PRACTISING SOCIAL JUSTICE:

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS,

WHAT MATTERS AND WHAT COUNTS

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has been written by me, and that, to the best of my knowledge, any help I have received in preparing the thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in the text. This thesis has not already been submitted for the award of any other qualification at any other academic institution.

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Lynne Keevers

Acknowledgements

Publications

Peer reviewed publications in support of this thesis

Keevers, L. & Treleaven, L. & Sykes, C. (2008). Partnership and participation: contradictions and tensions in the social policy space. *Australian Journal of Social Issues,* 43(3) 459-477.

Keevers, L. & Treleaven, L. (2008). *Feminist praxis, co-emergence and practice-based studies in organizations.* Paper presented at the 4th Organization Studies Summer Workshop Embracing Complexity: Advancing Ecological Understanding in Organization Studies, Pissouri, Cyprus.

Keevers, L. & Treleaven, L. (2007). *Waltzing Matilda: Reflecting in/on the hot action of practice.* Paper presented at the 23rd European Group of Organisational Studies 23rd Colloquium: Beyond Waltz – Dances of Individuals and Organizations, Vienna University of Economics, Austria.

Keevers, L., Sykes, C., & Treleaven, L. (2006). *The policy space as a catalyst for the push to partnership and participation.* Paper presented at the Governments and Community in Partnership: From Theory to Practice Conference, Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne, Australia.

Other publications in support of this thesis

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Keevers, L. et al., (2009). *Submission to the Productivity Commission: Contribution of the Not-for-Profit Sector.* Wollongong: Illawarra Forum Inc.

Keevers, L., Dooley, L., & Pollard, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Stories from the 'Hood: Practising place in the Illawarra: Place-based organisations in the Illawarra, Action Research Report.* Wollongong: Illawarra Forum Inc. ISBN 978-0-9580870-1-8.

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the situated knowing-in-practice of locally-based community organisations, and studies how this practice knowledge is translated and contested in inter-organisational relations in the community services field of practices. Despite participation in government-led consultation processes, community organisations express frustration that the resulting policies and plans inadequately take account of the contributions from their practice knowledge. The funding of locally-based community organisations is gradually diminishing in real terms and in the competitive tendering environment, large nationally-based organisations often attract the new funding sources. The concern of locally-based community organisations is that the apparent lack of understanding of their distinctive practice knowing is threatening their capacity to improve the well-being of local people and their communities.

 In this study, I work with practitioners, service participants and management committee members to present an account of their knowing-in-practice, its character and conditions of efficacy; and then investigate what happens when this local practice knowledge is translated into results-based accountability (RBA) planning with diverse organisations and institutions. This thesis analyses three points of observation: knowing in a community of practitioners; knowing in a community organisation and knowing in the community services field of practices. In choosing these points of observation, the inquiry explores some of the relations and intra-actions from the single organisation to the institutional at a time when state government bureaucracy has mandated that community organisations implement RBA to articulate outcomes that can be measured by performance indicators.

A feminist, performative, relational practice-based approach employs participatory action research to achieve an enabling research experience for the participants. It aims to intervene strategically to enhance recognition of the distinctive contributions of community organisations' practice knowledge.

This thesis reconfigures understandings of the roles, contributions and accountabilities of locally-based community organisations. Observations of

situated practices together with the accounts of workers and service participants demonstrate how community organisations facilitate service participants' struggles over social justice. A new topology for rethinking social justice as processual and practice-based is developed. It demonstrates how these struggles are a dynamic complex of iteratively-enfolded practices of respect and recognition, redistribution and distributive justice, representation and participation, belonging and inclusion. The focus on the practising of social justice in this thesis offers an alternative to the neo-liberal discourse that positions community organisations as sub-contractors accountable to government for delivering measurable outputs, outcomes and efficiencies in specified service provision contracts.

The study shows how knowing-in-practice in locally-based community organisations contests the representational conception of knowledge inextricably entangled with accountability and performance measurement apparatus such as RBA. Further, it suggests that practitioner and service participant contributions are marginalised and diminished in RBA through the privileging of knowledge that takes an 'expert', quantifiable and calculative form. Thus crucially, harnessing local practice knowing requires re-imagining and enacting knowledge spaces that assemble and take seriously all relevant stakeholder perspectives, diverse knowledges and methods.

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Notation and acronyms

Notation

The names of research participants have been changed in accordance with confidentiality agreements. The actual names of the community organisations participating in the study have been used at their request.

All quotations from fieldnotes, from transcribed recordings and published material are indented in slightly smaller font size.

Excerpts from fieldnotes and transcripts are referenced in text with an abbreviation identifying the research site, date and the page number from the fieldnotes or transcript. For example, (SYFS, 12/9/2007: 2).

"Double quotation marks" are used to identify participants' statements recorded in fieldnotes during observations.

'Single quotation marks' are used to enclose a term and indicate the use of the word or phrase is in some ways under revision.

Italics are used to signal participants' words selected from the transcripts in the analysis. The purpose of this notation is to achieve a more readable text. Italics are also used conventionally to indicate emphasis and publication.

Research site abbreviations

CSARG	Community Sector Action Research Group
Interchange	Interchange Illawarra
MWN	Multicultural Women's Network
SYFS	Southern Youth and Family Services
WCC	Warrawong Community Centre
WS	The West Street Centre
Comm. Devt RBA	Community Development Results-Based Accountability Workshops

Comm. Care RBA   Community Care Results-Based Accountability Workshops

Training RBA   Results-Based Accountability Training Sessions

Acronyms and abbreviations

ABS   Australian Bureau of Statistics.

ACOSS   Australian Council of Social Services

AGM   Annual General Meeting

ARC   Australian Research Council

ANT   Actor-Network Theory

APAI   Australian Postgraduate Award Industry

CEO   Chief Executive Officer

COAG   Council for Australian Governments

CSDH   Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, WHO

CSGP   Community Services Grants Program, DoCS

CSHTA   Community Services and Heath Training Australia Ltd

DADHC   Department of Aged, Disability and Home Care, NSW Government

DoCS   Department of Community Services, NSW Government

IFG   Interpretive Focus Group

LCSA   Local Community Services Association

NGO   Non-Government Organisation

NSW   New South Wales, Australia

NCOSS   New South Wales Council of Social Services

PAR   Participatory Action Research

RBA   Results-Based Accountability

WHO   World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1

Locally-based community organisations in an age of accountability

> Civil society itself is sustained by groups much smaller than the demos or the working class or the mass of consumers or the nation. All these are necessarily pluralised as they are incorporated. They become part of the world of family, friends, comrades and colleagues, where people are connected to one another and made responsible for one another. Connected and responsible: without that 'free and equal' is less attractive than we once thought it would be… Civil society is a project of projects. It requires a new sensitivity for what is local, specific, contingent – and above all, a new recognition (to paraphrase a famous sentence) that the good life is in the details.
>
> Michael Walzer (1992)

Introduction

This thesis investigates the situated knowing-in-practice of locally-based community organisations and studies how this practice knowledge is translated and contested in inter-organisational relations in the community services field of practices. Broadly, the thesis addresses two questions: What constitutes the situated knowing-in-practice generated in locally-based community organisations? What happens when this local practice knowledge is brought into results-based accountability (RBA)[1] planning with diverse organisations and institutions within the community services field of practices?

In order to investigate these questions the study focuses specifically on locally-based community organisations in the Illawarra[2] at a time when the state government bureaucracy has mandated that community organisations implement RBA to articulate outcomes that can be measured by performance indicators. The practices and experiences discussed in this thesis are, in this way, specific and local. But this does not mean their significance is confined to

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[1] The results-based accountability (RBA) framework (Friedman, 2005) combines a performance measurement system with a means for co-ordinating effort in social service provision. It is introduced later in this chapter.

[2] Illawarra means between the mountains and the sea in the language of the Dharawal people, the traditional owners of the land where the study is situated. The region occupies a narrow strip of land along the southeast coast of Australia that is bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the east and steeply forested sandstone escarpment to the west.

the local. Despite the government's increasing reliance on non-government organisations (NGOs) to provide services to people, the practices of locally-based community organisations are often marginalised in the current political and policy context (Andrew, 2006; Harris, 2001b; Suhood, Marks, & Waterford, 2006; Williams & Onyx, 2002). A key aim of this thesis is to articulate the distinctive knowing-in-practice of these organisations so that this practice knowledge can be talked about in order to encourage the institutional conditions required for the work of these organisations to flourish. This participative study is thereby explicitly imbued with the intention of advocacy and change.

The following transcript of a conversation between service participants[3] (Zekiye, Helena and Maria), community workers (Flavia and Elka) and the co-ordinator (Trish) from the Multicultural Women's Network[4] captures some of the dominant experiences, practices and concerns that are the impetus for this study and thesis.

Zekiye: We're all coming from different backgrounds or different religions but when we walk in that door we all become one. It is so understanding, so much respect. Especially in multicultural Australia, it's so hard to find that, to grab that. We make a better life. Because we offer a meeting place, it's a real community development project. We don't want to lose that. With all the funding cuts going on, all of us are scared. Where are we going to go? We're all trying to find a solution to that, you know. It's so sad that we've become faced with funding cuts.

Flavia: But it's like you feel down as a worker because you…

Elka: Yes, you feel gutted.

Flavia: You feel you put so much in to trying to change things and you don't get any assistance that way. And yet you know that they [government funding agency] are not in contact so they don't know like us…

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[3] Throughout the thesis I use the term 'service participant' as the descriptor for those accessing locally-based community organisations. Although not entirely satisfactory, this descriptor attempts to convey active engagement and participation of those involved in locally-based community organisations. It attempts to avoid the connotations of dependency in the term 'client', the exaggerated choice implied by the term 'customer' and the passivity and lack of reciprocity imbued in the terms 'service user' and 'consumer'. However, the term service participant could convey a misleading impression, as locally-based community organisations do not confine their practice to service provision.

[4] The Multicultural Women's Network is one of the locally-based community organisations participating in this study.

> Helena: If they doesn't fund… doesn't give us any fund and we stop, how are we going to feel?
>
> Trish: If we can't get… I would be very sad, Helena, because all of us have a sense of the potential, you know, there is still so much there that we want to explore and do.
>
> Maria: How would you feel, if it…
>
> Helena: I feel lost. I start crying just to think about it.
>
> Zekiye: We won't let that happen.
>
> Helena: I hope not. And as I said if it's going to stop I'm going to go to see Mr Howard [the then, Prime Minister of Australia}. I'm going… [Laughter] I'm going to protest (MWN 30/5/2007:37,40).

The words of service participants, Zekiye and Helena, convey the significance of this community organisation in their lives. Zekiye describes experiences of respect and belonging, making *a better life* and how *it's so hard to find that, to grab that.* Their comments are representative of other service participants' accounts that show how locally-based community organisations facilitate peoples' experiences of and struggles over respect, recognition, representation, belonging, poverty and change. Such accounts of community organisation practices embody core themes that philosophers and theorists of social justice have struggled to analyse and understand. Community organisations *doing* social justice is a core theme articulated in this thesis.

The community workers, Elka and Flavia discuss their sense that the practices of the Multicultural Women's Network, its relationships with the community, local knowledge and positive impacts on people's lives are not recognised or valued by funding bureaucracies. The transcript articulates a growing concern, expressed by the locally-based community organisations involved in this study, that the apparent lack of recognition and understanding of their distinctive practice knowing is threatening their survival.[5]

When reading this transcript, it is difficult to differentiate between service participants, workers and the co-ordinator. Unlike government bureaucracies and large non-government organisations, the boundaries in terms of roles,

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[5] Such concerns are not confined to the Illawarra but are evident in the literature. See for example Williams and Onyx (2002), Harris (2001b), Roberts (2001). Several submissions to the current Productivity Commission Inquiry into the contributions of the not-for-profit sector in Australia discuss the current threats to the survival of small and locally-based community organisations. See for example Western Sydney Community Forum (WSCF, 2009), Suhood and Waterford (2009) and Smith (2009).

positioning and decision-making in many locally-based community organisations are often fluid and shifting. The conversation shows it is not always necessary to distinguish between service participants, community practitioners and management committee members. This transcript is, thereby, symptomatic of a unique feature in the ways of organising and practising in locally-based community organisations evident in this research.

As the fragment of transcript suggests, there is a need to find constructive ways to illuminate aspects of the practice knowing of locally-based community organisations. Such an articulation would make visible to the wider public and particularly to government funding agencies and policy-makers, the contributions of locally-based community organisations to the well-being of local people and their communities.

This chapter is organised as follows. First, I describe locally-based community organisations as a sub-set of organisations within the community sector in Australia. Second, I outline the background of the research project and the questions the inquiry investigates. Third, I sketch the policy environment within which the concerns and opportunities that catalysed this study were generated. I conclude by providing an overview of how the thesis addresses the research questions.

Locally-based community organisations and the community sector

The locally-based community organisations participating in this study are a sub-set of organisations within the community sector.[6] The community sector is large, complex, heterogenous and difficult to define (Productivity Commission, 2009; Staples, 2006). The organisations that make up the community sector are often described as non-government and non-profit organisations. They are neither entities of the state nor the market and although they may receive funding from government they are legally autonomous from them (Onyx,

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[6] Throughout this thesis, I use the term community sector (unless referring to literature that uses another term) to describe the collective of non-profit, non-government organisations that provide community services and/or advocacy and representation in Australia. Other terms are also used to describe this sector such as 'third', 'charitable', 'voluntary' or 'civil society'. However, all the locally-based community organisations participating in this study identify as being part of the community sector.

Dalton, Melville, Casey, & Banks, 2008). In this way they are often defined by what they are not, by absence, as other.

The Australian community sector

A widely-accepted frame describes a diverse and broad community or third sector that includes organisations:

> formed by people to provide services for themselves or for others, to advance a cause, to share an enthusiasm, to preserve a tradition, to worship a god or gods. Different groups of these organisations are known by different names: non-government organisations (NGOs), charities, unions, cooperatives, clubs, associations, peoples' organisations, churches, temples, mosques and so on. Collectively, they comprise a third organised sector (Lyons, 2003: 2).

There is little reliable data on the numbers of organisations in the community sector in Australia (Productivity Commission, 2009). The first substantial mapping of the Australian community sector using data from 1995-96 estimated it comprised about 700,000 organisations (Lyons, 2001; Lyons & Hocking, 2000).[7] The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimates that in 2007 there were almost 41,000 not-for-profit organisations employing 884,476 people and harnessing the efforts of 2.4 million volunteers (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008).[8] However, this figure excludes several of the community organisations that participated in our study as it only counts those whose annual turnover is more than $150,000 per year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). Comparing the figures above, it is clear that the vast majority of community organisations in the sector are small in terms of income. Most community organisations, which are funded by government, employ only a few staff and are managed by locally-based, voluntary, management committees. Despite their prevalence there is relatively little research on this group of organisations as most of the

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[7] An international comparison of Australia's community sector in terms of its contribution to employment shows that the community sector in Australia is of a similar size to that of the United States and the United Kingdom. It is larger than that in Canada, New Zealand and most other European countries and is smaller than the non-profit sectors in the Netherlands and Ireland (Lyons, 2009; Salamon, Anheier, List, Toepler, & Wojciech Sokolowski, 1999).
[8] Because ABS, included only those organisations they define as economically significant, this figure is a large underestimation of volunteering in Australia. For example, the ABS 2006 Voluntary Work Survey, which used a different definition, estimates that the number of people volunteering was 5.2 million.

published literature concentrates on the few, large, national and state-wide community services organisations (Roberts, 2001; Suhood, et al., 2006).

Locally-based community organisations

This study is centrally concerned with the situated practice knowing of *locally-based* community organisations. Locally-based community organisations are described, in this thesis, as having the following characteristics, they: do not distribute profits to members; have autonomy in local decision-making; have voluntary participation by members; are self-governing organisations usually through a local management committee or board elected by the members of the organisation; are community-serving and pursue some 'public good' within a particular geographic area (Productivity Commission, 2009; Salamon & Anheier, 1996).

Locally-based community organisations are the sites where people "mingle and form groups, where communities unite for a collective purpose and where groups of individuals with mutual or shared interests organise" at the local level (Alessandrini, 2002: 117). They provide support, services and/or advocacy to specific groups such as children, women, elderly people, refugees, young people, local residents, people with a disability, indigenous people or people from culturally and linguistically-diverse backgrounds in their area. They offer programs responding to community issues such as poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, environmental degradation, child abuse, sexual assault, unemployment, mental health or substance abuse. There is also diversity in the ways locally-based community organisations intervene that include practices of: community development, community education and social action; residential and community care and support; counselling, case management and groupwork; information, advice, referral and individual and systemic advocacy.

Perhaps the critical distinguishing feature is their local governance. It is this feature that generates the possibility that decisions can take place in the presence of those who will bear their consequences. Being face-to-face means accountability and response-ability[9] is always inside connections and

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[9] Response-ability, the capacity to respond is Haraway's (2008) term.

multidirectional relationships, a much riskier and demanding situation than accountability or answering to a checklist at a distance (Haraway, 2008). Arguably in contrast to large nationally-based non-government organisations, locally-based community organisations have distinctive ways of practising, organising and managing that make crucial contributions to the quality of community life but remain largely unacknowledged by those outside the sector (Harris, 2001b; Lyons, 2001; Lyons & Passey, 2006).

Introducing the research

This research began with 'we' in conversations and actions long before my enrolment as a doctoral student on an Australian Postgraduate Award Industry (APAI). The thesis forms part of a three-year project called *Valuing local NGO knowledge in planning community services* funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Industry Linkage Grant.[10] This research project is a partnership between a regional community organisation peak body, the Illawarra Forum Inc.[11], the University of Sydney and the University of Western Sydney. The broader project aims to improve ways to harness the knowledge of non-government community organisations and increase genuine participation in newer planning models, such as the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework (Friedman, 2005).[12] The industry partnership and the submission to the ARC build upon previous research conducted by members of the research team with community services organisations.[13]

This section details the concerns and events that gave rise to the research project and outlines the questions the inquiry investigates. Only a brief introduction to the sites and the feminist-informed participatory action research is presented here as Chapter 3 elaborates the theoretical and methodological

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[10] The ARC Industry Linkage Grant number is KLP 0562569. Related publications include Keevers, Treleaven & Sykes (2008), Sykes & Treleaven (2009).

[11] The Illawarra Forum Inc. is a regional peak and resourcing organisation for community sector organisations in the Illawarra. For information on the activities, philosophy and projects of the Illawarra Forum Inc, the industry partner in this research study, see their website at www.illawarraforum.org.au

[12] Mark Friedman's framework is known by at least four different names: Results Accountability, Results and Performance Accountability, Outcome-Based Accountability and Results-Based Accountability. As Results-Based Accountability (RBA) is the term most commonly used in Australia it is used throughout this thesis.

[13] See for example Treleaven and Sykes (2005; 2006b) and Sykes (2006)

approach established in the thesis and Chapter 4 discusses the methods employed.

Research investigations often begin with a feeling of unease, a problem or necessity according to both Smith (1987) and Stanley (1996) and as the above transcript shows, this inquiry is no exception. The unease that motivated this inquiry came from members of the Illawarra Forum Inc.[14] expressing frustration about the volume and form of government-initiated consultations relating to the development and restructuring of community services programs and planning. Whilst many community organisations felt that they were providing the same information in different consultation processes, they also experienced the sense that they were unable to adequately re-present and fully convey their knowledge of local communities, practice models and what works and doesn't work on the ground (Illawarra Forum Inc. documentation, 2006:1). The experience of many practitioners and community members is that despite all these consultations, the emerging policies and processes rarely seem to adequately reflect the contributions and ideals of residents, service participants or community sector practitioners. Community organisations believe their local knowledge is relevant for policy development and implementation. However, there seems to be a lack of attention to and appreciation of this situated knowing-in-practice (Yanow, 2004).

The funding of locally-based community organisations is gradually diminishing in real terms and in the competitive tendering environment, large nationally-based non-government organisations are attracting the new funding sources (Keevers, Treleaven, et al., 2008; Phillips, 2007; Productivity Commission, 2009; Suhood, et al., 2006). The experience of the community organisations participating in this study is that conventional accountability and performance measurement apparatus overlook critical information such as the importance of building relationships, a sense of belonging, community development and social justice. Instead, such reporting systems usually favour

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[14] The members of the Illawarra Forum Inc. are not-for-profit non-government and community-based organisations working in the Illawarra region of south-eastern Australia. The Illawarra Forum Inc. has over 300 member organisations.

simple counts of 'client throughput' and 'occasions of service' that are easily quantifiable and comparable (Cortis, 2006).

 In 2005, however, the New South Wales (NSW) state-government departments that fund many of the community organisations in the Illawarra announced new funding policies and a new approach to both accountability and planning processes (see for example, Department of Community Services, 2005). The Illawarra Forum Inc., commenting on the introduction of this new approach to accountability and planning called the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework (Friedman, 2005), wrote:

> It is an interesting model in that it encourages participation from all levels of government instrumentalities, local community members, community organisations and other interested bodies... Because it aims to create a collective commitment and response to community need, it also contains elements of participatory decision-making, which are quite different to more traditional models of consultation (Illawarra Forum Documentation, 2005:1).

For member organisations of the Illawarra Forum Inc., the promise of the opportunity to articulate community voices, to be included in the planning of service systems, projects and their delivery encouraged cautious optimism. Experience of conventional apparatus of measuring program performance shows that critical dimensions of the work of locally-based community organisations are rendered unimportant and thereby get excluded in service purchasing contracts. The possibility of the value of their work being made visible using RBA offered an alternative way forward. Member organisations of the Illawarra Forum Inc. were, therefore, keen to investigate and maximise the chance of their local knowledge being brought forward in the new RBA processes to improve both the well-being of local people, their communities and the sustainability of locally-based community organisations.

The practice-based study

In response to the concerns outlined above and the perceived opportunity afforded by the introduction of RBA, this practice-based study, employs feminist-informed participatory action research (PAR) in working with practitioners, service participants and management committee members from

locally-based community organisations. The collaborative research project will: first, present an account of their knowing-in-practice and second, investigate what happens when this situated practice knowledge is translated into results-based accountability planning with diverse organisations and institutions within the community services field of practices. Elaborating upon the two research questions outlined in the opening paragraph of this chapter, this participatory research explores the following questions: What constitutes the situated knowing-in-practice generated in locally-based community organisations? How can this situated knowing-in-practice be characterised and described? How is this knowing, organising and practising enacted in community organisations? What happens when this local practice knowledge is brought into results-based accountability planning with diverse organisations and institutions within the community services field of practices? How is practice knowledge translated, contested and circulated in inter-organisational relations in the community services field of practices?

To investigate these questions and ensure maximum participation and collaboration in all aspects of the inquiry, the industry partner and research team invited a group of practitioners from a diversity of community organisations in the Illawarra to join and become the Community Sector Action Research Group (CSARG).[15] The CSARG selected five locally-based community organisations and two RBA planning processes as the sites for this inquiry. Six methods were used within iterative PAR cycles: observation of situated practices, written ethnographic accounts of observations, reflective group discussions, semi-structured interviewing, accessing, collecting and copying artefacts, and reflexive writing.

Positioning the researcher

Harris (2001a) urges community sector scholars to recognise both "the importance of the self" and "the reflexive nature of knowledge construction" (2001a: 747). There are dangers, however, in efforts to include the researcher in the telling of the tale (Patai, 1994; Van Maanen, 1988). Such accounts can become confessional, reinscribing the modernist notion of a stable and coherent self and implying that individualised accounts based on self-reflection are

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[15] A list of the members of the CSARG is included in Appendix 7.

possible (Lather, 2007; Marshall, 2004). Following Marshall (2004), who argues that acknowledging all accounts are incomplete does not offer licence to the researcher to give no account, below I briefly situate myself in the research and articulate some of the experiences that have shaped my sensemaking and approach to researching community sector organisations.

As a doctoral student researching community sector organisations, these types of organisations are not 'other' to me but have always been an important presence in my life. Growing up in a rural, working-class, extended family I was surrounded by people immersed in community life. My grandparents lived with an open door, so we usually shared the farmhouse with a crowd: family, friends, strangers and furry-orphaned creatures like kangaroos, wombats and possums. Family and community worlds were intimately tied together. Thus, belonging to voluntary community organisations and groups, such as the Injured Wildlife Rescue, the local Bush Fire Brigade, the church congregation, the Repertory Club, Junior Farmers and the Country Women's Association, was a mundane and enriching texture of everyday life.

In Australia in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, community organisations and groups linked to activist social movements proliferated. Participation in community theatre groups, the Students' Movement Against Uranium Mining (SMAUM) and the local peace movement were defining experiences of my adolescence. Like many others, I was inspired and confident that collectives of people organising and acting together could overcome injustice, effect personal and political change and create a better world. These experiences were so pivotal that, after completing a degree in social work, I spent the next twelve years working in paid positions in locally-based community organisations such as feminist women's centres, legal centres and community development organisations. I have also spent a large part of my paid-employment working for a public sector organisation that educates people for careers in the community sector. Equally consequential influences on the theoretical, methodological and ethical approach developed in this thesis are my experiences on management committees, as a member of numerous community groups and as a service participant. There is passion and intensity in the practices of the community organisations with which I have been involved. They can be creative and cruel, brilliant and brutal, friendly and fierce. These

close contacts and connections have shaped my knowing of the distinctive contributions, complexities, difficulties and weaknesses of locally-based community organisations.

These experiences and entanglements position me as an intra-twined partisan. I am both insider and outsider researcher. Throughout this thesis I move between the 'I' and 'we' of this research project. The 'we' 'us' and 'our' in feminist-informed participatory action research is "hard won" (Wadsworth, 2006: 323) and may not fit comfortably with the 'I' and 'my' that may be anticipated in a scholarly thesis. The inclusion of research participants' discussions, narratives and sensemaking as well as accounts of their practices throughout this thesis, rather than confining them to a 'findings' chapter, speaks of their agential involvement in all aspects of this research. However, although the understandings developed in this research include a synthesis of our collective sensemaking, as author, it was me who chose what observations and 'cuts' to make, which excerpts of transcripts to analyse and which artefacts to include and thereby wrote them into being in this thesis. Accordingly, throughout the thesis I variously employ 'we', 'our', 'I/we', 'my/our' 'I' and 'my' to signal both how the study is co-produced in relationships and actions (Greenwood & Levin, 1998) and my response-ability and accountability for writing the thesis.

RBA and the social policy environment

As outlined above, this thesis investigates what happens when the situated, practice knowledge of locally-based community organisations is translated into RBA planning with diverse organisations and institutions within the community services field of practices. The introduction of RBA by government into the community sector, however, has not come out of an empty space. It is therefore important to briefly situate this inquiry with/in the broader social policy environment or space[16] that catalyses both RBA's current prominence

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[16] The concept of social policy space places less emphasis on the structures and mechanisms of state institutions and focuses more on how particular discourses and practices make some things important and others insignificant, how they include some participants and organisations and exclude or marginalise others (Fischer, 2006: 25). Thus, the use of the term space signals an approach that "calls attention to the importance of analysing the underlying and implicit assumptions about social and political relations that organise and constitute spaces for participation" (Fischer, 2006: 39n1).

and the concerns about the impact of reform on the survival of locally-based community organisations discussed earlier.

RBA is derived from protocols of financial accountability and seen by proponents as a means to strengthen government's capacity to manage service provision across the purchaser-provider divide, to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of government spending, and to increase accountability and transparency of public and community sector organisations (Baulderstone, 2006a; Cortis, 2006). RBA is an example of a set of practices that have been called 'rituals of verification' (Power, 1997), are part of the 'new accountability' (Martin & Kettner, 1996) and the rise of 'audit culture' (Strathern, 2000b). One of the distinctive features of Friedman's RBA is that it combines a performance measurement system with a means for co-ordinating effort by including all 'partners' in planning for social service provision. Friedman's RBA works back from the 'bottom line', from the results by which accountability can be ascertained, to the indicators and performance measures that provide evidence, to identifying the partners with a role to play, to what might get to the evidence. In short, RBA "starts with ends and works backward step by step to means" (Friedman, 2005: 11).

The interest in RBA appears related to a shift towards what Iedema (2003) calls "post-bureaucratic organisation". He argues that post-bureaucratic organisation attempts to straddle a desire to enhance transparency through "formalizing devices" such as benchmarks, standards and data production for monitoring and performance comparison on the one hand and "dissimulating organizational authority by reducing hierarchy… and dissolving inside-outside boundaries" on the other (Iedema, 2003: 21-22). At the same time, the economic imperatives of neo-liberalist discourse combined with the technologies of managerialist discourse or New Public Management (Hood, 1991; Ryan, 2001; Verspaandonk, 2001) have had profound influences on the social policy space re-configuring the relations between government and community sector organisations in many capitalist societies over the past two decades (Baulderstone, 2006a; Garland & Darcy, forthcoming; Shore, 2008; Staples, 2007). More recent times have seen the emerging influence in social policy of

network governance[17] discourse emphasising partnership, collaboration and whole of government approaches (Baulderstone, 2006b; Considine, 2005; Institute of Public Administration Australia, 2002; Lewis, 2001).

The next section draws on the literature of social policy grounded in the community sector in order to provide the contextual, discursive environment within which the thesis has been developed and its knowing-in-practice co-shaped.

Neo-liberal discourse

Most of the policy interventions impacting community organisations are linked to, and shaped by, neo-liberal and economic rationalist public policy (see, for example, ACOSS., 2005; Henderson, 2005; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, 1998; McDonald & Chenoweth, 2009; McDonald & Marston, 2002; Meagher & Healy, 2003; Mendes, 2005; Nevile, 2000; O'Shea, Leonard, & Darcy, 2007; Rogers, 2007; Staples, 2006). The global spread of neo-liberalism has involved a top-down re-engineering to shrink the role of the state in society and increase the role of markets (Bourdieu, 1998; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). Pusey (1991) sums up a range of beliefs, attitudes and assumptions that are privileged in neo-liberalism: supply and demand within the marketplace is the sole means of efficiently and effectively producing and distributing all goods and services; markets and money offer the only reliable means of setting values on anything; all consumers can participate and meet their needs within the market; market failure is small, if pure markets are allowed to operate; the belief that government failure is considerable.

Under the influence of neo-liberalism, Australian Federal and State governments have privatised publicly-owned institutions, promoted individual responsibility (Rose, 1999), self-sufficiency of the family household and corporate profit-making (Smith, 2008). Proponents of neo-liberal discourse are critical of the post-war welfare discourses it supplanted, arguing that they encourage laziness and dependence in individuals, robbing them of free will and choice (Andrew, 2006). They also question the legitimacy of some

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[17] Network governance is Considine's (2005) term. Joined-up government is the UK equivalent that has been particularly influential on Australia's approach. In Canada, horizontal management is the preferred term (Farland, 2004: 42).

community sector organisations arguing they interfere with the market by trying to obtain benefits for their members and are unrepresentative and unaccountable (Marsh, 2002; Staples, 2007). Neo-liberal discourse promotes limiting the advocacy role of community sector organisations and "rejects the view of a public sphere in which contested ideas are debated to formulate public policy" (Staples, 2007: 5). There is therefore much anxiety reflected in the literature about the impact of neo-liberalist policy interventions on community organisations, especially in terms of their capability to address inequality and work towards social change (ACOSS, 1999; McDonald, 2005; Mendes, 2005; Staples, 2006). Of particular concern is the viability of many locally-based community organisations, especially those operating in rural or remote locations (Baulderstone, 2006b; House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, 1998; Raper, 2000; Suhood, et al., 2006), which may be undermined by lowest price competition.

One of the major technologies of neo-liberal discourse is the creation of markets and mandated competition through the implementation of National Competition Policy. Establishing markets to provide community services has transformed how relationships between government and community sector organisations are negotiated, characterised and regulated (Lipsky & Smith, 1990; Nevile, 2000). Increasingly, instead of funding community organisations through submissions based on locally-determined needs, specific services and programs are purchased and delivered according to pre-determined contracts and funding agreements (ACOSS, 1999; Baulderstone, 2006a; Everingham, 2001).

This introduction of the 'principal/agent' or 'purchaser/provider' model places community organisations in a dilemma by positioning them as an arm of government, albeit at arms length. In this relation, government sets the funding amount, specifies the services, outputs to be delivered, outcomes to be attained and selects the organisation(s) to fulfil the contract. Responsibility for service results and quality is thereby placed with the community organisation, without control over the determination of results or the funding available to attain the results (Andrew, 2006: 319). As there is generally only one purchaser in the

community services 'quasi-market'[18], refusing inadequate funding to deliver programs is very difficult for community organisations. Responsibility then falls to the community organisation to resolve inadequate funding levels internally, thus creating the bind for community organisations that struggle to maintain both independence and sustainability in a situation where "independence and sustainability may at times be mutually detrimental" (Andrew, 2006: 320).

Managerialist discourse

Closely linked to neo-liberal discourse, and equally widespread, is managerialist discourse. Managerialist discourse operates at a more micro pragmatic level, while neo-liberal discourse provides the macro level "theoretical fuel for restructuring" (Andrew, 2006: 316). Managerialist or New Public Management reforms typically include:

> a focus on management, not policy, and on performance appraisal and efficiency; the disaggregation of public bureaucracies into agencies which deal with each other on a user-pays basis; the use of quasi-markets and contracting out to foster competition; cost cutting; and a style of management that emphasises amongst other things, output targets, limited-term contracts, monetary incentives and freedom to manage (Verspaandonk, 2001: : 27).

Managerialist discourse has seen the introduction of mechanisms such as strategic and business plans into community organisations, to ensure increased accountability for measurable outputs. In turn, performance measures and outcomes aligned to service contracts prescribe practice and regulate risk management in areas such as public liability, incorporation, and occupational health and safety. Some studies suggest that abstract and generic management knowledge may be given priority over practice and local knowledge (Sykes, 2006; Townley, 2002; Treleaven & Sykes, 2006a).

The assumption that the public, private and community sectors can all be managed in the same way is a central tenet of managerialism (Rix, 2005: : 51). This belief is driving the shift to contractualism. Community organisations are

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[18] Quasi-market is Le Grand's (2003) term.

being contracted to provide services that were previously the responsibility of government departments (Darcy, 2002). The effect is to increase opportunities for funding and participation and expand the role of non-government organisations in areas such as employment services, child and family services and mental health (Andrew, 2006; Rawsthorne, 2005). However, the purchaser/provider relationship increases centralist government control over what and how services are delivered. Geddes, writing about similar models in the United Kingdom argues that despite the rhetoric of partnership and network governance, "there has been a recent tendency on the part of central government to regard local institutions as dependent mechanisms to achieve central targets and to prioritise managerialist control over local autonomy and initiative" (Geddes, 2006: 3). Despite the increasing devolution of the provision of welfare services to non-government organisations the local knowledge and distinctive perspectives of community sector organisations is often not considered in setting targets and priorities or in broader policy and political debates (Andrew, 2006: 323).

According to Galbally (2004), contracting of services and competitive tendering have encouraged atomised and individualised services, emphasised through-puts and hindered a sense of belonging and control for community members accessing community organisations. She argues community groups at the grassroots level have suffered and been weakened by managerialist commitment to forms of contractualism (Galbally, 2004: 282). Problematically, contracts and competitive tendering introduce uniform accountability for locally-based community organisations and large national non-government organisations alike. Locally-based community organisations argue that they must allocate a disproportionate amount of their organisational resources to management functions. This diversion reduces the resources available for service delivery and community development (House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs, 1998).

Under the influence of managerialist discourse, accountability requirements have grown significantly as organisations are obliged to comply within an increasingly complex legal and governance framework (Suhood, et al., 2006; Williams & Onyx, 2002). Many locally-based community organisations, with management committees made up of interested members and local residents,

find it increasingly difficult to attract and retain such committee members due to fear of litigation and feelings of being overwhelmed in the face of onerous bureaucratic accountability requirements (Harris, 2001b; NCOSS, 2005; Suhood, et al., 2006). In this way, the increasing weight of accountabilities, legislative requirements and the insecurity of short-term funding place pressure on locally-based community organisations (Harris, 2001b).

Network governance discourse

The procedural demands of managerialism, combined with the effects of mandating competition, can compromise collaborative and participatory approaches to organising local community services (ACOSS, 2009; O'Shea, et al., 2007). Some working in the public sector have acknowledged these effects. For example, McCann reflects that in the move to more distanced contractual relationships and the "quest for efficiency… we have tended to devalue some of the less tangible dimensions of the relationship – such as joint planning and policy and program development" (McCann, 2001: 112). The desirability of partnership and collaboration is re-asserted in the emergence of network governance which Considine (2005) argues "forges a new path between bureaucratic centralization and privatisation and as such may be regarded as the emerging model of public organisation for the twenty-first century" (Considine, 2005: 2). Network governance has elastic and various meanings. However, it involves multiple government agencies and non-government players collaborating in specific on-going ventures to deliver services and co-ordinate action (Considine, 2005). It can include a range of material-discursive[19] practices such as whole-of-government approaches, partnerships, place-based policy making, and participatory planning processes. The push to partnership is evident in network governance style contracting which requires 'joining up' with government or other non-government organisations prior to submitting tenders or submissions for funding programs (Aimers & Walker, 2008). It is no coincidence in a social policy space, dominated by the twin discourses of neo-liberalism and managerialism that network governance is gaining prominence. For network governance offers the promise of partnership, co-ordination and collaboration at a time when governments prefer 'the steering not rowing'

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[19] Of course all discursive practices are material. In this thesis the adjective is used more as a reminder than as a qualifier.

model (Edwards, 2001: 85). Network governance discourse may thus be seen as a corrective to the fragmenting tendencies of neo-liberalist policies.

The emergence of RBA

This brief outline of three of the dominant discourses active in the social policy space shaping relations in the community services field of practices illustrates that although these discourses sometimes complement each other, they also contradict. Similar to all discourses, they are partial and incomplete and remain in a constant state of change as they interact and intersect (Hardy & Phillips, 2004; Rose, 1999). While the emphasis on network governance reflected in Australian State and Federal Government social policy documents expounds the value of social inclusion, partnership, reciprocity and trust, neo-liberal and managerial policy interventions can produce the opposite effect, through the emphasis on self-reliance, responsibility and individualised contractual relationships (Baulderstone, 2006b; Everingham, 2001). Indeed, the concept of partnerships "challenges the dominance of principal-agent theory in determining relationships between government and contracted non-profit organisations" (Baulderstone, 2006b: 121). The inevitable gap between these discourses and what happens in practice means tensions, contradiction and paradox are threaded through the current social policy space.

Some in the community sector believe Friedman's version of RBA offers the promise of reconciling these contradictory and paradoxical discursive forces by combining: a means of co-ordinating effort and partnership; a performance measurement system; and data driven evidence-based decision-making to improve quality of life outcomes. RBA operates at the intersection of the boundaries of neo-liberalist, managerialist and network governance discourses. Perhaps it is the capability to bring together the imperatives of both managerialist and network governance discourses that makes Friedman's RBA of particular interest to NSW Treasury and human services government departments. Additionally, RBA uses language and practices that fit well within a neo-liberal framework, at a time when governments of market-led economies strive to demonstrate greater transparency, increased accountability and incorporate evidence-based approaches into their policy-making and planning processes (OECD, 2001: 11). Given the social policy environment it is perhaps unsurprising that in the Illawarra community services field of

practices, RBA has currently been given prominence as a non-human "actant[20] to which all kinds of power are attributed" (Strathern, 2000b: 5).

Overview of the thesis

The research project and thesis are entangled with/in this social policy space. Drawing upon Gherardi's spiral case study approach and thereby acknowledging the field of community services practices as "a seamless texture" (2006: 56), the thesis analyses three points of observation: knowing in a community of practitioners (Chapters 5 and 6); knowing in a community organisation (Chapter 7) and knowing in the community services field of practices (Chapter 8). In choosing these points of observation I explore some of the relations and intra-actions[21] from the single organisation to the institutional at a time of substantial change in these relations (Baulderstone, 2006a).

At each of these three points of observation the thesis employs interpretive methods and analyses material-discursive practices using a diffractive method (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1991a).[22] The deployment of a diffractive analytic method in a multi-disciplinary practice-based study involves placing the fieldwork data and literatures in conversation through one another to emphasise mutual engagement and patterns of difference. One of the consequences of using this analytic method is that rather than the more usual practice of the literature review being confined only to Chapter 2, in this thesis different literatures are also 'reviewed' and diffracted through each other in Chapters 5, 7 and 8.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on knowledge-based approaches to studying organisation. I conclude that practice-based studies emphasising knowing-in-practice are particularly germane in offering concepts and tools for investigating the situated practice knowing and connections-in-action characteristic of the community services field of practices. The chapter discusses

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[20] Actant is Latour's (1987) term to refer to any thing or person that acts.

[21] Intra-action is a neologism coined by Barad to signify the "inseparability of "objects" and "agencies of observation" (2001: 84). She substitutes the notion of 'inter-action' with 'intra-action' in order to stress that the actors in a performative relationship should not be seen as distinct entities, acting upon each other from 'outside', but as entangled agencies which establish each other as well as being created themselves (Birke, Bryld, & Lykke, 2004; Uden, 2009). Intra-action is used throughout the thesis and discussed in Chapter 3.

[22] The diffractive analytic method employed in this thesis is described in Chapter 4.

the use in this thesis of key concepts such as practice and practising, knowledge and knowing.

In Chapter 3, I argue that one useful way of extending previous practice-based studies of organisation is to empirically explore knowing in the community services field of practices from a feminist, performative standpoint. Key works drawn upon to articulate the theoretical and methodological approach in the thesis are: Haraway's (1991b) situated knowledges; Barad's (2007) post-humanist agential realist approach; Mol's (1999) ontological politics; Gherardi's (2006) spiral case study framework and Lather's (2007) understanding of praxis. The approach foregrounds the inseparability of epistemological, ontological and ethical considerations and highlights the situatedness of knowing. The chapter articulates the concepts and analytic tools, critical to the development of this thesis – intra-action, diffraction, relationality and performativity. An appreciation of the intra-twining of ethics, knowing and being, what Barad calls ethico-onto-epistem-ology (2007: 185), implies that inquiry is necessarily practical and encourages a participatory form of research.

