if one dominates the other, participate in and contribute to that process. This consideration acknowledges the connection between power and relatedness, and Janeway points to the developmental process of growing from the dependence of childhood to a creative, interdependent self-sufficient maturity, as a power-process in which and from which we all learn as we grow. This process includes developing a strong, healthy sense of self, gaining knowledge about the world, and "learning how to respond to, predict and control events, to bargain, to negotiate with others, and to rebel—all part of the process of achieving power" (Lips, 1991, p. 4). In describing this process, Janeway states:

When we turn from speculation on the origins of the human species to everyday child-rearing practices, we find ourselves once again looking at a process of individuation that depends on relatedness, and which carries each human creature from a condition of total powerlessness toward a goal—not always reached!—of reasonable control over the external circumstances of life and comfortable, affectionate connection with other human creatures. Whatever we know of power begins here, as the self becomes aware of the line that separates it from the not-self and then learns ways of
dealing with the not-self, some more successful than others. (p.28)

In rejecting social psychology's individualistic view of power and focusing on relational views of this phenomenon, recent theorists see power, not as static, but as dynamic—an inescapable aspect of all human interaction (Foucault, 1980; Hartsock, 1983; Janeway, 1980). According to Foucault:

Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organization. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. (p. 98)

Since the mid-nineteenth century, feminists have generated questions and debate about the nature and use of power. The feminist movement itself grows out of the basic assumption that power differences exist between men and women. "Feminist efforts to seek power without emphasizing control over others have lifted the veil from some other faces of power" (Lips, 1991, p. 8). One of these faces, described by Janeway (1980) as part of her exploration of the psychology of response to oppression is the power of resistance, which she labels as one of the "powers of the weak." Thus the weak can exert power by questioning the status quo instead of meekly accepting it. They can join together in order to bargain with the powerful for a more equal arrangement. Jean Lipman-Blumen (1984) pointed out that "once the powerless recognize that their self-interest lies in joining with similarly disenfranchised people, they can unite to demand change" (p. 9). Bardwick (1976) labelled this power "compensatory manipulation" and described it as "intended to
diminish another's control, exercised in order to protect oneself" (p. 140). This power is, of course, influence, but it cannot really be seen as "influence over;" Janeway names it "power from under," and it seems most concerned with resisting and limiting the power of others.

Another of the faces of power favoured by those who seek to move away from focusing on power solely as domination over others, is the power to achieve one's goals—either individually or collectively. Jean Baker Miller (1986) describes this as the "capacity to implement," and she notes that this is a fresh outlook on power in that it assumes that power may be felt primarily for the self, without implying a winner-loser situation. Thus, one of the important implications of this power rests in the assumption that it is possible to act as an "empowered" person in the world without dominating or restricting others' rights to do the same. In discussing this power, which involves a sense of personal capacity and potential effectiveness, Miller states:

"In a basic sense, the greater the development of each individual the more able, more effective, and less needy of limiting or restricting others she or he will be. (p. 116)

"There is also personal power, in the sense of confidence that resides in oneself, that comes from one's maturity and self-respect" (Bardwick, 1976, p.140). An important element of this, according to Bardwick, is that the strength reflected in this personal power comes out of a sense of self which is firmly based in an acceptance of oneself. According to her, people who experience this internal power are "not dominated by the need to
be liked, not measuring themselves by others' responses, they do not need to conform to or rebel against others" (Ibid). This description of power seems similar to Maslow's (1968) concept of "self-actualization," and Winnicott's (1971) idea of "a capacity for creative living." Miller (1986) also speaks of "authenticity" as becoming/being oneself and the "personal creativity" which comes out of that. She describes this process of personal creativity as follows:

Personal creativity is a personal process of bringing forth a changing vision of oneself, and of oneself in relation to the world. Out of this creation each person determines her/his next step and is motivated to take that next step. This vision must undergo repeated change and re-creation. Through childhood and adulthood, too, there are inevitable physical changes as one grows and then ages. These demand a change in one's relation to the world. Further, there are the continuous psychological changes that lead to more experience, more perceptions, more emotions, and more thought. It is necessary to integrate all these into a coherent and constantly enlarging conception of one's life. (p.111)

Another facet of personal power—one that Lips (1991) points to as largely overlooked in feminist discussion, except by those interested in feminist spirituality, is "power from within" (Starhawk, 1982) which focuses on an acceptance of the innate individual value of each person and which translates, in knowing that value, into "an inner strength." Like some Native Canadian and American spiritual practices, nascent feminist theologies emphasize that this power has its source in the individual—not, as in traditional Western religion, in an external source such as God. Power from within comes from connection with self on an essential level and is nourished through interaction with others and with the environment.
Although feminist dialogue has added to our picture of power, it has not managed to resolve the ambivalence towards power which, probably, the less powerful members of society have always experienced. Indeed, "the debates have succeeded only in highlighting, not in resolving, the uneasiness about power" (Lips, 1991, p. 10). The next sections of this chapter examine the psychology of women and women's orientations/attitudes to power.

**The Psychology of Women and Power**

In examining power through the various lenses with which it has been viewed, it becomes apparent that as traditional concepts of "power over" were broadened to include interactive and intrapersonal elements, power could take new forms "and a disinclination toward dominance or a recognition of one's own feelings of vulnerability and uncertainty need not imply weakness" (Lips, 1991, p. 89). Serious consideration of heretofore ignored aspects of power have come out of a growing awareness that women's experience, which is often different from men's, results in a different orientation towards social phenomena, and a consideration of these orientations has contributed to a re-valuing of qualities and characteristics which are often associated with femininity (in men as well as in women). Theorists involved in this work have pointed out that feminine qualities usually seen as disabilities are often, in reality, strengths, and that by including women's experience and
orientation, we expand our understanding of power, to the benefit of both sexes.