Chapter 4 presents and justifies the methods employed in this practice-based study. A feminist-informed participatory action research methodology consisting of a five phase research strategy employs the methods of observation of situated practices, written ethnographic accounts, reflective group discussions, semi-structured interviews, accessing and collecting artefacts and reflexive writing. These methods are used within multiple sites in the Illawarra community services field of practices. These interpretive methods combined with iterative and collaborative sensemaking with the Community Services Action Research Group (CSARG) members and research participants enable us to collectively identify themes, patterns, discrepancies and the practice knowledge of locally-based community organisations. Analysis of the accounts of workers, service participants and management committee members together with observations of situated practices, demonstrate that community organisations facilitate service participants' struggles over and experiences of social justice.

In Chapter 5, I employ a diffractive analytic method (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997) to develop a topology[23] of community organisations as 'doing' social justice in a world of inequality. This topology, which is simultaneously grounded theoretically and in the fieldwork data, assists in more thoroughly analysing community organisations' knowledge and knowing, practices and practising of social justice. The topology distinguishes four co-emerging and entangled dimensions of social justice: social, cultural, political and economic.

In Chapter 6, an analysis of multiple material-discursive practices demonstrates how service participants (re)position their relationships with community organisations, community practitioners and other service participants within their struggles over humiliation, hardship, belonging, voice, respect and personal and social change. This chapter offers insights into the distinctive features of the knowing-in-practice of locally-based community organisations.

Chapter 7 presents a case study, the West Street Centre[24], which investigates how the practices and the practising of social justice are ongoingly enacted. It offers insights into the character or quality of 'good' practice in a locally-based community organisation. The analysis illustrates that co-emergence, uncertainty and contingency are important qualities in a community organisation's practices of social justice that aim to make a difference, and to generate new meanings, actions and becomings. The study shows that as co-emergence and ceaselessness are inherent qualities of practising social justice, reflective and reflexive practices are critical for practitioners' understanding and taking account of their part in what becomes and what is excluded from coming-into-being.

The focus of Chapter 8 is results-based accountability (RBA) and the intra-relations between the various communities of practitioners, organisations and government institutions that constitute the community services field of practices. Specifically, this chapter analyses what happens when the local practices of social justice are brought into RBA processes. Our study of RBA

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[23] Topology studies connectivity, continuity, entanglements fluidity and boundaries (Barad, 2007; Kennington, 2008). It is used in this thesis in preference to the metaphor of framework, which tends to evoke the image of a fixed container within which things are placed.
[24] The West Street Centre is one of the locally-based community organisations participating in this research.

intra-action in the community service field of practices supports Gherardi's (2006) view that a field of practice is held together by power relations. Within the current configurations of knowledge/power-relations the governmental deployment of RBA, with its emphasis on performance measurement, co-ordinated effort and consensus, aligns with state-government efforts to position community organisations as sub-contractors in purchaser/provider relations. The study demonstrates community organisations are adapting, resisting and swerving around this material-discursive (re)positioning and asserting their identity as 'autonomous' community organisations.

The final chapter, Chapter 9 summarises the thesis and outlines the conclusions of the research. It then discusses the theoretical, methodological and practical contributions of the thesis and finally, identifies directions for further research. The conclusions have several implications for how policy makers, researchers and community sector practitioners may conceive of the purposes, contributions and accountabilities of locally-based community organisations. By focusing on the practices and practising of social justice, this thesis offers an alternative to the dominant neo-liberal discourse that positions community organisations as sub-contractors accountable to government for delivering measurable outputs, outcomes and efficiencies in specified service provision contracts.

This research belongs to an historical, political space and location and is particular, partial and continues to evolve. The understandings and actions brought forth and progressed in this research project and thesis are enfolded in the realities of practice and specific to the conditions, context and perspectives that situate this inquiry. The thesis is accountable and response-able to the research participants. I hope it does justice to their experiences and practices, recognises and respects their participation and ongoing commitment to the research project, is useful in representing their practice knowing and encourages the redistribution of resources in ways that support the flourishing of locally-based community organisations and the local people and communities with which they are involved.

CHAPTER 2

From knowledge to knowing: Practice-based approaches

> Knowledge is not something that people possess in their heads,
> but rather, something that people do together.
>
> (Gergen, 1991)

Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced this study of practice knowledge in the community sector and outlined the research questions as: What constitutes the situated knowing-in-practice generated in local community organisations? How can this situated knowing-in-practice be characterised and described? How is this knowing, organising and practising enacted in community organisations? What happens when this local practice knowledge is brought into results-based accountability (RBA) planning with diverse organisations and institutions within the community services field of practices? How is practice knowledge translated, contested and circulated in inter-organisational relations in the community services field of practices?

To begin investigating these questions I examine, in this chapter, the knowledge and practice-based approaches to studying organisation literature. Such a review provides both the rationale for the theoretical approach adopted and contributes to the development of the epistemological, ontological, methodological and ethical approach elaborated in Chapter 3.

The practice knowledge of workers in locally-based community organisations itself is under-researched and the specific literature in this domain is therefore sparse (Muetzelfeldt, 2005; Sykes, 2006; Treleaven & Sykes, 2006a). This is surprising given that locally-based community organisations make up the vast majority of the community sector in Australia (Lyons & Hocking, 2000; Suhood, et al., 2006). A body of related literature examines the knowledge and practice base of the social work profession (Drury-Hudson, 1999; Osmond, 2005, 2006; Osmond & O'Connor, 2004, 2006; Zeira & Rosen, 2000). However, social

workers constitute only a small percentage of workers employed in community organisations.

In the absence of a significant body of research and literature discussing the practice knowledge of locally-based community organisations, this research project and thesis adopts a transdisciplinary approach. In this chapter, resources from the fields of organisational knowledge, practice-based approaches to studying organisation, social work professional practice as well as the practice knowledge of community services organisations are employed to frame and inform the research questions. This is not to suggest that the literature on these topics in these disciplines is comprehensively covered, as such breadth is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, the review is situated and partial, it articulates the complexities involved in investigating the research questions and positions the thesis theoretically and methodologically (Lather, 1999).

This chapter is organised in the following way. First, I briefly outline the contributions of some of the well-known authors to understandings of practice knowledge. Second, I examine perspectives on knowledge discernable in organisational studies discourse. Third, I discuss the practice-based approaches to knowing and learning in organisations and networks. Fourth, I outline the social services professional practice knowledge literature including contributions from both social work professional practice research and the community services practice literature. Finally, I summarise an emerging view of practice knowledge across these literatures and then explicate and discuss key concepts such as practice and knowing-in-practice and their usage in this thesis.

The question of practice knowledge

The question of knowledge has occupied philosophers for thousands of years. But it is only relatively recently that organisation researchers have become interested in the topic. The research on knowledge in the discourses of organisational studies and social services professional practice draws upon definitions and ideas from Western epistemological and philosophical traditions. These traditions have been shaped by a set of enduring dualisms: nature/culture, body/mind, hand/head, skill/knowledge, applied/pure,

knowing how/knowing that, practice/theory, procedural/declarative, tacit/explicit and human/non-human to name a few (Latour & Weibel, 2005). To illustrate both the knowledge dichotomies and the philosophical work, that influences much of the literature deployed in this investigation, I will briefly consider the contributions of some well-known scholars to understandings of practice knowledge.[25]

Aristotle drew the distinction between theoretical (theoria) and practical reasoning (phronesis). Theoria concerns knowledge that is certain (episteme). Phronesis is concerned with the world of action (praxis). Aristotle held theoretical knowledge to be superior to practical knowledge (Aristotle, 1941). Yet, praxis brings both theoria and techne (knowledge of production, skill or craft) together in dynamic processes that inform each other through the exercise of phronesis or practical wisdom. In this way, Aristotle's identification of phronesis could be seen as an early version of knowing how to proceed in practice. However, the diversity in interpretations of Aristotle makes understanding of phronesis problematic. Beckett and Hager (2002) identify three main interpretations in the literature, when phronesis is thought of as responding to the question: 'What should I do in this situation?' The first "focuses on acting rationally in the situation", the second is concerned with perception and insight, understanding the features of a situation and responding appropriately (Beckett & Hager, 2002: 173). The third emphasises behaving in a morally correct way and thus focuses on the ethical dimensions of a situation (Beckett & Hager, 2002: 173). Perhaps, the diversity of interpretations points to the complexity of phronesis or practical wisdom. This complexity will be explored in our investigation of the practice knowledge of community organisations.

Ryle (1949) drew the famous distinction between 'knowing how' and 'knowing that'. He claimed that knowledge is essentially knowing how to perform or act in particular circumstances. He emphasised 'knowing' in his writings rather

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[25] Of course there are many other scholars who have influenced conceptions and theories of practice knowledge. For example, a genealogy stretching from Schütz (1967) to Goffman (1977; 1983), Taylor (1985; 1998), Garfinkel (1967; 1986) and Giddens (1984) has been particularly influential as has the work of Bourdieu (1990). Several works usefully discuss the philosophical and sociological roots of the practice tradition, see for example Reckwitz (2002), Gherardi (2006; 2008) and Rasche & Chia (2009).

than knowledge and argued that knowing and practice are mutually constitutive. As Ryle notes:

> 'thinking what I am doing' does not connote 'both thinking what to do and doing it'. When I do something intelligently, i.e. thinking what I am doing, I am doing one thing and not two. My performance has no special procedure or manner, not special antecedents (Ryle, 1949: 32).

It is ironic that although Ryle was seeking to elevate practice from its mistakenly subordinate role, his drawing attention to the 'knowing how' vs. 'knowing that' distinction seems to have provided a vocabulary to further consolidate the theory/practice divide. Although Ryle's insights are useful in building a perspective on knowing in the community services field of practices, Edel has demonstrated that the 'knowing how vs. knowing that' distinction applies only to a restricted range of individualistic activities that include the ones mentioned by Ryle, such as riding a bicycle, swimming or standing on one's head. Complex work situations that require teamwork involving high-skilled workers using sophisticated technology are examples of the kind of activity that elude classification as Rylean 'knowing how' (Edel, 1973: 237-243). Thus, his distinction while useful, may not offer sufficient clarity in understanding the practices carried out in the complex networks of community organisations.

Polanyi, like Ryle emphasises *knowing* in his writings. Polanyi wrote "knowledge is an activity which would better be described as a process of knowing" (Polanyi & Grene, 1969: 132). Polanyi introduced the important distinction that personal knowledge is both tacit (personal, informal, contextual, experience based, difficult to articulate) and explicit (formal, codified, transmittable, statable, written) (Polanyi, 1962). Personal knowledge refers to the type of know how that is displayed in skilful performances, which can be seen to follow a set of rules that are not known as such to the performer (Polanyi, 1962). Polanyi based his structure of tacit knowing on the part-whole model of perception (Gourlay, 2004: 90). He argued that gestalt psychology has shown we have powers of perceiving coherence so that clues or parts are integrated into the whole object (Polanyi & Grene, 1969: 138-139). Polanyi explains:

> We may say that a scientific discovery reduces our focal awareness of observations into a subsidiary awareness of them, by shifting our attention from them to their theoretical coherence. This act of integration, which we can identify in the visual perception of objects and in the discovery of scientific theories, is the tacit power we have been looking for. I shall call it tacit knowing (Polanyi & Grene, 1969: 140).

He claimed that learning physical skills, using tools effectively, speech and language, reading and expert pattern detection skills were all due to tacit knowing (Polanyi & Grene, 1969: 123-128, 182-123). Polanyi's notion that "*all knowing is personal knowing – participation through indwelling*" (Polanyi & Prosch, 1975: 44 cited in Tsoukas, 2003: 6 emphasis in original) and his explication of tacit knowing, have been influential and helpful in conceptualising knowing and practice in organisations. However tacit knowledge remains ambiguous in the literature and is employed as a blanket term to mean different things including: knowledge that cannot be put into words, knowledge that can be explicated only with difficulty, craft secrets, intuitive knowledge, bodily knowledge, silenced knowledge and knowledge that has become implicit through practice (Beckett & Hager, 2002). Much of the literature (see Nonaka, 1994; Tsoukas, 2003) tends to treat all these as the same thing and although some of them overlap, they are clearly different.

Schön's epistemology of professional practice centred on the reflective practitioner, who exhibits knowing-in-action and reflecting-in-action, draws strongly on both Ryle and Polanyi. He observed in his fieldwork examining the practice of five professions that "our knowing is *in* our action" (Schön, 1983: 49). Schön wrote:

> Often we cannot say what it is that we know. When we try to describe it we find ourselves at a loss, or we produce descriptions that are obviously inappropriate. Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say that our knowing is in action (Schön, 1983: 49).

Schön demonstrates the "essential role of human agency in knowledgeable performance" (Orlikowski, 2002: 251). According to Schön knowing-in-action is underpinned by reflecting-in-action or reflecting-in-practice. This reflecting is variously characterised by Schön as involving practitioners in taking notice of,

realising or feeling features of their actions and learning from this by consciously or unconsciously altering their practice to improve it (Schön, 1983). By placing reflection at the core of professional practice Schön's theory has much to offer our exploration of how community organisation practice knowledge is enacted. However, much practice in community organisations, as in professions, is embodied and cannot be isolated as a cognitive phenomenon. Schön's theory places heavy emphasis on the individual and cognitive aspects of practice.

Dewey (1934; 1991[1910]) was a critic of dualisms and of spectator theories of knowledge. In Dewey's pragmatist philosophy, learning and knowledge were closely linked to experience and action in the world. Knowledge *is always a matter of the use that is made of experienced natural events*, a use in which given things are treated as indications of what will be experienced under different conditions" (Dewey, 1980 [1917]: 33-34 emphasis in original). While Dewey did not deny that concepts and propositions were important, he subsumed them into a wider capacity called judgement. Deweyian judgement is holistic and organic incorporating cognitive, ethical, aesthetic and emotional factors as well as the natural and social environment in which it occurs (Beckett & Hager, 2002; Seigfried, 2002). It is Dewey's conception of judgement as both reasoning and acting that integrates both sides of the ubiquitous dualisms that is of particular interest in our study of the practice knowledge in the community services field of practices.

Vygotsky (1978; 1986[1962]) emphasised the fundamentally social character of human nature in developing his social theory of cognition. He maintained that individuals could only be understood when practising their normal activities within a socio-cultural and historical context. He introduced the notion that central to human life was the mediation of artefacts. Artefacts include tools and intellectual resources, of which, the most important are language and social institutions. Mediation refers to artefacts mediating not only what can be done but also carrying the historical knowledge of how communities behave and change. According to Vygotsky, the unit of analysis is humans engaged in artefact-mediated activity rather than the autonomous individual. Vygotsky particularly emphasised the interrelation of thought and language and argued "thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through

them" (1986 [1962]: 218). As Vygotsky died prematurely he was unable to fully resolve how a word comes to refer to an object or the way language constitutes new thought and knowledge.

Wittgenstein's (1958) later philosophy has been extremely influential for much recent work on discourse and practice and is relevant to our investigation of knowing in the community services field of practices (Engestrom, Miettinen, & Punamaki, 1999; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, & von Savigny, 2001; Tully, 1999). Wittgenstein argues that all our knowledge, concepts and judgements obtain their meaning by entering language not via the minds of single individuals but rather emerge from collective 'forms of life' (Toulmin, 1999: 55). Knowledge cannot be treated as primarily the possession of individuals because "all meanings are created in the public domain in the context of collective situations and activities" (Toulmin, 1999: 58). Perhaps it is Wittgenstein's concern with *practice* and its relationship to *language* that speaks most directly to this study. For Wittgenstein, language has a definite meaning only when it is related to a set of practical activities. *Use*, and the human practices embodying it, is the foundation of language. It is through use that the meaning of a concept is to be understood (Collins, 2001: 107). Wittgenstein explains words are only meaningful within 'language games' and the 'forms of life' in which they are embedded (Wittgenstein, 1958). "When I say what I know, how is what I say *what* I know?" (Wittgenstein, 1980 paragraph 88 cited in Bereiter, 2002). Wittgenstein's question points the researcher to one of the central challenges of this research project: the *languaging* of community sector practices through the words currently available to us.

Foucault (1965; 1972; 1977; 1978; 1980; 1988; 1990 [1984]) introduced the widely known formulation of the power-knowledge nexus, in his investigation of the mutually constituting relations between power/knowledge and discursive practices. His work on the "micro-physics of power" has profoundly influenced the ways in which power and knowledge are theorised. Power/knowledge refers to the processes by which power and knowledge interact and imply each other (Foucault, 1977). Through the operations of power, knowledges are formed which in turn allow for the possibility of knowledge claims such as occurs in professional discourses. Foucault described the emergence of such mutually defining sets of relationships with regard to madness, sexuality and

the forms of domination and discipline implicit in modern society and its institutions. For Foucault, power:

> is the moving substrate of force relations, which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable… [Power] is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another… Power is not something that is acquired, seized or shared, something that one holds on to or allows to slip away… Power comes from below; that is, there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations (Foucault, 1978: 93-94).

Power, here, is an effect spread across, and resulting from, a broad network of relationships, an immanent set of force relations that makes up but does not completely determine the subject. Foucault insisted, knowledge and power are intimately related because of how knowledge generating and deploying practices configure the world so as to both enable and constrain the practical possibilities available to people. In Foucault's account, discursive practices are the local socio-historical, material conditions that produce rather than merely describe the subjects and objects of knowledge practices (Barad, 2007). Foucault's elaboration of the discourse-power-knowledge nexus and the resulting link between discursive practices and the materiality of the body offer critical analytical tools of our exploration of the practice knowing of community organisations and what happens when it is translated and contested in the community services field of practices.[26]

These brief accounts of some of the most well known contributors to the conception of practice knowledge demonstrate both the enduring influence of dualisms and the project to realise their dissolution that has been a dominant and repeated theme in the literature. This section also shows that the term practice knowledge is widely used, has a rich philosophical heritage and is clearly a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon (Nicolini, Gherardi, &

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[26] Foucault drew the distinction between " a discursive field of knowledge (savoir) and… the specific statements held true at specific points within that field (conaissances)" (Rouse, 1994: 110). This distinction closely relates to the difference between knowledge practices and the representations that they produce. The difference between a representational view of knowledge and a performative practice-based view of knowledge is central to the arguments developed in this thesis.

Yanow, 2003b). Perhaps this is in part the reason why a general theory of practice is yet to emerge (Beckett & Hager, 2002; Gherardi, 2006).

Knowledge-based approaches to organisations

Within the discourses of organisation studies, there has been intense interest and debate on learning and knowing in organisations over the past three decades. Societal changes such as the intensification of globalisation, the expanding use of information technology and the rise of the knowledge economy (Bell, 1999; Drucker, 1993), have focused attention on knowledge creation and sharing in and between organisations (Brown & Duguid, 1998; Orlikowski, 2002). In the organisation studies literature, several knowledge-based approaches are discernable. This field has a long tradition of epistemology – the study of the theories of knowledge. Until the mid-1980's, most of the literature considered 'knowledge' to be interchangeable with 'information' (Nonaka, von Krogh, & Voelpel, 2006: 1180). This body of work is primarily concerned with technological development, storage and transfer of information (Boisot, 1995; Choo, 1998; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Hedlund, 1994) and has limited relevance in this study.

Towards the end of the 1980s, a growing number of scholars began to question the usefulness of many theoretical assumptions in mainstream knowledge management literature and its emphasis on information processing (Nonaka, et al., 2006). Organisational epistemology became the study of ways of knowing in organisation, focusing attention on how knowledge becomes organisational and on practice (Antonacopoulou, 2008; Argyris & Schön, 1978; Blackler, 1995; Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2003; Gherardi, 2000, 2006; Nicolini, 2007a; Nicolini, et al., 2003b; Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka, et al., 2006; Orlikowski, 2002; Tsoukas, 2005; Tsoukas & Mylonopoulos, 2004; Tsoukas & Vladimirou, 2001; Yanow, 2004). This literature has exposed the limitations of rationalism and dismantled the functionalist paradigm from which the discipline of organisation studies sprang (Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2003). It conceives knowledge as a mundane activity, situated in ongoing working and organising practices (Yanow, 2004). Knowledge is seen as distributed both between humans and between humans and non-humans (Orlikowski, 2002). This body of work is interested in such questions as: How can we observe knowledge-at-work? How can we talk about tacit knowledge embedded in everyday practice? How can we understand

organisational knowing-in-practice? As questions such as these are central to this study, this body of work has much to contribute in framing and guiding the research.

The knowledge-based approach has prompted inquiries based on an unprecedented variety of theories, assumptions and methods (Nonaka, et al., 2006). Research seeking to conceptualise what constitutes knowledge, both epistemologically and practically, and investigate how knowledge is created and used within organisations has accelerated in the last 15 years (Alvesson, 2001; Blackler, 1995; Boisot, 1995; Brown & Duguid, 2000, 2001; Bruni, Gherardi, & Parolin, 2007; Carlile, 2002, 2004; Chia & Holt, 2008; Choo, 1998; Choo & Bontis, 2002; Cook & Brown, 1999; Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2003; Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007; Gherardi, 2006; Kuhn & Jackson, 2008; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka & von Krogh, 2009; Schreyogg & Geiger, 2007; Starkey, Tempest, & McKinlay, 2004; Tsoukas, 2005; von Krogh & Roos, 1996). The outcome has been the emergence of a range of perspectives on knowledge in the organisation studies literature that, while distinctive, complement one another. Accordingly, following Orlikowski (2002), this review discusses three perspectives: taxonomic approaches, integrative approaches and practice-based approaches to knowledge in organisations. It is the third, practice-based approaches, which are of most relevance in this study.

Taxonomic approaches [27]

Taxonomic approaches assert that there are different types of knowledge in organisations. This approach attempts to classify these types of knowledges in order to examine how they are created, codified, converted, transferred, translated and exchanged (Hansen, 1999; Hedlund, 1994; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995; Nonaka & von Krogh, 2009; Nonaka, et al., 2006). Perhaps, the most influential work from this perspective is Nonaka and Takeuchi's (1995) *The Knowledge Creating Company*. Theirs is a pragmatic approach that intends to help organisations become more successful at making use of their knowledge resources and by generating new ideas, strategies and products. This approach sees tacit knowledge as primary and complementary to explicit knowledge. The basis for Nonaka and Takeuchi's classification and what the authors contend to

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[27] Tsoukas calls this approach taxonomic (1996: 13).

be the distinguishing feature of innovation in Japanese companies is the relationship between tacit and explicit knowledge. The authors draw on Polanyi's distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge to present four modes of knowledge conversion. Tacit to tacit knowledge conversion, called 'socialisation', is a process of sharing experiences to create shared mental models and build skills. The conversion of tacit to explicit knowledge, called 'externalisation', is the process of expressing and articulating knowledge through the use of metaphors and analogies. The reverse process of converting explicit to tacit knowledge, called 'internalisation', is achieved through learning by doing and hands-on learning. Finally, conversion of explicit to explicit knowledge through the process of 'combination' works to systemise concepts into a knowledge system.

Although this taxonomic approach has been extremely influential, it has been critiqued for objectifying knowledge and treating it as if it is made up of discrete elements (Blackler, 1995; Cook & Brown, 1999; Tsoukas, 1996). For example, Tsoukas argues that Nonaka and Takeuchi "ignore the essential ineffability of tacit knowledge, thus reducing it to what can be articulated" (Tsoukas, 2003: 30). He argues it is erroneous to see tacit and explicit knowledge as opposite ends of a continuum. Instead he explains they are bound together and that "even the most explicit kind of knowledge is underlain by tacit knowledge" (Tsoukas, 2003: 30). Similarly, Duguid explains explicit knowledge is not "a self-sufficient base, but a dependent superstructure… Thus while knowledge may include codified content, to be used it requires the disposition to apply it, which cannot itself, without risk of recursion, be propositional" (Duguid, 2005: 111).

Integrative approaches

Tsoukas argues for an integrated approach that sees knowledge as experiential, contextual, personal, dispersed and "inherently indeterminate" (Tsoukas, 1996: 22). Starting from the premise that all knowledge is personal, and drawing on Wenger (1998), Tsoukas and Vladimirou explain that "knowing how to act within a domain of action is making competent use of the categories and the distinctions constituting the domain" (2001: 978).

The integrative approach has much to offer our research project. Nevertheless more definitional clarity, in relation to such concepts as tacit knowledge, is needed for talking about the practice knowledge of community organisations. The depiction of tacit knowledge, in the literature, remains ambiguous and is employed as a blanket term to mean many different things. This deployment results in little more than a renaming of the problem and this act of renaming seems to suffice to close off further enquiry. For example, Tsoukas (2003) restricts his account of tacit knowledge to personal knowledge. His epistemology of organisational practice does not adequately address knowledge that is collective and exists in groups, communities and networks or knowledge embedded in conceptual artefacts (Gourlay, 2004: 87). So although Tsoukas illuminates the know-how craftspeople and artists have of their tools and of the materials with which they work, he does not discuss people's relations with conceptual artefacts (theories, problem formulation, interpretation) or the relations of conceptual artefacts to one another and to the problems to which they are applied (Bereiter, 2002). This omission results in an inadequate distinction being made between the knowledge involved in productive work and knowledge that is the product of that work. Further research is required to investigate the relationship between 'tacit knowing' at the personal level, 'tacit knowledges' at the collective level and tacit knowledges embedded in conceptual and material artefacts (Gourlay, 2004). Accordingly, due to the difficulty of using the term tacit transparently, I will use it sparingly and explicate the sense in which I am using it in this thesis.

Challenging the dominant view of knowledge: Practice-based approaches

Orlikowski, while acknowledging that both taxonomic and integrative perspectives have contributed a great deal to our understanding, argues they often "treat knowledge as a thing (to be captured, stored, transmitted, etc.) or as a disposition (whether individual or collective) resulting in 'objectivist reification' on the one hand or 'subjectivist reduction' on the other" (Orlikowski, 2002: 250). Her work forms part of a third perspective on organisational knowledge that has been called practice-based approaches (Antonacopoulou, 2008; Gherardi, 2001, 2006; Nicolini, et al., 2003b; Rasche & Chia, 2009; Schatzki, et al., 2001; Whittington, 2006).

Disrupting the dominant view of knowledge is a central theme in the practice-based literature. The dominant view of knowledge and learning views the mind as a 'container' and knowledge as a 'type of substance' (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Rorty (1989) agree that the metaphors we use become literalised and stitched seamlessly into our everyday practices, so that their figurative aspects disappear and become invisible. Davis and Sumara surmise this process of becoming invisible or literalised helps to ensure the entrenchment of once-metaphorical imagery into daily practices (1997: 109). Bereiter argues "under the influence of the mind-as-container metaphor, knowledge is treated as consisting of objects contained in individual minds, something like the contents of mental filing cabinets" (2002: 179). The effect of this metaphor is to emphasise the products of knowing and learning and characterise memory as retrieval from the container. He calls this the folk theory of mind (Bereiter, 2002). According to this view, theory informs practice and the mind directs bodily actions and knowledge transfers as decontextualised products. This approach is based on a number of assumptions. First, it requires the knowledge or skill to be acquired to be relatively stable and reasonably well-defined (Engestrom, 2001; Hager, 2004b). Second, it assumes replicability, that the learning and knowing of different people can be the same (Hager, 2004b: 25). Third, it assumes "that cognition is centralised, that the body is outside the process and that the environment is a problem to be overcome" (Gonczi, 2001: 6).

In contrast, Gergen argues that "knowledge is not something that people possess in their heads, but rather, something that people do together" (1991: 270). Gherardi (2001) agrees, asserting to know is to be capable of participating with the requisite competence in a complex web of relationships among people, material artefacts and activities. She argues that by looking at situated actions in ongoing practices, we can make 'knowledge observable' (Gherardi, 2008). Such a distributed conception of knowledge implies a mind, which does not contain knowledge but is knowledgeable (Bereiter, 2000; St Julien, 2000).

Practice-based approaches: A conversation amongst diverse research traditions

Practice-based theorising of learning and knowing in organisations draws on diverse research traditions. In this section I discuss the practice-based approach

and outline some of the research traditions that have contributed to its development.

Orlikowski, advocating the value of this practice-based approach, suggests it is fruitful to shift our perspective to focus on the knowledgeability of action, on *knowing* rather than *knowledge* (2002: 251). She outlines a perspective on knowing-in-practice that highlights the essential role of human action in knowing how to get things done in complex organisations. Knowing is defined as an ongoing social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted as actors engage in the world of practice (Orlikowski, 2002).

Blackler (1995) takes a similar view. Initially he refers to the taxonomic approach and identifies five types of knowledge in his analysis of earlier studies of knowledge and its uses in organisational learning literature. These include: *embrained, embodied, encultured, embedded and encoded*. However, later in his analysis, drawing upon Vygotsky (1978; 1986[1962]) he proposes knowledge is constantly evolving and created in the dynamics and interactivity of social processes and thus is more adequately represented by the verb *knowing*. In his words:

> Rather than studying knowledge as something individuals or organizations supposedly have, activity theory studies knowing as something they do and analyses the dynamics of the system through which knowing is accomplished. Recast in this way, knowing in all its forms is analysed as a phenomena that is a) manifest in systems of language, technology etc b) located in time and space and specific to particular contexts c) constructed and constantly developing and d) purposive and object oriented (Blackler, 1995: 58).

Knowing is thereby characterised as mediated, situational, provisional, pragmatic and contested (Blackler, 1995). Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow suggest, a practice-based vocabulary and epistemology may be "a promising candidate for deepening our understanding of the organizational world in a post-industrial society" (2003b: 28). In their opinion such a vocabulary: recognises practice in a world that is always in the making; conceives of knowing as a social ecology; includes the role of material artefacts; acknowledges the spatio-localised nature of contextuality; embraces, rather

than discounts change and disorder; and crosses boundaries connecting things, people and events (Nicolini, et al., 2003b: 21-25). This description offers a good fit with the community sector practice context.

Gherardi's (2006) book, *'Organizational knowledge: the texture of workplace learning'* is a journey through the world of practice and practices and demonstrates how an organisational researcher can empirically describe activities like learning, knowing and organising as elements of practice. It is situated in the empirical context of construction sites and asks: "How does safety in the construction industry become expertise, conserved and transmitted within a texture of organisational practices and performed through being put-into-practice?" (Gherardi, 2006: x). Gherardi outlines a theoretical and methodological approach, which she calls the spiral case study. This "spiral links practical knowledge activities from the institutional to the individual level within a single field of practices", elaborates the processes of knowing-in-practice identified at each level and explains how this knowledge that forms a field of practices is woven together (Gherardi, 2006: 230). Gherardi's spiral case study approach and her elaboration of the concepts 'knowing-in-practice' and 'field of practices' are crucial to the theoretical and methodological design of this research project.

Gherardi points out "a unified field of practices or a social theory of practice does not exist" (2006: 14). Rather, practice-based theorising on learning and knowing in organisations employs a range of research traditions including among others, activity theory (Blackler, 1995; Blackler & Crump, 2000; Engestrom, et al., 1999), situated learning theory and communities of practice (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) cultural and aesthetic perspectives on organisational knowing and learning (Cook & Yanow, 1993; Gherardi, Nicolini, & Strati, 2007; Strati, 1999; Yanow, 2004), actor-network theory (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000; Latour, 2005; Law, 1992; Law & Hassard, 1999) and work-based learning (Beckett & Hager, 2002; Billet, Fenwick, & Somerville, 2006; Raelin, 2007). These practice-based approaches draw on rich philosophical and epistemological traditions including pragmatism, phenomenology, Marxist epistemology, Vygostsky's social constructivism, Wittgenstein's later philosophy, Foucault's power/knowledge

nexus and Polanyi's personal knowledge and tacit knowing (Bengtsson, Sandberg, & Dall'Alba, 2006; Reckwitz, 2002).

Cultural and aesthetic approach

The cultural and aesthetic perspective to organisational knowing and learning is useful for researching and discussing knowing in the practices of community organisations (Cook & Yanow, 1993; Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007; Gherardi, et al., 2007; Strati, 1999; Weick & Westley, 1996; Yanow, 2000, 2004).

Strati's (1999) notion of 'aesthetic understanding' which incorporates feelings as forms of non-cognitive knowing has much to offer this study in its foregrounding of perceptive-sensorial capacities and aesthetic judgements. The cultural and aesthetic approach claims to enable us to 'see' the social and collective aspects of organisational knowing and learning. The interpretive methods employed "produce a record of local knowledge: detailed descriptions of those activities that groups actually engage in, and members' sensemaking of those actions from their own points of view" (Yanow, 2000: 251).

It is this recognition of *local* knowledge that is especially relevant for this study. In an important paper for this research, Yanow explains local knowledge is contextual knowledge, it is "the very mundane, yet expert understanding of and practical reasoning about local conditions derived from lived experience" (Yanow, 2004: S12). Local knowledge informs and includes practical judgement, "the situationally contingent reasoning and deliberation that underlie acting and taking action" (Yanow, 2000: 251). Yanow's research examines the experience of 'front-line' workers in large organisations. These workers at the periphery of their organisation, both hierarchically and geographically, develop knowledge in interaction with clients and customers that is extremely valuable for their organisation. However, her research demonstrates that the more centrally-located managers discount the local knowledge these workers learn in acting across the borders and at the peripheries. Her article theorises the structural character of 'local' versus 'expert' knowledge and the nature of translating local knowledge concerning organisational practices across 'borders' (Yanow, 2004). Yanow explains local knowledge is typically developed within a community of practitioners. It is specific to a context and to the group of people acting together in that context at that time. "Its very locality, that first hand

experience that made its generation possible is not perceived as having any bearing on or legitimacy in or value to the wider organization" (Yanow, 2004: S11). Referring to public policy design, she comments:

> Decision-makers tend to craft legislation and action to implement it without inputs from residents or other (targets in traditional policy language) who have policy-relevant local knowledge. The lack of attention to (at best) or outright devaluing of (at worst) local knowledge has been a common occurrence in many policy issue areas (Yanow, 2004: S17).

It is this issue that motivated the partnership to initiate the research from which this thesis has emerged. Strati's aesthetic understanding, Yanow and Cook's cultural view, and the concepts of local knowledge, translation, and crossing borders at the periphery of organisations are particularly helpful in relation to analysing relations between diverse organisations and institutions in the community sector.

Situated learning theories and communities of practice

Another perspective that focuses on the collective aspects of learning and practice is situated learning theory and the concept of communities of practice (CoP) (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Handley, Strudy, Fincham, & Clark, 2006; Iedema, Meyerkort, & White, 2005; Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, 2004; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). Since Lave and Wenger (1991) published their seminal work, the notion of communities of practice has generated increasing interest in a variety of fields including those most relevant to this study: organisational studies, feminist praxis and the community services domain.

Like Yanow and Cook's cultural view, this perspective takes a pragmatist orientation, and focuses on learning and knowing in and through action. Community of practice puts action-as-practice on centre stage (Yanow, 2000: 260). This approach advocates a social theory of knowledge and learning, in which learning is not about the transfer of knowledge from the head of the expert to the head of the novice but instead views knowledge as social construction. It positions knowledge in the contexts in which it has meaning. This process involves becoming an insider, learning to practice through interaction and enculturation into the community of practice (Brown & Duguid,

1991). In short, it involves acquiring the identity of a community member and learning the art of knowing and practice in that community (Duguid, 2005). Lave and Wenger make it clear that there is no separation between learning, social practice or the context where they take place:

> In our view, learning is not merely situated in practice – as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere; learning is an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world (Lave & Wenger, 1991: 35).

Furthermore, from their perspective, learning and social practice are seen as relational, we need to *belong* to learn and this belonging is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

In their review of the multidisciplinary learning in work literature, Fenwick and Rubenson found that later research in communities of practice has sought to explain the adaptation and reconfiguration of practices to meet changing pressures, and to identify ways to facilitate these dynamics (2005: 6). More recent communities of practice literature have tended to weaken key, radical aspects of Lave and Wenger's original formulation of situated learning. For example, Contu and Willmott, commenting on Wenger's *Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems* (2000) encounter "slippage from an earlier representation of learning as praxis fashioned within a discourse of critique to a formulation of learning as technology conceived within a discourse of regulation and performance" (Contu & Willmott, 2000: 272-273). For this research project and thesis the distinctive contribution of situated learning theory is its emphasis on "knowing in practice as joint enterprise and belonging" (Gherardi, 2006: 16).

Actor-network theory (ANT)

Actor-network theory, also known as the sociology of translation (Callon, 1986; Czarniawska & Jorges, 1995; Gherardi & Nicolini, 2000, 2003; Latour, 2005; Law, 1992; Law & Hassard, 1999; Suchman, 2000), emphasises the relational but here no a priori distinction is made between human and non-human actors. Material entities (for example, technologies, artefacts, animals, places) are both *participants* and *effects* in social practices. Thus, this approach emphasises performativity, as "entities take their form and acquire their attributes as a result of their relations with other entities" (Law & Hassard, 1999: 3). Intermediaries not only mediate

practices but also produce them (Gherardi, 2006: 17) by participating, enabling and constraining the creation of the material-discursive world (Bruni, 2004; Nicolini, Gherardi, & Yanow, 2003a; Suchman, 2005a, 2007). For example, Annemarie Mol's fascinating book *The Body Multiple* (2002) brings forward the multiplicity of complex ways that atherosclerosis is 'made up' both by the materials used to diagnose and treat the condition (such as medical tests, machines, surgical practices) as well as the practices of patients, doctors, physiotherapists and pathologists. By foregrounding practices comprised of materialities and events, she shows how the stability and persistence of the social order (of the hospital) constantly requires an effort and is an effect of processes, practices, tools and operations that hold things in place (Gherardi, 2006). The recognition that a purely social actor or social relation cannot exist, makes an important contribution to researching knowing in the community services field of practices by bringing the other-than human into view (Whittle & Spicer, 2008).

Actor-network theory originated in and has made significant contributions to science and technology studies. ANT theorists have disassembled the belief that what scientists make evident through their practices is the existence of discrete objects. On the contrary, they have emphasised that the efficacy of scientific practices depends on specific processes for making networks or assemblages of humans and nonhumans. Although they have persuasively questioned the taken-for-granted object-nature of things, actor-network theorists have been criticised for neglecting discursive practices relating to gender, race, nationality, class, sexuality and power. In doing so, ANT assumes they are properties of individual subjects (Barad, 2007). Casper points out the ANT approach to nonhuman agency excludes from analysis recognition that "the attribution of human and nonhuman to heterogenous entities" (1994: 840) is already a consequence of particular political practices. The boundaries between human and nonhuman are, therefore "the outcomes of a labour of division" (Whittle & Spicer, 2008: 615).

Activity theory

Activity theory (Blackler, 1995; Blackler & Crump, 2000; Engestrom & Kerosuo, 2007; Engestrom, et al., 1999), drawing on the Marxist tradition and particularly the work of Vygotsky, also highlights the mediated nature of activity and the important role of material and conceptual objects. An 'activity system' shows

the complex relations between agents, object-orientated activity and the community of which they are part. The existence of tensions, contradictions and conflicts are immanent in activity systems and productive of their ongoing development and change. Thus it is in practical action and not in individual thought that social learning takes place (Blackler, Crump, & McDonald, 2003). Activity theory enables the interpretation of practical knowing "as a historically situated accomplishment subject to an irrevocable process of expansion" involving the continual emergence of new objects of work (Nicolini, et al., 2003a: 18). The emphasis in activity theory on dissonance, contradictions and conflicts and their essential role in expansive learning, knowing and acting is particularly useful in this study's understanding of knowing in the community services field of practices.

Work-based learning

Emphasis on knowledge embedded in action, the interrelation of contexts and identities, the dynamics of difference and continual change, politics and power relations, ecology and ethics, and learning processes in work and organisations are some of the dominant themes discernable in the work-based learning literature (Fenwick, 2002). Much of the recent writing on working knowledge acknowledges the importance of workplace context, whose values shape the naming of valid knowledge and whose activities and interactions mark, alter and shape knowing-in-practice (Fenwick, 2002; Hager, 2005; Raelin, 2007). Hager argues there are four main contextual dimensions that shape work knowing – pervasive change and crisis, difference and diversity, the particular and the local, and political and social dimensions of knowledge (Hager, 1999: 648). The work of Dewey, particularly his theory of learning and his "naturalistic and ecological conception of logic" (Burke, 1994: 2) have been influential in the work-based learning approach, in highlighting the inherent contextuality of knowing and knowledge. The organisation's culture and its effects on social networks, practices and the meanings of practices is an important focus of research (Barnett, 1999; Fenwick, 2002; Watkins & Marsick, 1993).

Beckett, Halliday and Hager (Beckett, 2008; Beckett & Hager, 2000, 2002; Hager & Halliday, 2002, 2006) characterise productive informal learning and knowing as a growing capacity to make context sensitive judgements. This capacity is a

discretionary and discriminating process that involves holistic and embodied knowing (Johnsson, Athanasou, & Hager, 2005). Their practice-based approach argues for an active, broad, integrated and informal view of learning as everyday acting and knowing in the world.

This view is consistent with and draws from social learning theories (Brown & Duguid, 1991; Elkjaer, 2003; Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), action-based approaches (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Schön, 1983) and practice-based knowing (Nicolini, et al., 2003b; Orlikowski, 2002; Yanow, 2004), all discussed earlier in this literature review. This approach also resonates with Toulmin's (1999) collective knowers.

Beckett and Hager paint a rich typology of nested concepts (learning, practice, context, judgement) that celebrates the performance of work and makes visible judgements within practices. Valuable working knowledge is "anticipative action" in particular situations, a back-and-forth dynamic that goes on in the "hot action" of practice (Beckett & Hager, 2002). It is the account of practical judgement and its importance to knowing and know-how, that is distinctive. The importance of the discussion of judgement is that it provides a rich contextualisation to practice, learning and knowing. When integrated with Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow's practice-based approach, the concept of judgement adds an embodied ethical, value-based dimension to knowing-in-practice.

Similar to much of the literature on knowing, learning and practice, Hager and Beckett's paradigm can be challenged for its lack of strong analysis of power and its institutionalisation. O'Loughlin finds that while Beckett and Hager's work is "deeply informative and quite splendidly detailed in its treatment of the varieties of workplace practice, [it is] lacking in what I think is an essential ingredient – one that shows how the normalising apparatuses of disciplinarity actually serve to animate our daily practice…. by regulating life *from its very interior"* (2003: 115).

Additionally Beckett and Hager, in their care to demystify and make visible the creation of know-how, appear to stabilize and reify 'know-how' as a residue of learning (Fenwick, 2002). In their model, context influences and is acted upon

by individuals but remains essentially separate from them. This separation has been challenged by recent feminist praxis and theorising and is discussed in the next chapter.

Common themes and reasons for adopting a practice-based approach

Despite the range of practice-based approaches, Schatzki, et al., (2001), Nicolini, et al., (2003a) and Gherardi (2006) identify common themes that suggest the appropriateness of adopting a practice-based approach in this research project and thesis. A core theme is the desire to go beyond *dualisms* and instead emphasise the *relational* character of practice. This emphasis on relationality questions "the primacy of the actor and the individual action as the building blocks of social phenomena" (Gherardi, 2006: 39). It is within a situated practice that the knowers and knowns co-emerge and define each other. Thus practice is viewed as *socially and collectively constituted* rather than individually constituted (Bengtsson, et al., 2006). This suggests an emphasis on *knowing and doing* rather than knowledge and having. This preference for verbs is indicative of the *process-oriented* stance (Nicolini, et al., 2003a). This stance engages the fluidity of organising, "embraces ambiguity, uncertainty and discontinuity… the foundation of emerging/becoming/organizing. Practice therefore, exists in practise" (Antonacopoulou, 2008: 126). Relatedly, the attention paid to doing and the move away from a cognitive conception of knowledge emphasises the *embodiment* of practice by practitioners, sensible knowledge and the knowing body. Another common theme is that practice is conceived as *situated, local, context specific and experience based*. Knowing-in-practice is viewed as *mediated, provisional, contested and pragmatic* activity. Practice-based approaches offer methodologies that grapple with the complexity and multidimensionality of *knowing-in-practice*. Yet another theme is the focus on the *materiality* of the social world. "Knowing and acting are located in ecologies of social-material relations and their intermediaries [both human and non-human] not only mediate activities but also propagate practices" (Gherardi, 2006: 39).

Social services professional practice literature

The increasing interest in knowing-in-practice evident in the organisation studies discourse is largely absent from community services discourse. There is, however, a body of literature that examines the knowledge and practice base of the social work profession (Drury-Hudson, 1999; Osmond, 2005, 2006; Osmond

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& O'Connor, 2004, 2006; Zeira & Rosen, 2000). Interestingly, almost all of the research into social work practice and knowledge use has been conducted within the organisational setting of government bureaucracies and statutory agencies. Community organisations are thereby positioned as marginal and invisible. Further, the community sector employs people from a diverse range of backgrounds with social workers being only one of the professional groups employed. Nevertheless, it is the commonalities in relation to practice methods, interventions and social issues that make the social work practice literature of relevance to this study.

This section of the review concentrates on the literature that examines social workers' practice knowledge, rather than the literature that articulates the knowledge base and theoretical foundations of the social work profession. The review then discusses the much smaller body of work that investigates community services practice knowledge, in non-government organisations and networks.

Social work professional practice literature

Within the longstanding discussion of the social work profession's relationship to its knowledge base, there have been a number of studies conducted which have sought to articulate the knowledge that informs social work practice (Carew, 1979; Corby, 1982; DeMartini & Whitbeck, 1986; Sheppard, 1995). However, most of these studies adopt a very narrow conception of knowledge as empirical research and theory. Overwhelmingly, they conclude that these types of knowledge do not play a significant role in guiding practice (Carew, 1979; Corby, 1982; Sheppard & Ryan, 2003). When the social work literature adopts a broader conception of knowledge, and discusses the implicit or tacit dimensions of knowing or the concept of practice wisdom, it is most often in the form of theoretical explorations (see for example, Carew, 1987; DeRoos, 1990; Dybicz, 2004; Imre, 1985; Trevithick, 2005, 2008). A strong theme emerging from this literature explores the role of ethics and values as the basis of social work practice wisdom (Dybicz, 2004; Hawkins, Fook, & Ryan, 2001; Wilks, 2005).

A small number of empirically based studies adopt this broader conception of knowledge and they are of particular interest to this literature review (Drury-

Hudson, 1997, 1999; Osmond, 2000, 2005; Osmond & O'Connor, 2004, 2006; Sheppard, Newstead, Di Caccavo, & Ryan, 2000; Taylor & White, 2006; White, 1997; Zeira & Rosen, 2000).

Sheppard, et al.'s (2000) study, involving 21 social workers asked to respond to 3 referral vignettes using the 'cognitive processes interview' method, identifies a number of categories of process knowledge and illustrates "the intimate relationship between critical appraisal, hypothesis generation and forward speculation in the reflexive process" (Sheppard, et al., 2000: 481). The study offers useful insights into knowledge as process and reflexivity as critical aspects of 'good practice'. However, its reliance on simulated practice rather than interrogating actual practice limits the guidance it offers our study.

Drawing upon fieldwork data from an ethnographic study of child-care social work, Taylor and White (2006) also adopt a 'knowledge as process' view in advocating increased focus on the knowledge-*making* processes embedded in practice. In contrast, Osmond's (2000) qualitative multi-method study focuses on social workers' *use* of knowledge in practice. Osmond adopts an ecological theoretical approach and draws on the work of Polanyi and Ryle to explore the explicit and tacit[28] understandings of social workers employed in a statutory child-protection context (Osmond, 2000). Osmond (2000; 2005) develops the 'knowledge spectrum framework' a tool that diagrammatically maps the range of knowledges and their interconnections that inform social work practice. The framework incorporates both explicit and tacit forms of knowing and presents knowledge use in practice as a complex dynamic process. She advocates "moving away from simplistic notions of knowledge use towards the recognition that knowing-in-practice is a complex temporally variable process" (Osmond, 2000: ii). Osmond asserts the value of examining knowledge use by studying 'real' practice in order to generate findings that are "contextually located and enfolded with the realities of practice" (2000: 288).

Osmond's work provides a detailed account of 10 social workers' casework practice within a particular setting. As such it offers key insights for this research project in relation to how knowledge is used, the recognition of the

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[28] Osmond (2000) uses the concept tacit to denote knowledge that is difficult to describe, knowledge that is taken for granted or tacitly presupposed and silenced knowledge.

different knowledges utilised and methods for studying and documenting such knowledges. On the other hand, the particularity and specialised nature of the context and the narrow range of interventions examined, restricts its use for this study. Osmond calls for further research into practice knowledge with practitioners from different organisational contexts and with different professional backgrounds (2000: 310). This research project and thesis contributes to meeting this gap in the literature.

Knowledge-based approaches to community services organisations

Muetzelfeldt's (2005) research adopts a knowledge-based analytical frame to examine a partnership between non-government and government agencies delivering social support to families in a local area in Victoria, a southern state in Australia. Drawing on the work of Mezirow (1991; 2000) and Gibbons, et al. (1994), Muetzelfeldt introduces the distinction between *dialogical* knowledge and *monological* knowledge, while emphasising the interdependence between them (2005). He argues:

> dialogical knowledge is emergent through interactive practices, and in particular through the interactions of dialogue. It embodies the discursive foundations of practice, and so is central to sustaining and reproducing practices and the identities, categories, values and organisational forms in which they occur (Muetzelfeldt, 2005: 3).

He explains that bodies of knowledge are both constitutive of and are constituted by the policy and organisational frameworks within which knowledge management takes place:

> The formal organisation or network, together with the practices that enact it and give it both its routine everydayness as well as its ways of reacting or responding to unique crises and opportunities, is constituted through the complex interplay of relevant and appropriate monological and dialogical knowledge (Muetzelfeldt, 2005: 5).

This mutually constitutive relationship of monological and dialogical knowledge to organisational structures and form offers an important insight for our investigation of community sector practice knowledge in a range of community organisations and networks.

Similarly, Sykes (2006) adopts a discursive and knowledge-based approach. He combines this analytical framework with a methodology based on third person action research to investigate how managerialist discourse is shaping organisational knowledge in community service organisations (2006: 4). Across three different non-government organisation sites, Sykes identifies the following five characteristics of working knowledge in community service organisations.

- A reliance on individual community service practice knowledge and skills often used heuristically to provide services creatively and flexibly.
- Knowledge is dispersed and distributed across organisations both internally and externally.
- Local and situated knowledge is required in the provision of services to particular communities and groups
- In accord with the social work professional practice literature, Sykes draws attention to the ethical, values-orientated dimension to community services practice knowledge
- Loss and changes in organisation knowledge result in changes to organisations and the services they deliver to communities (Sykes, 2006: 133-140).

Sykes demonstrates how the spread of managerialist discourse in community service organisations is subsuming and displacing the distributed, situated and local practice knowledge outlined above "resulting in significant dissonance and loss of vital organisational knowledge and relatedly, reduced organisational capability" (2006: xii).

Echoing the calls to further research advocated by Osmond, Sykes argues finding ways to make visible and appreciate the "complex knowledge embedded in organisations is crucial for the community service organisations themselves and their delivery of effective services" (2006: 156).

This work has been partially taken up by Treleaven and Sykes (2006a). Like Osmond (2000; 2005), they developed a knowledge tool for use by community service organisations. In contrast to Osmond's knowledge spectrum this tool does not attempt to map community services practice knowledges. Instead, it is framed around three levels of practice knowledge: the individual practitioner, the organisational level and the sector level of community services. At each

level reflective questions are proposed to facilitate a reflexive, re-minding of practice. The questions are guided by the following propositions. At the individual practitioner level, practitioners need to "reflect on and bring out their practice knowledge which is tacit and embodied in their everyday routines" and "draw attention to the ways in which their decisions require not only information but also evaluations of worth" (Treleaven & Sykes, 2006a: 23). At the organisational level, there is a need for community services to demonstrate how evidence is more than data in their reporting and draw out their organisational practice knowledge by mentoring staff to recognise its importance and create cultures and opportunities to share this knowledge. At the sector level, community services need to continue its collective, social role of developing its community of practice and translate its shared practice knowledge to other relevant stakeholders (Treleaven & Sykes, 2006a: 23).

National Community Services Training Package

Perhaps the most comprehensive and grand attempt to capture community services practice knowledge and develop a knowledge tool is to be found in the Australian National Training Authority's Community Services Training Package (CSHTA, 2002).[29] This document is extremely influential and has been adopted by policy-makers and decision-makers at both Federal and State government levels in Australia as the definitive description of community services knowledge, skill and practice. The Training Package attempted to codify community service practice knowledge and skills across 19 practice areas including children's services, mental health, aged care, alcohol and other drugs, child protection, community development and youth work. This codification involved atomising and separating practice knowledge into 452 discrete units of competence. These units of competence were then clustered together in varying combinations to form individual 'recipes' for particular types and levels of community service worker practice, from entry-level practitioners through to managers of services. These 'recipes' were scaled to form a national suite of qualifications for each practice area from Certificate II through to Advanced Diploma. The process resulted in the national Community Services Training Package containing 61 qualifications (CSHTA, 2002).

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[29] An updated version of the Community Services Training Package was released in December 2008. It follows the same format as the previous package and has resulted in expansion of both the number of units of competence and qualifications delineated (CSHISC, 2008).

As performance descriptors, the units of competence contained in the community services training package may provide reference points in fieldwork discussions with community organisation workers about their practice. However, the view of learning, knowing and practice evident in the organisation studies literature discussed earlier in this chapter highlights fundamental flaws in the training package approach to community services skills, knowledge and practice. Indeed, the community services training package is an excellent example of the dominant paradigm of knowledge and learning convincingly critiqued in the discourse of organisation studies.

The view of competence contained in the community services training package is based on the assumption that views learning, knowing and knowledge as products (Fenwick, 2006a; Hager, 2003). This underpinning assumption leads to performance and outcomes being erroneously equated with knowledge, skills and capabilities. The community services units of competence are descriptors of activities and tasks not, as they claim to be, specifications of knowledge, skills and attributes. The training package assumes that knowledge, skills, attributes and capabilities are individualistic and transparent. There is also a failure to recognise that competency standards are, by necessity, abstractions that are only complete in a very limited sense and need to be adapted to changing contexts. Their generality is illusory, as they reflect abstraction from real work situations and practice which are holistic not atomistic (Hager, 2003: 22). Fenwick argues that current attempts in Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom to identify and measure, knowledge, skill and competence are limited by their failure to account for how environment, activity, socio-cultural participation and knowledge politics all shape what is observed as practice (Fenwick, 2006a: 694).

Practice and practising, knowledge and knowing

Across both the practice-based approaches to knowing in organisations literature and the social services professional practice literature the elements of an alternative, expanded conception of knowledge, knowing, practice and practising are suggested. This view does not cast knowledge as a product. Instead it emphasises knowing as process, "as a dialectical interplay of process and product" (Hager, 2004b: 29). In this view, knowing is practice-based.

However, practice is a word with many different meanings. Consequently, in this section, I discuss, first, conceptions of practice evident in the literatures reviewed and second, the relationship between knowledge and practice.

Practice and practising

In *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, practice simultaneously means: a learning method, a way of acquiring proficiency through repetition; a field of activity, to be engaged in an occupation such as legal or medical practice; the way something is performed, or done customarily and to carry out in action (Onions, [1944] 1965b). Such diversity of use and debate about what constitutes practice is evident in the literatures reviewed in this chapter. The multiplicity of the term is connected to its rich philosophical and sociological heritage (Gherardi, 2006; Nicolini, et al., 2003b; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, et al., 2001).

There are currently two main and quite different conceptions of practices evident in the literatures discussed in this chapter. One conception of practices emphasises rule-governed, habitual, embodied performances. These performances are characterised by regularity-exhibiting behaviour and recurrent processes (see Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984). This conception has been variously called the descriptive (Gherardi, 2007) or the regulist (Rouse, 2007) notion of practices. Turner (1994) has persuasively criticised this conception of practices in his argument that the notion of practices is a pseudo-explanation for the regularities, continuities and commonalities of social life. He asserts that the value of the concept of practices evaporates when attempts are made at a precise elaboration and advocates replacing it with the notion of 'habit'.

However, the alternative conception of practices does not depend on any underlying regularity or commonality (Rouse, 2002). Instead, this conception emphasises that practices are constituted by the mutual accountability of their performances to what is at issue and at stake in a practice (see Antonacopoulou, 2008; MacIntyre, 1981; Rouse, 2007).[30] This is called the

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[30] MacIntyre's normative conception of practice has been widely drawn upon in the practice-based studies literature (see Antonacopoulou, 2008; Hager & Halliday, 2002; Tsoukas, 2005). He defines a practice as "any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive

normative conception of practices (Gherardi, 2007; Rouse, 2007). Gherardi's definition, drawing on the phenomenological and ethnomethodological traditions, falls within this normative conception of practices. She explains, practices:

> are modes of ordering which acquire temporal and spatial stability from provisional and unstable agreements in practice. We can say that people share a practice if their actions are appropriately regarded as answerable to norms of correct or incorrect practice, to criteria of aesthetics, taste and to standards of fairness (Gherardi, 2008: 523).

It is this normative conception of practices that is most influential in this thesis. Thus, practices do not simply refer to regularised patterns of human activity but rather to dynamic, situated, embodied, spatially and temporally extended ways of humans and other-than-humans 'doing' things together. Practices are materially and discursively constructed networks of intra-active performances that constitute something at issue and at stake "whose definitive resolution is always prospective" (Rouse, 2007: 51). So matters of significance, accountability and context are key dimensions of 'good' practice in the community sector.

This normative, relational view draws attention to the fluid, dynamic character of practices. Practices are ongoingly reconfigured – they are practised. The distinction between practice and practising alerts the researcher to the open-ended, 'always-in-the-process-of-becoming' nature of practice. Practising a practice involves 'forward feeding', trying things out, rehearsing and changing aspects of the practice. Practise enables different dimensions of a practice to emerge or be transformed. As Antonacopoulou (2008) explains:

> A practice, therefore, exists because it is in practise, not simply performed, but formed and transformed as practising attempts reveal different aspects that configure and reconfigure a practice on an ongoing basis… The ongoing permutations of practice in practising attempts help to explain why no practice is ever the same (Antonacopoulou, 2008: 125).

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of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systemically extended" (MacIntyre, 1981: 187).

In this way, it is through practising that practices, practitioners, intentions, accountabilities and ethicality co-emerge.

Knowing-in-practice

Gherardi (2006) identifies three types of relations between practices and knowledge in the literature: containment, mutual constitution and equivalence. None exclude the other. A relation of containment views knowledge as "a process that takes place within situated practices" (Gherardi, 2006: 38). A relation of mutual constitution views the activities of knowing and practising not as two distinct and separate phenomena but as interacting and productive of each other (Gherardi, 2006). A relation of equivalence views practising as knowing in practice, "whether the subject is aware of it or not. Acting as a competent practitioner is synonymous with knowing how to connect successfully with the field of practices thus activated" (Gherardi, 2006: 38-39). This thesis is located in the relation of equivalence and is elaborated in a feminist, performative approach presented in the following chapter.

The equivalence relation connects with a powerful concept or 'topos' in the practice-based literature 'knowing-in-practice' (Cook & Brown, 1999; Gherardi, 2006; Nicolini, et al., 2003b; Orlikowski, 2002). The idea is that knowledge is studied as a social process, human and other-than-human, aesthetic, emotive and ethical. It is embedded in practice, the domain where doing and knowing are one and the same (Gherardi, 2006). Participation in a practice is on the one hand a way to acquire knowledge in action, and on the other, a way to change as well as perpetuate such knowledge. Orlikowski uses knowing-in-practice to suggest that "knowing is not a static embedded capability, or stable disposition among actors, but rather an ongoing social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted as actors engage the world of practice" (Orlikowski, 2002: 249). The practices of the context produce a collective knowing-how. Thus knowing-in-practice is an accomplishment realised by establishing connections-in-action (Gherardi, 2006).

The study of knowing-in-practice adopts action verbs that are able to transmit the idea of emergent reality, of knowledge as a material activity and that emphasises the situatedness of practices. It is also characterised by forms of language that denote uncertainty, conflict, incoherence and power relations,

understood as features intrinsic to practices because they produce innovation, learning and change (Nicolini, et al., 2003a).

Conclusion

Changes in the conceptions and role of knowledge in Western societies and developments in practice-based approaches to knowing in organisations and the social services professional practice literature are pointing in a similar direction. This direction fundamentally challenges the view that successful community services practice depends only on the prior acquisition of knowledge and principles codified in the various disciplines. Individualistic and acquisitive theories of knowledge have been critiqued in much of the literature cited in this review as highly limited, "usually apolitical and acontextual, lacking historical and sociological analysis of knowledge generation, ignoring cultural psychology and geography, and unable to account for the dynamic and often contradictory interactions of individuals with and in the turbulence of everyday activity" (Fenwick, 2006b: 297).

Instead, across these literatures practice is foregrounded. Knowing-in-practice is holistic, in that it attends to social, conative, cultural and political factors and centres on organic, holistic, embodied judgements made and re-made through acting in and on the world (Johnsson, et al., 2005; Orlikowski, 2002). This view casts knowledge as "diffused, fragmented and distributed as a property of groups working within a situated material environment and within a situated and discursively sustained social world" (Gherardi, 2008: 523). Thus, such an approach emphasises the importance of contextuality and culture, and views practice as simultaneously both individual and collective (Fenwick, 2006a; Hager, 2004a; Nicolini, et al., 2003b; Wenger, 1998).

Accordingly, in adopting the perspective on practice and practising, on knowledge and knowing summarised in the previous section, this thesis requires a congruent philosophical and methodological approach. A congruent approach assists investigating and making visible the knowing-in-practice and the connections-in-action characteristic of a community services field of practices. Such an epistemological, ontological, methodological and ethical approach is presented and justified in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

A Feminist ethico-onto-epistem-ology[31]

> I think my problem and "our" problem is to have *simultaneously* an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own "semiotic technologies" for making meanings, *and* a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a "real" world, one that can be partially shared and friendly to earth-wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering and limited happiness.
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> <div align="right">Donna Haraway (1991a)</div>

Introduction

The previous chapter illustrated practice-based approaches to knowing and learning in organisations by drawing upon a range of research traditions. Feminist voices have made significant contributions to the ongoing conversation amongst research traditions focusing on situated practice. Gherardi argues "it would be an unpardonable oversight… not to recognise the authority of the feminist voice in discussion of 'situated knowledge'" (2006: 18). This thesis aims to further this contribution by employing feminist praxis and feminist poststructural applications to open up a range of ontological, epistemological, methodological and ethical perspectives that provide analytical resources for exploring knowing in the community services field of practices.

Accordingly, this chapter presents and justifies a feminist, performative, epistemological, ontological, methodological and ethical approach developed to address the research questions in this practice-based study. As outlined in Chapter 1, the aims of this research study are: first, to describe, analyse and present an account of the situated knowing-in-practice of a community of practitioners from five local organisations working within the broader community services field of practices in the Illawarra; second, to discuss how knowing, organising and practising are enacted in a community organisation; third, to investigate what happens when this local practice knowledge is brought into results-based accountability (RBA) processes with diverse

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[31] Ethico-onto-epistem-ology is Karen Barad's (2007) term and refers to the entanglement of ethics, knowing and being.

organisations and institutions within the community services field of practices; and fourth, to explore how practice knowledge is translated, contested and circulated in inter-organisational relations in the community services field of practices.

The chapter is organised to begin addressing these aims as follows. First, I broadly position the study in relation to epistemology and ontology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. Second, I discuss feminist praxis. Third, I present a performative epistemology and relational ontology that informs this practice-based study. Finally, I review the methodology, feminist-informed participatory action research, in relation to the literature. Chapter 3 thereby opens the way for Chapter 4, which discusses the research sites, processes and the specific methods used to gather and analyse the data.

Positioning the study

Crotty (1998) distinguishes different frameworks of research on the basis of their grounding in epistemology. He argues that there are four basic elements in any research process: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and methods. These elements necessarily inform one another. According to Crotty, epistemology is the theory of knowledge embedded in the research. The theoretical perspective is the particular philosophical position that provides a context for the research. Methodology refers to the overall strategy, or plan of action for conducting research. Methods are the techniques and procedures used to gather and analyse data (Crotty, 1998: 3). Crotty's schema is particularly useful in that it provides a format for a researcher to conceptualise and clarify the foundations for a research project. Using the schema as a guide, researchers can deliberatively consider how the ideas underlying their project fit together within the different layers, and ensure congruency between them.

Lather (2007) takes a slightly different approach to Crotty, that of the paradigm. A paradigm "determines the criteria according to how one selects and defines problems for inquiry and how one approaches them theoretically and methodologically… How a problem is formulated and methodologically tackled" (Husen, 1997: 16,18). In other words, a paradigm determines what counts as knowledge and how knowledge can be validly generated. The paradigm approach is similar to Crotty's in that different aspects of the research

shape one another. Lather distinguishes between three current post-positivist paradigms: interpretive, critical and post-structural and speculates about a possible emerging paradigm she calls neopositivist. She draws on Habermas's (1971) three categories of human interest that underscore knowledge claims – prediction, understanding and emancipation. She adds the non-Habermasian category of 'deconstruct' (2007: 164).

This study occupies the dialogic space between the 'emancipative' and 'deconstruct' categories. Specifically, the research adopts a feminist, performative epistemological, ontological and ethical approach. The theoretical perspective is strongly influenced by feminist practice-based approaches particularly Gherardi's (2006) theoretical and methodological spiral case study approach and Lather's (2007) approach to praxis. A post-positivist, praxis-orientated methodology using participatory action research (Reason & Bradbury, 2001b), interpretive[32] methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2006) and analysis of material-discursive practices using a diffractive method (Barad, 2007; Gherardi, 2006) is chosen to appropriately address the research aims.

Using multiple, interpretive methods[33] within a feminist-informed participatory action research methodology to gather and access the data enhances theoretical and methodological congruence in a practice-based study. The complexity of the research questions also invites multiple methods as this expands the possibilities and avenues for exploring knowing-in-practice and enhances the opportunity to yield broader and deeper insights. Community sector workers, management committee members and service participants are a diverse group and therefore necessitate a research strategy which is flexible and sensitive to 'hearing' and 'seeing' their local knowledge. Participatory Action Research (PAR) methods recognise research participants as experts and authoritative of their own experiences. This acknowledgement is particularly important given

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[32] Yanow and Schwartz-Shea distinguish a "tri-partite division among quantitative, positivist-qualitative and traditional qualitative methods. The later have increasingly been termed 'interpretive' methods" (2006: xviii). The description and examples of interpretive methods elaborated by Yanow and Schwartz-Shea offer a good fit with the methods deployed in this study.

[33] The specific methods employed for accessing/gathering and analysing the data are discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

community practitioner and service participants' sense of the validity of their local knowledge and experience being denied by policy-makers and decision-makers.

The principles of open-endedness, dialogue, explicitness, reciprocity and self-reflexivity underlying Lather's approach (1986; 1991; 1994) offer guidance for this research project. It is threaded through with the intention of advocacy and change. Actioning these principles through a participatory methodology is highly appropriate because, like the results-based accountability (RBA) framework methodology, it relies on stakeholders' participation and collaboration through cycles of planning, action and reflection in order to improve outcomes (Treleaven, 2001).

 A further rationale for a participatory methodology is evident in the literature of organisational knowledge in general and practice-based approaches in particular, discussed in the previous chapter. This literature argues that knowing and learning are social, participatory activities, and emphasise that people's understanding resides in the practices in which s/he is involved. Knowledge is not discovered but ongoingly co-created (Orlikowski, 2002; Tsoukas, 1996).

However, a review of research methodologies used in the organisational knowledge and practice-based studies literature by Petit and Huault (2008) points out the frequent lack of consistency between the epistemological position and the methodological choices as well as the absence of real participation by researchers in organisational life. Such knowledge thus risks being removed from its social dimension and represented as an objective element. Petit and Huault (2008) also criticise the positivism still apparent in many organisation studies and argue that when studying knowing-in-practice, methodologies such as action research, collaborative ethnography, and storytelling are more appropriate.

Ensuring coherence between espoused epistemic principles and principles-in-use was thus a crucial factor in selecting a performative epistemology, a relational ontology and a feminist-informed participatory action research methodology for this practice-based study.

Feminist praxis

It is not possible here to reflect in any depth on debates about definitions and meanings of feminist praxis and research. There are few who would claim there is a distinctly and uniquely feminist method of data collection and analysis (Harding, 1987; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007; Pillow, 2002; Reinharz, 1992; Stanley & Wise, 1983). Reinharz (1992) describes feminist research as having the following characteristics. There is a focus on understanding and analysing women within and from their own perspectives. Feminist research analyses gender in context and focuses on the daily-lived experiences of women's lives. It is about commitment to the empowerment, personal or social, of women or some change as a result of research. There is attention to researcher subjectivity and reflexivity in the research process.

Other authors describe feminist research in terms of a distinctive approach to issues of epistemology and ontology (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Grosz, 1988; Harding, 1991; Stanley & Wise, 1983, 1990; Tanesini, 1999; Tuana & Morgen, 2001). For Weiner (1994) feminist research is a form of critical praxis, defined as:

> deriving from experience and rooted in practice; continually subject to revision as a result of experience; reflexive and self-reflective; widely accessible and open to change; ground in the analysis of women's (and men's) multiple and different material realities; illuminative of women's and (men's) multiple and different material realities; explicitly political and value-led; and rejecting conventional dualisms such as theory/practice, mental/manual, epistemology/methodology (Weiner, 1994: 130).

This thesis is not *uniquely* feminist on these grounds. However, it belongs to a feminist tradition and has a strong feminist orientation in the above terms. The community sector workforce is highly gendered[34] and the organisations participating in this study focus on issues that have long been central to feminism such as child sexual assault, care, parenting, and multiculturalism.

A distinctive feature of feminist praxis is an ontological commitment to producing knowledge for making a difference in people's everyday lives while

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[34] For example 86.6% of all workers in community sector occupations in Australia are women (Ride, 2007: 22).

reflexively scrutinising interventions to strengthen praxis. Such an approach recognises that for the inquiry process to contribute to action and change, it requires a "participatory stance to knowing, reflecting and learning. That is to say, feminist scholars conceive 'knowing' as concretely situated in conversation among machines, people, other organisms and artefacts" (Gherardi, 2006: 19).

Three significant publications particularly informed feminist praxis: Lather's (1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern*, Fonow and Cook's (1991) *Beyond Methodology: Feminist Scholarship as Lived Research* and Stanley's (1990) *Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology.* Although each emerged from different disciplines and theoretical frameworks, they all placed emphasis on four major aspects of feminist praxis: reflexivity, orientation to action, attention to the affective aspects of research and the use of the situation-to-hand as a focus for engaging in research.

Troubling feminist praxis

The 'reflexive turn' has been a dominant theme in feminist praxis since the late 1980's that has encouraged debates and critiques on the meaning, scope and effects of feminist research and praxis. Fonow and Cook's (2005) recent overview of these tensions and debates demonstrates that the agenda has shifted to an emphasis on an epistemic and ontological turn to the body, the limits of reflexivity, the deepening of the crisis of representation and a turn to social policy as part of a continued focus on social action.

These shifts have been shaped by the persuasive critiques of feminism by black feminists, feminists from third world countries and "the varied post movements that have so troubled Western philosophy, history and language" (Lather, 2007: 74). Consequently, feminists became increasingly aware of the limitations of gender as a single analytical category. Approaches to research and praxis emerged that embraced intersectionality,[35] the complexity of entangled intra-relations "among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations" (McCall, 2005: 1771) such as gender, ethnicity, race, class and sexuality.

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[35] The term intersectionality is usually attributed to Crenshaw (1989).

These critiques have also urged feminists to interrogate the unintended consequences of its own feminist praxis, in a time when 'giving voice', 'empowering' and 'emancipating' have lost their innocence. Feminist praxis has responded to the demand for complexity (McCall, 2005: 1786) urged by poststructuralism and post-colonialism by asking: What might it look like to go about knowledge projects and praxis where we try to be accountable to both the complexities of research and action for social justice while attending "to post-structural suspicions of rationality, philosophies of presence and universalising projects" (Lather, 2007: 16)?

Rather than abandoning the possibility of praxis that makes a difference in people's lives, what is required is a reconceptualisation of praxis as a situated, contestable, uncertain, incomplete work in process, where we are not so sure of ourselves and we see this 'not knowing' as the best means to strengthen and improve praxis (Lather, 2007: 76). Towards this end, feminist praxis combines practical intervention into existing relations with a reflexive problematising and scrutinising of those terms upon which the intervention is made, a "double(d) movement that uses and troubles a category simultaneously" (Lather, 2007: 16). Thus the insights generated from feminist praxis and poststructural and postcolonial applications are placed in conversation with one another. This does not involve reading these disciplinary practices against each other but using a diffractive method, as Barad (2007) puts it, to respectfully and carefully read and think their insights through one another.

Epistemologies of ignorance, of not knowing[36]

Awareness of the limits and dangers of feminist praxis as well as the resulting doubts and bafflements have shaped the realisation amongst feminist researchers that we cannot robustly understand knowing-in-practice without also understanding practices of 'not knowing'. Practices of ignorance, of not knowing, have largely been ignored in practice-based studies of organisation. Often ignorance is assumed to be a simple lack of knowledge, a gap, something we do not yet know. However, in many cases, ignorance is far more complex. It is often actively produced and sustained, "linked to issues of cognitive

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[36] Epistemologies of ignorance is Tuana's (2004; 2006) term.

authority, doubt, trust, silencing and uncertainty" (Tuana, 2004: 195). To explore different manifestations of ignorance and the practices of their production, Tuana (2006) examines the example of the women's health movement collectively recovering and creating knowledge of women's bodies. Her work demonstrates that understanding the multiplicity of practices of 'not knowing' and how they intersect with power relations requires an acknowledgement that, like knowledge, ignorance is situated and often intertwined with practices of oppression and exclusion.

Another dimension of 'ignorance', amplified by the tensions between feminist praxis and feminist poststructuralism, is what Davis (2002) calls the "ability of not knowing". This is "not a will *not* to know as the condition of ignorance but an ability to engage with what escapes propositions and representation" (Kostkowska, 2004: 199 emphasis in original). The ability of not knowing is enabling, opening us up to the other, to the encounter with difference. Feminist praxis urges us to see how our "not wanting to not know is a violence against the other" (Lather, 2007: 161). However, "unknowability does not exist in opposition to knowledge-making", but is inside knowing (Parkins, 2008: 5). It suggests limits are immanent in knowledge and that such knowing boundaries are negotiated and enacted amongst actors.

There is much at stake in these encounters with difference, outcomes are not guaranteed. Of course, such inquiry invites an appreciation of complexity but also insists that more is required. It is a political and ethical call, to learn to respond, to act respectfully in relations that are nevertheless always asymmetrical (Haraway, 2008). The following section elaborates an epistemological, ontological and ethical approach that contributes to the possibility of enacting such inquiry.

A performative epistemology and a relational ontology

Feminist work unsettles, takes up and swerves around what Latour (2005) has called the 'Great Divides' such as nature/culture, human/nonhuman, mind/body, subject/object, sex/gender matter/discourse and constructionist/realist that run deep in Western cultures. In particular, the emphases in feminist praxis on performativity, materiality, intra-activity and an ethics of relationality are

key concepts for further understanding and developing a practice-based approach to investigating knowing-in-practice in the community sector.

In this section I outline the performative epistemology and relational ontology threaded through this thesis.[37] First, I briefly discuss a performative understanding of materiality that includes the body. Second, I describe the performative paradigm and how it challenges the representational conception of knowledge traditionally entangled in Western cultures (Rouse, 1996). This also includes a discussion of ontology, "the conditions of the possibilities we live with" (Mol, 1999), as relational and multiple. Fourth, I introduce the key concepts of intra-action and agential realism, and the implications for re-working concepts such as agency and structure, discourse and material-discursive practices are elaborated. Finally, my discussion of an ethics of relationality completes the depiction of the 'ethico-onto-epistem-ology' (Barad, 2007) adopted in this thesis.

Materiality

One of the important and distinctive contributions made by practice-based approaches to studying organisation, outlined in Chapter 2, is foregrounding the active, mediating role played by tools, material artefacts and contexts in shaping organisational practices and in exploring materiality and its interaction with knowing-in-practice (see for example, Gherardi, 2006; Nicolini, et al., 2003b; Rafaeli & Pratt, 2006; Suchman, 1987). However, Nyberg argues, "although material dimensions are recognized in this literature, the emphasis is still on how objects are constructed by human actors… How objects are materialized in everyday organisational life and the practical meaning of this needs to be further problematized" (2007: 8). In addition, despite the strength of the practice perspective in conceptualising the human-side of the interaction between materiality and sociality, the human bodies that inhabit the texts often appear as cognitive, abstract, theoretical bodies rather than lived bodies in the fullness of their physicality.

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[37] One of the difficulties in discussing an approach grounded in relationality and performativity is that our language makes it difficult to express inseparability. As Orlikowski and Scott acknowledge "even terms such as mutual constitution, entanglement, assemblage and relationality allude to separateness even as they try to move beyond it" (2008: 468).

A performative approach to the body, materiality and relationality has been pioneered by feminist scholars such as Butler (1993) Haraway (1991a) and Sedgwick (2003). Haraway disrupts the category of materiality to produce new relations between the human and the nonhuman, nature and culture and forges "new kinds of collective in a way that questions what is practice and what is theory" (Thrift, 2006: 189). Butler too offers conceptions of the body and of matter, where matter is "a process of materialization that stabilises over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity, and surface we call matter" (Butler, 1993: 9). In doing so, she rescues matter "from its location as both prior and passive with regard to the notion of production" (Kirby, 1997: 104). She thereby re-casts materiality as a doing, a performance, not a fixed entity. Thus, the importance of the body, underlined in early feminist praxis, is broadened in recent feminist studies to 'materiality as a performance' that includes not only 'doing gender' through the body but dynamically engages with human and nonhuman entities (see for example, Barad, 2007; Code, 2008; Kirby, 1997; Mol, 2002; Tuana, 2001). For example, during my fieldwork with the Warrawong Community Centre[38] I observed:

> A woman in a wheelchair adroitly gliding, dancing, spinning and singing with other singers/dancers and a piano accordionist in a community hall (WCC, 9/3/2007).

In this observation the wheelchair belongs corporeally to the woman, there is fluidity and no clear boundaries between the human and non-human actors. The performance of the activities was an enabling, relational coming-into-being through joining with the metallic physicality of the wheelchair that produced one configuration – a vital singing, dancing performer. In this way, not unlike some other practice-oriented theorists (for example, Law, 1999; Orlikowski, 2007; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008; Suchman, 2007), feminist praxis applies a performative not a representational lens for the exploration of materiality.

A performative paradigm

Performativity is often traced back to Austin's (1962) foundational work on performative utterances. Austin's performativity concerns how language constructs or affects 'reality' rather than merely describes it. The concept of performativity has catalysed markedly divergent thinking and usages in many

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[38] The Warrawong Community Centre and the PAR cycles we conducted with the oganisation are detailed on pages 93-94.

disciplines including sociology, politics, economics, feminist, cultural, literary, theatre and science studies (Sedgwick, 2003). For example, Lyotard uses performativity to mean an extreme form of efficiency, of maximising output and minimising input (Lyotard, 1984). In this view performativity is the meta-discourse of the globalising state (Yeatman, 1994).

In contrast, Pickering (1995), a science studies scholar, deploys performativity as a remedy to the representationalist view of knowledge in his investigations of the nature of scientific practices. However, Pickering in his use of the term does not acknowledge performativity's politically important feminist and queer genealogy, a line that extends from Derrida (1976) and Foucault (1977; 1978), to Butler (1990; 1993; 1997; 2004) and Sedgwick (1993; 2003). For example, building on Foucault's critique of representationalism, Butler's notion of performativity emphasises that gender is not the attribute of individuals or pre-given but is the sedimentation of iterative performances, "a set of repeated acts within a tightly rigid regulatory frame" (Butler, 1999: 43). It is this genealogy, placed in conversation with the performative understandings of the nature of scientific practices propounded by scholars such as Barad (2003; 2007), Haraway (1991a; 1997; 2008), Latour (1993; 1999; 2004) and Rouse (1996; 2002) that have been influential in the development of the epistemological, ontological and methodological approach employed in this thesis.

A performative paradigm challenges the representationist view that knowledge is best understood in terms of how individuals represent things and their environment (Tanesini, 1999). According to the representationalist approach, we have the knower (person who does the representing) and things (the known). Representations (knowledge) are assumed to "serve a mediating function between [these two] independently existing entities (Barad, 2007: 47). For representations to count as knowledge they must be accurate or true (Tanesini, 1999).

The move from representationalism to performative alternatives shifts the focus from questions of correspondence between descriptions and reality to matters of practices and actions (Barad, 2007: 28). The performative paradigm gives priority to the ways actions are manifest in the world and how material-discursive practices enact the world. Performativity suggests interactions and

intra-actions are not only productive of "what and how we know but also to what there is to know" (Fonow & Cook, 2005: 2217). A performative approach therefore emphasises that organisational learning and knowing come from direct material engagement with the world of which we are part rather than from standing on the outside as observers as representationalism suggests.

A principal concern of a performative approach is the practical engagement between humans and between other-than-humans and humans, involved in the production of knowledge, rather than with the representations that result from this engagement (Healy, 2004). Thus, a performative paradigm doesn't deny cognitive representations of the environment. A performative paradigm however, suggests "we do not start our thinking about knowledge from representations. They come last rather than first in the account" (Tanesini, 1999: 11).

A performative approach is particularly suited to this study, as it directs serious attention to practice as dynamic and thus to the need to renew how we think about knowledge as engaged, relational intra-active practices rather than as atomistic, representationalist practices.

Such a performative epistemology goes hand in hand with a relational ontology (Emirbayer, 1997). A relational ontology suggests entities (humans and other-than-humans) co-emerge and take their form in sticky knots of connection and entangled histories (Haraway, 2008). In this view, entities have no inherent boundaries and qualities as "there is no resting place in a multiple and partially connected world" (Mol & Law, 2002: 20).

Ontologies, realities, Mol argues, are historically, culturally and materially located and are *enacted*. Thus, reality becomes multiple (1999). She differentiates between multiple realities and plurality through her illustrative discussion of perspectivalism. Mol explains that perspectivalism contests the monopolistic version of truth through emphasizing that different people look at the world from different standpoints. According to Mol, perspectivalism thereby:

> multiplied the eyes of the beholders… and this in turn brought pluralism in
> its wake… mutually exclusive perspectives, discrete existing side by side in
> a transparent space. While in the centre the object of many gazes and

glances remains singular intangible, untouched… [Thus] perspectivalism didn't multiply *reality*" (Mol, 1999: 76 emphasis in original).

Mol's (2002) empirical study of the performances of atherosclerosis reveals their multiplicity. Her work demonstrates that if realities performed are multiple, it is not a matter of pluralism. What multiplicity entails instead is that whole realities may clash at some points, elsewhere the various performances of an entity may collaborate, depend on each other and they may even include one another (Haraway, 2008; Mol, 1999). So according to a relational ontology, reality is not independent of our involvements in it. Neither is reality a matter of perspective or opinion but of the consequences of enacting particular discursive-technical-material practices that would and do produce quite different lived worlds (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997).