Carol Gilligan's (1982) work on women's moral development suggests that developmental differences between the sexes result in alternative conceptions of maturity—which are not necessarily inferior to the accepted definitions which had been based on observations of male experience. The psychology of women which has been described in terms of women's orientation toward being in relationship implied, in Gilligan's mind, that women bring a different point of view and different priorities to their life experience. For the women involved in her research, these differences centered around the importance of care and responsibility to others within relationship as opposed to individual rights, and around connectedness as opposed to separation. These differences seem consistent with male emphasis on companionate and instrumental modes of relating as different from female emphasis on affiliation and connectedness found in studies of relationship patterns within organizations (Eagley, 1978; Hennig & Jardin, 1977; Kanter, 1977; Riger & Galligan, 1980).

As noted above, McClelland (1975) viewed power styles in terms of maturity/immaturity, and he also pointed to the developmental differences in women and men as leading to different power styles in the mature individual. Like Gilligan, McClelland saw the construction of maturity by women as "invoking interdependence, building up resources, and giving" (p. 96). Whereas research revealed that power fantasies in men often
revolved around assertion and aggressiveness, in women these fantasies were concerned with nurturance as strength. In discussing women's traditional approach towards power as nurturing and caring, McClelland stated:

It should be emphasized, however, that there is absolutely no reason why a woman has to or should adopt this life style or why a man for that matter should not adopt it. My own belief is that the traditional male's single-minded, specialized assertive life style is far too dominant and too much valued in so-called advanced societies. Both women and men are drawn to it—to full-time specialized careers, for instance—because that is the only way to be fully respected in contemporary Western society. The traditional male life style has won out and exerts an even subtler form of oppression on women who feel increasingly worthless if they pursue the traditional feminine social emotional role rather than the male instrumental role...I see no reason why more men could not or should not adopt such a role also. (p. 93)

Jean Baker Miller (1986) also saw women's orientation toward power as differing from the traditional male orientation. Miller focuses on women's participation in relationships of dominance and subordination in her exploration of these differing orientations. She distinguishes, here, between relationships of permanent inequality as compared to those of temporary inequality—the latter referring to relationships, such as parent/child or teacher/student, in which power is ideally used in supporting and encouraging development which eventually ends the disparity. Relationships of permanent inequality, on the other hand, use power to maintain dominance of one group over another, and to legitimize that inequality and incorporate it into society's "guiding concepts."

Focusing, in this way, on power inequities, Miller describes the psychology of women as coming out of their positions in
relationships of temporary and permanent inequality. She saw women as dominant in temporarily unequal relationships (ex. mother/child) and subordinate in permanently unequal relationships with men. These latter relationships, she points out, are complicated by the intimate sexual and familial bonds between men and women. According to Miller, women thus have a particularly unique vantage point in terms of their experience and observations of the potential for care and responsibility within human relationship, as well as the potential for domination and oppression. In *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (1986), Miller asserted a psychology of power and maturity which recognized that separation does not displace the value of care and responsibility in relationships. In discussing women's peculiar position vis-a-vis power relationships within the family, she pointed out that:

What has not been recognized is that this psychic starting point contains the possibilities for an entirely different (and more advanced) approach to living and functioning—very different, that is, from the approach fostered by the dominant culture. In it, affiliation is valued as highly as, or more highly than, self-enhancement. Moreover, it allows for the emergence of the truth: that for everyone—men as well as women—individual development proceeds only by means of connection. (p. 83)

Consistent with Miller's position, Percival and Percival (1986) found, across two studies, that women and men who were able to define themselves in a non-oppositional way—i.e. incorporate both connectedness to others or empathy, and separateness or agency—were able to transcend traditional gender constructs and were supportive of equality for women.

In bringing the voices of women out of silence and into
their research on human development and the psychology of power, and in recognizing that women's often devalued qualities can be seen, in fact, as strengthening power's "appropriate operation" (Miller, 1986, p. 118), these theorists have made important connections between an ethic of care and responsibility toward others, on the one hand, and individual rights, on the other. Gilligan (1982) points to the importance of listening carefully to the voices of both women and men and hearing the different realities of their lives, so that in recognizing differing modes of social experience and interpretation, "we arrive at a more complex rendition of human experience" (p. 174). In pointing to the inevitable connections between the two disparate modes of experience, she stated:

Just as the language of responsibilities provides a weblike imagery of relationships to replace a hierarchical ordering that dissolves with the coming of equality, so the language of rights underlines the importance of including in the network of care not only the other but also the self. (p. 173)

Women's Attitudes Toward Power

Developmental aspects of women's life experience affects their orientations and attitudes toward power. As Jean Baker Miller (1986) and others have pointed out, the "womanly strengths" referred to above, come, not out of any particular saintliness or higher awareness exclusive to women, but out of the peculiar and sometimes painful reality of women's gender-defined socialization. The emphasis on feminine qualities as positive and valuable is relatively new and certainly not
universally accepted, by men or by women. Since, as McClelland pointed out in 1975, "sex role turns out to be one of the most important determinants of human behaviour" (p. 81) and since research data, at least up until that time, had focused almost exclusively on studies of males, there has been a tendency to "regard male behaviour as the 'norm' and female behaviour as some kind of deviation from that norm" (Ibid). This has resulted in women feeling devalued and, often, accepting the notion that they are, indeed, less valuable and that something is wrong with their feelings or behaviour.

Women's (and men's) socialization in this direction begins, Lipman-Blumen (1984) says, in childhood, when boys and girls are segregated in school--not on the basis of who they are or what they can do, but on the basis of having been born male or female. Whatever the boys do is accorded more importance, and thus, lacking socially-valued resources, women are, from the beginning seen as less important and less valuable--by males and by each other.

According to Gordon Allport (1955), victims of prejudice are likely to take on defensive modes of behaviour; he described these as intropunitive and extropunitive ego-defenses. Rawlings and Carter's (1977) application of Allport's theory to women is consistent with Lipman-Blumen's (1984) work. Intropunitive ego-defenses turn societal devaluation of women inward towards the self and other women. Thus women who manifest intropunitive ego defenses protect themselves by denying membership in their own group, sometimes by being careful not to "step out of line" or to
associate with women who might be seen as "deviant" in terms of societal views of accepted feminine behaviour or ideas. For such women, the very idea of claiming power for themselves by actualizing their potential in non-traditional ways, may be felt as intensely frightening, and they may resent other women who attempt to do that.

Thus, while recent theory suggests that women may bring particular strengths to bear on our understanding of power, women have their own particular problems with power. As Miller (1986) points out, for many women, power "is almost a dirty word-in somewhat the same way 'sex' has been" (p. 115). Just as "nice girls" didn't want any (sex) in the fifties, "nice women" today often shy away from the notion of themselves as powerful. Research suggests that this fear of power results from the experience of powerlessness (Lips, 1991). Bardwick (1979) pointed out that "those without power are always preoccupied with it because they are always afraid of being victims" (p. 141), and certainly women have experienced ascribed powerlessness in every area. As numerous researchers and theorists have pointed out, men on the average possess more reward power, more coercive power, more referent power, more expert power and more legitimate power (Janeway, 1980; Johnson, 1976; Kahn, 1980; Lips, 1991). Also, some men have used that power to dominate and control women in ways that women find very frightening, including threatened or actual physical violence or abuse (Baker-Miller, 1986; Kahn, 1980; Lips, 1991; Herman, 1979). Thus, women's use of their own power, in their own interest, sometimes brings a severely
negative reaction from men and, for some women, this knowledge is a deterrent to acting in powerful ways (Baker-Miller, 1986).

This personal understanding of powerlessness, combined with women's emphasis on care and responsibility within relationship, may also sensitize women to the misuse of power, in that they may shy away from success at the expense of another's failure (Gilligan, 1987). If a woman sees the use of power as likely to hurt another person, interfere with another's rights, or entail the loss of empathy for others, then she may "construe the conflict between femininity and adulthood as a moral problem" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 97). Janeway (1982) speaks of the contradiction, for women, "between a limiting power to compel and a liberating power to act" (p. 87). She asks "how dare we trust our own aspirations if...ambition for oneself can be transmuted in the space of a breath into domination over others?" (p. 88) Of course, a questioning of traditional definitions of success and power may, as pointed out above, benefit both women and men. Taken to extremes, however, a fear of power may limit women's perceptions of their own potential and block their ability to move new understandings of power into action.

Gilligan (1982) also discusses power as choice and she points out that in order to be willing to make choices, one must be willing to accept responsibility for the choices one makes. Women who experience lack of power and a need to depend on men for protection and support may have grave fears around being responsible for making their own choices. These women may make the choice to trade their power as decision-makers for the
approval or support they believe they need. Gilligan described this process in the following words:

To the extent that women perceive themselves as having no choice, they correspondingly excuse themselves from the responsibility that decision entails. Childlike in the vulnerability of their dependence and consequent fear of abandonment, they claim to wish only to please, but in return for their goodness they expect to be loved and cared for. (p. 67)

Paula Caplan (1981) also discussed women's difficulty in dealing with the freedom to choose. She pointed out that many traditional women never really make choices about their life directions, except to choose who they would marry. The other choices were made for them—by parents, by society, and later by their husbands. In her opinion, women are often made to feel that they really have no choices and that, at any rate, "their husbands are far better equipped to make choices and decisions" (p. 154). Caplan goes on to say:

If we never make our own choices and decisions, we never have to grow, and we find it hard to know what we want, how we would choose if it were up to us. (Ibid)

Thus, in spite of the growing body of research and theory which is slowing changing cultural norms and values, traditional gender socialization and gender definitions are still very powerful. It seems that both these things—the changing focii, and the traditional definitions of what we are allowed and expected to be—will affect women's conceptions of power for some time to come.
B. Discussion

The preceding section explored some of the relevant literature on the psychology of power as it relates to women's experience. The following discussion examines the research findings of this study (see Chapter IV) in the light of that literature, with a view to seeing how the research data and the literature might illuminate one another. It focuses, first, on understandings of the nature of power—as illustrated through the outcome space and, second, on women's orientation and attitudes toward power.

Women's Understandings of the Nature of Power

The respondents in this study hold six qualitatively different conceptions of power. These can be expressed as (a) integrity/entitlement, (b) expressing integrity/congruence, (c) self-determination, (d) agency/competence, (e) respected standing, and (f) influence. Before examining each conception individually, this section discusses findings related to all conceptions.

The first thread which weaves its way through all the conceptions is a view of power as a dynamic process, rather than a static phenomenon. This leads directly to the second finding which appears as somewhat of a theme throughout the data, and that is that rather than being seen as an individual right, "which one is able to possess like a commodity" (Foucault, 1980, p. 88), power is seen as relational—an undeniable aspect of all
human interaction. Over and over again, as the respondents struggled to articulate their experience of power, interdependence among the "actors" was taken into account. This view, of course, is consistent with feminist theory which emphasizes women's inter-connectedness within relationships (Baker-Miller, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Lips, 1991).

That is not to claim that the respondents unilaterally defined power in this way in each and every instance of describing their experiences. Indeed, the range of variation in terms of directedness of thought within conceptions mirrors, to some degree, the movement in psychology's view of power, as described above, and that, of course, is to be expected. But, often, even when a woman acknowledged the operation of power based on individual rights, from just under the surface of her description would emerge the themes of interdependence, embeddedness within relationship, connection with others. Influence was, most often, seen as mutual influence; self-determination was described as being able to control one's environment in a way "that works for you and for other people" (B-42); personal integrity, although always involving an inward focus, also necessarily involved the internalization of inter-connectedness. For example, an aspect of personal integration, in some cases was an owning of one's history as a woman—either a connectedness with family members, such as mothers and grandmothers, or a connectedness with women as contributors through the ages.