The performative paradigm is thus, deeply relational, focused on the connectivity and mutual constitution among actors (human and other-than-human), "interwoven with moral-social-political epistemological issues and committed to exposing the effects of power-knowledge intersections" (Code, 2008: 188). By these accounts human and other-than-human bodies come to matter through the world's performativity, its endless liveliness and co-emergence. Materiality as a doing, as an ongoing accomplishment, suggests complex interactions and entanglements that go on well beyond what we know. As Haraway eloquently explains "the body is always in-the-making; it is always a vital entanglement of heterogeneous scales, times, kinds of beings webbed into fleshly presence, always a becoming, always constituted in relating" (2008: 163). But how can we better come to grips with these entanglements, relationalities and multiplicities?

Intra-activity and agential realism

It is this entanglement of matter, meaning and ethics that Karen Barad extends in what she calls agential realism. As a physicist and feminist scholar building on the work of Butler, Foucault and particularly Bohr, Barad offers agential realism as an "epistemological-ontological-ethical framework that provides an understanding of the role of human *and* non-human, material *and* discursive and natural *and* cultural factors in scientific and other social-material practices" (Barad, 2007: 26 emphasis in original). Thus, she usefully unsettles earlier

distinctions between matter and discourse, human and non-human, agency and structure in her argument for the co-emergence of onto-epistem-ology as "the study of practices of knowing in being … [as to] how specific intra-actions come to matter" (Barad, 2003: 829).

In Barad's view, the world is made of entanglements of social and natural agencies, where the distinction between the two emerges out of specific intra-actions. Intra-activity is an inexhaustible dynamism and liveliness that continuously configures and reconfigures relations of space-time-matter. Shotter and Tsoukas, drawing on Wittgensteinian philosophy, urge organisational researchers to bring to the foreground the "nature of the spontaneously responsive activities ceaselessly occurring between us, that usually remains in the background" (2007: 3). They argue "our immersion in this continuous flow of spontaneously responsive and expressive bodily activity in the cultural lifeworld of our community is essential to our being the kind of people we are" (Shotter & Tsoukas, 2007: 4). Barad's understanding of agential realism, phenomena and intra-action provide a lively theoretical idiom for continuing the conversation of bringing the background into the foreground. Her elaboration of an agential realist account, in her own words, is worthy of inclusion:

> The primary ontological unit is not independent objects with inherent boundaries and properties but rather phenomena… phenomena do not merely mark the epistemological inseparability of observer and observed, or the results of measurements; rather, phenomena are the ontological inseparability/entanglement of intra-acting "agencies"… Phenomena are constitutive of reality. Reality is composed not of things-in-themselves or things-behind-phenomena but of things-in-phenomena (Barad, 2007: 139-140 emphasis removed).

Here Barad insists on the primacy of intra-active phenomena over objects and their properties. The focus moves from interactions between humans/other-than-humans to intra-actions (togetherness/entanglement) in practices/doings/actions. Barad introduces the term intra-action, an auditory and visual reminder of the entanglement of matters of being, knowing, doing and valuing, of ontology, epistemology and ethics. Intra-action stresses that the human and other-than-human actors, in a performative relationship, should not

be seen as entities with distinct boundaries, acting upon each other. Rather, the different actors become with and co-emerge through their entangled intra-relating in the ongoing performance of practices. Thus, it is "the intra-actions within practices that produce actors and categories", rather than practices performed by actors interacting (Nyberg, forthcoming: 9). Starting organisational analysis from performance, or in Barad's terms phenomena, challenges any pre-determined categories of subjects and objects. Actors co-emerge and are co-shaped in and through the practices they perform (Nyberg, 2007).

In this way intra-action is distinct from relations of mutual constitution or reciprocal interaction common in some dynamic social theories, for although they acknowledge entities are changed by interaction with each other, they maintain their ontological separation (Orlikowski, 2007). Thus, everyday work practices entail not the interaction of separate entities but material-discursive intra-action.

Barad's conception of intra-action has been usefully translated into the work practices of a call centre (Nyberg, forthcoming), the fashion industry (Parkins, 2008), a methadone clinic (Fraser, 2006) and engineering (Uden, 2009). Before discussing examples from the context of locally-based community organisations, it is important to elaborate the central illustrative example in Barad's (2007) book, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum physics and entanglement of matter and meaning*, the 'wave-particle duality paradox' of quantum physics.[39] The paradox originated from early twentieth-century experimental evidence that light exhibited seemingly contradictory features. Under some circumstances, light manifests as a particle and under different experimental circumstances it manifests as waves. Similar results are found for matter: electrons behave like particles when the 'concept' position is measured requiring an instrument with fixed parts. They behave like waves when the 'concept' momentum is measured requiring an instrument with movable parts (Barad, 2007). This example illustrates the co-constitutive relation between

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[39] For a detailed and accessible examination of Bohr's philosophy-physics, a discussion of the foundational interpretive issues in quantum mechanics and a presentation of some important experimental results in the past decade, see Barad (2007) Chapters 3, 4 and 7. See also Mermin (1985; 1998).

physical and conceptual constraints and exclusions (Barad, 1998). The situation is paradoxical because the true ontological nature of matter and light is in question.

Barad rigorously examines and extends Bohr's resolution of the wave-particle duality paradox and his philosophy-physics. In so doing, she profoundly reworks understandings of epistemological, ontological and ethical issues such as the nature of nature and meaning-making, the relationship between discursive practices and the material world, and the nature of measurement. Barad explains Bohr's resolution:

> Wave and particle are classical descriptive concepts that refer to different mutually exclusive phenomena, and not to independent physical objects. He [Bohr] emphasised that this saved quantum theory from inconsistencies because it was impossible to observe particle and wave behaviours simultaneously because mutually exclusive experimental arrangements are required… the referent is not an observation-independent object, but a phenomenon (Barad, 2001: 85).

There is always a continuous trade-off between particle and wave behaviours, the more one observes the wave nature of light, the more information must be given up about its particle properties (Wootters & Zurek, 1979: 482). For Bohr, the entanglements of objects and agencies of observation constitute physical reality. Bohr thereby, calls into question fundamental assumptions of representationalism: that the world is composed of individual things with their own independently determinate boundaries and properties; and the inherent separability of knower and known (Barad, 2007).

Such relations, however, are not peculiar to microphysics. Similar incompatibilities in the cuts constituted by different measurement and interpretive apparatus show up in macroscopic phenomena. For example, Rouse (2002) illustrates the same arguments with examples from experimental evolutionary biology concerning the intra-action between plants and their environments.

Similarly, following Bohr (1963: [1929 essay]), Barad uses the straightforward example of a person in a dark room using a stick for navigation, to illustrate phenomena, intra-activity and the question of boundaries between subject and

object. Barad explains two mutually exclusive ways for a person in a dark room to usefully intra-act with the stick. The person can hold the stick firmly in his/her hand to negotiate around the room, in which case "the stick is properly understood to be part of the subject" or he/she can hold the stick loosely in order to feel its features, "in which case the stick is the object of observation" (2007: 154). The focus here is on the mutual exclusivity of different cuts differentiating subject from object. The stick cannot be used as an instrument of observation if one is observing it. "The line between subject and object is not fixed, but once a cut is made (i.e., a particular practice is being enacted), the identification is not arbitrary but in fact materially specified and determinate for a given practice" (Barad, 2007: 155).

Thus, in the above examples, the boundaries between humans, between non-humans and between humans and non-humans are inherently ambiguous: bodies are not entities with intrinsic boundaries and properties but "phenomena that acquire specific boundaries and properties through the open-ended dynamics of intra-activity" (Barad, 2007: 172). Barad argues "the seemingly self-evidentiary nature of bodily boundaries, including their seeming visual self-evidence, is a result of the repetition of (culturally and historically) specific bodily performance" (Barad, 2007: 155).[40]

Agency and structure

Barad (1998; 2007) and Rouse's (2002) radical assertions that the actors as such do not precede their relating, that patterns of relationality, intra-actions, "becoming with" (Haraway, 2008: 17) are all that there is, profoundly transforms understandings of agency. Agency is no longer aligned with human intentionality or subjectivity. Nor is agency attributed to other-than-human forms. Like power, "agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has… Agency is a 'doing' or 'being' in its

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[40] This elaboration of intra-activity has some interesting parallels with Polanyi's notions of subsidiary awareness and focal awareness which he illustrated using the example of a carpenter holding a hammer and hitting a nail. According to Polanyi, subsidiary awareness and focal awareness are mutually exclusive (Polanyi, 1962:56 cited in Tsoukas, 2003). Polanyi uses the example to consider tacit knowing in a skilful practice, quite different from Bohr and Barad's focus on phenomena and the differentiation of subject from object. However, their conceptualisations of embodiment and the questioning of the boundaries of bodies seem qualitatively similar. The same example of cane travelling is also used by Polanyi, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty (cited in Dreyfus, 1991: 65).

intra-activity. It is the enactment of iterative changes in particular practices" (Barad, 2007: 178). Agency resides in the relations between actors, in their intra-actions, rather than in people and things, thereby enabling some possibilities and constraining others. Agency is therefore about knowledge and accountability for the emergence and constitution of boundaries, objects and subjects (Haraway, 1997: 116). For Barad, the intra-activity and agency of any phenomenon whereby the constituents become knowledge and known to one another depends on intelligibility. Barad explains that boundary-making practices are necessary for giving meaning to matter and for this reason are never innocent (Suchman, 2007: 285). What becomes intelligible and what remains obscure, are functions of located knowing and interpretation that are not external to social realities but are fully historically situated (Parkins, 2008). By way of example, Barad examines obstetric ultrasonography and the role of the piezoelectric transducer, in the production of the foetus that it 'pictures'. She writes:

> The transducer does not allow us to peer innocently at the fetus [sic], nor does it simply offer constraints on what we can see; rather, it helps produce and is part of the body it images. That is, the marks on the computer screen (the sonogram images, sonic diffraction patterns translated into an electronic image) refer to a *phenomenon* that is constituted in the intra-action of the "object" (commonly referred to as the 'fetus') and the 'agencies of observation'. Significantly, the objective referent for the properties that are observed is the *phenomenon, not* some presumably pre-existing, determinately bounded and propertied object (2007: 202 emphasis in original).

So in this example, agency cannot be attributed to any single agent, such as the foetus nor to the piezoelectric transducer nor the doctor who must interpret the interpretation of echoes. Nor is it simply the case that agency can be distributed over nonhuman and human forms, it is a matter of *becoming with* all the way down (Haraway, 2008). The meaning "of the series of moments that interpret echoes" (Strathern, 2002: 100) as marks on the screen is produced and constrained by the intra-actions of material and discursive practices. The multitude of practices include:

> medical needs; design constraints (including legal, economic, biomedical, physics and engineering ones); market forces; political issues…the

> workplace environment of the engineering firm or lab, particular hospital or clinic environments where the technology is used… positioning of the patients during examinations and the nature of the training of technicians and physicians who use the technology (Barad, 2007: 203-204).

This example illustrates how Barad extends Bohr's understanding of the relation between physical and conceptual apparatuses to analyse material *and* discursive relations (Fraser, 2002). Barad argues, "materialization is a matter not only of how discourse come to matter but of how matter comes to matter… Materialization is an iteratively intra-active process of mattering whereby phenomena (bodies) are sedimented out and actively re (con)figured through the intra-action of multiple material-discursive apparatuses" (2007: 210 emphasis omitted).

Our fieldwork with Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS)[41], a community organisation offering accommodation and assistance to homeless young people provides an illustration of the intra-action of multiple material-discursive apparatuses. During the fieldwork, I observed the introduction of a new computerised case-management and reporting system mandated by the government department that both funds the service and provides a living allowance to homeless young people. The government department plays a governance role in relation to the young people, proscribing and delineating possibilities for behaviour. For example, in order to receive their payment, the young people have to undertake education or work-related activities. If they miss appointments, they are 'breached', their payment suspended. The new, computerised case-management system, acting as an electronic eye, provides the funding body with direct access to the Southern Youth and Family Services worker's online diary. The government department via the computer database makes appointments directly into the worker's diary and the Southern Youth Family Services workers are thereby required to give the funding body information on every appointment and contact they have with each young person. Prior to the introduction of the computer system, Southern Youth and Family Services acted as an advocate for the young person when they had difficulties with the government department providing the living allowance to

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[41] A more detailed account of the activities and practices of Southern Youth and Family Services is provided in the following chapter on pages 92-93.

them. Youth workers were not directly part of the surveillance, breaching and governance system. I recorded in my fieldnotes:

> The funding body via the database on the computer has a persistent and almost physical presence in the room. The computerised case management system occupies much of the worker's desk, along with the phone and the answering machine. The worker is in almost constant touch with the computer mouse, keyboard and phone. As the workers discuss the funding body and the new system with me, they glance repeatedly at the computer. Instead of being a background part of the infrastructure, at arm's length, the funding body is ever present, inscribing new ways of working on the SYFS youth workers… that don't fit with the SYFS approach to working with young people and seems to run counter to the ethics and ways of working of the youth workers… It is almost as if the workers experience surveillance and governance via the computer database in a manner not dissimilar to the young people they are assisting. Felicity [the youth worker] commented: "It used to be the relationship between me and the young person. Now it's the computer, the young person and me" (SYFS, 19/6/2008).

The computerised case-management system has an active role in shaping relationships between the youth workers, young people and the funding body. The workers treat the computer as an actor with whom they have a difficult and problematic relationship. They ascribe agency to the computer system that causes "dramas", "automatically flicks information to the government agency" and is "unreasonable" (SYFS, 12/9/2007).

The intra-relations between actors emerge from continuous struggle where the human and other-than-human actors resist, subvert and accommodate each other's activities. The meaning of the material actors (both human and non-human) is in the contextual performance (Nyberg, 2007, forthcoming). Meaning, matter and power relations are produced and constrained through the iterative intra-actions of the material-discursive involving the government department, the bureaucrats, the young person, the youth workers, the managers, the database on the machine and the administrative system of Southern Youth and Family Services. These structural relations of power are materialised, contested and (re)produced through a range of local practices including the numbers and notes recorded in the computer. The material-discursive assemblages are part of an entangled web of changing practices and possibilities including: economic, medical, political, social, legal, educational and cultural apparatuses for 'producing' and regulating the young people.

However, in Barad's agential realist account, structures are not "Althusserian apparatuses – rigidified social formations of power that foreclose agency and deterministically produce subjects of ideological formations… structures are to be understood as material-discursive phenomena that are iteratively (re)produced and (re)configured through ongoing material-discursive intra-actions" (2007: 240). Structure is treated as a verb not a noun. The category of 'youth' is thereby produced through dynamic and contested political processes and relations at the local level. Additionally, the structural relations themselves are also produced through these same practices. They are "contingent materialities that are iteratively reworked" (Barad, 2007: 242). Political economy and the cultural identity of young people are entangled and inseparable. Here "structure does not represent a set of transcendental, objective determinants but is shaped by modes of representation and meanings that social actors… give to their positions and activities" (Fernandes, 1997: 137).

The 'agential nature' of the multiple apparatuses and intra-actions entangled in the production of young people, youth workers and technologies of case management at Southern Youth and Family Services and the changing, emergent nature of the dynamics themselves point to the need for an "ethics of responsibility and accountability not only for what we know, how we know and what we do but, in part, for what exists" (Barad, 2007: 243).

Discourse and material-discursive practices

Foucault's (1977; 1978; 1990 [1984]) analytics of power including his theorisations of discourse and discursive practices have had a significant influence on feminist performative approaches. In Foucault's work discourses:

> are ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations, which inhere in such knowledges, and the relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern (Weedon, 1997: 105).

Foucault links discursive practices to the body's materiality and, as Weedon's summary illustrates, for Foucault discursive practices are more than linguistic statements. Indeed, a performative approach stresses that "discourse is not a

synonym for language" but the material conditions that both enable and restrain what can and cannot be said (Barad, 2007: 146).

While Foucault articulates the discursive nature of human bodies, he is arguably less clear about the "material nature of discursive practices" and materiality's dynamism (Barad, 2007: 63). Further, Foucault focuses on human social practices, the production of human bodies and his work needs updating to take account of new technoscientific practices that rework boundaries between the human and the other-than-human (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997).

Feminist performative approaches, in extending the work of Foucault, contribute to such an account of the materialisation of human and other-than-human bodies that includes the agential contribution of naturalcultural forces and the material-discursive practices through which boundaries are made and unmade (Barad, 2007; Butler, 1990; Haraway, 2008; Tuana, 2001).

According to Barad "matter is simultaneously a matter of substance and significance" (2007: 3). Her use of the term material-discursive practices signals that discourse, matter and meaning are inescapably fused together. Barad's intra-action connects the discursive with the material without letting the former take precedence over the latter.

Of course, Barad is not alone in emphasising material-discursive practices. Iedema explains discourse is "multi-modal" and includes "image, design, technology and other modes of mean-making" (Iedema, 2007: 931). He advocates a perspective in which matter and discourse are not separate and separable but co-emerge and are mutually constituting (Iedema, 2007). Studies, such as Fernandes's (1997) *Producing Workers*, adapts Foucault's analysis of power and discursive practices, to trace how gender, class and community are enfolded into one another on the shop floor of a Calcutta jute mill such that in this study of organisational practices, gender and community are no less structural and no more discursive than class. Gherardi too qualifies discursive practices with the adjective material. She explains her use of material-discursive practices as: "First it serves to stress that they [discursive practices] are mediated by objects, and secondly it serves to stress that seeing, saying and doing are connected in practice" (2006: 225). In exploring technology at work,

Orlikowski posits that "all practices are always and everywhere socio-material and that this sociomateriality is constitutive, shaping the contours and possibilities of everyday organising" (2007: 1444). Shifting to a performative perspective that recognises the deep intermingling of materiality and discourse within practice enables organisational researchers to "investigate the multiple, emergent and shifting sociomaterial assemblages that constitute organizations" (Orlikowski, 2007: 1446).

An ethics of relationality

The concern with ethics and social change has long been a commitment of feminist praxis and its generation of knowledge. In insisting on a dynamic, material view of knowing, feminist praxis recognises the complex entanglements of power/knowledge, ethics and politics. Writers such as Haraway (2008), Mol (2002) and Barad (2007) all emphasize that "worlds are being done, they are enacted into being… Making facts, is making values, is making arrangements that are in one way or another political" (Law, 2004: 2). These entanglements of epistemology, ontology and ethics mean that feminist projects attempt "to hold knowers accountable for what they do, and to determine to whom and to what they need to be held accountable" (Rouse, 2002: 156). Feminist praxis thereby proposes that knowing always involves power-charged, intra-twined relations among knowers and knowns. This politically engaged stance requires "not detachment or neutrality but a reflective and self-critical participation" (Rouse, 2002: 152) in the enactment of knowledge-making practices. As Haraway evocatively explains, feminist praxis and inquiry is about:

> understanding how things work, who is in the action, what might be possible, and how worldly actors might somehow be accountable to and love each other less violently… Answers to these questions can only be put together in emergent practices; i.e. in vulnerable, on-the-ground work that cobbles together non-harmonious agencies and ways of living that are accountable both to their disparate inherited histories and to their barely possible but absolutely necessary joint futures (2003: 7).

From this perspective, ethics is a material, relational practice that requires collective reflexivity. As Barad argues:

> Matter itself is always already open to, or rather entangled with the 'other'.
> The intra-actively emergent 'parts' of phenomena are co-constituted. Not

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only subjects but also objects are permeated through and through with their entangled kin… We are always already responsible to the others with whom or which we are entangled… Ethics is therefore not about right response to a radically exterior/ized other but responsibility and accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming of which we are part (Barad, 2007: 393).

Thus ethics is about mattering, about taking account of the entangled materialisations of which we are a part, including new configurations, new subjectivities and new possibilities. The other is much closer than we think. We live in a world where kin, kind and 'other' are emergent and unsettled with unequally distributed life chances and consequences. What is included and excluded in the enactment orders the world differently since different realities are sedimented out of particular practices/doings/actions. "Meeting each moment, being alive to the possibilities of becoming is an ethical call, an invitation that is written into the very matter of all being and becoming. We need to meet the universe halfway, to take responsibility for the role that we play in the world's differential becoming" (Barad, 2007: 396). To take responsibility, to be accountable involves what Cuoma suggests is a core feminist value, "commitment to the flourishing or well-being of individuals, species and communities" (1998: 62). This ethics of flourishing goes well beyond the relief of suffering and demands compassionate action (Haraway, 2008) and an appreciation of the entanglement of ethics, knowing and being, what Barad calls 'ethico-onto-epistem-ology' (2007: 185).

Such entanglements suggest we are engaged in modes of becoming that are also modes of constituting the habitats in which other entities (concepts, organisms, objects) become or disappear from mattering (Bell, 2007). Arguably, to create relevant knowledge and to take responsibility for our part in the world's becoming necessarily involves active engagement, since "no knowledge is both relevant and detached" (Stengers, 2005: 1002).

Feminist researchers are certainly not unique in appreciating the entanglement of ethics, knowing and being. Participatory action researchers are travelling companions (Brydon-Miller, et al., 2004) in acknowledging we are part of the world we are trying to understand as well as our deep implication in the world's enactment. For example, Reason and Bradbury (2001a) propose a

participatory worldview where humans and communities are embodied in their world, co-creating reality through participation. The relations between feminist praxis and participatory action research has been mutually beneficial (Brydon-Miller, et al., 2004; Frisby, Maguire, & Reid, 2009). For example, participatory action research has benefited greatly from feminist insights in terms of epistemological critiques, the development of alternative methods and the traditional commitment to activism within and outside the university (Greenwood, 2004). Ethico-onto-epistem-ology as discussed in this section, speaks directly to the need for engaged, participatory research. Such a methodology is employed in this study and is discussed in the following section.

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is an extremely broad field and is an umbrella term encompassing a range of participatory and collaborative approaches to action and change-oriented research (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007a). A heterogeneity of forms have been practiced since the 1940's (see for example, Lewin, 1946) including action research (Greenwood, 2002; Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Gustavsen, 2003), co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996; Heron & Reason, 2001), action learning (Argyris & Schön, 1978), feminist participatory action research (Brydon-Miller, et al., 2004; Frisby, et al., 2009; Maguire, 2006; Wadsworth, 1997), emancipatory action research (Freire, 1970, 2004), collaborative inquiry (Holly, 1996; Treleaven, 1994), reflection-in action (Smyth, 1986), action science (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Argyris & Schön, 1978), systemic action research (Burns, 2007; Carson & Sumara, 1997; Wadsworth, 2006, 2008b) and community-based participatory research (Leung, Yen, & Minkler, 2004; Stoeker, 1999) to name but a few.

As there are already multiple accounts of PAR's origins and history, I do not offer my own (see for example, Brydon-Miller, et al., 2004; Fals-Borda, 2006a, 2006b; Hall, 2005; Kindon, et al., 2007b; Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall, & Jackson, 1993). Different forms of participatory action research have originated in almost all continents of the globe and appear to have grown up with minimal cross-fertilisation (Argyris & Schön, 1978; Fals-Borda, 2006a; Freire, 1970; Hall, 2005; Henry, Hook, Kemmis, & McTaggart, 1982; Lewin, 1946; Reason & Rowan, 1981). Current PAR practice is shaped from these multiple forms. While there

are still considerable differences between these forms the distinctions are becoming increasingly fine and blurred (Kindon, et al., 2007b). PAR has been used in a diversity of contexts including education, organisation development, management, environmental science, health promotion and nursing, community development and community organisations.

PAR has been deployed for technical, practical and emancipatory purposes (Grundy, 1982). There has been contestation and no general consensus in the literature about what constitutes action research (Cairns, Harris, & Young, 2003). Given the range of practices that go by the name, it seems that the term has no specific meaning outside its construction in particular material-discursive practices. "Action research, the term given to a particular set of practices, never did exist outside of its practice. Such attempts to separate claims of what *is* action research from how it functions, ironically deny what it *is*" (Gore & Zeichner, 1991: 48 emphasis in original). This diversity is unsurprising given PAR's commitment to locally appropriate, engaged inquiry and action.

However, common elements from this diversity of practices are distinguishable including commitment to participatory research processes integrated with action that is change orientated. Reason and Bradbury (2001b) offer the following definition of action research:

> A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes… it seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities (Reason & Bradbury, 2001b: 1).

This definition reflects what Reason describes as the four characteristic dimensions of action research: an emergent process of engagement, worthwhile practical purposes, many ways of knowing, and participative and democratic relationships (2006: 189).

Most approaches involve a spiral of the four moments of PAR: planning, action, observing, and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2001). PAR is situational. It is solution oriented in that it focuses on particular problems/situations, in a

specific locality and aims at improvement and problem solving. It is an evolving, involving and reflective process (Greenwood & Levin, 1998) and often has a critical and a collaborative dimension. The co-emergent processes that characterise PAR enable flexible, responsive and iterative forms of research.

Influential in building the character and practices of PAR are the assumptions that: practice and our theory are constitutive of one another and integrated; creating knowledge is a practical affair, the 'turn to action' is necessary to forge a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and personal and social action (Bohman, 2004; Reason, 2006); neither the physical environment nor human relationships can be controlled. The technical-rational approach to the physical and social world is a construction that is inherently problematic and unsuccessful; human interactions and endeavours are complex, the best we can do is to develop systematic, creative and flexible approaches to thinking and action. These characteristics and assumptions offer a good fit with both the community sector and this research project.

One of the most generative aspects of the ability afforded by PAR to effect meaningful change is the entanglement and relationalities of people, places and processes of participation (Pain, Kesby, & Kindon, 2007). PAR works at a number of scales. For example, Torbert (1991) in his conceptualisation of third person action research distinguishes three scales: first-person, second-person and third-person. These three scales are identified as operating across three dimensions "time, voice and practice – to constitute a 3x3x3 figure: past/present/future x subjective/multiple/generalized research voices x 1st/2nd/3rd-person practice" (Chandler & Torbert, 2003: 135). Pain, et al. also recommend working at a number of scales – the personal, the relational, the institutional and the global. They discuss 'scaling out' activities rather than 'scaling up', as they conceive of the scales "as being flat and intricately connected, rather than hierarchical sites of action" (Pain, et al., 2007: 227).

The conceptualisation of scale that has been most influential in this thesis is Gherardi's (2006) spiral case study model that she applies to the field of safety

practices in the construction industry.[42] She identifies four scales: individual; group/collective; organisational; and institutional/societal. She argues that although these scales provide four points of observation they are not separate but interwoven and co-present. She explains:

> The spiral thus becomes a heuristic device for analysis and interpretation which unpacks the elements co-present. If we conceive that spiral as a spring, we can say that its extension is followed by its compression, and that when it is extended its interstices can be examined, given that stretching a spring amplifies its spaces of connection in action (Gherardi, 2006: 58).

This research methodology has also been influenced by feminist action researchers who have combined a post-structural focus on textual strategies and discourse analysis with developing interactive social relations in inquiry (Cameron & Gibson, 2005; McWilliam, 1994; Sanguinetti, 1999, 2000; Treleaven, 1994, 2001). For example, McWilliam's account of socialisation in pre-service teacher education at a Queensland University combined Nancy Fraser's (1989) analysis of welfare discourse, with Lather's (1991) constructions of validity and Kemmis and McTaggart's (2001) four moments of action research (McWilliam, 1994: 70-144). McWilliam's and Treleaven's work enacts what it means to straddle agendas (McWilliam, 1992), "let contradictions remain in tension, to unsettle from within" (Lather, 2007: 125). Such accounts are particularly useful for this study in designing a research framework that creates the conditions in which it becomes possible for both researchers and researched to work from within already existing practices to 'see' what is already there, to rethink attitudes and practices and decide how to proceed (Lather, 1994; Shotter, 2003).

Feminist engagement with poststructuralist and postcolonialist theorising, discussed earlier in this chapter has stimulated some of the most divisive and productive debates in PAR (see for example, Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Hickey & Mohan, 2004; Kesby, 2005; Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007c; Lather, 2007; Maguire, 2006). For example, spurred on by poststructural critiques of the

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[42] Although Gherardi and her colleagues did not use PAR, in their research her spiral case-study is compatible with PAR methodology. She comments "I wish to draw attention to this idea of knowledge that generates the action and empowerment of knowing subjects, because there may be an element of action research in the spiral case-study methodology" (Gherardi, 2006: 233).

emancipatory forms of earlier participatory action research, such participation in research is re-theorised as governance and thus a form of exercising power. Although PAR resources (including material-discursive practices such as cycles of collective action, dialogue, diagramming/mapping, storytelling, reflexive discussion and photovoice) can and do produce 'negative' power effects, the same resources can also produce quite different effects. Such effects of PAR are "messy, entangled, highly variable and contingent" (Kesby, Kindon, & Pain, 2007: 19). While acknowledging that participation can be a tyranny (Cooke & Kothari, 2001), participation can also be useful to outflank more oppressive and less self-reflexive forms of power (Kesby, et al., 2007). PAR is thereby strengthened by poststructural conceptions of power and PAR potentially provides "poststructuralism a practical means to achieve radical projects of de/reconstruction in and through its praxis" (Kesby, et al., 2007: 25). The challenge for feminist-informed participatory action research such as this inquiry is "to deconstruct what is through the process of making something else with other people" (Orner & Brennan, 1989: 3 cited in McWilliam, 1994: 118). Therefore, I (we) are well aware this PAR project is a situated mode of knowledge/power with its own limits and power effects, as I take up in the following chapter.

Summary

This chapter has elaborated the epistemological, ontological, methodological and ethical approach informing this thesis. This approach adopts a performative, relational, intra-active rather than representational view of knowing, where changes in knowledge and in human and other-than-human actors emerge as a result of the practices they perform together. Such a view emphasises for this thesis that the relationship between humans and between humans and other-than-humans is much more entangled, ambiguous and emergent than the traditional subject/object division, so often assumed in approaches to studying organisation (Nyberg, 2007, forthcoming).

Ethico-onto-epistem-ology, the intra-twining of ethics, knowing and being implies that inquiry is necessarily practical and encourages a participatory form of research. Thus feminist-informed participatory action research is the methodology chosen to appropriately address the research questions.

Troubling of the dialogic space between feminist praxis and applications of poststructural theorising, discussed in this chapter, has lead to a more disabused inquiry so that research for acting in and on the world is necessarily complexified. As Calas and Smircich demonstrate, feminist theories and inquiries of intersectionality have already inspired organisational researchers and "have contributed strong interdisciplinary theories that lend multiple theoretical lenses and methodological approaches to the study of organisations" (Calas & Smircich, 1999: 661). This interdisciplinary work has been strengthened by employing a diffractive methodology, which extends reflexivity in ways that are particularly resonant in the field of practice-based studies that is interpreted through many diverse disciplinary frameworks. For example, Haraway (1997) and Barad (2007) read "insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how those exclusions matter" (Barad, 2007: 30). Following Barad and Haraway, this thesis adopts a transdisciplinary approach drawing upon intersecting and often co-shaping threads of analysis such as practice-based studies of organisation, feminist theory and praxis, and political theory.

The ethico-onto-epistem-ology advanced in this chapter offers an alternative to the well-worn realist/social constructionist debates. The commitment of the traditional realist to what exists being seen as existing prior to and independent of human perceptions emphasises knowledge as discovery. This realist commitment has often created a sharp distinction between 'in here'/'out there', taken for granted the existence of individual entities with non-relational properties and thus adhered to essentialism (Barad, 2007; Tuana, 2001). Accounts of social constructivism have often privileged epistemological issues over ontological ones. The social constructivist literature has sometimes fallen short in discussions of materiality and agency and thus social responsibility due to "assumptions that any discussion of agency anthropomorphizes the construction or that any discussion of materiality implies a static opposition between structure and discourse" (Fernandes, 2006: 207-208). Feminist performative approaches try to avoid the oppositions of relativism and realism but they do not seek a middle ground between realism and social constructivism.

Instead, they work toward a 'postepistemological'[43] conception of knowledge and knowing (Gherardi, 2006; Rouse, 2002). In this conception there is a deep appreciation of knowledge as relational hence, practices, intra-actions and phenomena are the paramount interest of interpretation and accountability (Rouse, 2002). Such a move prefers a participatory and situated stance toward knowing-in-practice over detached access to an overview of decontextualised knowledge (Suchman, 2005b). The primary orientation is future possibilities and transformations in collective world-making rather than representational and retrospective. The commitment to objectivity is thereby re-worked as a matter of accountability for what is included and excluded from materialising. Engaged self-critical participation in the making and re-making of the world emphasises not only relations among humans and other-than-humans but the politics of difference. "The boundaries that constitute things as separate and different are treated not as pre-given, but as enacted and practices of boundary-making and the enactment of difference are inevitably political" (Suchman, 2005b: 6). Thus, a post-epistemological conception of knowledge requires ongoing attention to justification, responsibility, accountability and rigorous critique (Rouse, 2002).

Barad advocates a non-representationalist realist account of naturalcultural practices that takes seriously the material *and* discursive nature of practices. The radical shift from subjects and objects interacting to the subjects and objects emerging from intra-activity offers new understandings that have the capacity to foreground the liveliness of the material world including the body. In this account realism is "not about representations of an independent reality but about the real consequences, interventions, creative possibilities and responsibilities of intra-acting within and as part of the world" (Barad, 2007: 37). Accordingly, the next chapter provides a critical account of our research project's methods, 'interventions' and intra-actions in the Illawarra community services field of practices.

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[43] Examples of feminist scholars offering a 'post-epistemological' conception of knowledge are Haraway(1997; 2008), Barad (2007), Gherardi (2003) , Mol (2002; 2008) and Hawkesworth (1989; 2006).

CHAPTER 4

Participatory research methods

…Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.
You cannot tell always by looking what is happening.
More than half the tree is spread out in the soil under your feet.
Penetrate quietly as the earthworm that blows no trumpet.
Fight persistently as the creeper that brings down the tree.
Spread like the squash plant that overruns the garden.
Gnaw in the dark and use the sun to make sugar.

Weave real connections, create real nodes, build real houses.
Live a life you can endure.
Make love that is loving.
Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in,
a thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us interconnected …

from Marge Piercy's (1994) *The Seven of Pentacles*

Introduction

The previous chapter articulated a feminist, performative epistemological, ontological, methodological and ethical approach from which to address the research aims in this practice-based study. To appropriately investigate the research questions feminist-informed participatory action research employing interpretive methods and analysis of material-discursive practices using a diffractive method was chosen.

I can now, therefore, present and justify the specific research processes and methods employed to investigate the research questions in this study. First, I introduce the participatory research processes involved in initiating the participatory action research (PAR) cycles. Next, I describe the five organisational sites and the Results-Based Accountability training and planning workshops involved in the inquiry and the site selection processes used. I then provide an overview of PAR cycles and the research processes that evolved during the inquiry. The following two sections explain how data was generated or accessed and analysed. Finally, I discuss issues of quality, validity and trustworthiness in the study including its potential strengths and limitations.

The research begins

In the tradition of feminist praxis (Fonow & Cook, 1991; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007; Lather, 1991, 2007; Naples, 2003; Stanley & Wise, 1983) and participatory action research (Brydon-Miller, et al., 2004; Kindon, et al., 2007c), the inquiry is co-constructed and co-produced in relationships and actions (Greenwood & Levin, 1998). After gaining ethics approval from the University of Sydney to conduct interviews, focus groups and observations of RBA planning processes, the research team began planning of the fieldwork. To encourage maximum participation and contribution in all aspects of the research project, the industry partner and myself invited a group of practitioners from a diversity of community organisations in the Illawarra to join and become the Community Sector Action Research Group (CSARG).

The Community Sector Action Research Group

Fourteen community practitioners, the manager of the Illawarra Forum Inc. (the Industry partner), three academics from the University of Sydney and the University of Western Sydney and myself, a doctoral student, formed the membership of the group.[44] During the first meeting of CSARG, the members discussed what the group would be doing, its role and purpose. They agreed the group would be a meeting space for discussion, reflection, learning and activism; the group members would guide the research to ensure it remains meaningful, useful, grounded and relevant to the community sector; they would keep the networks and organisations with whom they are involved informed about the work of the project; and encourage active participation in the project (CSARG, Minutes of 1st meeting, 2006: 4).

During the first months of developing our collaborative inquiry within the CSARG, we read and discussed literature that argued persuasively that in order to make local knowledge visible, situated practice must be observed. Accordingly the CSARG recommended that the research team seek approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Sydney to extend the methods to include observing the everyday working practices of community organisation practitioners. These observations of situated practices were in addition to the ARC project's planned field observations of results

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[44] The members of the CSARG are listed in Appendix 7.

based accountabilty (RBA) planning processes. Such need for change is not unusual in PAR for it "is an evolutionary, developmental and emergent process. In the process of developing a community of inquiry, understanding of issues deepens, practice grows and shifts, questions may change, relationships may change and what is important may change" (Reason, 2006: 197). After gaining approval to incorporate observing community sector workers as they go about their practice in the workplace, the CSARG began selecting the research sites.

Research sites

This section outlines the site selection processes and introduces the research sites involved in this study. First, I describe the processes we used in selecting the five community organisations to participate in the observing, discussing and documenting community practitioners' knowing-in-practice phase of the study. Second, I provide an overview of each of the participating organisations. Third, I discuss the preparation and training for the RBA phase of the research. Fourth, I outline the site selection processes for the two RBA planning sites. Finally, I describe the two RBA planning process sites themselves.

Site selection of the knowing-in-practice phase of the study

The members of CSARG were keen to ensure the locally-based community organisations selected to participate in this aspect of the study reflected the diversity and complexity of the community sector in the Illawarra. The CSARG developed the following criteria, to guide the selection of sites:

Local community organisations will be selected to enable the observation of practices that capture:

Different types of interventions for example:
- Casework, counselling or direct work with individuals and families
- Community development, community work, or community cultural development and
- Community and personal care, residential care and support work.

Different 'target groups' for example:
- Women, children, families, people with disabilities, young people, older people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and indigenous people.

Different types of locally-based community organisations for example:
- Small community organisations, larger community organisations and a variety of governance structures.

A range of community issues for example:

- Poverty, violence, homelessness and housing, mental illness, transport and unemployment etc. (Documentation CSARG meeting 2nd February, 2007: 2).

Also considered important was to select organisations that would potentially overlap with the RBA planning process sites, to recruit organisations "where there were no current industrial disputes and that currently have functioning management committees/boards" (CSARG Minutes, 2/2/2007: 4). Members of the CSARG approached suitable local community organisations and the West Street Centre, Southern Youth and Family Services, the Warrawong Community Centre, the Illawarra Multicultural Women's Network and Interchange Illawarra[45] were chosen and all agreed, to participate. All five organisations are locally-based community organisations, situated in Wollongong, an industrial city and regional centre on the southeast coast of Australia. Taken together, these five organisations offer a good fit with the criteria developed by the CSARG. They enable the collaborative inquiry to observe and discuss a range of practices across a diversity of locally-based community organisations including counselling, youth, disability, community cultural development, CALD, aged care, women's services and neighbourhood-based work.

In the following sections, I briefly introduce each of the five organisations. Each description includes articulating the work of the organisation, the specific practices negotiated as the units of analysis and the built environment and materiality of the organisations. Built spaces communicate "social-political-cultural meanings" according to Yanow (2006a: 351) and are thereby matters of both substance and significance (Barad, 2007). There is certainly a community organisation "kind of building" (Yanow, 2006a: 356). The built spaces of locally-based organisations are easily identifiable and quite different from the buildings of the others types of organisations that make up the community services field of practices such as large nationally-based community organisations and government agencies and departments. Photographs as well as excerpts from my fieldnotes describing buildings, rooms, landscape and

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[45] These are the actual names of the organisations, not pseudonyms as all five organisations requested that their organisation be identified. However, the names of individual research participants have not been used, each research participant was given a fictitious name.

decor are used to convey the unique 'feel' of each organisation as well as the 'family resemblances' between them.

The West Street Centre

The West Street Centre is a feminist-identified counselling service for women who have experienced child sexual assault in their childhood. The work of the West Street Centre includes individual counselling, therapeutic group programs, court preparation, support and advocacy, community education and preventative strategies designed to influence the attitudinal, behavioural and structural changes needed within society to end sexual violence and improve responses to victims/survivors (WS pamphlet, 2007). A voluntary committee, elected by interested members of the community, manages the centre and is accountable to a state government department for the recurrent grant of funds it receives. The West Street Centre currently employs four part-time staff and has a flat organisational structure using collective processes as its way of organising. Established over 20 years ago, it operates out of a small house, which it owns in an inner city suburb. The house is described in the fieldnotes:[46]

> The West Street Centre is a small brick house with lots of little rooms. Each room is quite distinctive. For example, one of the counselling rooms has beautiful stained-glass windows, prints on the walls, shelves with dolls, toy figures and animals and a sand tray. The room has a welcoming, private, calm feel… The room in the centre of the house is open-plan, filled with office equipment and bookshelves. Out the back is a tiny kitchen and veranda… Across the yard and car park is a new, large, light, group room with comfortable lounges and chairs, kitchen and toilet facilities and verandas surrounded by native gardens (WS, 13/3/2007).

After negotiation with the West Street Centre workers, the PAR cycles focused on a capacity-building project and a community-building project. The *Capacity Building Project* arose, as the Centre could not meet the demand for its services. A waiting list of 18 months places enormous pressure on the service. They therefore decided to use part of a one-off grant of $20,000 from their funding body to offer free international training to local counsellors with monthly consultations over the next 12 months, to practice the approach learnt in the two-day training and continue learning together as a network. Through this process, West Street hoped to influence and support other counsellors (particularly those providing free services) to work with people who have

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[46] Photographs of the West St Centre buildings can be viewed on page 122.

experienced childhood sexual assault and encourage them to adopt practices and ways of working that are particularly helpful in dealing with the possible effects of childhood sexual assault.

The second project *Building the West Street Centre Community* is focused on enabling greater sharing of power and a stronger sense of community. The counsellors, management committee members, women who have used or currently use the service, and other community members regularly come together for a day's event that creates a place where women who have experiences of sexual violence can join with others in taking action against sexual violence and in building their own local communities of support.