Another aspect of the dynamic interactive nature of power
described by the respondents involved a view of power as a productive "snowballing" process, a kind of "system of energy" which built upon itself and increased, not just for the initiator of the process, but for all the parties involved. One respondent, for instance, described the instructor's power as "an inner strength," which, as she acted it out in the world, facilitated power for the counsellors-in-training; in noting the development of this inner strength within her students, the supervisor's own power grew—and so on, in a kind of chain reaction. The respondent described this system as a "flowing back and forth of power" (H-28). Another respondent spoke of power as:

..the energy of the interaction that's happening....and that energy facilitates more interaction, and it facilitates...uhm...that facilitates you...uhm...again, coming up with more personal resources than you knew that you had....by me feeling...her power...or her ability to exert herself to say what she thinks.....well, I'll just leave it at that...I'm understanding her, so she feels validated and I think that can energize her, and she can come up with more things...

Interviewer: So when you say it energizes you, do you mean you feel more powerful?

Yeah, I feel more powerful, too, and I can..

Interviewer: And then she feels more powerful?

Yeah..(G-42)

A very interesting product of power described this way is the possibility of a kind of "equalization" of power. Thus, even if it starts off with one person being more powerful, because of superior knowledge, or role, for instance, in the interaction the power begins to equal out. The respondent quoted above went on
to describe this feature of the process:

But what it comes down to, too, is one of the key points, I think...and that is...is that...even though it may have began...with an unequal....uhm..how am I going to put this?....it could be unequal power because she might be in a more powerful position than I am....it becomes more of an equal kind of an interaction even though...she's more knowledgeable?..Because....uhm..I'm ..I'm exerting power in a different kind of way...back to her. We're exerting power on each other....but it's mobilizing both of us, it's..uhm..somehow both of us could come up with resources that sort of..contribute to.. (G-43)

It is interesting to note, although the quoted data comes out of extended descriptions of two qualitatively different conceptions of power (the first--power as expressing integrity; the second--power as influence), the similarities in the process and end product of power. The exercise of power, in these cases, is not only seen as dynamic, interactive and embedded in connectedness, but also as liberating--a very different focus from a traditional view of power as dominance over others!

The Six Conceptions as Views of Power

Conception One: Power as Integrity

This conception of power as knowing oneself and being comfortable with oneself is often described, by the respondents, as an "inner strength" or as "inner power." As noted above, it involves not only a self-connectedness, but also the connectedness of being related to others and integrating that connectedness into one's self-concept. It seems that this conception is most closely related to feminist perceptions of personal power consistent with Bardwick's (1976) description of
personal power; the strength and confidence reflected in the operation of this power rests on a foundation of self-acceptance.

My sense was that some respondents seemed to be attempting to articulate the "essential level" self-connection of those who discuss personal power in the framework of feminist spirituality. In one case, for instance, the speaker used the word "soul" as a synonym for power; in another, she referred to herself as "spirit," and went on to describe that as "spirit in the sense of energy....I see it as self-grounded...not transpersonal...I don't see this...coming...from outside oneself...I see it as growing out of oneself" (B-61). Although none of the respondents specifically discussed modern feminist spirituality, it is interesting to note that no one discussed power as coming out of a traditional spiritual path or belief, such as Christianity, which would find its power in an external source. Conception 1a, power as entitlement, also seems, to me, to be somewhat related to the "power from within" which emphasizes the innate individual value of each individual.

Conception Two: Power is Expressing Personal Integrity

Women holding this conception were concerned with expressing themselves honestly in the world. Sometimes their acted out or spoken statements of being involve assertiveness, but always with the intention of standing up for their inner truth or remaining true to themselves. It brings to mind Miller's (1986) view of personal power as "authenticity," which she defined as individuals' ability to act "on the basis of their own
perceptions and evaluations...to act and react out of their own being" (p. 113). Miller points out that highly educated or accomplished women may already have travelled a long way in creating authentic lives for themselves, but she underlines the risk that such behaviour may entail for many women. In order to act out their authenticity, women must possess a strong conviction of their own worth and of their own right to self-development (cf. conception la: power is a sense of entitlement). One respondent, in expressing her conviction of the need for acting out personal integrity, captured much of this. She said:

I think my life..is..certainly an example and I..I think as are the live of many women. We've spent so much of our lives...doing what other people wanted..saying the right thing, and being appropriate and..speaking in turn, or..speaking quietly when you might..rather say your piece..and..I've certainly come to a point in my life where..I'm not going to live with that any more! Even if it means..taking a risk and facing the music..which, often I do...(F-52)

This conception also seems to be related to the feminist view of personal power. In really being congruent in the world—in acting out of a self-accepting sense of self—the actor transcends the domination of "the need to be liked...to conform to or rebel against others" (Bardwick, 1976, p. 140).

Conception Three: Power is Self-Determination

This conception is, perhaps, most closely related to feminist conceptions of power as the capacity to implement. It is interesting to note the difference between this conception—which sees power as the capacity to have impact on one's own life and on the environment, the awareness of choices in life, and
responsibility for oneself—and power as traditionally-defined autonomy. Rather than being based solely on individual rights, this conception takes into account, not only responsibility for oneself but also responsibility for others. One respondent, for example, described conception three as: "(Power is) being able...to...uh...control your environment....in a way that...that works for you and for other people" (B-42). This brings to mind the cautionary words of Jean Baker Miller:

...it is certainly oppressive for women to be dependent economically, politically, socially, and psychologically. However, the simple opposite, to be what is called 'independent' in the dominant group conception of that term, may be a spurious goal. Perhaps there are better goals than 'independence' as that word has been defined. Or rather, there may exist better conditions, which the word itself tends to deny: for example, feeling effective and free along with feeling intense connections with other people. (1986, p. 119)

Conception 4: Power is Agency/Competence

Again, this conception focuses on power as the ability to achieve one's goals—without implying the need to "win out" over others—in the basic sense of gainfully utilizing personal resources. One respondent expressed this as "using your ability to the fullest" (B-59). At times, this might mean "doing a good job" or "being skillful." A variation on this, however, could involve really doing one's best, no matter what the outcome, or surviving an ordeal and coming out of it with some learning or personal growth—even if the process itself was unpleasant. It is interesting to note, that in expressing power in this way, many respondents still focused on a theme of responsibility
within relationship. This is how one woman articulated that:

I could be relied upon, and she saw me as a reliable, responsible person who would get the job done. But guess...I see...I see...power in that. A person is powerful if they are reliable and responsible and get the job done. (E-56)

Conception 5: Power is Respected Standing

In this study, many of the women who expressed a view of power as respected standing focused on themselves or others in comparison to others in the sense of their standing in the group. This aspect of conception 5 is interesting in that it appears to be, with the exception of the "traditional" pole of conception 6, the most closely related, of the six conceptions, to traditional definitions of power. Although descriptions of the conception do not reveal "power over" themes, they do describe power as a hierarchical structure—"a kind of hierarchy of power" (E-68), and they point out that people low in the hierarchy are apt to feel poor self-esteem, as a result. Respondents who spoke of power as a hierarchical structure either warned against its operation as being disempowering for those on the bottom rungs of the ladder, and/or they expressed distress that they were conceiving of power that way. One interview exchange went as follows:

(Very softly) Gee..I guess I have levels of powerful people in our clinic.

Interviewer: You look disturbed by that..

Oh..distressed..I am distressed....well, it's that...you know..one of a group..and I...I don't like to see things in hierarchies...But...I have to admit that I guess I do. (E-66)
Also, although not all respondents had this perspective on power as respected standing, many described power here as an object or "commodity" which could be "given" or "taken" from others--another traditional focus.

Conception 6: Power is Influencing Others

Power is described here as influencing or having impact on others. This conception could be seen as bipolar in terms of the intent or purpose of power. On the one hand, respondents acknowledged the existence of power as "power over" others with a goal of using control, coercion, or manipulative behaviour to make personal gains without considering or caring about the needs of others. This pole of power as influence appears to be consistent with traditional views of power as control and the ability to getting the targets of power to do what the powerholder wants them to do.

The opposite pole of power as influence involves using power to benefit others--as in teaching, nurturing, facilitating, empowering. Power described in this way seemed closely related to feminist interpretations of power in several ways. First, respondents often stressed this type of influence as bedded in relatedness in the sense of involving care and responsibility for others. Second, influence in the sense of nurturing or facilitating others, held in itself the probability of becoming a dynamic process of the type of mutual influence described above, where the beginning power imbalance often equals out in the process, and in which both (or all) actors nourish and
facilitate one another's power.

Women's Orientation and Attitudes to Power

It is important to note here that a research study of this type focusses on description and does not purport to make inferences which compare women's conceptions or understandings with men's. It is concerned solely with describing women's conceptions of power and, in particular, the conceptions held by members of the particular all-woman group which volunteered to participate in this research. The literature which focuses on women's orientations to power, however, compares and contrasts women's experience to men's.

First, as discussed in more detail above, the research data here appears consistent, for the most part, with Carol Gilligan's moral development theory which portrays women approaching power issues through a concern with care and responsibility within relationship. Thus, love, connection and interdependence are not seen, by the respondents in this study, as antitheses to power. Second, the findings are consistent with David McClelland's (1975) similar portrayal of women's orientation to power being based in interdependence, nurturing and giving.

Third, there also appears to be some support for Jean Baker Miller's (1986) thesis that women approach power from a "care and responsibility" orientation, coming out of their particular experiences within family systems where they participate intimately both in relationships of permanent inequality and relationships of temporary inequality.
Most respondents described themselves as preparing for a life profession focused on "empowering women," and many of them were aware of coming to this out of their own experience of powerlessness in the world—sometimes powerlessness which they had experienced in their own families, in their relationships with husbands. As counsellors and teachers, however, they were most interested in facilitating power interactions which would lead to increased power for those who started off with less than them, and they acknowledged that, in doing this, they started a dynamic process which led to increased power for them as well as for the one they were facilitating.

Respondents' attitudes to power were mixed, and the goal or purpose of power was the decisive factor here. For the most part, women expressed themselves as comfortable with power which was utilized out of a desire to somehow help or support another individual. On the other hand, they felt extremely reluctant to participate in power which had, as its goal, the control or manipulation of another for "selfish" purposes. The following statement is representative of respondents' attitudes about this:

> It depends on how the power is used...that's the big thing...If it's for facilitative, beneficial purposes....then, I'm fine with it. But if it's that overpowering, manipulative, controlling stuff...I don't want to have anything to do with it...though I know it goes on all the time. (E-61)

This concern with the goal of power, and the respondent's emphasis that power use is positive only insofar as it takes care and connectedness within relationship into consideration was expressed repeatedly and strongly and is consistent with the

Some respondents expressed extreme discomfort with the idea of seeing themselves or projecting themselves as powerful. One of these women stated that she was willing to call herself "strong," but not powerful. "To me, it's (power) a scary word. I really much prefer to use the word strength...like the inner strength, but I know there is power out there, too" (E-37). She went on to say, "I guess...the connotation...that's scary to me, is the whole feeling of...being power...feeling powerless" (E-38). Consistent with Lips' (1991) assertion that fear of power comes out of the experience of powerlessness, many of the respondents cited their own powerlessness as the experience out of which they approach power—in terms of both their aversion to power and their wish to work towards empowering women in the world. In discussing women's attitudes toward power, one respondent noted that, "when women feel powerless they are really nervous about power--they want to back away from it" (C-47).