Southern Youth and Family Services

Southern Youth and Family Services is a medium-sized organisation that provides a comprehensive and highly integrated range of accommodation, support and advocacy services to homeless and vulnerable young people and their families. A community-based board of management who volunteer their services for board responsibilities manages the organisation. A management team is employed and supervise 55 full-time staff, 20 casuals and 10 volunteers. Southern Youth and Family Services is funded by multiple state and federal departments. The organisation was established 30 years ago and has earned an international reputation as a provider of excellent youth services.[47] It is the largest organisation in terms of both staff and funds participating in this phase of our study. Southern Youth and Family Services has grown significantly over the past ten years.

In contrast to the other organisations participating in our study, Southern Youth and Family Services operates from a large number of properties in the Illawarra Region. These are mainly suburban houses and flats, which accommodate the young people. The administrative centre of the organisation is located along with the Crisis Youth Refuge and a number of other Southern Youth and Family Services programs in a motley complex of buildings and

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[47] More information about Southern Youth and Family Services can be found on their website at http://www.syfs.org.au/

demountables in the main street of Wollongong.[48] In my fieldnotes of our initial meetings and negotiations with the management and staff, I described the spaces in which we met:

> We went out through the leafy courtyard to the demountable to meet. This was a pretty old, cold, musty room. The CEO ruefully joked about them being "a poor community service in terms of office and meeting space" [Later at the SYFS staff meeting] Everyone was packed into a tiny room for the number of people… I picked my way across the bodies and chairs to the place between Collin and Julie that they had reserved for me. Southern Youth and Family Services appear to have outgrown their available meeting space (SYFS, 24/3/2007: 1-2).

After these negotiations with the management and staff of Southern Youth and Family Services, our PAR cycles followed and observed practices in a range of SYFS programs including accommodation, health, education and employment services and talked with young people and workers involved with these programs. These cycles also included observing organisation events and activities and talking with workers and young people the day after one of these events. We conducted reflective discussions with managers and workers after our observations.

The Warrawong Community Centre

The Warrawong Community Centre is a small neighbourhood centre located in a council-owned building in Warrawong, a suburb to the south of the city, adjacent to the steelworks and manufacturing centre of the region.[49] A voluntary management committee of mostly local residents manages the service and is accountable to a state government department for the modest grant it receives. The Warrawong Community Centre employs two workers and also relies on a group of volunteers. It provides a range of services to individuals with complex needs, the majority of whom live in Housing NSW complexes nearby the community centre. The centre provides an inclusive

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[48] Photographs of the SYFS Crisis Youth Refuge and the demountable can be viewed on page 122.

[49] The locally-based community organisations in this study and particularly the Warrawong Community Centre and the Multicultural Women's Network have been shaped significantly by the dramatic contraction of the workforce of the Port Kembla steelworks since the 1980's. The steelworks was the predominant employer in the region from the 1930's till the 1980's employing many migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds. Due to technological changes, globalisation and particularly the decline in the world steel market in the space of 3-4 years the steelworks workforce fell from 26,000 to around 7,000, and ultimately to the current figure of 5,000 (Grace, 2008: 3).

community space for residents and actively works to build a strong sense of community in the area. The 'look' of the Warrawong Community Centre is described in the following fieldnotes:[50]

> The Centre seems completely permeable to the street and outside environment. People spill in from outside, onto the veranda, to inside the centre. The decor in the community centre feels a bit dingy and poor with a mismatch of second hand chairs and lounges in the foyer. There is no reception or other gate-keeping barriers of any kind, when you enter the building. People walk into the foyer of the Centre; where a table is set up with tea/coffee/hot water/milk and polystyrene cups (WCC, 24/4/2007: 1).

After consultation with the workers, our PAR cycles followed and observed the workers interacting with the people using the service on 'typical' working days. We observed the community lunch organised by the Centre and talked with people involved in and/or accessing the community kitchen and lunch. We observed the activities and practices of groups such as the men's group and the art therapy group. We also conducted reflective discussions and interviews with both workers and service participants.

The Illawarra Multicultural Women's Network

The Illawarra Multicultural Women's Network is a community-based collaborative network involving community, health, youth workers and community artists from various organisations in the Illawarra that work with culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The network has been working together for over 13 years planning and facilitating cross-cultural creative projects and activities involving younger and older women from diverse backgrounds in the Illawarra. The Multicultural Women's Network relies on short-term grants and currently receives no funding at all to support its activities. However, the network's co-ordinator is employed by the Wollongong Women's Centre. This community organisation provides the infrastructural support to the Network. The Network meets in Cringila, a suburb on a hill overlooking the steelworks, the industrial centre of the Illawarra region. Cringila's population is largely made up of post-second world war immigrants, many of whom work or have worked at the steelworks.

In my fieldnotes I describe the meeting place of the group:[51]

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[50] Photographs of the Warrawong Community Centre, the community lunch and the area surrounding the centre can be viewed on page 120.

> The Multicultural Women's Network doesn't have premises to call their own. Instead they meet in a community hall inside the grounds of the Cringila Community Co-operative. The hall is large, cavernous and empty with old polished wooden floors. There are toilets and a kitchen down one end. Stacks of metal and plastic chairs line the walls. When I entered the hall one of the group members was practising Tai Chi with a very ornate sword and a fan that made a loud clapping sound as it opened and shut. There were guitars and drums leaning against the chairs and a large wad of butcher's paper and coloured pens in the middle of the room on the floor. While Trish the co-ordinator went off to buy milk and we waited for the others to arrive, Mena (a Network member) tried to teach Zekiye and myself how to hold the fan and get it to make the sound (MWN, 30/5/2007: 1).

After consultation with the co-ordinator, participants and members of the Network planning group, our PAR cycles focused on observing the practices of a current Network project, the Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group. We also observed and participated in the Network's planning meetings and conducted reflective discussions and interviews with Network members and participants.

Interchange Illawarra[52]

Interchange Illawarra is a small to medium-sized organisation offering a range of flexible respite support services to suit the individual needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families/carers. Interchange Illawarra is managed by a voluntary management committee and receives recurrent funding from both Commonwealth and state governments. Interchange Illawarra has been operating for 27 years and has purchased two houses in an inner city suburban street in Wollongong.[53] We described them in the fieldnotes:

> They are typical working class inner-Wollongong wooden houses with quite big backyards. The small house at the front of the block is the office of Interchange. Out the back are a couple of rooms, a kitchen and a lounge room with a courtyard in between. The house next door is used for respite accommodation on the weekends and for emergency respite. It has a veranda with outdoor furniture out the back. The whole place has a light, bright 'homey' atmosphere, with plenty of outdoor living space. In the front office there are posters on the wall saying things like " Don't DIS my ABILITY" (Interchange, 1/5/2007: 1).

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[51] Photographs of the Cringila community hall and some of the activities of the Multicultural Womens Network can be viewed on page 121.
[52] More information about Interchange Illawarra is available on their website at http://www.interchangeillawarra.org.au
[53] Photographs of the Interchange buildings can be viewed on page 120.

After negotiation with workers at Interchange Illawarra, during our PAR cycles we observed and talked with workers and participants involved in the peer support program, observed the practices of workers interacting with people with a disability and their families, and observed meetings where the staff collectively plans the service provision for families new to the service. We also conducted reflective discussions with the workers of the service.

Preparation and training for RBA planning processes

During this phase of the inquiry, we observed two contrasting education sessions designed to train community sector practitioners in results-based accountability (RBA). One session was facilitated by a senior, government-agency officer. All of the organisations participating in the first phase of our study had representatives at this training session and, with the exception of the Illawarra Multicultural Women's Network, all receive funds from state-government departments.[54] The other session was organised by the Illawarra Forum Inc. and facilitated by Mark Friedman, the creator and author of the results-based accountability model. Approximately two hundred people attended this training session and again all of the organisations participating in the first stage of our study were represented.

In order to focus more closely on how community sector practitioners were engaging with and experiencing the RBA framework, five semi-structured interviews were conducted with community practitioners who already had experience facilitating and/or implementing RBA processes. During the interviews, the practitioners discussed their experiences and perspectives on the utility of the model, its challenges and strengths, and the way in which it was being introduced into the non-government sector. A reflective discussion with CSARG members was held after the observations of the first training session and the interviews were completed but before the training session facilitated by Mark Friedman.

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[54] The Multicultural Women's Network indirectly receives funding support from the state government as they provide a grant to the Wollongong Women's Centre that pays the wages of the Network's co-ordinator.

Site selection for the two results-based accountability planning sites

The CSARG developed criteria and then selected sites that offered the best fit to our criteria from the RBA processes that were being planned in the local area. In this way site selection was simultaneously deliberate, opportunistic and emergent. The group agreed on the following criteria:

-Interest in and willingness to participate in the research.

-Potential to bring forward and utilise local community service practice knowledge.

-Contrast between the two sites, different types of community services practice.

-Potential to make visible the most undervalued work in the sector.

-Interest and willingness to engage in RBA planning process from relevant funders.

-Being alert to state plan priorities.

-Potential to have impact or dissemination flow on effects.

-Ability to spread the word and share the learning.

-Alignment with the research question.

-Doable, practicable

-If there has been previous planning, being able to compare the local community organisation knowledge taken up in previous planning processes with current RBA processes. (CSARG, Minutes February 2007).

CSARG members selected two contrasting sites from the available options. Together these two sites potentially encompass most organisations within the Illawarra community services field of practices.

Methodologically, in a practice-based study, it is beneficial to observe practices during times of significant change, and "to study interactions on the boundaries between communities of practitioners" (Gherardi, 2006: 232). The introduction of RBA into the community services field of practices represents a substantial change that requires major realignments both for individual community organisations and for relations and practices between organisations. Focusing on RBA processes, involving large numbers of people from different organisations and institutions, thereby affords a particular opportunity to follow Gherardi's methodological suggestions.

The Community Care RBA planning workshops

The Community Care RBA planning process, focusing on the population of people with disabilities, frail aged people and their carers/families living in the

community in the Illawarra Region, offered a good fit to the criteria developed by the group. Both the funding body, the Department of Disability, Aging and Home Care (DADHC) and community care services expressed a desire to be involved in the research. They have a keen interest in changing aspects of the community care service system. The RBA planning processes were conducted over two days about a month apart. The planning workshops involved about seventy people who use, work in, participate in, fund or are involved in the community care sector.

The Community Development RBA planning workshops

The CSARG also selected an RBA planning process focused on the population of socially and economically disadvantaged children, young people and families living in the Illawarra. Ninety people, who are engaged with, work in, participate in or provide monetary and material assistance to local community organisations funded by the Department of Community Services (DoCS) participated in this two day planning process conducted as two workshops over a six-week period. Community organisations funded by DoCS were keen to participate in the research and there was strong interest to ensure that the community development, social inclusion and belonging roles of community organisations are more recognised in community services planning. Senior DoCS staff also suggested this would be a useful site to investigate RBA processes. DoCS is the state government department with the most experience and demonstrated commitment to RBA processes. In addition, a review of their funding programs and arrangements was being conducted.

A rhizomatic[55] research process: Overview of the PAR cycles

What became clear to me soon after the CSARG had been formed and the fieldwork commenced, was the planning, acting, observing and reflecting did not happen as discrete and tidy phases of research. While we were planning a suitable way forward in one stage of the project, other issues were at various stages of being reflected on, planned, acted on and observed.

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[55] Rhizome is a metaphor introduced by Deleuze and Guattari as a representation of postmodern knowledge, as an alternative to the metaphor of a tree. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines rhizomes as systems of "prostrate or subterranean root-like stems emitting roots and usually producing leaves at the apex" (Onions, [1944] 1965a: 1732). Lather explains rhizomatics are about the move from hierarchies to networks… a journey among intersections, nodes and regionalizations through a multicentred complexity" (Lather, 2007: 124).

A neat geometrical model or chronological record could not do justice to the messy, co-emergent and ramifying interrelations that became and are still 'becoming' during this participatory action research project. The cycles or spirals were reminiscent of what Wadsworth has called "researching within a metaphoric giant living organism", a "giant octopus" (2008a: 157). There was a "mushrooming effect" (McWilliam, 1994: 122) in relation to the processes and roles I had initially mapped out in the field work plan, as the research and the researchers were propelled into new action research projects that we had not anticipated. This was due in large part to the enthusiasm and sense of urgency expressed by some of the service participants who wanted a space to explore and speak publicly about their involvement in community organisations and its significance in their lives. This development led to the curious situation where my role as 'apprentice' researcher and project co-ordinator expanded to facilitator and 'teacher' in the emerging but unplanned PAR processes.

The rhizome (Nicolini, 2009) is an apt metaphor for this inquiry as its processes spread horizontally, proliferating in loose and overlapping connections. Our inquiry is non-hierarchical, multiplicitous and increasingly acentred. Like a rhizome the continuing inquiry is ceaselessly establishing connections and will continue to do so long after the ARC funded research project has concluded.

Although I am aware of the difficulties in capturing the complexity of the spreading, entangled but disparate events, processes and inquiry strands that were occurring simultaneously, a representational overview of the whole research process and PAR cycles is, nevertheless, attempted in Figure 2 on the next page. The diagram provides the reader with a map of the participatory research sites and tries to re-present the layered, interwoven and rhizomatic nature of both the collaborative inquiry and the intra-organisational connections and relations in the Illawarra community services field of practices.

Rhizomatic PAR processes: evolving, converging, emergent

Circles in the figure, left to right and top to bottom:
- RBA Community Care
- RBA Community Development
- 'Stories from the 'Hood'
- Interchange cycles
- SYFS cycles
- CSARG cycles
- West Street Centre cycles
- Warrawong Community Centre cycles
- Multicultural Womens Network cycles
- RBA training
- RBA training
- 'Our Voices Our Communities'
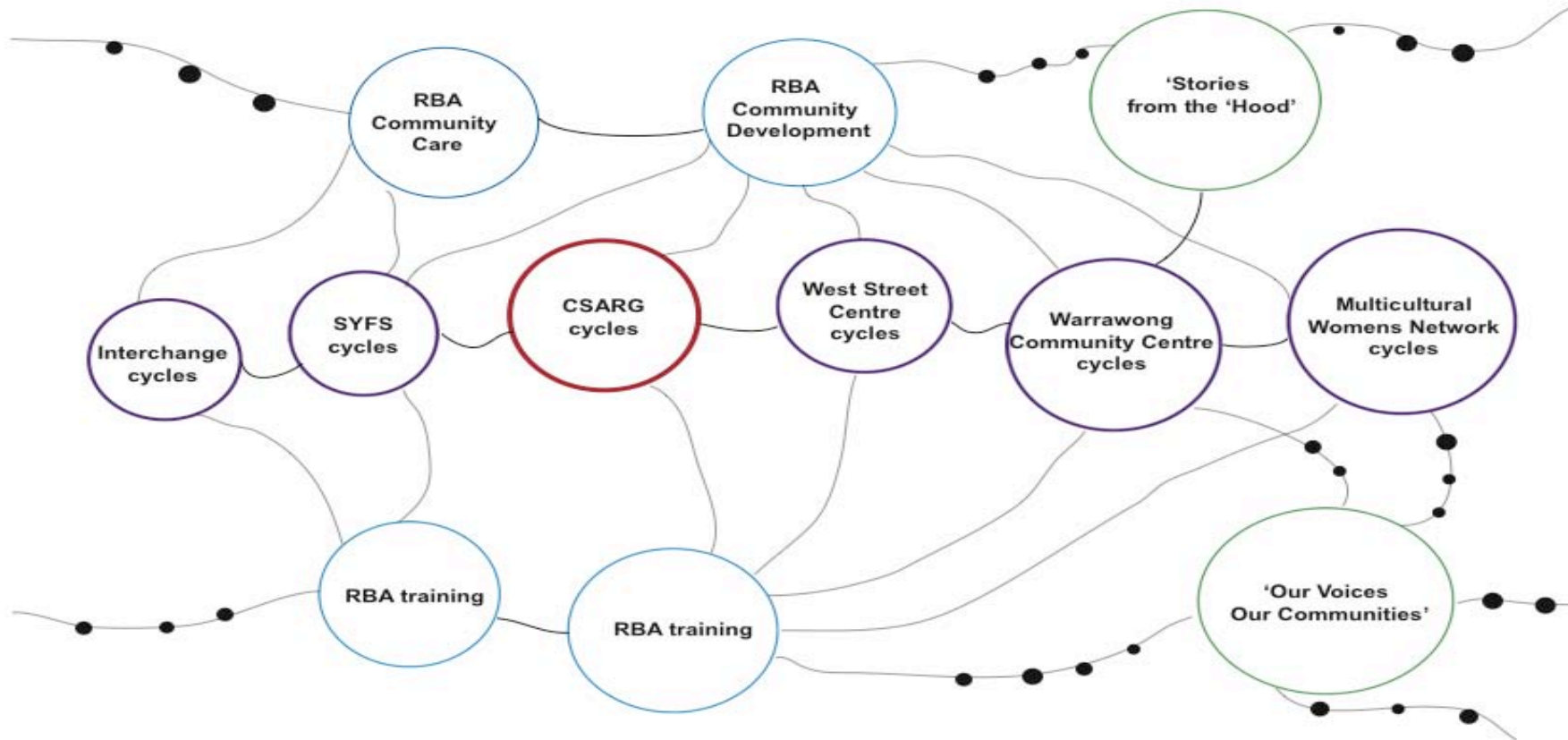
Figure 1: Representational overview of the PAR Sites

Our intra-twined research processes encompassed many of the characteristics of systemic action research (Burns, 2007; Carson & Sumara, 1997; Wadsworth, 2006) summarised by Burns as: an emergent research design; an exploratory inquiry phase; multiple inquiry streams operating at different levels; a structure for connecting organic inquiry to formal decision-making; a process for identifying cross-cutting links across inquiry streams; a commitment to open-boundary inquiry; and the active development of distributed leadership (2007: 85).

The inquiry process was emergent and iterative for although we specified the broad structure, the methods we were likely to use and the possible progression of the research, we could not however anticipate all of the methods we used nor the new inquiries that proliferated. For example, the diagram includes two of the 'unplanned' PAR projects that grew out from the process: 'Stories from the 'Hood'; and 'Our Voices, Our Communities'.[56] The diagram depicts their connections to the other sites of the inquiry as well as to other community organisations and groups (depicted as black nodes) that joined the new PAR projects.

The PAR cycles of the Community Sector Action Research Group formed the central node in the multiple inquiry strands that operate at different scales in the community services field of practices. In this way the CSARG cycles were the middle of the fieldwork rather than the beginning and the ending.[57]

The inquiry strand into knowing-in-practice in a community of practitioners (discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) propagated five rhizomes. These five organisational sites, described earlier in the chapter, became new inquiry groups in this research project. The membership of these PAR cycles was almost entirely different from the CSARG. Only three members were involved in both the CSARG and organisation sites. Although connected rhizomatically

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[56] The two PAR projects are documented in the following publications: Our voices our communities: Stories of belonging and change (Keevers, Pollard, & Dooley, 2007) and Stories from the 'Hood: Practising place in the Illawarra (Keevers, Dooley, & Pollard, 2008).

[57] Middle is used deliberately here. Our PAR processes like a rhizome is always becoming, have no beginnings and endings, just middles. The view in the middle enables us to see proliferating connections as well as ruptures and discontinuities that in turn create other linkages (Alvermann, 2000; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987).

to the broader project, the PAR cycles in each of the organisations were distinct nodes and afforded multiple opportunities to explore knowing-in-practice at the scale of a community organisation (a case study of one of the participating organisations is discussed in Chapter 7). During the fieldwork, we moved from one site to another encouraging the intra-connections. Both the research team and the CSARG engaged in processes for identifying the connections across the inquiry sites (Burns, 2007).

Participants from these five inquiry sites converged and agglomerated with others in the two sets of RBA planning workshop nodes (discussed in Chapter 8). At the points where our inquiry processes converged or overlapped, new joints were formed that produced new inquiry processes such as the PAR project with place-based organisations (Stories from the 'Hood) discussed later in the chapter. The CSARG and the Illawarra Forum Inc. were the node for connecting both the network of PAR cycles and the co-emergent, organic inquiries to formal decision-making and cross-boundary negotiations with institutions (such as government funding agencies, political parties) in the community services field of practices.

The 'we' and 'our' in this thesis refers to the five members of the ARC research team; this group was part of the CSARG, made up of fourteen other community sector practitioners. The PAR cycles network actively involved seventy people from five community organisations including service participants, management committee members and workers. All these groupings were part of the results-based accountability (RBA) workshops in which around one hundred and eighty people participated. A further three hundred people participated in the related PAR projects that spread outwards from the CSARG.[58]

Accessing data [59]

Within our PAR cycles, we incorporated multiple interpretive methods for accessing a variety of data for, as Nicolini asserts, "although practice as a

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[58] A summary of the fieldwork data is detailed in Appendix 1.
[59] Following Yanow, I use the term accessing data rather than gathering or collecting data. The field research involved in participatory action research the 'data' – "events, experiences, situational actors, conversations, documents – stay in the field. Unlike the botanical or archaeological [field research] organizational data are not brought back to the researcher's lab for analysis" (Yanow, 2006b: 47).

phenomenon can never be fully re-presented in theory or in text, the more approaches we can mobilise the better comprehension we achieve" (2007b: 14). Six interpretive methods were used within the PAR cycles: following and observing situated practices, written ethnographic accounts of observations, reflective group discussions, semi-structured interviewing, accessing, collecting and copying artefacts and reflexive writing.

Following and observing situated practices

By examining situated actions in ongoing practices, we can make knowledge observable (Gherardi, 2006). As we were particularly interested in investigating what community sector practitioners do and say, direct observation of situated actions and events in real-time was a crucial method employed in our practice-based study. Nicolini, Gherardi and Yanow urge practice-based researchers to adopt "some version of the methodological principle stated by Hughes (1971) as 'follow the actors'" (2003b: 28).

Observation in research involves not just observing but also social interaction such as "participating, interrogating, listening, communicating as well as a range of other forms of being, doing and thinking" (Mason, 1996: 63). With informed consent, the participant observation involved watching, listening to, doing and engaging with staff, volunteers, service participants and visitors such as other agency workers at the five organisational sites.[60] People of all ages, an enormous diversity of race-ethnicities and subcultures entered and participated in these organisational spaces and I talked with them about what they were doing, what they thought and felt about it, what Yanow calls "in-dwelling with others" (2006b: 49).

Such activities represent differing levels of participation and roles for the researcher in the field. Babbie (2007) explains that on one end of the continuum is the 'complete participant' in which the researcher participates fully in the activities of the studied group. At the opposite end of the continuum is the 'complete observer' who does not participate or have contact (verbal and physical) with the group being studied. Between these two roles on the continuum are varying levels of participation that can result in 'participant as

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[60] A sample of a participant information sheet and a consent form is attached in Appendix 2.

observer' or 'observer as participant'. My level of researcher participation varied across Babbie's spectrum. During the process of observing some intra-actions involving, for example, a worker at Interchange Illawarra interviewing a carer on the telephone, I had only minimal exchanges with the worker and my presence (while known by the person on the telephone) was unobtrusive. In other circumstances, such as observing the two-day training at West Street, I was 'observer as participant'. At other times I was 'participant as observer' such as during lunches or morning teas.

Written ethnographic accounts of observations

During the observations, I took fieldnotes. These notes consisted of descriptions of what I saw and heard going on, what people were doing and saying and the spaces with/in, which it was happening. I wrote down verbatim some of the comments people made. During some of the field visits, I was able to keep copious detailed notes, whereas in other circumstances, I was only able to make rough jottings. Following Hesse-Biber and Leavy's (2007; 2006) advice, immediately after each observation, I would sit in my car, or in the building, go over the fieldnotes, re-write them and often draw rough sketches of the space where the observations took place. When my co-field researcher was present, I got a copy of his notes and comments and would then turn the two sets of fieldnotes into one ethnographic account of the observations. This account would then be given back to the research participants involved in the field visit, for them to check, clarify, make changes or additions. The research participants and I negotiated changes to the written, ethnographic accounts. On most occasions the participants suggested no changes to the accounts and accepted them as a 'true report' about what had happened, despite the fact that it was their own actions and practices on which my (our) partial narrative was based. On a couple of occasions three or four iterations were negotiated before we agreed on a version. In this way, we co-produced a descriptive, narrative account for each field visit. However, the ready acquiescence of most of the research participants to my (our) account points to the difficulties recognised in the feminist research literature in generating egalitarian participatory research strategies (Lather, 2007; McWilliam, 1994; Naples, 2003).[61] The process of giving the ethnographic accounts to the research participants provided a mechanism

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[61] Following this experience, in future I would include questions in the ethnographic accounts to create a more exploratory style and invite interrogation and feedback.

for "confirming consent" which, affords participants "the opportunity to renegotiate consent after the fieldwork is completed" (Kirsch, 2005: 2168).

Reflective group discussions

Group discussions are a commonly used method in PAR (Kindon, et al., 2007b). Focus group is a term used generically for almost all forms of group interview in qualitative data-gathering (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas, & Robson, 2001; Madriz, 2003). Focus groups are a collectivistic rather than an individualistic research method that facilitates researchers hearing the multiple voices of participants' experiences, insights and attitudes (Madriz, 2003). However, in our study rather than focus groups, group discussions were used in conjunction with what Osmond terms "reflective recall" (2000: 118). The written ethnographic accounts of observations and fieldnotes were used as a stimulus for discussion. The focus was not on critiquing or evaluating performance and practices but rather on stimulating recall and exploring participants' understandings. At various times during the discussion, I would read aloud sections of the written account and these 'practice moments' provided a stimulus for deeper discussion about knowing-in-practice by the whole group. The questions used during these group discussions did not follow a format and resembled more closely what Schaffer (2006) calls "ordinary language interviewing" and what Minichiello, et al. (1995; 2008) call "unstructured interviews".

In contrast to the acceptance of our narrative accounts as 'true', noted in the previous section, the reflective group sessions at each research site interrogated and analysed the accounts in a lively and engaged manner. Perhaps this difference was due to the reflective group discussions using a questioning and interrogative style in contrast to the 'expository' style of the ethnographic accounts. The dialogue and co-theorising that characterised the reflective group discussions were crucial in deepening our understandings of the meanings research participants gave to their experiences and practices. Richardson (1997) explains that the 'collective story' facilitates the building of shared consciousness, so together we pursued naming the knowing-in-practice that was at times difficult to put in words or as several research participants said: "its just the way we do things". In our reflective discussions, we were "not seeking to discover anything entirely new, only what is already in plain view"

(Shotter, 2003: 299). All these reflective group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim with the expressed and informed agreement of the participants.[62]

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews with individuals were used only during Stage 2 for interviewing practitioners and managers in relation to their experience of RBA. Following the recommendations of Minichiello, et al. (1995; 2008) and Hesse-Biber (2007b; 2006), semi-structured interviews[63] were adopted as they offered a good fit to the PAR tradition of flexibility and responsiveness. They made possible a more organic exploration that, while not without structure and direction, was able to shift and make room for 'discovery and description' (Reinharz, 1992). However, a researcher, working within an asymmetrical and hierarchical relation to produce a particular form of interaction from which to elicit 'information', is always implicitly engaged in a political negotiation (Fernandes, 1997). As Haraway aptly argues "accounts of a 'real' world do not then, depend on a logic of 'discovery' but on a power-charged social relation of 'conversation'" (1991b: 198). All interviews/conversations were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim with the informed consent of the research participants.[64]

Accessing, collecting and copying artefacts

A range of research-relevant artefacts were accessed throughout all phases of the study. These artefacts included documents from individual organisations such as funding agreements, acquittal reports, documentation of practices and ways of working, annual reports, websites, written evaluations from service participants, copies of emails and minutes of meetings. DVD's, videotapes, photographs and recordings of music were also made and taken by those participating in the study. During the RBA planning processes, the charts, diagrams, summaries of ideas and conversations, workshop materials and photographs generated were collected and copied, as were the minutes, reports and evaluations. Secondary data such as newspaper and newsletter accounts were also copied.

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[62] A copy of the consent form and a participant information sheet are attached in Appendix 2.
[63] The questioning guide for community sector practitioners on the RBA process is attached in Appendix 3.
[64] A copy of a participant information sheet and consent form is included in Appendix 2.

Reflexive writing

I filled nine notebooks with my thoughts, responses, drawings and reflections on what I was observing, the conversations I was having with members of the CSARG, my supervisors, the senior research fellow, the Industry partner and the literature I was reading. Using this process I came to knowing through the writing, what Richardson (2000) terms "writing as a method of inquiry". I often discussed these responses and interpretations with those involved in the research process and these discussions co-shaped our collective sensemaking processes outlined in the next section of this chapter.

Iterative analysis

As the research methods described above already indicate, analysis in this inquiry was not confined to a finite moment but occurred throughout the entire research process (Kirby & McKenna, 1989). Because meaning-making and description were ongoing, interpretations were never considered complete or fixed. So instead of the separation between information gathering and analysis-of-data stages, the iterative, cycling character of PAR meant our joint deliberations were intra-twined. Such a process necessarily complexifies data analysis. It is not possible for me to give an adequate account of all of the processes of analysis undertaken during our PAR cycles. This would be excessively repetitive and laborious because data analysis was made and remade as the rhizomes of the inquiry spread. At each of the nodes, we worked towards creating explanatory frames able to sufficiently hold the varied understandings of service participants, workers and management committee members and our co-generated knowledges. Reinharz calls these "adequate interpretations" which, she says "do not give definitive answers but keeps the dialogue going" (1983: 183).

Accordingly, in this section I outline the data analyses undertaken during two of the phases of our PAR cycles. These are the data analysis processes that shaped 'Knowing in a community of practitioners' (Chapters 5 and 6) and the analyses of the RBA training and planning phase of our inquiry (Chapter 8). Since we (I) employed similar analytic processes and tools for 'Knowing in a community organisation' (Chapter 7) I do not detail the analysis here. Any distinguishing aspects and issues relating to the data analysis are discussed in Chapter 7. As the emergent PAR cycles (Stories from the 'Hood and Our Voices

our Communities) followed different "lines of flight" (Deleuze & Parnet, 1987) and are not discussed substantively in this thesis, I do not describe the data analysis methods used.[65]

Collaborative identification of themes and early sensemaking

Analysis of the data accessed during the *knowing-in-practice* phase of the study proceeded iteratively and the early analysis was made and re-made, with the CSARG actively involved in the process. The research team read the data set individually. For my part, the analysis proceeded by reading, several times, all the ethnographic accounts of observations, the transcripts of reflective discussions, the artefacts collected and my fieldnotes to get a sense of the whole and to immerse myself in the collated data. I read looking for practices, patterns, themes, discrepancies and metaphors and I recorded these findings in a notebook. I initially coded the data using words from the texts, and then developed more 'abstract' codes to arrive at the themes (Hesse-Biber, 2007b). The research team then came together and compared our readings of the data. A sensemaking session was then conducted with the CSARG members. Our sensemaking discussions are influenced by Dodson and Schmalzbauer's (2005) method of interpretive focus group (IFG) that seeks "to keep local knowledge and 'subjects' vantage of the world at the center of analytical authority" (Dodson, Piatelli, & Schmalzbauer, 2007: 822). IFGs are gatherings of people who share similar lifestyles or work with the people 'under study' to assist in data analysis (Dodson, et al., 2007). The CSARG sensemaking discussions were just such an IFG, as the members live in the same place and work in similar organisations to the research participants. Out of these sensemaking discussions, we drafted a brief paper outlining the themes and patterns identified in this early analysis, linked with examples from the data set.

This early identification of themes and analysis was corroborated with all participants from the five organisational sites. In this way, we incorporated the "right to co-interpretation" (Newkirk, 1996: 13) by offering our emerging interpretations and analysis of the research data to participants for their review and comments (Kirsch, 2005). Based on feedback from the research participants,

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[65] They are, however, discussed in the following publications. Stories from the `Hood: Practising place in the Illawarra (Keevers, Dooley, et al., 2008) and Our Voices Our Communities: Stories of belonging and change (Keevers, et al., 2007).

the outline identifying themes was re-worked with the CSARG members and distributed among the member organisations of the Illawarra Forum affording yet other perspectives on our research analysis and findings.[66]

Diffractive analysis

After this early analysis, I turned to reading literature on the discourses of social justice. Following Haraway (1991a) and Barad (2007), I employed a diffractive method. This method involves a practice of reading in and through texts and material-discursive practices in a way that places them in conversation with each other. The diffractive method thereby generates a non-linear engagement with concepts and examples from the fieldwork data, the discourses of social justice and the performative, relational, practice-based approach (Chapter 3). By placing these different perspectives in conversation with each other, I attempted "to engage aspects of each in dynamic relationality to the other" (Barad, 2007: 93). The diffractive analysis helps to illuminate the differences between the various perspectives, how they interfere, support and/or expand one another and what gets excluded from mattering from the different standpoints.

Employing this diffractive, analytic process and guided by Patton's (2002) discussion of developing category systems in qualitative data analysis, I developed categories and codes based on the social justice practices identified in the collaborative analysis. Next, employing these categories and codes I developed the interpretive topology of social justice practices to capture and re-present knowing-in-practice amongst the five community organisations (see Chapter 5). Then, I re-turned to data analysis and re-coded all the data by hand and developed memos about each code (Hesse-Biber, 2007b). I gathered all the data for each code, expanded the related memos and collated them to form one document (see Chapter 6).

I then distributed Chapters 5 and 6 amongst the five participating organisations and the CSARG for discussion in a sensemaking session. This collaboration sought to ensure that the work I had done on the previously generated categories retained a continuity of meanings in the now proposed topology.

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[66] An outline of the themes identified in this early analysis is included in Appendix 4.

This process thereby enabled corroboration that the meanings generated through the process of analysis resonated and was valid to both the co-researchers and research participants. The participants from the five locally-based community organisations provided detailed written feedback on the synthesised topology. Such feedback contributed to the inclusion of critical appraisal in relation to 'my' translation of meaning and its integration into the phase of research in which data are transformed into findings and knowledge is re-presented (Dodson, et al., 2007). Additionally, as the names of the participating organisations are identified in this thesis at their request, it was important to check that the research participants felt that they were fairly portrayed and to avoid unintended harms such as undue stress, unwanted publicity, loss of reputation and invasion of privacy.

Collaborative analysis of RBA data sets

Patton (2002) reminds us that when undertaking observations, particularly large group processes, not everything can be seen and noted, and that "sensitising concepts" can be useful as a guide by drawing our attention to certain kinds of events, activities, behaviours, language and practices (2002: 216). The research team were the participant observers at the RBA planning processes and we therefore collectively devised an observation sheet that we all used to prompt our fieldnotes.[67]

Once again the analysis was iterative and spiralling. The CSARG held a reflective discussion in between the RBA planning days to talk about and analyse members' experience. The group used this reflexive analysis of our RBA experiences to make decisions about how to change and intervene in the planning processes to encourage local practice knowledge being more fully brought forward.

After the RBA processes were complete, a sensemaking session was conducted with CSARG members and some of the research participants. Again we utilised the modified interpretive focus group (IFG) analytic method (Dodson, et al., 2007; Dodson & Schmalzbauer, 2005). As the data set relating to RBA processes was voluminous, we sent out different parts to those participating in the

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[67] A copy of the observation 'protocol' is attached in Appendix 5.

sensemaking session, along with the questions we would be using to guide the discussion, for people to read and analyse individually beforehand.[68] This collaborative sensemaking involving CSARG members and other research participants as analytical experts was particularly helpful to me as it both enriched and sharpened my re-turn to analysis of the RBA data set for the thesis.

Performative analysis of RBA data sets

In order to analyse what happened when the local practice knowledge of community practitioners (discussed in Chapters 6 and 7) entangled with RBA, I first named the competing discourses and material-discursive practices (Barad, 2007; Gherardi, 2006) discernable in the RBA fieldwork data.[69] I was particularly interested to analyse the material-discursive practices and engagement that co-emerged in the midst of processes of change and transition in the community services field of practices. I began by adapting Sanguinetti's (1999) method for discourse mapping. Her criteria for whether practices and talk can be named under a 'discourse' include: recurring across the data set; associated with a particular institutional sector, tradition, theory and set of practices, and reflecting a set of power relations and a world view (Sanguinetti, 1999: 140-141). These criteria enabled me to code the fieldwork data, develop a Venn diagram[70] to cluster the material-discursive practices under 'orders of discourse' (Fairclough, 1992) and depict the intra-relations between them. In this way the Venn diagram graphically re-presents the connections in tension where competing discourses intersect and entangle (Treleaven, 1998). Next, I used the Venn diagram as a reference for analysing the different conceptions of knowledge and what counts as evidence in RBA processes. Then, I analysed, using the performative, relational practice-based approach outlined in Chapter 3, what was included and excluded from mattering during intra-action with RBA. This included employing Barad's (2007) and Haraway's (1991a) diffractive

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[68] A copy of the questioning guide for the RBA sensemaking discussions is attached in Appendix 6.

[69] It is important to reiterate that in this analysis I adopt the view of discourse and material-discursive practices outlined in Chapter 3. Discourse is not a synonym for language but includes image, design, technology, movement and other modes of meaning making; discourse and materiality are fused together and co-emerge and discourses are practices that 'manifest a specific, historically situated form of life' (Barad, 2007; Iedema, 2007: 931).

[70] A copy of the Venn diagram is included in Chapter 8 on page 216.

method which enabled a critical look at community organisation practices and RBA in their relationality.

Finally, following Gherardi (2006), I analysed the material-discursive practices in which situated practice knowledge is translated, contested and circulated in inter-organisational relations. These processes of analysis formed the basis of Chapter 8 that was then distributed to the CSARG for corroboration and discussion using the same processes outlined earlier in the chapter.

Quality, validity and trustworthiness in the study

What constitutes quality and validity in feminist praxis and participatory action research is a topic of lively debate (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Lather, 1994, 2007; Manning, 1997; Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Richardson, 1997). In considering quality and validity in action research Bradbury and Reason (2006) suggest researchers emergently and reflexively address overlapping issues and 'choice points'. In the following section, I apply the 'choice points' of quality as: reflexive-practical outcomes, extended ways of knowing, engaging in significant work, enduring consequence and relationships, and relational praxis (Bradbury & Reason, 2006: 346-348). I then review the strengths and limitations of this study and my role in relation to Bradbury and Reason's (2006) 'choice points'. I conclude by discussing the techniques incorporated to ensure trustworthiness and rigour in our study.

Reflexive-practical outcomes

Greenwood and Levin argue:

> validity, credibility and reliability in action research are measured by the willingness of local stakeholders to act on the results of the action research, thereby risking their welfare on the "validity" of their ideas and the degree to which the outcomes meet their expectations. This cogenerated contextual knowledge is deemed valid if it generates warrants for action (Greenwood & Levin, 2005: 54).

Therefore, in relation to practical outcomes it is important to ask "whether the research is 'validated' by participants' new ways of acting in light of the work" (Bradbury & Reason, 2006: 347)? *Warrants for action* are certainly evident in the political activities of the CSARG. Group members have organised meetings with federal and state ministers, members of parliament and senior bureaucrats

to discuss the findings of our inquiry with the intent of influencing social policy and ensuring the distinctive perspectives of community sector organisations are heard in political and policy debates.

Extended ways of knowing

The quality as "extended ways of knowing" choice point encourages researchers to ask: Were new skills developed? Were there shifts in being in the world? Do our methods provide a way of engaging people on issues of importance (Bradbury & Reason, 2006: 347-348)? These issues are succinctly expressed in Lather's (1991) conception of catalytic validity. Catalytic validity is descriptive of the degree to which the research participants are refocused and energised toward new ways of knowing in order to engage more powerfully in their own practice (Lather, 1991: 68). As our PAR cycles spread rhizomatically, at some of the points where they converged or intersected new sites or nodes of inquiry emerged in ways we had not anticipated. The first involved participants and service users from nineteen small 'belonging', community organisations and groups (including the Multicultural Women's Network) keen to investigate the differences that small community groups make to members' lives and to the community. They wanted to document the benefits these groups have on the health and well-being of members and their families. Several members of the CSARG, including myself, organised assistance from the Technical and Further Education College and Illawarra Multicultural Services and together we supported participants from these community groups to gather their stories of involvement and document their experience.[71] Over two hundred community members attended the launch of the resulting research report that received positive media attention. Eleven representatives met with members of parliament, state government ministers and senior managers from government departments to inform them of the findings of the research and to advocate and lobby on behalf of the small community organisations and groups involved in the research.

The second ramifying PAR project involved neighbourhood centres (including the Warrawong Community Centre) and place-based organisations[72] joining

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[71] For details see Keevers, et al. (2007).
[72] Place-based organisations are distinguished by focusing their work efforts in a particular neighbourhood or bounded locality. "They pay particular attention to those most marginalised

together to explore and document their role in community strengthening and in facilitating relationships between community members.[73] These organisations were concerned that in a climate of increased competition for funding, the research about place-based organisations was almost non-existent in Australia. Hence, this emergent PAR project was designed to strengthen the evidence base on the contributions of place-based organisations in the Illawarra. Several members of the CSARG, including myself, were active in facilitating learning, conducting and documenting PAR, and editing this second research report.

Enduring infrastructure and consequence

Bradbury and Reason's issue 'choice point' concerning quality as enduring infrastructure encourages action researchers to evaluate the extent to which the inquiry process manifests "new patterns of behaviour" and capabilities that continue after "the action researcher has left the scene" (2006: 349). The emphasis on new, emergent behaviours and capabilities resonates with other PAR scholars/practitioners (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Kesby, 2005; Lather, 1991; Maguire, 1987; Reason, 2006) who emphasise that PAR values the means or processes of research as much as the ends or products. "Its 'success' rests not only on the quality of information generated, but also on the extent to which skills, knowledge and participants' capacities are developed through the research experience" (Kindon, et al., 2007b: 13). This development of skills, knowledge and capabilities is evident in the two PAR projects catalysed by the ARC project discussed above. For example, one participant from the 'Our Voices, Our Communities' project that involved small 'belonging' community groups researching one another commented:

> Joy: This project has helped me to expand my knowledge, gain understanding, and feel passionate about keeping all our groups running. If only everyone could have had the chance we had of seeing what goes on 'behind the scenes' in other groups and how beneficial they are, maybe then, us doing this project would never have had to happen, people wouldn't need to question the validity of keeping these groups going, they would have seen first hand the importance of these groups (OVOC, 7/10/2007).

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in their community. Place-based organisations build relationships between people, develop community life and are actively involved in local community issues and concerns" (Keevers, Dooley, et al., 2008: 6).

[73] This PAR project resulted in the publication Stories from the Hood: Practising place in the Illawarra published by the Illawarra Forum Inc. (Keevers, Dooley, et al., 2008).

Another researcher, from a local Turkish Islamic Association, participating in the same project said:

> Safiye: As a member from a community organisation, while I was researching these other community groups I felt proud. I felt proud to show our organisation to the other researchers and felt lucky that we have so many members who worked voluntary for years. We all want to belong somewhere and this is where I belong and where I feel comfortable (OVOC, 7/10/2007).

Here participating as co-researchers in this PAR process increased not only knowledge but also confidence and conviction about the value of their community groups and the importance of speaking out about their experience.

The place-based organisations involved in the "Stories from the 'Hood" project, as a consortium, are undertaking further training in quantitative and qualitative research methods, in order to create the infrastructure to ongoingly document, improve their practices, and measure the 'results' of their work. In this way, our PAR has catalysed a new emerging infrastructure that has the potential to have enduring consequences for the participating organisations.

Engaging in significant work

This 'choice point' concerns whether the inquiry group is addressing questions that they believe are significant, and convening a process that is likely to generate the desired outcomes (Bradbury & Reason, 2006: 348). As this inquiry process was grounded in the experience and concerns of community organisations, the CSARG believed it was worthwhile, significant and useful (CSARG Minutes, 8/9/ 2006).

One critique that may be raised is that to maximise the significance and worth of the inquiry, the CSARG deliberately chose 'good' practice organisations to participate in the first phase of the inquiry. This is acknowledged in the following comments from a sensemaking discussion with CSARG members:

> May: But I think we recognised that right up front, when they [the organisations] were being selected.
>
> Jaana: Yes, we did.
>
> May: We said we want agencies where we know there is good or best practice, whatever that means. Like we understood what it meant because when the agencies were named people were quite confident that yes…
>
> Jaana: That'd be reflected, that's good (CSARG, 27/11/2007: 2).

A further critique is that the selected organisations were restricted to locally-based community organisations, which excluded, for example national or international non-government organisations. These 'choices' mean practitioners and organisations involved in this inquiry are unlikely to be representative of the field. As the inquiry was comprised only of those community practitioners and organisations who were willing to participate in the study, it is reasonable to suppose that they were possibly more confident about opening their practice to scrutiny and also more interested and focused upon examining their practices than other community sector workers may be. Further, we (I) observed and talked to only current service participants, those for whom engagement with the community organisation was working well enough for them to actively persist in involvement. This recruitment strategy naturally excluded those who had, for example, found involvement with the community organisation unhelpful. However, the research was not intended to evaluate organisations' practices or services. Instead, it focused on observing, discussing and documenting practices and practising, knowledge and knowing within the Illawarra community services field of practices.

Relationships and relational praxis

Bradbury and Reason urge action researchers "to inquire into and seek to ensure quality of participation and relationship in the work" (2006: 344). Indeed, attending to relationships is regarded as principal to the process of investigating in both feminist research and participatory action research (See for example, Behar, 1996; Lutz, 2002; Reason, 2006; Rose, 1997). Instead of endeavouring to achieve supposedly objective and independent research, through use of certain methodological devices intended to dissociate and decontextualise knowledge from its source of production, what distinguishes feminist-informed PAR (and other forms of post-positivist research) is an attention to research relationships, to partial perspectives, to multiplicities, to situated knowledges (Haraway, 1991b). In other words, feminist-infused PAR rejects the "god tricks promising vision from everywhere and nowhere equally and fully [and celebrates embodied knowing], the view from a body always a complex contradictory, structuring and structured body" (Haraway, 1991b: 195).

As researcher I am, therefore, situated in the sites, an intra-twined partisan. Having previously worked in community organisations and being an activist in the community sector, I am both insider and outsider researcher. Blurring between researchers and participants, combined with variously being a doctoral student, feminist, activist, friend and colleague rarely felt problematic and movements between the positions from which we related usually reflected the context in which we met. But, contradictions and tensions did arise in the attempts to be both 'action researcher' and 'academic researcher'. At times the life-worlds of the community sector and the university seemed to be mutually indifferent if not suspicious of one another. Yet both were crucial to my role as a scholarly-action researcher. I sometimes felt torn between my understanding of the expectations and desires of the academy and my understanding of the expectations and desires of the community sector practitioners and industry partner. The feminist notion of the materially-discursively constituted and multiple subject 'always becoming' in intra-action, discussed in Chapter 3, has been useful in thinking/doing through the contradictions in my own positioning. My (our) strategic purposes (as action researchers) were at times contradicted by my academic purpose (to present a sophisticated, theorised analysis of our PAR). I dealt with this duality of purpose by continuously iterating along the insider-outsider continuum, what Fine (1994) calls working the self-other hyphens. This enabled me to do and think these positions through one another, thereby working on the tensions produced to think critically and reflexively about what it means to do scholarly-action research. Becoming the hyphen (Humphrey, 2007) enabled me to cross over between the life-worlds (although not always comfortably), reminded me to be constantly vigilant in enacting an ethics of relational praxis and to take responsibility for my part in what became in our inquiry.

Finally, our study was explicitly designed for maximum participation and we endeavoured to allow all to be fully involved in the process. This 'choice' that the inquiry become as participative and collaborative as possible, means the study is relatively small scale. Although our PAR cycles scaled-out, involving increasing numbers of participants as the inquiry spread rhizomatically, we accessed data from only one bounded region.

Techniques incorporated to ensure trustworthiness in the inquiry

Member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) were used throughout the research process. Participants checked and co-produced the written ethnographic accounts of observations and checked and made changes to transcripts. Research participants were also invited to discuss the researcher's reading of data accessed during the fieldwork for the purposes of co-theorising and validation. This process of 'giving back' to participants a picture of how data is viewed allows the researcher to "both return something to research participants and check descriptive and interpretive/analytical validity" (Lather, 1991: 57).

Trustworthiness in the research has been enhanced through the combination of multiple methods, variety in data sources, multiple sites of participatory action research and in varied perspectives and observers. In qualitative research these practices have traditionally been called triangulation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). However, there were far more than 'three sides' from which we approached the inquiry. A more apt imaginary for our inquiry is Richardson's (2000) crystallisation.

> The crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change and are altered… are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves… [In crystallisation} we have moved from plane geometry to light theory, where light can be both waves and particles (Richardson & St Pierre, 2005: 963).

Crystallisation captures our thoroughly partial, partisan, complex and never complete PAR cycles.

Practitioners' perspectives, service participants' perspectives, researchers' observations and literature perspectives were compared to assist authenticity. In selecting the 'cuts' of particular practices for inclusion in the thesis, I tried to include fieldnotes of direct observations of the practices, practitioner perspectives, and service participant perspectives on the same practices. I also included difference and confirmation patterns concerning the practices. The decision to incorporate data from these different angles has multiplied the amount of fieldwork data included in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8.

All written data has been kept in its original form, individual interviews, reflective group discussions and sensemaking sessions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. These data management and recording processes, which seek to preserve the original data holistically, enhance the dependability of the research.

Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the research sites and presented the processes and methods enacted in this inquiry. A feminist-informed participatory action research methodology consisting of a five phase research strategy involving the interpretive methods of observation of situated practices, written ethnographic accounts, reflective group discussions, semi-structured interviews, accessing and collecting artefacts, and reflexive writing were employed within multiple sites in the Illawarra community services field of practices. Iterative and collaborative sensemaking with the CSARG members and research participants enabled us to analyse themes, patterns, discrepancies and practices. Employing a diffractive analytic method to develop a topology that is simultaneously empirically and theoretically grounded assists in more clearly describing community practitioners' knowing-in-practice. Both the diffractive analytic method and the topology are also useful in exploring the extent to which RBA, emphasising the articulation of results, measured by performance indicators, can bring forward the complexity of local community organisations' practices.

The topology of social justice practices is presented in the first of four analyses of data chapters (Chapter 5) and used to analyse and document knowing-in-practice in a community of practitioners, and in a community organisation in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively. In Chapter 8, I extend the analysis to investigate what happens when this local practice knowledge is brought into results-based accountability (RBA) processes within the field of community services practices.

The built environment of the community organisations

Warrawong Community Centre

Warrawong community lunch

From the Housing NSW
bedsits opposite Warrawong
Community Centre

Interchange Illawarra

Figure 2: Photographs of the five locally-based community organisations

**Multicultural
Womens
Network**

**Cringila Community
Hall**

**Trish, the co-ordinator transcribing the
word "water" into different languages**

Photographs of the five locally-based community organisations (cont.)

The built environment of the community organisations
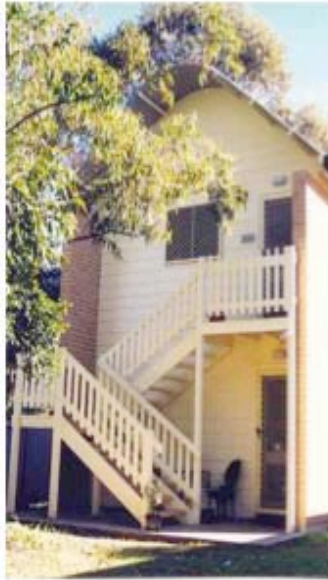
SYFS Crisis Refuge

The Crisis Refuge Courtyard

The SYFS demountable

The West Street Centre

The West Street Centre Group room

Photographs of the five locally-based community organisations (cont.)

CHAPTER 5

A topology of social justice practices

> I wish to strengthen the argument for granting a certain priority to praxis… This shift in orientation to the friction of the rough ground of practice and practical reason should not be viewed with resignation, for the ideal solution [to struggles over social justice] was utopian in the first place. The practical activity of struggling for and against forms of mutual recognition embodies some of the best features of democracy… Participation in activities of disclosure and acknowledgement generate a sense of belonging to and identification with the larger political society. These practices are, among other things, processes of citizenization in culturally diverse societies.
>
> James Tully

Introduction

This chapter presents a *topology*[74] for describing and analysing community services knowing-in-practice that is both grounded theoretically and in the fieldwork data. Topology studies connectivity, continuity, entanglements, fluidity and boundaries (Barad, 2007; Kennington, 2008). It is used in this thesis in preference to the metaphor of framework, which tends to evoke the image of a fixed container within which things are placed. Employing a social topological analysis, Mol and Law argue, "'the social' doesn't exist as a single spatial type. Rather, it performs several kinds of space" with/in which different practices, activities and operations become (Mol & Law, 1994: 643). Following Barad (2007) and Mol and Law (1994), I bring the notion of topology into the description and analysis of the practices of locally-based community organisations to assist my exploration of the intricate relations and joining together of these material-discursive practices.

The themes that co-participants in the research project identified from our collective reading of the fieldwork data are outlined in Appendix 4. This early

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[74] Mol and Law explain topology is a branch of mathematics that deals with spatial types. "Topology doesn't localize objects in terms of a given set of coordinates. Instead it articulates *different rules for localizing in a variety of coordinate system*s. Thus it doesn't limit itself to the three standard axes X, Y and Z but invents alternative systems or axes. In each of these, another set of mathematical operations is permitted which generates its own 'point' and 'lines'. These do not necessarily map on to those generated in an alternative axial system. Even the activity of 'mapping' itself differs between one space and another. Topology… articulates other spaces" (Mol & Law, 1994: 642-643).

analysis involved, as discussed in Chapter 4, each research team member determining possible themes and then meeting together to corroborate our readings in sensemaking sessions. However, the complexity of the themes evident in the early analysis suggested that reading the fieldwork data and the existing theoretical approaches to social justice through one another would achieve a more thorough analysis.

I begin by discussing how observations, worker and service participants' accounts of the practices of community organisations embody core themes evident in theories of social justice. Second, I briefly describe some of the current theoretical perspectives and debates in the discourses of social justice. Third, I critically analyse how appropriately these different conceptions capture participants' and workers' experience and understanding of the contributions of locally-based community organisations to practising social justice. Finally, by adopting the performative, relational practice-based approach outlined in Chapter 3, I critique and extend current discourses of social justice in order to propose a multi-dimensional topology of local community organisations as 'doing' social justice in the midst of 'a world of inequality'.[75] This chapter is the first of four data analysis chapters presented in this thesis. In Chapter 6, I apply this topology to bring forward and present an account of the knowing-in-practice of a community of practitioners from local organisations working within the broader community services field of practices in the Illawarra.

Locally-based community organisations and social justice

To investigate the situated practice knowing of locally-based community organisations, I (we) followed and observed the practices and conducted reflective discussions with workers, participants and management committee members within iterative action research cycles in five locally-based community organisations in the Illawarra. As already detailed in Chapter 4, there is great diversity in the ways of working and organising, the processes and interventions used, the services offered and the people using and participating in these organisations. Despite this diversity, all five organisations identify *social justice* as a driving force behind their work. For example, a

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[75] This phrase is borrowed from the title of Richard Sennett's (2003) book *Respect in a world of inequality.*

commitment to social justice is clearly stated in the aims of the West Street Centre:

> to provide a specialised service to victims and families of child sexual violence, which embraces social justice principles of access, equity and cultural diversity, working towards social change through the provision of advocacy, information and education within a feminist framework (WS Annual Report).

The report then goes on to document how this commitment to social justice is translated in practice. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Southern Youth and Family Services (SYFS) in her address at the Annual General Meeting in 2007 said:

> I would love to tell you that things are better this year for young homeless and disadvantaged people and their families. Sadly that's not going to happen. We still have hardships related to class, race and gender, increased poverty and locational disadvantage, the growing divide between advantage and disadvantage, high numbers of young people who are homeless, high numbers of young people in care, high numbers of child protection reports, high youth unemployment, some people have difficulty completing an adequate education, lack of an adequate amount of affordable and secure housing, the unintended outcomes of the changes to industrial relations, child abuse, domestic violence, family breakdown and many others… At a time when the Federal Government has taken unprecedented action into communities in the Northern Territory, it is even more important that community agencies, Unions and other groups stand with our Aboriginal friends and assist in the struggle to turn around racism and discrimination (SYFS, 2007: 1-2).

Here we see evidence of the organisation's social justice orientation in the CEO's repeated and public references to struggles over recognition, distribution and injustices.[76] Her comments disclose an orientation that acknowledges the ways in which societal institutions and processes create or exacerbate disadvantage and injustices. In a sensemaking discussion, one of the research participants commented:

> Jaana: It's so important for us to see that social justice is not just a word out there that we aim at, it is something that we actually – we're doing, what we do really well. It is part of our everyday activity and our everyday interactions with everybody (sensemaking discussion, 1/9/2008: 11).

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[76] Following Tully (2000; 2004) I use the phrase struggles *over* social justice in preference to struggles *for* social justice to indicate that these struggles are relational, mutual, multiple, not amenable to definitive solutions and thereby continue without cease. This characterisation of social justice is discussed in detail later in this chapter.

In Jaana's account social justice is described as a practice, an ongoing activity of everyday life. She went on to explain that social justice is in the little things they do. She gave the example of the practice of not having appointments for set times "they are welcome to stay all day at our Centre, its no drama" (sensemaking discussion, 1/9/2008: 11). This practice means that is not unusual for service participants to visit and spend time in the organisation for long periods before they decide to approach a worker for assistance with a specific issue. In this way people never 'lose face' by missing appointments.

Social justice is also strongly evident when service participants were discussing the benefits and the meanings of their involvement with community organisations. Although service participants did not use the word social justice, their accounts clearly reflect their ideals and experiences of respect, recognition, belonging, participation, and change. For example, a volunteer organiser and participant in the local men's group operating in a suburb adjacent to the steelworks with a large proportion of residents living in poverty, comments on what he sees as the benefits of involvement:

> Bill: it gives us a space to meet and come together to develop a bit of a culture and make some friends, to get out of the house, to connect with other guys at many different levels. So across age brackets and across culture so it really is a great benefit to local men and we can also support each other, we feel needed as well, so that rather than being needy, we are actually being needed in the community. We are needed by the community and we are in demand and that alone helps to build our self-esteem, build our confidence, and gives us the opportunity to share our skills with other men and to make a contribution. It's fantastic for the men and it's fantastic for the community because we hope to have a great role model for the community that people will look up to and value (WCC/PK men's group, 27/5/2007: 2).

Bill describes his and other group members' experience of recognition by emphasising participation in purposeful and meaningful activities, experiences of mutual respect and increased self-esteem, and in having their contributions valued by the wider community.

Gherardi argues that "a practice and the tradition of a practice do not respect organizational boundaries but instead traverse several organizations" (2006: 108). She maintains that practices 'perform' the community, "tie the activities of practitioners together and generate the set of communitarian, not institutional social bonds which do not exist prior to the practices themselves" (Gherardi,

2006: 130). Observation of situated practices combined with the accounts from practitioners and service participants, as well as artefacts and documents from the five participating organisations indicate it is practices of social justice that 'perform' and tie together both this community of practitioners and the network of locally-based community organisations.

Such accounts of community organisation practices embody core themes that philosophers and theorists of social justice have struggled to analyse and understand. They inform the development of a theoretical lens with which to more systematically analyse knowing-in-practice within this community of practitioners. Such theorisation will also assist in exploring the extent to which results-based accountability, emphasising the articulation of results that can be measured by performance indicators, can bring forward the complexity of knowing-in-practice and outcomes in local community organisations.

Discourses of social justice

Social justice is an amorphous concept that refers to a range of competing theoretical positions, values and ideals. Not all conceptions of social justice emphasise the strong themes of relationality, respect, care, belonging and overcoming hardship identified in the sensemaking of the fieldwork data conducted with the research participants (outlined in Appendix 4). Accordingly, I discuss discourses of social justice that focus more widely than on the material aspects of poverty and inequality. Such discourses conceptualise social justice as social inclusion, recognition, redistribution and representation.

Social inclusion/exclusion

The notions of social inclusion and exclusion have had significant influence in policy discourse on social justice in the past couple of decades particularly in the northern hemisphere (Popay, et al., 2008). Recently, the concepts of social inclusion and exclusion have been institutionalised in Australian social policy with a national Social Inclusion Unit and Board established in 2008 to "advise the Government on ways to achieve better outcomes for the most disadvantaged people in our community" (Australian Government, 2008: 1). This initiative's early priorities include addressing unemployment, homelessness, closing the life expectancy gap for Indigenous Australians,

support for disadvantaged children and services for communities with the greatest needs. These priorities have also been adopted in the reform agenda of the Council for Australian Government (COAG), the coordinating body for federal, state and territory governments (Baldwin, 2009).

As the discourse of social inclusion/exclusion usefully encompasses hardships and oppressions beyond the material aspects of poverty, it potentially contributes to deepening the insights into the practices of community organisations evident in this study.

The discursive diversity of social inclusion/exclusion is well illustrated in Levitas's (1998) work focusing on the United Kingdom. She distinguishes three contrasting discourses shaping the meaning of social exclusion/inclusion. She dubs these: RED, the redistributionist egalitarian discourse; MUD, the moral underclass discourse; and SID, the social integrationist discourse (Levitas, 1998, 2005). RED intertwines discussions of the problems (exclusion) and remedies (inclusion) with an understanding of the material dimensions of poverty. Levitas notes "from the perspective of RED, political inclusion is an aspect of social inclusion" (Levitas, 1998: 173). However, RED appears less prominent in recent Australian politics than SID which defines inclusion in terms of labour market attachment, positioning paid work as the ideal source of social cohesion. MUD too, which places emphasis on the moral deficits and behavioural delinquency of the excluded, has been more influential than RED in Australia, at least during the years of the Howard government (1996-2007).

The discourse of social inclusion implicitly binarises the 'included' and 'excluded' and promotes an insider-outsider metaphor (Cortis, 2006; Levitas, 2005). Such conceptions tend to characterise social exclusion as a 'state' in which people or groups are assumed to be 'excluded' from social systems and relationships (Popay, et al., 2008). Further, a discourse of social inclusion that focuses on integrating excluded individuals into 'mainstream society' fails to acknowledge the ways in which exclusion, inequality and poverty are created and maintained by mainstream institutions and processes (Nevile, 2006: 84).

The social inclusion approach fails to engage adequately with social justice as dynamic, relational, ongoing practices, a conception strongly evident in the

fieldwork observations and in worker and service participants' accounts. Most of the available measures and indicators of social inclusion/exclusion provide "descriptions of 'states' of exclusion, neglecting the relational nature of these 'states' and the exclusionary processes generating them" (Popay, et al., 2008: 43). Quantitative measures of social exclusion are often themselves exclusionary as they tend to neglect the voices and ideas of those most severely affected by exclusionary processes and these people are often the least likely to be counted (Popay, et al., 2008).

Neither the broader conception of social inclusion/exclusion as a 'state', nor the three discourses argued by Levitas (1998; 2005) to shape its meaning, adequately reflect service participants' desires for and experiences of respect, belonging, well-being and change that feature in their discussions of participation in community organisations. Their perspectives certainly challenge a narrow conception of social inclusion/exclusion, limited to labour market participation, or to a derogatory conceptualisation, which labels people as passive welfare 'dependants' (Lister, 2002: 38).

Sen (2000: 8) argues that only by forcefully emphasising and focusing attention on the role of relational features will the concept of social exclusion contribute to appropriate and effective ways of addressing deprivation, poverty and inequity. Arguably, the discourse of social exclusion that offers investigative advantages for this study is one that recognises the relational interdependence of all social systems and views exclusionary processes as dynamic, multi-dimensional and driven by unequal power relationships (Popay, et al., 2008: 36). Such a view also recognises that societal processes and institutions often create exclusionary processes. Further, social inclusion needs to be incorporated into a rich, broad concept of social justice that encompasses ideals, and experiences of mutual respect, recognition, representation, redistribution and belonging, if it is to bring forward the practices of locally-based community organisations observed and discussed in the fieldwork.

Recognition

The idea of recognition occupies a central place in debates focusing on what social justice means today. Contemporary recognition theorists such as Nancy Fraser, Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth offer rich, nuanced and contrasting

political theories of recognition. However they all agree "a just society is one in which everyone receives due recognition" (Thompson, 2006: 186) and that respect should be at the forefront of our relationships with others.

Drawing principally from Hegel, Taylor identifies recognition as a "vital human need" (1994: 26) and underlines the damaging impact of misrecognition on identity. Honneth concurs and argues social life is made possible through inter-subjective recognition. Humans develop as moral and social actors through a dialogic process across three forms of recognition: love, respect and solidarity (Honneth, 1992, 1995, 1997). The non-recognition or misrecognition of social actors "along any of these axes of self-formation is experienced as a harm or injustice that, under favourable social conditions, will motivate a struggle for recognition" (Van den Brink & Owen, 2007: 1). These harms and struggles then form the basis of political claims for social justice. Honneth argues that the harms created through misrecognition include cultural domination, invisibility, degradation and disrespect. Honneth's work seeks to extend the tradition of the Frankfurt School critical theory by offering a 'post-material' account of justice and injustice that focuses not on expectations relating to the distribution of material resources but centres instead on the affirmation and violation of moral expectations connected to conceptions of identity and desire for selfhood (Yar, 2003). So for recognition theorists like Taylor and Honneth, the primary harm of misrecognition is to preclude subjectivity and render subjects into objects.

The recognition discourse of social justice has been usefully mobilised: in studies of social movements[77] (for example, Hobson, 2003; Maddison & Scalmer, 2006); to examine the welfare state (Sennett, 2003); to analyse participation in social policy-making by those living in poverty (Lister, 2004, 2007a); and to examine the concept of community (Yar, 2003). In relation to

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[77] In contrast to large charitable non-government organisations, the question of whether the organisations participating in this study can be considered to be part of social movements is complex. Certainly they all have social change goals, and some of the organisations such as the West Street Centre are linked to and have historically seen themselves as part of broader social movements such as the women's movement. In addition some of the Interchange Illawarra service participants belong to organisations that are part of the disability rights movement and some of the workers and the young people that receive services from SYFS participate in collective action around youth issues and homelessness. However, participants of centres such as the Warrawong Community Centre do not have formal organisations to join. Additionally, locally-based community organisations are not generally considered to be representing social movements.

social services the recognition discourse of social justice has been deployed to explore care workers struggles for justice (MacDonald & Merrill, 2002), the professional recognition of social workers (Healy & Meagher, 2004) and as a framework for conceptualising social work (Houston, 2008a, 2008b). It has also been used to investigate the practices of community-based health and arts projects (Froggett, 2004).

However, the work that has been most influential in this thesis, applies theorisations of recognition to child and family support services (Cortis, 2006; 2007; Houston & Dolan, 2007). Houston and Dolan apply Honneth's account of the struggle for recognition to social support resulting in "a conceptual framework of reflective practice that can illuminate and interrogate the moral and operational dimensions of preventative work with children and families" (2007: 458). Cortis (2006; 2007) successfully integrates the two main conceptions of recognition proposed by Fraser (1997) and Honneth (1995) that have been forcefully counter-posed (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). She develops an interpretive framework that reflects and analyses service-user's perspectives on the outcomes, evaluation and quality of family support services. Although, like Fraser, Cortis maintains redistribution as a separate analytical category of social justice, it is Honneth's tripartite construct of recognition she finds most useful. Her study demonstrates that Honneth's theorisation renders visible the intersubjective or relationship-based processes of change that service-users experience family support services facilitating (Cortis, 2006: 156). It is Cortis's work highlighting "the role of social services and welfare professionals in facilitating service-users' struggles for recognition" (2006: 202) that I build upon in developing the practice-based topology elaborated later in this chapter.

Recognition and redistribution

While Taylor's (1994) theory of recognition ignores issues of class and distributive justice, Honneth argues economic and distributive patterns are best understood as cultural patterns of recognition on a continuum of respect (2003: 135). Honneth's work deems questions of socio-economic distribution matter only to the extent that "material social conditions must be met if humans are to be able to proceed on the project of self-realization *qua* recognition" (Yar, 2001: 298 emphasis in original). Fraser (1997) stridently disagrees asserting that maldistribution and misrecognition are mutually irreducible. Thus, she

maintains a dualistic analytical distinction between claims for material redistribution and claims for cultural recognition. By proposing a 'perspectival dualism', Fraser attempts to "provide a way of understanding political struggles and social movements which is sensitive to both economic and cultural agendas" (Yar, 2001: 289). In contrast to Honneth and Taylor, Fraser frames recognition as a question of status rather than identity, thereby emphasising the economic underpinnings of social status. She argues "what requires recognition is not group-specific identity but rather the status of group members as full partners in social interaction" (Fraser, 2001: 24).

I argue that neither Fraser's treatment and labelling of some apparatuses as economic and some as 'merely cultural'[78] nor Honneth's subsuming of the economic into the cultural adequately captures the strong themes evident in our PAR cycles of observation, reflection and discussion of practice. Barad explains "apparatuses are not individually separable or determinate since they are always already implicated in on-going intra-actions and enfoldings" (Barad, 2007: 450). Fraser (1997; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) has herself consistently argued against making an either or choice between the politics of recognition and the politics of redistribution. Yet her starting point is to set up redistribution and recognition on separate axes of a co-ordinate system of injustices. This boundary cut, which Fraser herself admits is an analytical construct, limits her attempt to synthesise the very elements she separates at the outset (Barad, 2001; McNay, 2008). As both Butler (1997b) and Barad (2007) argue, Fraser's analysis reinscribes the problematic conception of social identities as merely cultural. In challenging Honneth's argument that social injustice is contingent on psychological harm, Fraser fails to adequately account for the entanglements of such harms (Lister, 2007b: 165). Wilkinson, in his analysis of the links between poverty and health comments, "Second-rate goods seem to tell people you are a second-rate person. To believe otherwise is to fundamentally misunderstand the pain of relative poverty or low social status" (Wilkinson, 2005: 71). Honneth, however, in stressing a psychological account of identity formation based on the idea of recognition (Thompson, 2006), fails to acknowledge the material nature of identities that co-emerge with material conditions. Both Fraser and Honneth specify and strictly demarcate axes of recognition (albeit in

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[78] Merely cultural is the term used by Judith Butler (1997b) in her critique of Fraser's dual construct of social justice.

different forms) and these boundary cuts create certain blind spots with respect to the dynamics of power (Van den Brink & Owen, 2007: 22). This blind spot leads to an insufficient grasp on the complex ways in which "identity and subjectivity are penetrated by structural dynamics of power which often operate at one remove from the immediate relations of everyday life" (McNay, 2008: 9).

Furthermore, both Honneth's and Fraser's concepts of the material are limited to the merely economic. This stands contra to the alternative concept of materiality offered by feminist scholars such as Fernandes (1997; 2006), Barad (2007), Gherardi (2006) and Orlikowski (2007; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008) discussed in Chapter 3. As Barad explains, "it is not the case that economic practices are material while the presumably separate set of social matters such as gender, community and identity are merely ideological. The nature of production is reconfigured as iterative intra-activity" (Barad, 2007: 283). By this account, production is a process of not only making commodities or delivering services but also of making subjects and re-making structures.

Representation

In recent work, Fraser (2005; 2007) has revised her framework with the addition of a third analytic category that she calls 'representation'. This third category contributes the political dimension required for realising economic and cultural struggles for social justice. She argues that a politics of redistribution and recognition must be joined to a politics of representation, oriented to decision-making processes and governance structures (Fraser, 2005). Lister (2007a) agrees, arguing that participation and inclusivity in policy-making are essential building blocks in a politics of social justice. This move shifts the emphasis from an either/or opposition between the dimensions of redistribution and recognition towards a realisation that struggles for recognition are struggles for inclusion and political voice (Phillips, 2003). Thus, the denial of participation as peers in social interaction is a central part of what misrecognition involves (Dahl, Stoitz, & Willig, 2004). The themes of representation, of advocacy, of standing alongside and of trying to create possibilities for 'parity of participation' (Fraser, 1996, 2005, 2007) are evident in our fieldwork data, making the inclusion of this political dimension important in the development of an interpretive topology for analysis.

A practice-based topology of social justice

The performative, relational orientation, outlined in Chapter 3, suggests focusing attention on praxis and practising. This orientation to practices and actions warns against conceptualising social justice as a state that can be achieved once and for all. Social justice cannot be tamed. It cannot be simplified to a set of claims or goals. Nor can social justice be reduced to a set of principles to be evaluated against. Instead, there are no definitive solutions and struggles *over* recognition will continue without cease. By focusing on praxis, Tully argues recognition becomes:

> a partial, provisional, mutual, and human-to-all-too-human part of continuous processes of democratic activity in which citizens struggle to change their rules of mutual recognition as they change themselves. If the study of struggles over recognition is to be critical and enlightening, then it should be practical and "permanent" rather than theoretical and end-state oriented (2000: 477).

As discussed in Chapter 4, I developed this practice-based topology using a diffractive methodology (Barad, 2007). This method involved placing in conversation: the insights of the social justice discourses (discussed in the previous sections); the performative, relational practice-based approach (outlined in Chapter 2 and 3); and the collective sensemaking of the fieldwork data (outlined in Appendix 4). Thinking and engaging these different resources through one another enables attention to be focused on the differences, the entanglements and the boundaries that are enacted.

Accordingly, I now present the interpretive topology of locally-based community organisations as 'doing' social justice. This topology attempts to contribute towards addressing the gap identified by Tully. He argues because theorists and practitioners have tended to conceptualise social justice as an end state, the practices and practising of social justice have been relatively overlooked (Tully, 2000, 2004).

This interpretive topology of locally-based community organisations as 'doing' social justice is summarised and depicted diagrammatically in the figure on the next page.

Interpretative topology
of locally-based community organisations 'doing' social justice

Co-emerging and mutually constituting dimensions, forms and practices of social justice

Political

Cultural

community management

campaigning

standing alongside

lobbying

advocating

facilitating
legal rights

**Representation
& Participation**

encouraging a sense
of agency and hope

encouraging power to

collaborating

negotiating

declining
the expert role

**Respect &
Recognition**

practising
respect

non-
judgemental
attitude

compassion

care

workers &
participants of similar background

working for social change

blurred boundaries

education

housing

overcoming
cultural
divisions

**Belonging &
Inclusion**

organisational
membership

food

Redistribution

transport

money

not providing
a service

fun &
friendship

allocations
for respite

creating connections
between people

access to activities

employment

creating a sense of belonging

clothing

Social

Economic

Figure 3: Topology of social justice practices[79]

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[79] This diagram references the 'iconic' photographic image of entangled photons. The image can be viewed at http://www.tongue-twister.net/mr/physics/photons.jpg

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The diagram attempts to depict the co-emerging political, cultural, social and economic dimensions of social justice. In each inner circle the intra-acting forms of social justice are named which, are themselves phenomena, the results of intra-actions of material-discursive practices. Some of the material-discursive practices of social justice, identified in the fieldwork, are named in the entangled rings depicted both merging and dividing. The use of red, purple, green and white references the historical, political and cultural connections that community organisations in the Illawarra have with the social movements involved in struggles over social justice such as the labour movement (red) the women's movement (purple and green) the environmental movement (green) and the peace movement (white). The pattern of these colours (for example, the inner ring of 'redistribution' corresponds with the colour of the outer ring of belonging and inclusion) illustrates how practices intra-act, collaborate, depend on each other, include one another and co-emerge in struggles over social justice.

This two-dimensional diagram is inadequate in that it cannot capture the multi-dimensional, complex and fluid character of connections and changing practices and possibilities (Barad, 2007). It also fails to convey the dynamic set of relations and entanglements that are part of the ongoing struggles over social justice. Further, the diagram gives the impression of an assemblage of individual forms, categories and sets of practices, whereas these dimensions are intra-acting, co-emerging and constituting one another. Moreover, representations are not reflections of what is but "productive, generative… material articulations or re-configurings of what is" (Barad, 2007: 389). Nevertheless, with these caveats in mind, the diagram is presented as a useful heuristic device to aid analysis and understanding of locally-based community organisations' contributions to practising social justice.

In the topology, social justice is characterised as a knot of on-going, iterative practices that entail being open and awake to each encounter, each intra-action (Barad, 2007). Practitioners from local community organisations use their ability to respond, their response-ability, to build relationships and intra-actions that contribute to living justly in the midst of gaping gulfs of inequality. The possibility, the meaning and matter of social justice are constantly open and indeterminate. The possibilities and impossibilities for living justly are made

and remade in engagement with one another. What is included and excluded in the enactment orders the world differently, since different realities (worlds) are sedimented out of particular practices/doings/actions (Barad, 2007).

This topology therefore attempts to synthesise the discourses of social justice as recognition, redistribution, representation and social inclusion outlined above. This synthesis emphasises the relations and entanglements among the components and incorporates the intra-twined social *and* political *and* economic *and* cultural dimensions.

Moreover, this topology recognises that social justice is bound up in connections, entanglements and responsibilities to one another. Haraway's considerations of the act of respect foregrounds the specific relationality involved in this kind of regard:

> to have regard for, to see differently, to esteem, to look back, to hold in regard, to hold in seeing, to be touched by another's regard, to heed, to take care of. This kind of regard aims to release and be released in oxymoronic relation. Autonomy as the fruit of and inside relation. Autonomy as trans-acting (Haraway, 2008: 164).

In this view autonomy begins in encounters, where meeting the look of the other is a condition of having face oneself. For as Sennett explains, "Rather than an equality of understanding, autonomy means accepting in others what one does not understand about them. In so doing, the fact of their autonomy is treated as equal to your own" (2003: 262).

Struggles over social justice demand a detailed knowing of the material-discursive practices and apparatuses of oppression and its many 'faces' including: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, stigmatisation, racism, sexism, abuse and violence (Young, 1990). This topology recognises that these material-discursive practices and apparatuses are iteratively produced through one another, are happenings that make-up and are made-up by human and other-than-human bodies.

Critically, the topology focuses on recognition *and* power. As Foucault (1978) and Butler (1993) emphasise power is constitutive of practical identities and is not an external force that acts on the subject. Struggles over recognition entail

the "dynamic intra-workings of the instruments of power through which particular meanings, bodies and boundaries are produced" (Barad, 2007: 230). Recognition of the entanglement of subjectivity and power relations helps develop practical and material understandings of both agency and the production of social inequalities. Subjectivity becomes through practice, however, unlike the recognition discourses discussed earlier, "power relations are not secondary to the process of subject formation" and agency is not tethered to identity (McNay, 2008: 14). In the topology presented here, the foregrounding of practice implies that oppression and misrecognition are endlessly sedimented through the intra-action of multiple material-discursive apparatuses and lived-through the always-becoming body (Barad, 2007). Class, gender, race and a sense of belonging are realised through one another "in modest daily practices that are often not strongly marked by symbolic categorical identities" (Amit & Rapport, 2002: 64) such as friendships, neighbours and co-participants in local activities. At the same time a perspective on practice with its anticipatory or prospective dimension opens the space of agency. The possibility of encounters with the unanticipated in practices, which when practised are rarely simply reproduced, is a potential source of innovation and change in daily life (McNay, 2008).

Finally, this performative, relational practice-based approach seeks to understand struggles over social justice as a dynamic complex of enfolded practices of respect, recognition, redistribution, representation, inclusion and belonging.

Conclusions

Grounded in the early analysis of themes identified by co-participants in the research project during our collaborative reading of the fieldwork data, this chapter has developed a theoretically-informed, multi-dimensional topology of locally-based community organisations 'doing' social justice in the midst of a world of inequality. I illustrated and discussed how researcher observations, combined with the accounts of workers and, perhaps most significantly, service participants of the knowing-in-practice in community organisations, embody core themes evident in existing frameworks of social justice. Haraway (1997) and Barad's (2007) diffractive method was then applied. Thus, the topology was developed by reading in and through the early analysis of themes, the current

discourses of social justice and the performative, relational practice-based approach in order to place them in conversation with each other. This diffractive method enabled current theories of social justice (social justice as social inclusion, recognition, redistribution and representation) to be extended, synthesised and transformed. The resulting topology usefully brings the practices and practising of social justice to the foreground. The topology thereby re-positions community organisations in terms of facilitating service participants' ideals, experiences and struggles over respect and recognition, belonging and inclusion, representation and participation, and redistribution. In the following chapter, this topology is deployed to interrogate, analyse and present an account of the knowing-in-practice of a community of practitioners from five local organisations working with/in the Illawarra community services field of practices.

CHAPTER 6

Knowing in a community of practitioners:

Practising social justice

> Mattering and its possibilities and impossibilities for justice are integral parts of the universe in its becoming; an invitation to live justly is written into the very matter of being. How to respond to that invitation is as much a question about the nature of response and responsibility as it is about the nature of matter. The yearning for justice, a yearning larger than any individual or sets of individuals is the driving force behind this work.
>
> <div align="right">Karen Barad (2007)</div>

Introduction

Commonly both theorists and practitioners have tended to conceptualise social justice as an end state, a goal or result, or as a set of principles and values. The practices and practising of social justice have been relatively overlooked (Tully, 2000, 2004). In the previous chapter, I developed a practice-based perspective on social justice in which, the 'doing' of social justice is conceived as a dynamic complex of everyday practices of respect and recognition, redistribution, representation, belonging and inclusion. In this chapter, I apply this topology of community organisations as 'doing' social justice in a world of inequality to bring forward and present an account of the knowing-in-practice of a community of practitioners from five local organisations working in the Illawarra. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss all of the material-discursive practices of social justice evident in the fieldwork data and included in the diagrammatic representation of the topology.[80] I begin, therefore, by discussing some practices of belonging and inclusion. This is followed by an exploration of practices of recognition and respect. The next two sections investigate some of the practices of representation and participation and of redistribution and distributive justice. An illustration of how these practices co-emerge, entangle, iteratively enfold, sustain and include each other through intra-action concludes most sections.

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[80] The material-discursive practices are outlined in the topology on page 136 in Chapter 5.

Practices of inclusion and belonging

Experiencing a sense of belonging and inclusion is the theme most strongly expressed by service participants involved in this study. Workers' accounts also stress this theme. Workers not only recognise the importance of building strong relationships and connections with service participants but also emphasise the importance of facilitating connections and relationships *between* service participants.

Perhaps this is not surprising, given the now overwhelming evidence demonstrating the centrality of social connectedness and social support for health and well-being (Berkman, 1995; Wilkinson, 2005). In a recent report, the World Health Organization asserts: "Being included in the society in which one lives is vital to the material, psychosocial, and political aspects of empowerment that underpin social well-being and equitable health" (CSDH, 2008: 18). The international research on the social determinants of health demonstrates that significant risk/protective factors for a whole range of diseases including heart disease, arthritis and depression include a sense of control over your life (Marmot, 2004), a sense of belonging (Wilkinson, 2005) and a sense of agency and hope (Berkman, 1995; CSDH, 2008). Wilkinson's research in the United Kingdom demonstrates that belonging infrastructure at the neighbourhood level is a significant factor in the physical and mental health, and well-being of individuals living in the community. The more unequal a society is, the weaker the belonging infrastructure (Wilkinson, 2005; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009).

Wallerstein (2006) conducted an international literature review aimed at evaluating the effectiveness of empowerment and participatory strategies to improve health. Her work demonstrates that the "most effective empowerment strategies are those that build on and reinforce authentic participation ensuring autonomy in decision-making, sense of community and local bonding, and psychological empowerment of community members themselves" (Wallerstein, 2006: 5). She explains that active participation of citizens in community organisations is critical in "reducing dependency on health professionals, ensuring cultural and local sensitivity of programs, and facilitating capacity and sustainability of change efforts" (Wallerstein, 2006: 8).