Another aspect to this expressed fear of power was revealed by women who felt their own powerfulness alienated them from other women. One respondent expressed her dilemma this way:

It's strange to me, because I do feel very powerful... and it's taken me years to get that. And I want that so much for other women...but my power will often intimidate other women...and make them dislike me...which hurts me a lot. (C-8)

Although this was not expressed as a general theme by respondents, one woman spoke of being afraid that if she was too
powerful, in the sense of being responsible for herself, she wouldn't get the love she wants. In this case, it was not women, but men, she feared to alienate. She expressed it as follows:

I'm afraid...to allow...to allow my power...I'm afraid that if I become as...overtly powerful as I...as I feel...the potential for...that will be to my detriment. ...I think that's true...for me...that if I am powerful then I won't...I...nobody will look after me. Nobody will care for me...care...what should I say? Give me...love...I don't think it's love...but...uhm...if I'm too powerful then I will...I will push people away...(D-34)

Later this respondent commented that she used men so that she would not have to be responsible for herself. Her attitudes, here, may reflect Gilligan's (1982) and Caplan's (1981) theories that women who have been socially conditioned to rely on men will find it difficult to make their own choices in life, even when given the opportunity.

C. Implications for Future Research

Miller (1986) suggests that women coming out of high accomplishment or a sense of fighting for a valuable cause will find it easier to manifest power as authenticity in the world. Since this research was conducted with very well-educated, high achieving women—who also, for the most part, felt committed to work towards women's empowerment—and since conceptions of power are, like all conceptions, closely related to the life-experience of the respondents, one might expect that data from a less "privileged" group of women would reveal different conceptions and/or different perspectives or figure/ground focii. Thus, it
would be interesting to explore conceptions of power with women in a variety of life situations.

As noted, no data were collected on men's conceptions of power, and thus no inferences can be made about men's understandings of this phenomenon. Since much of the recent psychology of power research highlights gender-based differences in power approaches and experience, it seems that it might be fruitful to investigate men's conceptions of power, with a view to confirming or disproving gender-based theories. Also, Kahn (1980) suggests that men's responses to women's movement toward greater power is important as a determinant of the ease or difficulty with which women and men share power in the world. Thus investigation of women and men's conceptions of the meaning of power equity is another direction for research.

D. Implications for Counselling

This research on women's conceptions of power is consistent with literature in the area of women and psychology which suggests that: (a) women approach power issues from an orientation of care, responsibility and connectedness within relationship and, (b) women, for a variety of reasons, may feel fearful or ambivalent about claiming power for themselves. It seems that these issues have special implications for counselling women, particularly when we consider the probability of links between power, self-esteem, and depression (which are suggested in the research data and the literature).
Self-esteem as a measure of how much we value ourselves and like ourselves is remarkably similar to conceptions expressed by respondents in this study, of power as personal integrity and entitlement. Expressed this way, power was seen as knowing oneself and feeling comfortable and whole with oneself. As entitlement, this "liking oneself" extends to a recognition that one is deserving of the human rights which we are all entitled to. It seems no accident that respondents not only saw this "personal integrity" and sense of entitlement as power, they also saw it, at times, as a "source" of all other conceptions of power. Thus, this sense of personal connectedness and comfort with oneself fed into the ability to: express oneself congruently in the world; be aware of choices in life, and be capable of self-determination; gainfully utilize one's personal and professional resources; gain respected standing among others; and move to influence others.

Since, as pointed out above, women often feel devalued, as a group and as individuals, it may be difficult for women who have internalized negative views of women to have positive self-concepts and to feel powerful in the world. Further to this, and also discussed above, women as a group, have historically held little power in the world and, again, the result of this may be low self-esteem coupled with feelings of powerlessness. In the last ten or fifteen years there has been a focus by some counsellors, in an effort to empower women and raise their self-esteem, on such issues as "dressing for success," "succeeding professionally" and "assertiveness training." As recent
theorists have pointed out (Gilligan, 1982; Baker Miller, 1986; McClelland, 1975), there is a danger for women and a loss for men and society as a whole, in simply adopting androcentric conceptions of what is healthy or powerful. In merely adopting traditional power "styles" women deny, to the detriment of all, their orientation towards empathic connectedness with others.

It also seems to me, that assertiveness training as a kind of "skills training" for women may run the risk of minimizing the real issues at stake here and end in merely being a "band-aid" solution for the core issue of feelings of powerlessness and low self-esteem in women. This has been confirmed, informally, by talking to colleagues who have commented that in running assertiveness groups for women, they often see the same women returning, time after time, and making little lasting gain. The respondents in this study give us a clue to this by including assertiveness as an aspect of "power as expressing personal integrity." In this sense, assertiveness is seen as acting or speaking out one's truth and values in the world, and it comes, of course, out of a woman's personal power--her sense of wholeness and her own innate worth--her "liking" herself. On the other hand, a woman who doesn't have a strong sense of personal power, who doesn't like herself and feel a sense of entitlement, will necessarily find it very difficult--first, to even really "know" herself well enough to recognize what she does want and need--second, to feel her entitlement to put that out in the world--third, to recognize that it is possible to assert herself without being disrespectful or uncaring towards others, or
negating their rights and needs.

Women with low self-esteem also have difficulty feeling powerful in other ways. Feeling strong, competent, self-determining, respected or influential are all inconsistent with low self-esteem. Conversely, when, as Caplan (1984) and Bardwick (1976) suggest, women feel that life is beyond their control—that they have no choices or are incapable of making self-enhancing choices in their lives—they truly feel their powerlessness, and thus may feel despondent or depressed. Recent research and theory suggests that depression is, overwhelmingly, a woman's problem, with women being nearly twice as likely as men to experience depression (Bart, 1971; Weissman & Klerman, 1987). In treating depression in women, it is important for counsellors to take into account, women's real position in the world and in society. The literature in the area of psychology and power reviewed briefly above (Baker Miller, 1986; Gilligan, 1982; Lips, 1991; McClelland, 1975), as well as the research data in this study, suggest that for women, depression often comes out of an interplay between external factors such as loss, trauma and low societal status and internal factors such as women's tendency to emphasize empathic connections with others, women's tendency to inhibit their expression of anger and conflict, and women's feelings of powerlessness to act. This latter factor, which seems to be a by-product of gender-role socialization for many women, has been termed "learned helplessness" (Seligman, 1974).

Women who feel powerlessness in their relationships as in other aspects of their lives, are also at risk in terms of being
abused by others. Women who remain, for example, in relationships with physically and emotionally abusive male partners, often at great danger to themselves, usually do so out of feelings of "deserving" the abuse and/or out of a lack of any sense that they have choices and could act in ways to make life better for themselves. It is important to note here that, in reality, women really lack viable choices in these situations. A woman, perhaps with children to care for, who may find herself unable to land anything but a minimum-wage job, for example—and who might not be able to rely on community support or resources such as temporary shelter in a "safe house," may feel, with good reason, that her options are very limited. Counsellors working with such women should be cognizant of the life realities that their clients may be dealing with.

Feelings of powerlessness are not reserved for women in "desperate" situations. The respondents in this study—a group of relatively privileged, well-educated, achieving women—all spoke of their own experiences of feeling devalued and powerless, in one way or another, in their lives, and connected that to their experience as women in the world. Statements like: "In my relationship with my ex-husband..I mean I was just..totally made myself a door mat with him" (D-8); "We really believe that we're only entitled to the few crumbs that people throw us" (C-9); "Women have been socialized to feel....less than, say men...women find it very difficult to acknowledge their strengths....it seems like it's something that's..arrogant or conceited..uhm..and that it's not okay to do" (H-45); and (in discussing a situation where
she felt that she couldn't do anything to move her life in a
direction she wanted to go), "I got very depressed...like I
couldn't do anything" (E-38).

In expressing their commitment to working, as counsellors,
with other women, these women pointed to the empowerment of women
as a primary therapeutic goal. Speaking of both their own
experiences of power/powerlessness and also their work in
facilitating other women's empowerment through counselling, they
emphasized the importance of a "double-faceted" awareness and
emphasis in counselling. One facet of this focuses on the
awareness that, women, because they are women, do experience
devaluation and powerlessness in our society. In understanding
this, women can begin to recognize that their feelings of low
self-esteem, weakness and vulnerability, rather than pointing to
something very wrong with them in a personal sense, are a natural
outcome of their gender-based socialization. In beginning to know
that, in some very important ways, it is not "their problem"
alone, but one that all women, to some extent, share and--beyond
this--one that has important negative ramifications for men,
also, and for society as a whole, women can perhaps begin to
build the strength to move out of their powerlessness. The
second facet of this approach focuses on the individual woman
client, and in discussing their views of the goals and processes
of counselling toward empowerment, in this personal sense, the
respondents spoke of: the importance of valuing the client, for
who she is--just as she is--within the therapeutic relationship,
and communicating that valuing to her; the importance of
identifying and affirming her often devalued "womanly strengths" as strength and helping her realize that she does, indeed, have personal resources which she can build on, and for which she can value herself; exploring the choices which she does have in her life; and recognizing that, along with others' needs, her own wants and needs are important and deserve to be taken into consideration.

Of course, diverse schools of psychotherapy and many different psychotherapeutic techniques are valid and useful in working with women (and men) on their issues—which are often, in the end, related to power. Person-centered therapy is sensitive to modelling egalitarian power relationship through the client-therapist relationship and through the attitudes of the therapist. This seems consistent with opinions expressed by respondents in this study around the therapeutic importance of respect, congruence, and facilitating personal power in others. It is interesting to note, in this regard, that the clinic supervisor of this group, worked out of an open "person-centered" model, and that most of the counsellors-in-training, spoke in our conversations, about feeling personally validated and empowered by this woman's approach. Comments like:

Oh! It was a treat! Because she...well...there was...the respect that I was treated with. Which is not always the case when you're a (student). Because...of course, you're one down. You're learning how to do it, as well...and she never made me feel like...my point of view was irrelevant or wrong. And...she'd let me know when she'd learned something new from me. Which again...empowers you...And, I think it created a really safe environment that way. (C-4)

She has...she's had the power, certainly, to...to...uhm...through her modelling...to...of...facilitate us having really respected each other....because she has...I
truly believe she has respected us...as individuals...um...and
even though she has been...she's had the role of...of a
supervisor, she has treated us as equals. Even though we are
in the learning process...(H-27)

Carl Rogers (1961, 1977, 1980) stressed the importance of
the therapeutic relationship—specifically, the ability of
therapists to communicate unconditional positive regard for their
clients, to be congruent in their relationships, and to trust the
clients' own innate potential for growth in directions that are
important and valid for them. He points our that in not seeking,
in any way, control over a client's responses or way of being,
and in permitting oneself to be as one is, the therapist
facilitates the discovery of this same freedom in the client.