Accordingly, this section explores a couple of the myriad of practices that contribute to people experiencing a sense of belonging and inclusion through participation in locally-based community organisations. First, encouraging a sense of belonging and connections between people. Second, the importance of facilitating shared experience of joy, fun and friendship and 'not providing a service'. Finally, I use the example of the Multicultural Women's Performing Group to discuss how a sense of belonging, experiences of recognition and voice, improved well-being and health co-emerge through intra-actions across extraordinary cultural differences.

Encouraging a sense of belonging and connections between people

Service participants in this study all evoke the same metaphors of *family and home* to convey the sense of belonging they experience through their involvement with community organisations and its importance in their lives.

> Matilda: When we all come here it's like we go to a family.
>
> Viet: A family, yes
>
> Lucia: It is a family.
>
> Helena: Yes, that's true
>
> Suat: … and I said to myself and this is my different nationality cousins. Because I have no cousins, yes, it's only my family. (MWN, 30/3/2007: 9).

Participants and volunteers used exactly the same words during observations at Interchange Illawarra. This sentiment is also reflected in the following conversation between Nicole, Mark and Rob, participants and volunteers at the Warrawong Community Centre:

> Nicole: It's not only adults, we've got little kids coming in too, look at Lou, she has been coming through since she was a week old. They're been here since a week old and she's just turned one. So we're like part of their family. We're extended family here.
>
> Mark: Yeah and we've lost a few that were really, really close to us, like Billie and Red, yeah (WCC, August, 2007: 5).

Here we see the ideals of family used to convey both the sense of connection between adults and children and also the sense of loss when people connected with the community centre die. Later in the same conversation, Rob describes the openness and closeness he experiences in his relationship with one of the workers:

> Rob: This lady here is more of a mum to us than our own Mums, Hey – what I can't tell me mum; I can tell Thelma [laughter] (WCC, August, 2007: 7).

Not surprisingly, the metaphor of family and home was strongly expressed at the Southern Youth and Family Services accommodation services. Additionally, during a visit to the Southern Youth and Family Service's drop-in health program (known as CHAIN) Kylie, a long-time service participant, said "CHAIN is my second home" (SYFS, 15/6/2007: 3). She used this metaphor to articulate her sense of ownership and enduring connection with the service, and to express the quality and integrity of the relationships she experiences with the workers. Interestingly, service users in Cortis's (2006) study, focusing on performance measurement in family support services, also used the same metaphors when describing their relationships to the services.

Although the metaphors of family and home dominate service participants' accounts of their involvement with community organisations, workers do not tend to use this discourse in their descriptions of the importance of relationships and connections between those involved in community organisations. Both the significance of the sense of belonging facilitated by the practices of community organisations and the workers' ambivalence towards the allusions to family is well illustrated in Julia's telling of a recent experience at Southern Youth and Family Services.

> Julia: Jimmy was a young person here some, I don't know how long, 15 years ago. And he moved to Queensland, got a job, and has a partner and he's just gone on his first big 12-month trip overseas. He spent his last night in Australia with us. He saw his family the weekend before. He said he wanted to come to Wollongong before he caught the flight the next day and he wanted to know about where the other young people were that he'd sort of grown up with here. And we went out to dinner with him and it was kind of like – it's very interesting. So we don't present as a family but there was a very strong connection for someone to come back from Queensland to spend their last night before they go overseas with us. So that makes us feel good too and I don't know if that's bad [laughter] (SYFS, 12/9/2007: 11).

Here we see Julia's wonder at the depth of connection generated by being part of SYFS for the ex-resident, her acknowledgement of the importance of the relationships for workers *we went out to dinner with him… So that makes us feel good too* as well as her concern *I don't know if that's bad* about how Jimmy's experience of belonging and its significance in his life may be perceived by others.

Valuing the intra-actions between people and supporting and facilitating horizontal relationships between peers rather than focusing only on the worker-client relationship and individualised outcomes, is a distinctive feature of knowing-in-practice in all of the community organisations participating in this study. This valuing of the relationships between peers is evident in Kevin's reflections on what he appreciates most about participating in the men's group supported by the community centre.

> Kevin: The interaction with all the other fellows, the big difference that everybody can do when they are here and we can sort of share common ground together. The socialisation of being with the fellows each week, I look forward to that, I also look forward to a good lunch also the great harmony that's within this group (WCC, 16/5/2007: 3).

This focus on the relational features of inclusion is particularly evident at the Warrawong Community Centre, Interchange Illawarra and the Multicultural Women's Network. However, even at the West Street Centre where the largest demand on their service is for one-on-one counselling, they "offer additional services, to women who have experienced child sexual assault, which contribute to a developing sense of personal agency as well as community connection" (WS documentation, 2006). West Street[81] creates this sense of community in multi-layered practices. They structure their one-on-one counselling sessions in ways that encourage women to get to know the whole team rather than the usual practice of building a relationship with one counsellor. They offer group programs that provide opportunities for women to meet with others, share experiences and challenge the effects of abuse in a supportive environment. They actively involve service participants in the process of planning how the service develops.

Creating a sense of belonging and encouraging inclusive relations between young people are also deliberative practices at Southern Youth and Family Services. As the CEO explains:

> Belonging, everyone wants to belong somewhere, everyone wants to feel like they are part of something; generosity and hospitality, the importance of sharing what we have, the importance of showing warmth and giving. These things we try and model every day, these things we try and teach and these things we give (SYFS, 2007: 2).

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[81] The knowing-in-practice of the West Street Centre is discussed in detail in the next chapter.

At all the different Southern Youth and Family Services sites visited to observe their practices, as an 'outsider' researcher, I experienced this *giving*. The youth workers always took the time to show me around the workplace and made me feel welcome. Workers, and often the young people themselves, clearly appreciated the sense of belonging and offered it freely in intra-actions with me. For example, during the first minutes of the initial visit to SYFS, I noted:

> When we arrived we sat in the foyer of the refuge waiting and immediately a couple of young people from the refuge approached and started talking to us. They seemed to be trying to get clear about who we were and where we fitted into SYFS. One was particularly interested and talkative. He was a real 'includer' (SYFS, 26/3/2007: 1).

At all sites I observed that the community practitioners are keenly attuned to others, always keeping an eye out for those on the margins or those feeling unsure. They acknowledge their power and use it to invite people in, to create the possibility of belonging. There is a knowing-in-practice that an easy sense of belonging is essential to feeling safe, to health and to well-being. Helena beautifully conveys the profound and uplifting effects of an easy sense of belonging and inclusion:

> Helena: And the most important thing with our group, with Multicultural Women's Group, is we don't know each other. First time I came in nobody know me. Soon as I was on this door, it was ladies there, and they all come smiling and said, "Welcome, how are you and what your name?" And I said to myself they… I know them. But I didn't. Then we start talking like we know each other. So this for me it was the beginning and this changed my life completely. I lost myself since I came to Australia and I was here so many years. It's since the year 2000 I joined this. I came to Australia 1956 and I thought I was dead, you know, because I didn't know nobody except my small community. Before I came to Australia I was very outgoing and very happy and I have so many things in my mind but when I came here I was dead. But when I started with this group I… it was like I was dead and was resurrected. That's true. And I'm alive because of this group. I found so many happiness coming here (MWN, 30/5/2007: 31).

Helena comments powerfully emphasise the sticky connections between a sense of belonging and both physical and mental health and well-being.

'Not providing a service'

At all sites there is a knowing-in-practice that sometimes what is most significant, the crucial aspect for people, is not just providing the service. This knowing-in-practice means that even community organisations funded to provide specific services like counselling, case management or respite value

processes and activities that do not necessarily 'deliver a service' as such. Not just providing a service is underpinned by the practice conviction that "reciprocity is the foundation of mutual respect" (Sennett, 2003: 219) and that the quality of the relationship is central. The importance of reciprocity and 'not providing' a service is well illustrated in the following fieldnotes from Interchange Illawarra concerning Tom, a young man with an intellectual disability:

> Tom was very keen to mow the lawns. He arrived with a pair of gloves and a terry-towelling hat. He asked Sam whether he would be mowing. She said, "Yes of course you can do some mowing, but you do too much for us". She talked with him about the different activities that had been arranged that he had indicated he would like to participate in. He agreed to do both the mowing and participate in the peer support program. Later he started to mow the lawns with a push mower (no engine) and pushed the mower vigorously despite the fact that the blade settings were out and so the mower didn't cut the lawn all that effectively. He kept mowing for most of the time we were there and only stopped when workers insisted that he have a drink. He looked happy and satisfied with his work. He clearly loved mowing and felt he was contributing and providing a service in this way (Interchange, 1/5/2007: 4).[82]

Tom's mowing contributions demonstrate the intra-connections between reciprocity and a sense of belonging. Thus, practices of respect and recognition and practices of belonging and participation are threaded through one another in the backyard of the Interchange Illawarra premises.

The Multicultural Women's Network does not provide anything at all that would be recognised as 'a service' for aging immigrant women. Instead, they create lino-cuts together, they sing in different languages together, they tell stories, and they turn their life experiences into public performances. However, although the Multicultural Women's Network does not explicitly plan it, the network produces the sorts of outcomes that are commonly detailed in service agreements and contracts between aged care providers and funding bodies. In a discussion during a Multicultural Women's Network planning group meeting, Elka, a community worker explains:

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[82] A few weeks after this field observation, Tom was referred by a Job Network provider (they are subcontracted by the Federal Government to provide employment assistance) to a business for work experience, two days per week. Unfortunately, one of the days of the week the Job Network agency organised for him to attend was Tuesday, the day that he participates at Interchange Illawarra. Tom was at the workplace on the first Tuesday, noticed it was 10am, told the employer he had to be at Interchange and left. The workplace decided he was unreliable and discontinued his work experience.

> Elka: This group has empowered women, it's given them independence, it has given them a sense of belonging more to their community. I know for a fact that a lot of them suffered from a lot of mental health problems, a lot of depression, and all those kinds of things. And this has meant that these women are no longer taking medication for it, you know, this has been an experience where it's improved even the family relationships. Because they've always been seen as the wife and the mother but with this group their families get to see them in these different roles. So it's given them a lot of independence and it's given them this sense of power, and it's given them their own identity back.
>
> Maria: And their own identity, exactly what I wanted to say… And it shines in their faces when they perform (WMN, 30/5/2007: 4-5).

Although the Multicultural Women's Network does not provide services as such they do create the opportunity for women from diverse cultural backgrounds to actively participate in what Sennett argues are "the three modern codes of respect: make something of yourself, take care of yourself, help others" (Sennett, 2003: 260). Instead of providing care services, the Multicultural Women's Network invites women to participate actively in their own care. Sennett argues "the hard counsel of equality comes home to people within the welfare system when they feel their own claims to the attention of others lie solely in their problems, in the facts of their neediness" (2003: xv). The invitation to participate in their own care, to experience their contributions as needed is a powerful counter to the experience eloquently described by Sennett. This approach demonstrably produces outcomes such as improved English language skills, improved physical and mental health, reduced isolation, increased social connectedness across cultural differences, increased self-confidence and esteem, and increased levels of happiness and joy.

Intra-action: Belonging and regard across the boundaries of cultural difference

The Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group is a project of the Multicultural Women's Network.[83] The group meets every Friday in a community hall in Cringila, a suburb overlooking the steelworks, the industrial centre of the Illawarra. The members of the group are women from an extraordinary range of countries including Greece, Turkey, Vietnam, Australia, Italy, Chile, Portugal, Macedonia and Sudan. Participants in the group acknowledge their differences but stress their experience of the group process

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[83] Photographs of some of the members of the group practising together in the Cringila community hall are included on page 121.

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overcoming these cultural and religious barriers. Della and Zekiye's comments are representative examples:

> Della: So when you join the group so many like we are 30 – most of us is different. I'm orthodox, she's a catholic somebody is a Muslim but we treat each other like one (MWN, 29/6/2007: 12).

> Zekiye: We're all coming from different backgrounds or different religions but when we walk in that door we all become one. It is so understanding, so much respect. Especially in multicultural Australia, it's so hard to find that, to grab that (MWN, 30/5/2007: 37).

The Multicultural Women's Performing Group is full of situated difference but *we all become one.* The boundaries between the members are ambiguous, not stable and only temporarily determinate for a given practice. Thus, for Zekiye, being in a marked minority disappears altogether within the practices of the group. So how does the Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group overcome cultural barriers and create such a strong sense of belonging and inclusivity? The Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group employs a wide range of creative practices that work as powerful inclusive technologies. Trish, the facilitator of the group explains:

> Trish: We do all sorts of things together. You know, using certain creative tools and practices; music and song and voice and movement and visual arts. … I think with all of those things, there's a level of playfulness. There's a level of positive emotional engagement. Like singing with other people. Then singing in somebody else's language. It creates an intensity and an enjoyment that I think is quite special. I'm really aware of that at the times when we've gotten to the point where we've developed a scene together and we all feel really satisfied with the shape of it and how we're all working together to make it work. At that point, there's such a sense of intensity and satisfaction. I can trust, that, with the times where we drop out of that again, and we're just kind of relating to each other, sometimes in appalling ways, you know. Different people hurting each other in all sorts of ways. That's a reality of what happens too. But people know that we can – and have experienced it – the moments when we rise out of that and experience a sense of connection with each other that is really quite extraordinary. And it is because of those creative processes (MWN, 19/6/2007: 5).

The practices of the Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group are energetic, embodied and engage passion and emotions. For example singing, particularly in a group, is experiential, enacts the intra-connections of the body, emotions, senses and minds and creates *intensity and enjoyment*. To sing in a detached, purely cognitive way would be strange singing indeed. Trish's experience that the creative practices bring forth *a quite extraordinary sense of*

connection was witnessed by the researchers during observations of the women singing songs from their childhoods about fetching and carrying water, first in Vietnamese and then in Spanish. In the hall there were not individual entities or components of women, guitars, drums, songs and paper but a singular becoming-together, a co-shaping, co-emergent creativity. The meaning of the women, the guitars, the songs and drums enfold in the practices they are both created by and have a role in creating. In this intra-action, there are no distinctions between woman and guitar, between a tall Portuguese woman and a short Asian woman, between young and old. Each is entangled with the other. There is sheer joy in the coming together of different bodies in the *intensity and satisfaction* of "getting it, which makes each partner more than one but less than two" (Haraway, 2008: 244). Even the co-researcher and I, the agencies of observation in the 'cut' of this intra-action, were aglow with pleasure witnessing these phenomena.

Trish's knowing that the possibilities of relations of respect and the sense of co-belonging have to be made and re-made in encounters with one another is evident in her comments. *I can trust that, with the times where… we're just kind of relating to each other, sometimes in appalling ways... we can rise out of that.* These comments are also linked to another theme that was evident in both the accounts of service participants and in observations of practices. Intra-relating with these creative processes to perform the stories of their lives and create contexts of meaning together provokes strong emotions and re-configures thinking/doing/feeling about power, belonging, skill, achievement, shame, risk, friendship, body, memory, joy and much else.

The following extract from the acquittal report to a government agency that provided a one-off grant to the network describes 'A Meeting Place', one of their performance works that involved over 300 women:

> Women's ideals and desires in relation to multiculturalism were imaginatively explored through a cross-cultural, multilingual music and song development process. The song that emerged was a kind of cry, or yearning for a 'meeting place' - a meeting place being a metaphoric and multilingual reference to an imagined place, a kind of multicultural utopia, where people from all cultures feel free to come together to meet on equal ground and learn from each other (MWN, Acquittal report 2006: 9).

In these struggles over recognition, the yearning for justice is necessarily bound up in our connections and responsibilities to one another. For the Multicultural Women's Network, yearning is an affective and political sensibility that may "promote the recognition of common commitments and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition" (hooks, 1990: 27).

These entanglements between practices of recognition, representation, participation, belonging and well-being are illustrated in the following service participants' comments:

> Valda: Well, exchanging ideas just makes the group stronger. [speaking together] … at the same time we learning each other's cultures, each other's background… then when we perform, when we sing, we sing as one. The feeling more
>
> Simona: The feeling is…[speaking together] … no one is better than the other. Try to be all the same. And that brings voice. The frog sing too why not sing us too. Never mind if you are good or bad but try to be the best.
>
> Helena: I will never forget the very first day I came here. I was very sick, depressed and worried. Soon as I walk in the door, they came; they walked towards me with a smile in their faces. And they… it was like they cuddle me, I don't know… this feeling it never goes away.
>
> Zekiye: Friday brings you alive (MWN, 30/3/2007: 4,12).

The members of the Illawarra Multicultural Women's Performing Group have learnt through laughter, tears, conflicts, work, play and practise for thousands of hours over years and years to pay attention to each other, to recognise each other in ways that change who and what they become together (Haraway, 2008). Experiences of recognition and autonomy are co-shaped inside relationalities and entanglements produced through cultural differences and changing gender roles. The members of the Multicultural Women's Network know that the other is much closer that we think. Flavia, one of the members summed up the experience of the network as:

> Flavia: This is real[ly] building multicultural communities, living multiculturalism (MWN, 30/3/2007: 19).

The Multicultural Women's Network thereby creates the conditions where people *have* to experience direct face-to-face communication across the boundaries of difference (Sennett, 1970).

Practices of respect and recognition

Our participatory action research with community organisations affords a particular opportunity to bring forward the situated practices and encounters entailed in creating possibilities for experiencing respect. Sennett argues:

> In sum, if behaviour, which expresses respect, is often scant and unequally distributed in society, what respect itself means is both socially and psychologically complex. As a result, the acts which convey respect – the acts of acknowledging others – are demanding and obscure (2003: 59).

In the fieldwork data, *how* involvement in community organisations contributes to overcoming the kinds of oppressions, humiliations and sufferings that concern people's sense of well-being, esteem and recognition are strong and complex themes. This section explores the practices in these lively relations of becoming, the engagements made and remade that contribute to and convey mutual respect. The practice-based topology casts respect as an expressive performance. To convey respect entails finding the words, the gestures, the layout of the physical space that makes respect felt and persuasive (Sennett, 2003). The Southern Youth and Family Services worker who verbally challenges the behaviour of a homeless young person without turning them off; the Interchange Illawarra worker who, with a gesture, gently dissuades the child with autism not to jump down onto the tracks to see why the train is late; the West Street counsellor who negotiates to sit side-by-side facing the door with the client who is feeling uncomfortable and trapped sitting face-to-face – all perform respect.

In this section I describe some of the specific iterative practices enacted in the ongoing performance of recognition and respect. First, practising respect and collaboration in asymmetrical power relations. Second, the fluidity of status boundaries between workers, service participants, volunteers and management committee members.

Practising respect and collaboration in asymmetrical power relations

The big question in Sennett's book is how might people "express respect so as to reach across the boundaries of inequality" (2003: 208)? In all the community organisations that participated in this study, both service participants and workers stress the importance of *relationships* in facilitating service participants'

struggles over recognition. Respect here is no ethical abstraction nor is it simply an intrinsic quality. The ongoing practices of respect and response are only possible within co-shaping relationships. Respect, caring for, response and response-ability; "these mundane prosaic things are the result of having truck with each other" (Haraway, 2008: 36). Both community organisation practitioners and service participants try, in sometimes stumbling gestures, to enact answers to Sennett's question of enacting respect across the gulf of inequality.

Indeed, throughout the fieldwork data service participants overwhelmingly experienced their connections with workers as authentic, respectful and often compared them to the disrespect and negative judgements they had experienced with government bureaucracies and in other spheres of their lives. For example, during observations at Southern Youth and Family Services I noted:

> All of the young women had a close relationship with Diana, the mid-wife who had worked at the service for many years. One young woman explained that she had lost her baby boy at 16 weeks the year before and that Diana was the only person she felt she could talk too. She said: "it's really personal here, they really listen to what you want". Another young women sitting at the table agreed, saying of Diana: "She's awesome" (SYFS, 15/6/2007: 3).

This experience contrasts with some of the young people's experience of their Job Network provider.[84] A young woman commented: "You feel like a number- they don't listen" (SYFS, 19/6/2007: 4). The importance of relationships in creating possibilities for experiencing trust and respect is confirmed in fieldnotes of observations of the Southern Youth and Family Services crisis refuge workers' practices:

> During the morning it was clear that the young people really trusted the workers. The workers in their body language, in their use of humour and in the way they 'held' or came from a very non-loaded emotional response themselves, contributed to an atmosphere where the young people felt free to 'be themselves', and were willing to take the challenges coming from the workers, over their use of language or their behaviour (SYFS, 13/4/2007: 2).

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[84] Job network providers are subcontracted by the Australian Federal Government to deliver labour market services to unemployed people in Australia. The providers are a combination of large not-for-profit organisations and for-profit organisations.

For service participants, workers' warmth, authenticity, respect, passion and care are strong contributors to the depth of connection they felt with workers. In the following conversation Simona and Helena, two participants in the Multicultural Women's Network, discuss their relationship with Trish, the paid co-ordinator of the group:

Simona: Sometimes its Trish's job how to draw the line and she treats women like a friend…

Helena: Like they're queen.

Simona: … not, she not just put her… "I'm working and you all will listen to me"… [Over speaking]

Helena: As an equal.

Simona: Yes, that's what I was going to say.

Helena: Yes, now there's only one. She became to inside of each one of us. She understand each one of us. If we say one word she knows what we mean. That's how we make this (MWN, 30/5/2007: 22-23).

Here although the participants recognise the power imbalance in the relationship between the co-ordinator and themselves, they feel deeply understood, listened to and treated not just as equals, as friends, but as *queens*. There is a sense of inseparability and entanglement *she became to inside of each one of us*. They attribute the achievements of the group to the quality of these relationships, the mutual liking and valuing. The importance of liking, respecting and developing a personal connection with service participants was also evident in workers' accounts:

James: And I suppose you wouldn't want to work in a women's refuge if you didn't like women. You wouldn't work in a disability setting if you didn't like people with disabilities.

Wendy: It is very respectful, yes.

Sam: That is why it is important to have that personal connection stuff.

Jan: There is a whole lot that goes on beyond it. It is not bits of information and just matching bits of information to families. It is about having a relationship with them and knowing what is going on in their families. Also I guess it is knowing what is happening in other services and what they can actually do and what they can't do. You are not going to get that out of a directory or a computer system (Interchange, 12/6/2007: 31).

In this conversation the Interchange Illawarra workers link respect, personal connections and actual liking of the people with whom they work in their discussion of relationships as the core process through which disability workers co-generate services and activities to meet the particular needs of people. Jan argues that having access to *bits of information* is not enough to ensure 'good'

practise. She argues that situated local knowledge of both the changing circumstances of families and services repeatedly produced through direct encounters and indwelling is crucial and simply cannot be attained through *a computer system*.

Alongside this valuing of personal connections, at all sites in this study, most practitioners have an acute sensitivity to working in *asymmetrical power relations*. There is a recognition that whenever people are assigned a socially sanctioned role which entitles them to assess, assist, treat or act on behalf of others power relations are generated (Bird, 2004). Sharon, one of the West Street workers, emphasises the importance of negotiation and collaboration within multiple and complex power relations.

> Sharon: For me I still see how you negotiate a power relationship and how you work collaboratively as two kinds of really fundamental parts of our practices. I think they are of particular value when you're working with someone who's had experiences of being totally disempowered through an abusive situation. So they become really critical skills because otherwise you're so easily invited into pathologising the person and it becomes their fault as well in a whole range of very subtle and awful ways (WS, 10/4/2007: 4).

Sharon's comment illustrates that encouraging 'power to' rather than emphasising 'power over' is seen as a critical practitioner skill in respectful but always asymmetrical relations with service participants (Thompson & McHugh, 1990). In observations of the West Street workers providing training to other local counsellors in relation to working with the effects of childhood sexual assault the same emphasis on constant negotiation and creating collaborative relations is evident:

> Claire and Liz created a space, where people participated actively and openly. They created a sense of producing it together, of co-creating. While not denying their expertise, they actively worked to give 'power to'. There was a strong ethic of collaboration evident, a respectful conversational space, sharing power, sharing facilitation, joint leadership and sharing morning tea responsibilities (WS, 2/5/2007: 6-7).

The practices that enact negotiation and collaboration in power relations are well illustrated in the following dialogue taken from a transcript of a supervision consultation between Susan and Jaq. Susan is experiencing "a weird shaky feeling" in the midst of the session while talking about receiving attention from boys:

Jaq:	Okay, can you put words to that effect; can you put words to that weird feeling?
Susan:	Words to the weird feeling.
Jaq:	Yes.
Susan:	Yes. Yes, I feel a bit shaken…
Jaq:	So a little bit shaky?
Susan:	Yes. Yes, that's right.
Jaq:	And is that shakiness, does it feel scary, does it feel…?
Susan:	It feels like… yes, sort of unfamiliar
Jaq:	Just unfamiliar?
Susan:	Yes. Let's talk about something else.
Jaq:	Okay. So if we talk about something else that will shift the shaky feeling, do you think?
Susan:	I think so.
Jaq:	Yes, and has that happened in the past when…
Susan:	Yes, I feel that regularly.
Jaq:	Okay so if you move… you move the mind somewhere else then the shaky feeling goes away?
Susan:	M'mm.
Jaq:	Is that right?
Susan:	Because I was starting to remember things.
Jaq:	Okay, so it's the memories that bring the shaky feeling?
Susan:	Yes.
Jaq:	Are we okay at the moment?
Susan:	Yes.
Jaq:	Okay, so it's the memories. So as soon as the memories come, they begin, then the shaky feeling happens?
Susan:	Yes.
Jaq:	And then one of the strategies you use is to move away from talking about that, is that right?
Susan:	M'mm.
Jaq:	How are we doing now?
Susan:	Good.
Jaq:	Are you all right?
Susan:	Yes.
Jaq:	Okay do you think we've managed to move away enough?
Susan:	Yes. Yes (WS, 27/3/2007: 12).

Here respect, collaboration and negotiation in power relations are enacted through relational, iterative practices. These practices include privileging the woman's expertise and experience – *What can we do, do you think, to reduce that feeling at the moment, what can we do?* The use of *we* in this question demonstrates

the worker adopting the stance of being a curious co-participant in an exploratory process rather than that of an objective observer. The segment of conversation illustrates the worker being attentive to what is going on in the present moment and slowing down the pace. For example she asks: *Are we okay at the moment? Are you all right?* She negotiates the pace with Susan – *Okay, do you think we've managed to move away enough?* She constantly checks they have a consensus of meaning – *Okay so you if you move… you move the mind somewhere else then the shaky feeling goes away?*

Deliberately not pathologising and not labelling but instead treating people as human beings with expertise, not as problems, is evident at all sites. This approach is supported by knowing-in-practice that we are all vulnerable to risk and an acknowledgement of a shared humanity with intra-connected people (Porter, 2006).

> Cheryl: It's about equality, like I'm not any different to them and that's the way I work, in that I am working and I'm probably in a better place than them but that could all change. See, and that's where I work from because you just don't know what's going to happen tomorrow and that could be me there next week or next month or next year or whatever. So that's the way I work and that's what keeps me humble (WCC, 23/5/2007: 5).

The acknowledgement that we are all vulnerable to risk assists Cheryl practice in ways that eliminates a sense of 'power over' and conveys humility and respect. However, there are no guarantees. Workers know in practice that recognising we are all vulnerable to risk and working collaboratively within asymmetrical power relations will not always prevent them unwittingly imposing ideas and practices on others:

> Liz: If you've got an intention around helping somebody to feel agency. I mean having an intention to help people feel agency is very different from actually helping somebody to feel agency.
>
> Sharon: Your intentions don't always match (WS, 10/4/2007: 16).

Here the West Street workers discuss the potential gap between their intention of enacting respectful relations and what unfolds while practising in the moment. Cheryl too acknowledges that respectful practice is not something you ever attain, but has to be enacted and negotiated in every encounter:

> Cheryl: Sometimes you do it well and sometimes you don't do it so well, that's a learning experience. That's actually a really important part of it as well; that sometimes the worker might learn something or the person who's participating in things might be

able to say I would've thought it would have been better if this had happened (sensemaking discussion, 1/9/2008: 13).

By repeatedly negotiating the implications and effects of asymmetrical power relations within every relationship both Cheryl, the community worker, and Liz and Sharon, the counsellors, are acknowledging in practice there can be no definitive position on enfolded cultural, gender and class relations.

Much of the literature, including that supporting the notion of 'working alliance' (Cortis, 2006; Howgego, et al., 2003; Maidment, 2006) that discusses social service professional/client relations, places primary responsibility for building trust, bonding and collaboration in those relationships with the social service professionals. Whilst this literature explores the 'vertical' relationships between worker-clients, it largely overlooks the 'horizontal' relationships between service participants themselves. Interestingly, in most of the community organisations that participated in this study creating possibilities for experiencing respect and recognition in relationships was seen as a joint responsibility that included service participants. The contributions of service participants were clearly acknowledged in worker accounts. In the following transcript Trish, the co-ordinator of the Multicultural Women's Network, casts the relations between group members as a practice and as an ethical call.

> Trish: So it is creating an ethical context, about encouraging a practice around how we relate to each other… Some of the women I rely on, because they really practise that ethic and encourage that ethic in other women. Helena is a fantastic example of that. I've learnt – in terms of how she works with other women, at that level… If I were to say what is the main thing that gets spoken about, after we've all had a session together, it's the relationships. How people are negotiating that at different times. Because that is a really strong thing that keeps the group going, but also creates these challenges and disturbances (MWN, 19/6/2007: 19-20).

Trish's talk illustrates the work of building relations of respect that reach across cultural differences, are practices that are made and re-made in encounters with one another and require the collective reflexive practices of the group members. In viewing respect as a collective performance, the Multicultural Women's Network places emphasis on the horizontal relationships between peers. The possibilities and the impossibilities for respect and recognition are constantly

becoming 'for another first time'.[85] Here respect is not an outcome, an achievement, but a moment-by-moment process that requires co-presence. It is a relational process that is experienced in and through practices.

Attention to the relations between the people who use the services and creating opportunities for people to participate and give back are distinguishing features of local community organisations' practices of mutual respect and recognition. Service participants in this study experience their contributions as being genuinely needed. For example, the young people at Southern Youth and Family Services felt that their expertise on homelessness was recognised and some of them participate as representatives of the organisation in government consultations and in the media. One of the participants in the men's group explained:

> Bill   … so that rather than being needy, we are actually being needed in the community (WCC, 27/5/2007: 2).

In contrast, Sennett discussing the state bureaucracy-managed housing project in Chicago where he grew up argues:

> The other problem was that the project denied people control over their own lives. They were rendered spectators to their own needs, mere consumers of care provided to them. It was here that they experienced that peculiar lack of respect which consists of not being seen, not being accounted as full human beings (Sennett, 2003: 13).

Community organisations know in practice that reciprocal exchange combined with an acknowledgement of working in asymmetrical power relations create possibilities for mutual respect and a sense of belonging. This resonates with Mauss's (1990) work in his book *The Gift.* He argues that reciprocal exchange, when people's resources are unequal and the exchanges asymmetrical, creates an expressive bond between them and knits them together in groups.

Fluidity of boundaries

Engaging collaboratively, practising mutual respect and privileging the expertise of service participants are also entangled with another practice evident in all of the sites in this study: *deliberately blurring and creating fluid*

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[85] For another first time is Garfinkels (1967) phrase.

boundaries between, workers, service participants and management committee members. In observations at the Warrawong Community Centre, I noted:

> The [community kitchen and lunch] volunteers are all people from the local area. There are no clear distinctions between people who use the service, participate in the community centre, volunteer and work in the Centre… Everyone seems to 'muck in' together to get things done (WCC, 24/4/2007: 3).

Indeed many of the workers in both observations and discussions identify as being *of* the community rather than providing services *to* or *for* the community.

> Cheryl: I think because of the staff and the volunteers because the volunteers are from this community and they are also disadvantaged people… They're known so the people that are accessing the lunch, eating the lunch they feel comfortable. They don't feel judged by the staff and I think elsewhere, this is just my opinion, they might see them as different from these people, maybe above these people, I don't know, but different let's say. They're from different backgrounds, a different life (WCC, 23/5/2007: 8).

Here Cheryl suggests being of the community and coming from similar backgrounds creates possibilities for overcoming disrespect and judgements that participants experience in other spheres of life. Cheryl argues the congruence in backgrounds enables participation on an equal footing and the possibility of experiencing an easy comfort.

The fluidity of boundaries also contributes to creating a friendly, warm feel in the offices of Interchange Illawarra. One of the observations at Interchange Illawarra was conducted on a day when the peer support program for people with an intellectual disability was happening in the buildings and outdoor living space behind the office:

> Participants from the peer support program come and go from the workers offices, chatting, hugging, and borrowing things like sticky tape. The whole space is available to all. Sam [manager] explained, "People are not allowed to interrupt while you're on the phone, or if you're having a private conversation with a family, but everyone comes and goes from our offices". All of the interactions we observed had a respectful, warm friendly feel. It was clear that all the workers had great skills in maintaining an informal, safe and open environment, while being able to get the day to day demands of their jobs done, despite 'interruptions' (Interchange, 1/5/1007: 4-5).

Both the flexibility and informality of the office space, and the close physical exchanges between the workers and the service participants, convey a sense of connection unparalleled by purely verbal exchanges. At Interchange Illawarra, the use of touch and the permeability of the office space are powerful means for

communicating as 'equals' and inviting a sense of ownership over the physical and relational spaces for service participants. Such practices contribute to Interchange's extraordinary capability of enacting respect across the boundaries of dependency and unavoidable inequalities.

The significance of the makeup of the material space was also an important consideration for workers at Warrawong Community Centre:

> Cheryl explained that they were going to get a small gate for the office. She talks with people in the office but because the door is open other people just walk right in, which is sometimes frightening for the other worker and not good for service participant confidentiality. They suggested to council [the landlord] to cut the door in half but council wouldn't pay for it and told the workers to just close the door. But Cheryl felt it would look like too much of a barrier, so they have decided to pay for a small gate to partition off a bit of the office, a symbol rather than an actual barrier (WCC, 24/4/2007: 2).

Here the office door is a material marker of the status boundary between the workers and the people who use the community centre. Cheryl takes great care in deciding how the status boundary will be materialised, wanting to create a respectful space in terms of confidentiality and safety but also recognising the importance in keeping the status boundaries permeable.

The West Street Centre workers too deliberately create processes that blur the status boundaries between the counsellors, the women who use the service and the management committee members. They create processes where service participants are invited as experts or 'consultants' to shape the direction of the practices and activities of the service. At the same time, the workers recognise the complexity involved in processes that deliberately disrupt power relations and status boundaries. In their documentation of these processes, they explain:

> We have also become much more aware of the complex and at times contradictory dilemma of committing to a process where we ask those that we work with to position themselves as our consultants. This is not necessarily the easiest path to tread, as it has so far invited us to ask even more questions of ourselves, rather than just coming up with neat answers. Much of the feedback we are receiving has been very positive and this encourages us to continue to work in this way (WS documentation, 2007: 18).

A related practice that creates fluidity in the boundaries between paid workers and services participants is *employing workers from the same class, race, gender or*

similar life experience. This practice was evident at all sites. The West Street centre employs some counsellors who have experienced sexual assault in their childhood. Some youth workers from Southern Youth and Family Services have experienced homelessness. The Multicultural Women's Network employs people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Interchange Illawarra employs people with a disability. For example during observations at Interchange Illawarra, I noted:

> Mario [team leader] explained to us that he had a disability and this helped him relate well to everyone and increased the sense of 'being a family' (Interchange, 1/5/2007: 3).

They also employ parents who have a child with a disability:

> Jan explained that the experience that best equips her to do her job is having a child with a disability. "Don't get me wrong, I have the credentials but it's having a child with a disability". She explained that she had two children with spina bifida, one died at 18 months and one lived. This experience and the depth of knowing it gives her, is really important to the way she works with families (Interchange, 1/5/2007: 5).

Employing workers with similar life experiences to the service participants involves a deep respect for situated, experiential knowing and knowing that although much experience can be shared, there will always be experience that cannot. This is confirmed during a reflective discussion with the Interchange Illawarra workers, when Sam comments on this employment practice:

> Sam: I actually think that it is back to our value base about acknowledging families and that those people that are living it should be the ones who direct us in the way in which we provide the support. So I think that if we have that belief about families, we obviously have to have that belief about our colleagues who have also walked it or lived the experience of having a son or daughter with a disability (Interchange, 12/6/2007: 7-8).

Such employment practices increase opportunities for service participants to identify with and develop strong connections with workers. Workers sometimes become powerful role models of what might become possible. These employment practices thereby contribute to service participants' experiences of recognition and respect.

Practices of representation and voice

In observations and in discussions with workers and service participants, multiple practices of representation and participation were evident in all sites. In this section I discuss some of the knowing-in-practice involved in supporting

struggles over representation and voice. First, advocacy, standing alongside, lobbying and facilitating rights. Second, the practices of community management that constitutes the distinctive way of organising in locally-based community organisations. Finally, I explore the co-emergence of practices of representation and belonging in the performance of the Southern Youth and Family Services Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Practices of representation that constitute what Fraser call the "third *political*[86] dimension of social justice, alongside the (economic) dimension of redistribution and the (cultural) dimension of recognition" (Fraser & Naples, 2004: 1117) are well illustrated in Finessa's story recounted by one of the community practitioners:

> Jaana: I always remember one of our board members Finessa, who got involved in our centre. Finessa couldn't read or write she was illiterate and got involved in our centre, and when we asked her to come on the board she said: "I've got nothing to contribute". She joined the board and got involved. She lived in Warrawong and got involved when they closed down the Centrelink office in Warrawong. She got involved in the action campaign to get the Centrelink office back. From that she went on to represent people living in poverty at the ACOSS, the Australian Council of Social Services conference in Adelaide. So, she flew to Adelaide and presented and she was part of policy making. From a person who couldn't read or write, she became part of policy making. She spoke in terms of "because they've closed down the Centrelink offices that's going to cost me four loaves of bread to get to Wollongong on the bus, so that's four loaves of bread I won't be able to feed my children" and people took notice of that sort of stuff (sensemaking discussion, 1/9/2008: 20).[87]

Finessa's story illustrates multiple aspects of representation, participation and activism threaded through involvement with locally-based community organisations. The ways of organising at the community centre enabled Finessa to play an active role in shaping the work of the centre as a member of the board of management representing the members of the organisation. This experience challenged her sense of disempowerment – *I've got nothing to contribute*. Her involvement facilitated her development of the leadership skills, self-confidence and understandings to actively campaign to reopen the

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[86] Emphasis in the original.
[87] In this transcript and in the thesis Finessa's actual name is used. Finessa died not long after the experiences described in the transcript, so in honour of her work and life, the community organisation prefers her real name be used.

Centrelink office (the government agency responsible for income support payments in Australia). At the community centre, her expertise that was born of experience, her 'insider expertise' (Richardson & Le Grand, 2002) was valued. The locally-based community organisation connected Finessa to a national anti-poverty campaign, where her voice made a contribution in the policy-making process. Lister argues:

> The right of participation represents an important means of recognising the dignity of people living in poverty. It is saying that their voices count; that they have something important to contribute to public policy making… Such recognition is crucial to counteracting the disrespect with which many people in poverty feel they are treated by the wider society (Lister, 2007a: 440).

The locally-based community organisation through a range of ongoing practices is able to support local people, like Finessa, to overcome the many and intra-connected barriers that make participation in invited policy-making spaces difficult. These practices include the modest redistribution practices that assist in the struggle for day-to-day survival, such as meeting the financial costs involved in systems advocacy efforts and enabling the purchase of appropriate clothes. These micro-practices intra-act with recognition practices that foster self-respect, esteem, confidence and voice. The local community organisation also enables access to the advocacy and lobbying 'tools of the trade' such as faxes, computers, Internet access, jargon-busting glossaries and political-contacts databases.

Advocating, standing alongside, lobbying and pursuing rights

Advocacy[88] carries multiple connotations. Code's description encompasses the advocacy practices in everyday working life evident in the community organisations participating this study:

> it has to do with defending or espousing a cause by arguing in its favour; speaking on behalf of, supporting, vindicating, recommending someone, some project, some policy, in respect to a particular issue or point of view; representing someone/some group in order to counter patterns of silencing, discounting, incredulity, and other egregious harms. It can take

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[88] Advocacy was initially used in a legal context. Advocate: "One who pleads the cause of any one in a court of justice". [Then later it was used more generally] "to argue in favour of; to recommend publicly" (Onions, [1944] 1965a: 1767).

place in individual and communal practices: someone may advocate on her own behalf or on behalf of (an)other person(s), may advocate in favour of the significance, cogency, validity, credibility of another person's testimony, of the testimony of several people, a group, institution, or society (Code, 2006: 165).

This definition emphasises both systemic advocacy which aims to change the institutional conditions that contribute to producing the problem or harm and individual advocacy that concentrates on "ameliorating its effects in a particular case" (Onyx, et al., 2008: 633). Despite the diversity in the community organisations participating in our study, they all practice advocacy and lobbying in facilitating both individual and collective struggles over social justice. For example, Cheryl, the community worker at the Warrawong Community Centre, views individual advocacy as a core part of her work:

> Cheryl: The main thing I do is provide support, information, referral, advocacy for people. Most of it is one-on-one clients coming in and that can vary from drug and alcohol information, Centrelink, mental health, legal, heaps of things (WCC, 23/5/2007: 1).

This emphasis on advocacy is confirmed in Nicole's account of the first time she walked through the door of the Warrawong Community Centre. Although she doesn't explicitly use the word advocacy, it is clearly described in her experience as a service participant:

> Nicole: I arrived at Warrawong Community Centre with no home and a dog after leaving a violent situation. Before I walked out [of the Centre] the same day I had a full belly, yoghurt for later, a list of other services in the area and I had already submitted a priority housing application, thanks to the help from Cheryl and Thelma. Two days later my dog and I had a public housing flat, I still had a full belly and more yoghurt for later. I've since been attending the community lunch four days a week and have now become a member of the Warrawong Community Lunch Steering Committee (WCC, 24/5/2007: 1).