Rogers (1977) said:

By listening to the feelings within, the client reduces the
power others have had in inculcating guilts and fears and
inhibitions, and is slowly extending the understanding of,
and control over, self. As the client is more acceptant of
self, the possibility of being in command of self becomes
greater and greater. The client possesses herself to a
degree that has never occurred before. The sense of power is
growing. (p. 12)

Feminist and non-sexist approaches to counselling seem
particularly valid in working with women around power issues.
These approaches are valuable, among other things, in that they
apply a political/social analysis to the issues which clients are
struggling with. The main therapeutic technique which we might
specifically see as a feminist counselling intervention is
conscious and ongoing sex-role analysis (Rawlings & Carter, 1977;
Russell, 1984) which involves bringing to the client's attention,
relevant sex-role expectations which may be operating for them in
the specific life-situations they find themselves working in, and
in encouraging the client to make an aware analysis of the costs and benefits of fulfilling "feminine" role expectations. Rawlings and Carter (1977) discuss the assumptions of feminist therapy, which they see as including: (a) an acknowledgement of the power differentials in our society, between men and women, and a focus on social rather than biological factors to explain women's lesser power and status, (b) a focus on societal and environmental stress as a major source of unhealth (c) a concomitant weight on individual responsibility in terms of the necessity of personal action towards empowerment, and (d) knowing that other women are not the enemy (and men are not always the enemy, either). Beyond this, in their approaches to therapy, feminist therapists may hold as goals: (a) being explicit about their own values—particularly regarding women's roles, (b) as much as possible, equalizing personal power between the client and therapist, (c) encouraging self-determination in women, along with responsibility and care for others, (d) role-modelling effective, healthy behaviour, and (e) working with clients toward personal power—i.e. knowing and valuing themselves as unique beings. Feminist therapists view their own engagement in social/political action as consistent with their desire to treat the disease (our political/social system), rather than just the symptom (the distressed individual), and they often encourage social action on the part of their clients. This experience, for both counsellors and clients alike, leads to feelings of effectiveness and agency—to the experience of being powerful people who can, indeed, have influence and effect change. These
emphases of feminist counselling appear to be consistent with the literature and with the views of the respondents in this research project.
References


Appendix A

Women's Conceptions of Power in All-Women Groups

Respondent Consent Form

I hereby consent to participate in the above-named project, a qualitative research study aimed at exploring women's varying personal experiences of power in the context of an all-woman work group. The purpose of the study is to learn more about the ways women see power operating in their relationships with other women. I am aware that the study is being carried out by Carol Wilson, a graduate student in Counselling Psychology at U.B.C., and I have attended a short class lecture/discussion on the purpose and design of the research. Further information is available through Carol, who can be reached at

I understand that I am agreeing to participate in a private, audio-taped interview and to answer two brief questionnaires (one focusing on biographical information to be completed at the time of the interview; the other focusing on my experience of participating in the project to be completed within two weeks after the interview); my total time investment in this project will be 2 hours, maximum. I know that data for the study will not be identified by name and that all information I may give will remain anonymous and confidential. I also understand that my participation in this project is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without fear that such refusal or withdrawal will, in any way, jeopardize my class standing in CNPS 588 or any other course.

I have been assured that results of this study will be shared with me, if I so wish, upon completion of the project.

My signature below acknowledges my consent to participate in the research project; it also acknowledges my receipt of a copy of this consent form.

Signature __________________________ Date __________________________
Student's Name (please print) ___________________________________
Appendix B

Questionnaire

All information is completely anonymous and confidential. We would appreciate it if you would complete every question.

1. Age ______

2. Education:
   Highest degree achieved to date: ________________
   I am an M.A. student ______
   M. Ed. student ______
   Doctoral student ______

3. Please list any organizations or informal groups to which you belong.
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

4. How many of these groups include both men and women as members? ______

5. How many of these groups are all-women groups? ___

6. Name any other all-woman group to which you have belonged in the past.
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

7. How often do you attend functions related to:
   The mixed group(s) ____________
   The all-women group(s) ____________

8. How do you understand the term feminist? Please give a brief, personal explanation.
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________
   ____________________________________________

9. Do you consider yourself a feminist?
   Yes _____ No _____
Appendix C

Post-Interview Questionnaire

All information is anonymous and confidential. Please keep your responses as concise as possible. However, if you require more space, use the other side of this sheet.

1. What was it like for you to discuss your experiences with me?

2. What impact, if any, did our conversation(s) have on you? (Your thoughts, ideas, feelings, attitudes, behaviour, etc.) On your group? Please be specific.

3. If you were telling a friend about this research and our conversation(s), would you recommend that she participate? Please explain your answer in concrete terms.

4. Have you any other comments or suggestions regarding our conversation(s) in light of your experience?
Appendix D

Transcript Typescript Notation

1. Nonlexical expressions such as "humm," "ah," "uhm" are included.

2. False starts and repetitions of word or parts of words are retained.

3. Unclear speech is enclosed in parentheses.

4. Laughter or obvious changes in pitch, stress, volume or rate are noted in parentheses.

5. Hesitations and pauses are indicated by the use of periods. Each period corresponds to approximately one second of silence. For example: ....... would indicate a 6 second pause.

6. Interruptions and overlaps between speakers are noted with a left-hand square bracket at the beginning of the interrupting speaker's words.
## Appendix E

### Synonyms and Antonyms for Power

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<th>Synonyms</th>
<th>Antonyms</th>
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<td>Self-actualization</td>
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<td>aggressive</td>
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<tr>
<td>self-confidence</td>
<td>debilitation</td>
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<tr>
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<td>helplessness</td>
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<td>self-acceptance</td>
<td>doormat</td>
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<td>authority</td>
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<td>being female</td>
<td>deviousness</td>
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<tr>
<td>being male</td>
<td>bigotry</td>
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<td>love</td>
<td>sexism</td>
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<tr>
<td>respect</td>
<td>weakness/weak</td>
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<tr>
<td>courage</td>
<td>avoidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>strength</td>
<td>tiredness/exhaustion</td>
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<td>ineffectuality</td>
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<td>insignificance</td>
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## Appendix F

### Results of Independent Judge Reliability Tests

#### Table 1

Independent Judges' Categorization of Conceptions

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<th>Conception #</th>
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<th>Judges' number of correct placements</th>
<th>Agreement as %</th>
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<td>100%</td>
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<td>16</td>
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