Here advocacy practices are entangled with other dimensions of practising social justice, meeting the bodily needs for food and shelter, and enabling Nicole to give back and genuinely participate in the running of the community lunch. As Nicole points out these practices of social justice also included her companion dog and were not confined to the human.

The intra-connections between: the material practices of meeting bodily need; practices of care; recognising the systemic/structural dimension to the emergence of the young person's situation; and representation practices are

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evident in the CEO's comments about the Southern Youth and Family Services approach to advocacy:

> Julia: In terms of the individual advocacy I think we also have a view that we – our job is to help them be able to stand up for themselves and you can only be doing that if you're getting your needs and basic requirements met. So you have to look after them and be kind to them. You can only learn in an environment where you're supported and encouraged and looked after. And also you know, we don't think lots of mainstream parts of society are particularly youth-friendly. So sometimes disputes at the Centrelink office where the kid's telling the Centrelink person to 'get fucked' or they're stomping out of the casualty ward because they're not being seen quick enough; all those things we try and teach them about how to manage that so they're not going to miss out. Because at the end of the day that sort of behaviour does make you miss out on things. But we also want to teach the Centrelink worker and the casualty ward how to respond differently (SYFS, 12/9/2007: 26).

In Julia's comment *our job is to help them be able to stand up for themselves* we see the ambivalent relationship with advocacy practices in situations, where the advocate speaks for the other that was evident in many workers' accounts. For the organisations in our study, advocacy is an uneasy delicate practice. The politics of advocacy are highly contested in the community services field of practices. Deleuze & Foucault warn of the "indignity of speaking for others" and Foucault argues that when those usually spoken for and about by others begin to speak for themselves, they produce a "counter discourse", that constitutes a practical engagement in political struggles (Deleuze & Foucault, 1977: 209).

The indignity of being spoken for and the power of creating a space where the formerly voiceless might begin to speak are central to the knowing-in-practice of the Multicultural Women's Network. Maria, a participant and member of the network's planning group comments:

> Maria: Everybody willing to open their mouth and finally, you know, feel that we have a right to speak out and other people will listen to us. This is my history; this is what has happened to me (MWN, 17/4/2007: 3).

Here we see the power of co-creating a 'counter discourse' of speaking for themselves. Trish, the co-ordinator of the group talks about the humiliations and sufferings of not being able to speak for oneself:

> Trish: Painful memories about feeling terribly humiliated to even attempt to try to speak English. They have painful stories about their experiences of speaking, of just speaking. I think they

surprise themselves now when they think back to that – you know. Yet it's there, I know with some of the women, this intense anger and frustration about not being able to speak for so long (MWN, 19/6/2007: 6).

The preference for practising 'standing alongside' as an advocate rather than speaking for/on behalf of is evident in fieldnotes of a planning meeting of the Multicultural Women's Network. The community workers, Flavia, Isabelle and Helen, discuss problematic changes to Centrelink's multi-lingual help line:

> Isabelle talked about the Centrelink's multi-lingual help line. Flavia said she uses it all the time. She explained how she tells people how to use the line, "to listen for the word language and then to say Italian". Isabelle said yes, she does the same. "But now when the person says 'Portuguese', a recorded message says, leave your number and the Portuguese interpreter will ring back within three hours". Isabelle explained that the help line says this in English, so the elderly Portuguese just hang up, as they don't understand the message. Helen suggested "It's better if you have the person in the room with you, so that they can do it themselves but are not too far out of their comfort zone" (MWN, 17/4/2007: 2).

Helen, Flavia and Isabelle all struggle to intra-act respectfully in relations among the elderly non-English speaking immigrant, the computerised telephone help line and the Centrelink bureaucracy. Collectively they are advocating for systemic change in how Centrelink via the telephone information infrastructure communicates with people whose preferred language is not English.

The multiple positions of community organisation workers is captured well by Code (2008) in her argument that the advocate intra-acts in-between and in-among. Advocacy involves "negotiating between habitats involving different areas or kinds of knowing and knowledge" (Rooney, 2008: 173). The workers in-between and in-among positions enable co-participation in the advocacy process, an opportunity for the person to learn, to practice *with* the community practitioner:

> Jayne: It's like a rehearsal for which parts of your story are essential and relevant to tell and which are not. People don't often actually have a feel for that. The other thing is, we're [community workers] not the expert either. So say I'm looking at housing department guidelines, I'd be saying, gosh this is complicated, that's actually very empowering because I don't know the answer. I don't know it's an F15 form and you multiply it by five. … By working through it with someone who doesn't know the system, we know it better than they do, but we don't actually really understand all the bits and pieces, so by actually by being

not perfect and not efficient we actually – that's really important. It's important because I'm finding it hard too, but we can work through the process together (sensemaking discussion, 1/9/2008: 9).

Jayne's comments that workers in community organisations practising advocacy are *not experts* is reflected in all the community organisations participating in this study. They do not have the detailed knowledge of processes and procedures involved in working in bureaucracies such as the Housing NSW, the mental health system or Centrelink nor are they employed to provide expert advice and advocacy in a specialist area like a lawyer. Arguably, their in-between/in-among, non-expert position enables the possibility for service participants to practise and to co-produce successful interactions with the institutions involved in governing their lives.

Community management

Ways of organising in locally-based community organisations are distinctive. Perhaps the critical distinguishing feature is their local governance. The locally-based community organisations participating in this study are community-managed by democratically elected management committees. The management committee is elected by the membership of the organisation. This way of organising means that it is by no means unusual for a service participant to become a member of the board of management of the organisation. Community management generates the possibility that decisions can take place in the presence of those who will bear their consequences. Williams and Onyx argue:

> There are some distinctive characteristics about these community organisations that enable them to act in ways that larger, more bureaucratic organisations can't match. They are likely to have their ears to the ground in ways few organisations do. They hear distress and name it before others are even aware there is a problem. They can, and often do, mobilise an instant response to that issue by way of emergency support, advocacy, information, preparing a submission to government or establishing a service on a volunteer basis (Williams & Onyx, 2002).

I would argue that this is a description of community organisations at their best. Certainly, during my observations of the practices of the organisations in this study, I have witnessed them promote and practice, trust, support, reciprocity, mutual respect, collective action and good fun. However, the ways of organising that grant these organisations the freedom to practice in a

passionate, responsive, inclusive and genuinely participative manner also make community organisations vulnerable, at their worst, to closing ranks, turning inward, insisting people look and speak the 'right' way and subjecting members and outsiders to 'power over' relations.

Nevertheless, the distinctive local governance of community organisations affords a particular opportunity to build local people's leadership and give people a greater sense of control over their lives and future. Developing a greater sense of agency and control over one's life was evident in Finessa's story at the beginning of the chapter. These features are also illustrated in Sam's description of the organisational hierarchy and structure of Interchange Illawarra:

> Sam: If you look at it from an organisational flow chart perspective, we actually have all of our consumers and families at the top and then we have the management committee drawn from this group. The management committee are our overseeing body. Then there is me [the manager] and the other paid workers and volunteers (Interchange, 12/6/2007: 3).

Sam's description contrasts to other common ways of organising such as government bureaucracies, large non-government organisations, corporations and small businesses. Not only are the people with a disability and their families seen as an integral part of the structure of Interchange Illawarra, they *are at the top* of the organisational chart.

Intra-action: Practices of representation and belonging at the SYFS AGM

Most of the organisations participating in this study are incorporated associations. One of the legal requirements involved in being an incorporated association is holding an Annual General Meeting (AGM). At the AGM the activities of the organisation and an audit of the organisation's financial position are presented to the members of the association and the board or management committee are elected for the following financial year. During observations at Southern Youth and Family Services, I commented to the workers in a reflective discussion that I was intrigued and surprised that young people seemed genuinely excited about attending the up-coming AGM. During her speech at the AGM, the CEO reflected on our discussion:

> Two weeks ago staff at SYFS had a conversation with two researchers from a project, which is being done in partnership with the Illawarra Forum, the University of Sydney and the University of Western Sydney. It is looking at knowledge and practice in the community sector. The researchers had been

observing practice in a number of organisations and we are one of the sites. They talked to young people and staff, and observed what was happening routinely in services. Many aspects and issues were covered. One of the observations made me think and I want to just mention it briefly. One of the researchers said she was intrigued by the notion that so many people and especially clients would come to an AGM. We agreed it is funny as most people groan when AGM season comes around. SYFS has to have one, it's a requirement and it's a way to be publicly accountable, so if you have to have one, we say, turn it into something, and have a party. So we have entertainment and food and we give out gifts. So that's part of the reason why some come. But there are other reasons and they are more important. For the young people it's a way to stay connected. They come back and for some, they see friends they met at a time in their life when things were tough, and they feel very close to the people they met then. They bring their friends, their new partners, their kids and it's a bit like I saying, I still want to be a part of this but I am independent now, I am going okay now. It's a regular event and a large number of young people who have departed the Service ring up and say when is the AGM and when is the Christmas Party. They come back, and look at the photos, and often have a laugh, and say, "remember when…", so maybe it's not so odd. It's about belonging, its about ownership, its about engaging with people, its about feeling safe, its about history, its about familiarity, its about who helps out in tough times and its about who and what can we rely on (SYFS/AGM, 2007: 2).

My observations at the AGM confirm the CEO's account. For the young people and ex-residents the occasion resembled a re-union. At Southern Youth and Family Services the practices of formal legal representation and accountability are entangled with celebrations of belonging. Indeed Southern Youth and Family Services have transformed the AGM into a ritual of belonging that orients staff, young people and ex-residents to one another. In the performance of the AGM they speak together.

This practice also enables the AGM to become a powerful example of practising representation. Several state ministers and members of parliament attended the AGM. However, it was not just the organisation that gets to represent itself to those in positions of power. Young people also have opportunities to lobby and advocate for themselves at these occasions as Collin, one of the service managers explained:

Collin: We had an example just recently where a young boy actually met the Minister and he was sitting down talking to him and during the conversation this young, gay boy was talking about the problems he was experiencing through the education system. The Minister rang one of his mates on his mobile phone and was talking to him and then he gave it to the kid to talk to on his personal phone. The connection was formed and he is going to get some support through his problems and it was just an amazing experience that happened so naturally. And that'll linger on this

kid's mind for the rest of his life I reckon. He actually spoke to the Minister and the Minister actually took notice and did something (SYFS, 12/9/2007: 64).

Here we see the experiences of respect and recognition co-emerging with practices of representation. Local governance combined with the explicit advocacy role of locally-based community organisations supports robust and deliberative democracy (Hamilton & Maddison, 2007; Onyx, et al., 2008; Staples, 2007). For example, organisations such as Southern Youth and Family Services provide young people with the opportunity to learn and participate in political action and to ensure that their voices are represented in the policy process (Onyx, et al., 2008).

Practices of redistribution and distributive justice

All of the organisations in this study, especially Southern Youth and Family Services, Interchange Illawarra and the Warrawong Community Centre, engage in practices and provide services and programs that contribute towards remedying what Fraser (1997) terms distributive injustices.[89] These injustices are socio-economic in character and rooted in the political-economic organisation of society. Instances of such injustices include "exploitation, poverty, economic marginalisation and deprivation" (Fraser, 1997: 13). Many of the service participants in this study experience poverty, unemployment and homelessness. These harms clearly fit within Fraser's paradigm of redistribution. There is an extraordinarily wide range of practices aimed at remedying these harms evident in this study and it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss them all. Therefore in the following section, I will briefly discuss the aspects of redistributive justice that featured most strongly in observations of practice and in discussions with service participants and workers. First, material and socio-economic resources such as housing, food, clothing and money, education, and employment and second, access to activities and opportunities. Finally, I will use the example of the community lunch at the Warrawong Community Centre to interrogate how practices of distributive justice are entangled with practices of recognition, respect,

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[89] Of course, it would not be legitimate to expect locally-based community organisations to effect redistribution of wealth on a large scale as there are many other apparatuses and configurations of power active in the production of inequality in the region. However, Barad's work reminds me, the intra-actions of community organisations do open up possibilities for changes in the topology and dynamics of power and hence they do participate in what will be and be possible (Barad, 2007).

representation and belonging on the kitchen and dining room floor of the community centre.

Material and socio-economic resources

At all sites, service participants informally pool and share material resources amongst themselves. In some sites, such as Southern Youth and Family Services and Interchange Illawarra, formal distribution plays a central role in the practices of the organisations. For example, between 2007 and 2008 Southern Youth and Family Services provided short and medium term housing to 189 young people and provided support services to 2872 young people (SYFS documentation, 2008: 9). Their non-residential services such as the health service (CHAIN) provides breakfast, hot shower facilities, laundry and dryer facilities, vouchers for food, clothing for children, prescriptions and haircuts to homeless and 'at risk' young people. CHAIN also operates free dental, sexual health and antenatal clinics (SYFS documentation, 2007: 1). Fieldnotes from visits and observations at the SYFS health service clearly illustrate the participants' recognition of the material resources they access and importance in their 'growing up', subsequently becoming parents:

> The young women from the Yoga class, joined by a couple of other young women sat around the dining table, eating a hot lunch supplied by the service. One of the young women commented: "CHAIN is my second home". She said she had been coming to CHAIN since she was 15 and she is now pregnant with her second child and is 23. She talked about how she had used the dentist at CHAIN, how she had used the breakfast, kitchen and laundry when she was younger. She supplies her sexually active younger relatives with free condoms from CHAIN and passes on lots of sexual health information to them that she has picked up through her involvement with the service over the years (SYFS, 15/6/2007: 3).

Interchange Illawarra, a respite service for families with a child who has a disability, have a very flexible approach to meeting the material needs of their service participants. The families that use the service stress that having resources made available to them in such a flexible and responsive way makes an enormous difference to their lives. The conversation between Sam and Jan, two of the workers at Interchange Illawarra, illustrates both the types of material resources families access and the organisation's approach to provision:

> Sam: So I think some of that stuff – and it is the feedback that we get [from families] is really important. The workers will come back and say; oh they could just do with a one off something – you know, that one hit. Whether it is to buy nappies or whether it is to

> buy a new TV/ DVD or whether it is to fly nanna in or whether it is to buy, you know, something.

Jan: Screens for the window so the kids don't jump out the top windows.

Sam: A family we bought for very early on – this kid used to clear off because he had this obsession about being at the highest point. It was Jock wasn't it?

Jan: Yes.

Sam: We got a really high cubby house built so that he would actually be happy to stay in his yard because now he could climb to the highest point in his yard… And someone could have said from an occupational health and safety perspective, like how safe it is for this kid to be sitting up there? But when you weigh up the pros and cons, well how safe is it if you know he is going to run off anyway and find the highest point even if it across a three-lane highway. So that was a request from the parents to us – 'Look, when you say what would help, well if we had something really high in our place, he would stay with us'; and it seemed to work. (Interchange, 12/6/2007: 14).

At sites such as the Multicultural Women's Network, the Warrawong Community Centre and Southern Youth and Family Services, the participants describe how they learn new skills, participate in education and training, and in some cases obtain employment. For example, Southern Youth and Family Services provide a range of employment, education and training programs. As the CEO explains:

> Julia: We hold very dear the notion of the importance of mastery, being able to learn something, being able to do it, accomplishing something (SYFS, 2007: 1).

Three hundred and sixty one homeless or 'at risk' young people received individual and group work support in employment, education and training in 2007-2008. More than half of them began, maintained or returned to education, training or employment (SYFS, Annual report 2007/2008: 21-22). I noted the high demand, during observations at SYFS employment, education and training services:

> Margaret provides assistance to young people in relation to getting into courses. She helps them put their resume together and with job seeking skills. She also provides young people with study backpacks, pays for textbooks and for short courses that interest the young person (SYFS, 19/6/2007: 1).

They also deliver education and links to learning programs designed for young people aged between 13 and 19 years who are not currently in education to re-

engage young people with learning, education and training (SYFS fieldnotes, 19/6/2007: 3).

Employment outcomes at Warrawong, where unemployment in the Housing NSW bed sits opposite is 100% (WCC documentation) can be very hard to attain as Thelma's obvious disappointment attests:

> Thelma: We've had two volunteers that have actually moved on to employment and that was really good. We've trained something like 80 something volunteers and they're the only two out of it and I'm really pleased for them and everything else but I wish there was more of them that actually made that step out (WCC, 23/5/2007: 39).

However, at a site where many of the participants are elderly and not aspiring to join the workforce such as the Multicultural Women's Network, the excitement and challenge of learning new skills was palpable in all our observations of their practices and in participants' comments:

> Wanda: I learnt so many new things, new skills from this group. We learnt songs from different languages. We learnt different cultures, different backgrounds. Also we put stories together. Also, this group changed my life. It's given me more confidence, and I learn a little bit better English. It's good for my mental health instead of staying home being full of depression. I enjoy this group and I'm very happy to be here, and very happy to continue with this group (MWN, 29/6/2007: 5).

Here learning new skills, while not attached to employment aspirations produces many material benefits that are not merely economic.

Access to activities, affordable outings and new opportunities

At almost all of the sites, service participants identified how involvement with the community organisation facilitated access to opportunities, activities and experiences that they wouldn't otherwise have had often because of lack of finances or information.[90] For example, I visited the Southern Youth and Family Services crisis refuge the morning after they had been on a trip to the Sydney Royal Easter show:

> I sat around the dining room table with a couple of workers and some very tired young people. There was a young man of 13 and three young women all 16. The previous day they had a 20-hour trip going to the Easter show and back with a convoy of four mini buses. Despite being tired they were

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[90] The exception is the West St Centre where for confidentiality reasons I did not interview service participants receiving counselling services.

all talking about the trip to the Easter show, what they did, what they liked etc. They all seemed very enthusiastic and obviously had had a great day. A couple had never been to the Easter show before. They all spoke in detail about the actual amounts of money they were given. One young woman proudly said "it costs the at least $200 per kid". Collin (worker) explained, "We fund-raise for the young people to be able to go." Having this money spent on them, for something like the Easter show was clearly very important to all these residents… The young people sitting around the table talked about the day at the show for at least an hour and a half. The 13-year-old boy went to his bedroom and brought back things he'd bought to show us (SYFS fieldnotes, 13/4/2007: 1).

Later the same day, two of the experienced SYFS managers discussed the value of the young people getting access to activities like the Easter show. Interestingly, unlike the young people, they did not frame these activities as economic benefits, but as something that enables young people to feel valued and participate in the community like other young people:

Collin talked about how activities like the Easter show and the partnership that SYFS has with the Dragons [local football club], where the young people go to coaching clinics, get free tickets to the games, act as helpers when the Dragons have coaching clinics with younger children and get signed jerseys, balls etc are not considered very useful by funding bodies. Julie agreed with him and said, "They think we should spend our money on a counselling session for Dan [the 13yr old boy] but look at him this morning. He's relaxed and happy. Trips like the Easter show are really important… they might not be a casework service but they are really important". Kevin talked about how these sorts of activities "enable the young people to feel valued, feel part of something, feel like they are participating normally in the community" (SYFS fieldnotes, 13/4/2007: 4).

A participant in the Multicultural Women's Network, Maria described how she was isolated, didn't go anywhere and was lonely until she joined the group. Here she discusses her excitement over the activities and experiences she has gained through her involvement:

Maria: Then the most exciting thing we did, we did was the play called 'A Better Life'. It was for me an exciting thing. The first time we present the play all in Wollongong at Bridge theatre… then we travel to Canberra and Sydney to perform our play. And this was very exciting too, something I could never do… especially thank you to my travel companions without whose encouragement and transport I couldn't ever participate in all this (MWN, 30/3/2008: 11).

Intra-acting practices of social justice: Warrawong community lunch

Before discussing the community kitchen and lunch, I want to outline the environment within which the Warrawong Community Centre intra-acts. It is located in Greene St opposite a Housing NSW bed sit complex along with two

other Housing NSW complexes of one and two bedroom units in the adjacent street. Warrawong is a suburb to the south of the city centre near the steelworks. It is culturally diverse with a large proportion of residents living in poverty (Vinson, 2007). Most of the people who come to the community lunch live in the local area and many come from Housing NSW estates. The majority are unemployed, are often in crisis situations, have complex mental health issues, drug and alcohol problems or a combination of both. Many are long term unemployed and are often lonely and isolated (WCC documentation). The area has a reputation of having a high crime rate and as being dangerous. A local Koori[91] elder confirms this perception:

> Donna: That kitchen is good; it has got a hell of a lot of people that live in Greene Street. Greene Street is a no go area. It's a very rough area that that community centre works in (WCC, 23/8/2007: 19).

Some of the people who participate in the community kitchen and lunch are not only materially marginalised in the economic sense but their bodies are physically excluded from most of the shops and offices in the suburb. The company, that owns the majority of the commercial area, bans them from entering any of their premises. Some government agencies such as Centrelink, which is responsible for income support in Australia, lease their premises from the company and the bans effectively prevent some residents putting in the forms that ensure they continue to get their income support payments. As the Warrawong Community Centre workers explain:

> Cheryl: What happens with Westfield, because we've met with Westfield over the last couple of years too, is that is that we've got to ring the security guard. The security guard will escort them. You say 'I'm coming over to put my form in' and I've done that on quite a few occasions for a client, I ring them up, and they have to go through the pictures which is Hoyts, up the stairs, go to Centrelink, put their form in, come back down straight away. So you ring the security guard, okay, so and so's coming over in five minutes, they need to put in their form. The banning also means no doctors, no dentists, no Bunnings, no McDonald's, all that is owned by Westfield.
>
> Lynne: They get banned from all if it?
>
> Cheryl: Yes.
>
> Thelma: Yes, and then they have to spend their pittance of money that they get at the bloody servo [petrol station], which costs them a

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[91] Koori is the word used to signify an Indigenous or Aboriginal person from New South Wales and Victoria.

fortune… that's the only place they can get food. Isn't it ridiculous? (WCC, 23/5/2007: 31-32)

This example starkly illustrates how the spatial positioning of residents in the streets and in the shopping centre acts as a material marker of the structural dimensions of class, race, ethnicity and disability. The dynamics of power are captured by the material constraints that restrict and constrain the movement of residents throughout the shopping centre. The identities of particular residents are contested, constituted and re-configured in dynamic relationship with the iteratively re-configured relations of power (Barad, 2007). The large scale boundary-making practices of the Westfield company are "deployments of power… directly connected to the bodies", the material identities of residents (Foucault, 1978: 151).

The community kitchen that provides lunch four days per week for between 50-80 people per day constitutes an altogether different topological space. Many of these people explicitly identify the lunch as contributing to alleviating economic hardship. For example, John explained:

> I'm on a disability pension and often I come and have lunch here at the Warrawong Community Centre. Sometimes, if it weren't for this service, the days before my pension would be pretty lean. I think they are such a wonderful service for those of us surviving on social security (WCC, 24/5/2007).

Other participants commented:

> "This is the only decent meal I have all day"
>
> "It's here or steal it" and "I'm not sure I would even be living right now if it wasn't for the community lunch and Cheryl and Thelma [the workers] (WCC, 24/5/2007).

Although the lunch is clearly an example of practising redistribution, it is also thoroughly intra-twined with practices of respect, recognition, representation and belonging. In observations of the community lunch, I noted that the material layout of the dining room and the way the lunch is organised and performed embodied relations of respect. In contrast to other soup kitchens I've witnessed, there are no queues at the community lunch. People sit at tables that they set out in the community hall and are served at their table, restaurant style, by the lunch volunteers. After everyone is served the workers and volunteers take off their OH&S clothing (caps and gloves), the only markers that

distinguish them from those attending the lunch, and sit down as companions[92] at table to share in the food.

A couple of lunch volunteers talking in the context of the wider community's perception of the people living in the area around the community centre, explained:

> Nicole: The biggest problem is people's perception. Because they're homeless, because they use drugs, because they drink, because they're whatever, but they are still human beings. They're still entitled to the same thing that you and I are, no matter what their circumstances and that's what we provide here.
>
> Rod: Once they come through the front door, the respect is here. No matter what they're from and no matter what they've been on, no matter what they've been doing. They know the minute they walk through that front door, it's got to be ultimate respect and they get it back (WCC, 14/8/2007: 4-5).

Here we see in the performance of the lunch, the practices of redistribution and the practices of respect and recognition co-emerging and co-shaping one another.

Perhaps even more than the much-needed free meal, the participants, volunteers and workers alike, discuss the sense of belonging and participation that the community lunch and kitchen generates. The following fieldnotes were taken from my first observation of the community lunch:

> Around eleven o'clock, people started arriving for the lunch. Several young families arrived with kids in prams. Many people looked like they were hungry and looking forward to the food. Despite the wide variation in dress styles, ages and cultural background etc, people were clearly connected to one another. A young boy about 6 years old ran up to a young woman coming out of the art therapy group and gave her a big hug, he did the same when Thelma went past, and the same as the volunteers from the kitchen came out with trays of bread, he called their names and grabbed their skirts. The tables were quickly filled despite the weather. A radio was on in the background tuned to a station playing 70s and 80s rock music. The smell of chicken soup permeated the building. Families went about setting up high chairs for the kids. A couple of people commented that the lunch is a place, where they know they won't get subjected to the stand over tactics or violence common on the streets of Warrawong (WCC, 24/4/2007: 4).

This impression is confirmed by the comments of both participants and volunteers at the lunch. As Lila one of the volunteers explained:

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[92] In this context companion is an apt word as it comes from the Latin com - "with" + panis "bread"(Onions, [1944] 1965a: 353).

Lila: We're not just workers here. We're mates. Like it's brought us skills, like social things to us too, a community… I've made friends here that I would never have met. I'm here every day to catch up with friends as well. We're a real support network (WCC, 14/8/2007: 6).

The following are representative of the sentiments expressed by the lunch participants:

Angelo: It's good for having someone to talk to about other things that are interesting and it's good for getting to know other people, it brings everyone together, its very homely.

Wendy: The community centre and its staff are a lifeblood for us. They help keep my family together.

Frida: We people who attend are from all types of backgrounds and we benefit greatly from the sense of community felt at the lunch (WCC, 24/4/2008).

Thus, while the participants and volunteers articulate the value of the modest material resources they receive at the community centre, they also clearly value the way the community lunch enables them to experience friendship, solidarity and a sense of belonging in their community. The outcomes of redistribution and social inclusion co-emerge in the on-going practices of the Warrawong community centre. A local Koori elder whose extended family has established a market garden supplying fresh vegetables to the lunch, but who does not attend the lunch herself, explains:

Donna: We know people that live there as well you know. They're black and white but they have found something in that kitchen. They will go in there and they will volunteer and they will help set up the tables, set up like all the food and help wash up, clean up. So that's given them something down at that community to be really proud of, they really belong. So now we're all trying to fight for funding to keep that kitchen going. Because it's a necessity. You get a lot of kids in there eating, babies and all in there. They need to keep that kitchen open (WCC, 23/8/2007: 19).

In Donna's comments we see the intra-connections between meeting the bodily necessity of food – *lots of kids in there eating*, achieving recognition and self-respect – *that's given them something… to be really proud of*, experiencing a sense of belonging – *they really belong* and the practices of representation and voice – *we're all trying to fight for funding*.

Thus, in the Warrawong community kitchen and lunch, the production of food for distribution, the practising of mutual respect, community and class and the struggles over representation and political voice are enfolded into and

produced through one another in the on-going becoming of Warrawong. The Warrawong Community Centre illustrates that people will co-belong whether state or corporate apparatuses want them to or not. Warrawong is a motley crew of 'becoming-communities' (Agamben, 1993). This becoming is not, however, a community based on comfortable sameness, a shield from difference. Face-to-face negotiation and communication with 'others' is required in this "disorderly" community (Sennett, 1970). Perhaps, what the Warrawong Community Centre points to is a 'politics of possibilities' (Gilmore, 1999), ways of responsibly imagining and intervening in the multiple scales of injustice locally (Barad, 2007).

Conclusion

By applying the topology of social justice practices discussed in Chapter 5, this chapter has presented an empirically grounded account of the knowing-in-practice of a community of practitioners from five locally-based community organisations. Observations of situated practices combined with the accounts of workers and service participants demonstrate that community organisations facilitate service participants' struggles over and experiences of social justice. The knowing-in-practice of locally-based community organisations make distinctive contributions to what Sennett (2003) and Lovell (2007) argue is an urgent need in our society, practices that enact respect across the boundaries of inequality, difference and dependency. By focusing on the practices and practising of social justice our study challenges the dominant economic and managerial discourse that currently emphasises service provision and the purchase of welfare outputs. Thus, understandings of the contributions, purposes and accountabilities of community organisations are stretched beyond a narrow discourse of measurable outputs, outcomes and efficiencies.

The chapter demonstrates how struggles over social justice are a dynamic complex of iteratively enfolded practices of respect, recognition, redistribution, representation, belonging and inclusion. Shifting the orientation of studies of social justice from the legislative, political, and adjudicative institutions to the everyday practices of locally-based community organisations reveals the practical activity of struggling over social justice that goes on in "the shadows of the political sphere" (Honneth, 2003: 122). This study of knowing in a community of practitioners reworks social justice as situated, practical, partial,

open-ended processes, made and remade in relations with one another rather than as theoretical and end-state oriented. This shift to the ordinary sites and practices of social justice empirically supports the work of scholars who warn against a singular encompassing theory of justice (Benhabib, 2002; Tully, 2000; Walzer, 1983). Instead, the focus on practices and practising multiplies the picture of social justice.

Law and Mol (2002) suggest such multiplicity requires attending to how practices are enacted and hold together. Accordingly, in the following chapter the point of observation shifts to a community organisation as I (we) investigate how the knowing, organising and practising of social justice is iteratively enacted at the West Street Centre.

CHAPTER 7

Knowing in a community organisation: The West Street Centre study

> Re-vision – the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of tendering an old text from a new critical direction – is for women, more than a chapter in cultural history! It is an act of survival.
>
> Adrienne Rich (1979)

Introduction

How are the practices and the practising of social justice ongoingly enacted in a community organisation? How is it that in the midst of the flux of practice, practitioners know what to do next? What is the quality or character of 'good'[93] practice in a community organisation? In this chapter I use the fieldwork data accessed at the West Street Centre[94] as the point of observation to investigate these questions. As elaborated in the previous chapter, making a difference in what becomes in the lives of women and children dealing with the effects of child sexual abuse is a driving force behind the work of the West Street Centre. They explain their approach to practising social justice as:

> At West Street we believe social justice is not something we simply 'do' to others. Our way of understanding social justice is we are trying to do it together *with* others – in fact we are all doing social justice together and we all potentially benefit. For example if one 'outcome' is that women challenge secrecy around child sexual assault, this has broader social implications for all of us. In doing this, we come from the position that all the different knowledges that are carried and held by women who use the centre are valued as having something to offer to the community of the West Street Centre (WS Documentation, 2005: 15).

In this statement the West Street Centre casts the practising of social justice as a collaborative effort in which personal and social change are entangled and different knowledges are respected and recognised. This chapter explores how these practices are enacted, sustained and re-made in each intra-action, how

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[93]Not surprisingly, there is no generally accepted definition of 'good practice'. Discourse within community organisations tends to prefer the notion of 'good practice' rather than 'best practice', which has connotations of quality control, measurable standards and competition (Sanguinetti, Waterhouse, & Maunders, 2005). On the other hand, 'good practice' is a more open and flexible term that practitioners use amongst themselves when talking about what they think is 'good' community, care or support work.

[94] For a description of the work of the West Street Centre see Chapter 4.

this community organisation supports new possibilities for living justly in the connections and responsibilities of all involved in the becoming of the West Street Centre community.

During a sensemaking discussion, Sharon, one of the West Street Centre workers speculated about the conditions that enable the practices of social justice, to be produced.

> Sharon: I'm kind of really interested in the idea that social justice practice goes with reflexivity and it has to be there, its like a workplace culture of some kind that has to be part of it, as well as the set of [social justice] practices (CSARG, 27/11/2007: 3).

Here Sharon suggests that practices of reflexivity, not just individual reflexivity but organisational practices of reflexivity, are woven together and *have to be there* for the enactment of social justice practices. Such a view resonates with both our/my observations of practices in community organisations and in workers' discussions of their practice. Practices of reflection and reflexivity, respectful engagement that senses and attends to differences, patterns and connections are strong themes in the fieldwork data. Because the West Street Centre has a particular focus on counselling practices in their 'doing' of social justice, the organisation affords a heightened opportunity to amplify the dynamics of reflection, reflexivity and the production of practice.

Given the West Street Centre's linking of social justice and organisational reflexivity, I returned to the literature as the relations between reflexivity, reflection, learning and practice are also recurring themes in both the organisational studies and the social service professional practice literatures discussed in Chapter 2 (for example, Boud, Cressey, & Docherty, 2006; Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004; D'Cruz, Gillingham, & Melendez, 2007; Gray, 2007; Reynolds & Vince, 2004; Vince, 2002; Yanow & Tsoukas, 2007). Employing the diffractive analytic method (described in Chapter 4), this chapter places the West Street field data, the literature on reflective and reflexive practice at work and the performative, relational practice-based approach (Chapter 3) in conversation with each other to distinguish the relations between reflectivity, reflexivity and knowing in the practising of social justice.

The chapter is organised as follows: I begin by discussing some of the conceptions of reflective and reflexive practice at work with reference to Schön

(1983), Beckett and Hagar (2002), Fenwick (2006b), Cunliffe and Jun (2005) Reynolds and Vince (2004), Boud, Cressey and Docherty (2006), and Yanow and Tsoukas (2007). Reading these conceptions and a performative, relational practice-based approach through one another, I re-cast practices of reflection and reflexivity as relational, diffractive, intra-active and ethical. Next, I discuss some of the methodological issues specific to the fieldwork with the West Street Centre. I then explore the entangled relations of reflective, diffractive and reflexive practices in the production of practice and its emergent character in the fieldwork I (we) conducted with West Street. I conclude that viewing knowing as a "material practice of engagement as part of the world in its differential becoming" (Barad, 2007: 89) renders more visible the anticipative, deliberative and organising processes of reflection and reflexivity that co-shape and sustain one another in the enactment of social justice practices.

Reflection and reflexivity at work

In this section I focus on perspectives of reflection and reflexivity that are most pertinent to practitioners situated within organisational work and learning contexts. Thus, I briefly highlight the concepts of Schönian reflection-in-action; of 'hot action' of practice; of mindfulness and heedful interrelations; of collective organising processes of reflection; and of self and critical reflexivity.

Schönian reflection-in-action

The seminal work of Donald Schön has most widely influenced conceptualisations of the relationship between reflection and practice. His reflective practitioner exhibits knowing-in-action, reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action (Schön, 1983, 1987). He argues that the elements of reflection-in-action comprise routinised action, encounter of surprise, reflection and new action (Schön, 1987: 26-29). His work presents a powerful challenge to the idea that only theoretical bodies of knowledge can successfully direct practice.

Although many writers credit Schön's work as a major generative influence, there is considerable debate and critique of his work, particularly his account of reflection-in-action. Dreyfus and Dreyfus (2005) propose a 5-stage linear model of the acquisition of expertise from novice, advanced beginner, competence, proficiency and expertise that contrasts starkly with Schön's work. In their

view, at the stage of expertise, practice is *unreflective*, "what must be done, simply is done. The expert straightaway does the appropriate thing, at the appropriate time, in the appropriate way" (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2005: 788). In calling for a reframing of Schön's account of reflection, Eraut (1995) points to the need to "recognise the significance of the time dimension: a rapid intuitive process is not the same as a slower, more deliberate process" (1995: 9). Beckett (1996) goes further to question the existence of reflection-in-action, in those situations where the pressure for action is immediate.

The ex-post orientation implied by 'reflection' is questioned by Yanow and Tsoukas (2007, 2009) who argue that Schön "under theorized practice in treating it as unarticulated background… he gave short shrift to the necessity and centrality of tacit knowledge" (2007: 34). Schön's theory places heavy emphasis on the individual and cognitive aspects of practice (Yanow & Tsoukas, 2009) and in my view pays little attention to the body, emotions or to collective processes of reflection.

'Hot action' of practice

In *Life, Work and Learning: Practice in Postmodernity*, Beckett and Hager (2002) give an account of know-how and practical judgement in the flux of practice which, they characterise as the anticipative conversations with their practices, a back-and-forth dynamic that goes on in the 'hot action' of practice. Adopting a similar view of practice, Yanow and Tsoukas build on Schön's work in several ways by elaborating: "an appreciation for the evaluative dimensions built into competent professional practice, that encourage, if not require, reflecting; a further theorizing of the character of surprise; and a fuller delineation of the character of improvisation in relation to practice and its surprises" (2007: 2-3). They identify three dimensions of reflectivity: reflection in the midst of action, analytical reflectivity; rethinking the knowing involved in action after the event; and reflexive practice, reflection-on-the-practice of reflection. Their exploration focuses primarily on reflection in the midst of practice, for which they deploy a rich cluster of descriptors including absorbed coping, backtalk, surprise, and improvisation. They propose that absorbed coping occurs in routine practice that has become tacit and second nature. Further, when the practitioner inevitably encounters a surprise or a disturbance, situational judgement comes to the fore.

Mindfulness and heedful interrelations

Weick's work on mindfulness and heedful interrelations (Weick & Putnam, 2006; Weick & Roberts, 1993; Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 1999) provides a useful lens for exploring the moment-to-moment awareness and attention required in some fields of practice. Mindfulness appears to describe a quite different process to the anticipative action described by Beckett (1996) or the 'in-the-moment' response to surprise/disturbance outlined by Yanow and Tsoukas (2007). Mindfulness is defined by Langer (2000) "as a flexible state of mind in which we are actively engaged in the present, noticing new things and sensitive to context" (2000: 220). Weick and Putnam (2006) enrich this 'Western' view of mindfulness incorporating Eastern meditative qualities: "they experience focused attention and see the costs of distraction; they pay more attention to what is happening here and now; they see the liabilities of swift thinking when they slow down to register finer distinctions and see how much is missed and distorted in the interest of speed" (Weick, 2006: 1727). Weick's (1999) work with high reliability organisations explores not only individual mindfulness but also processes of collective mindfulness. Jordan identifies two levels of collective mindfulness, mindfulness in interactions and the organisational level "rules and routines for organising mindfulness" (2008: 8).

Collective organising of reflection

The relational and the collective is also stressed in recent work (Boud, et al., 2006; Reynolds & Vince, 2004; Vince, 2002) that has re-contextualized and re-conceptualized reflection as a *collective organising process* rather than focusing on the individual reflective practitioner. Boud, et al. (2006) introduce the phrase 'productive reflection' in their exploration of reflection from a collective standpoint. They argue, "reflection is an integral part of good work… It is a necessary element in evaluation, sensemaking, learning and decision-making processes in the workplace" (2006: 193).

In this shift to focusing on the collective aspects of reflection, both Vince (2002) and Reynolds (1998; 1999) play particular attention to the analysis of power relations. They characterize critical reflection as an organising process concerned with the collective capacity to question assumptions, render power relations visible and contribute to more democratic ways of managing and organising (Reynolds & Vince, 2004; Vince, 2002).

Self and critical reflexivity

Cunliffe and Jun (2005) also centralize power relations in their argument for the need to go beyond the idea of reflective practice to reflexive practice. They distinguish between self and critical reflexivity and suggest that in combination they enable a more critical, responsible and ethical practice. For reflexivity goes well beyond reflecting cognitively on an event or a situation, it is a dialogical and relational activity that can lead to learning in experience at the team and organisational level (Cunliffe & Easterby-Smith, 2004). In this account, reflexivity involves the recognition that "we are in-relation-to others, that we summon each other in responsibility" (Cunliffe, 2008: 135). In combination, critical and self reflexivity provide a "basis for examining taken for granted assumptions, who may be excluded or marginalized by policy and practice and the responsibility for ethical action at the organisational and societal levels" (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005: 228).

A performative, relational approach to reflection and reflexivity

In the accounts outlined by Beckett and Hagar (2002), as well as Yanow and Tsoukas (2007), context is emphasised for its influence upon individuals and actions but remains separate from them. This separation is challenged by a performative, relational approach proposing that neither nature nor nurture, neither organism nor environment, are separate, dichotomous processes but rather always dynamically entangled phenomena (Tuana, 1997). This approach shifts the attention of reflection and reflexivity from thinking back on the components of practice – actors, experience, tools, and activity – to articulating the relationalities, patterns exclusions and boundaries created by intra-actions making up complex communities (Fenwick, 2001).

In insisting on a dynamic, material view of knowing, knowing as a way of engaging with the world, a performative, relational approach emphasises the complex entanglements of power/knowledge, ethics and politics. To understand such engagement, Tanesini (1999) argues we must reflexively study the patterns created by intra-actions. Reflective and self-critical participation in the production of knowledge are thus always ethical, political and epistemic matters (Rouse, 2002). From this perspective "particular possibilities for (intra-) acting exist at every moment, and these changing possibilities entail an ethical obligation to intra-act responsibly in the world's becoming" (Barad, 2007: 178).

Such a position encourages, if not requires, reflexivity and when combined with its emphasis on co-emergence re-casts reflection and reflexivity as engaged, relational, everyday practices.

The main focus is to work to make a difference in what becomes in the world (Haraway, 1997: 36). This requires caring about the worlds or possible futures that our own kind of work, our organisation helps create and/or sustain. From a performative, relational perspective reflexive practices are, therefore, critical to taking responsibility for the fact that the world becomes differently through different practices. Reflection and reflexivity are intra-twined analytic, imaginative and political practices.

Both Haraway (1997) and Barad (2007) suggest that as the metaphor of reflection implies mirroring, sameness and detachment, it is not enough to grasp the strong ethicality of engaged critical reflexivity. They propose diffraction as an alternative to the metaphor of reflection because diffraction attends to patterns of difference, interference and heterogenous history. Like reflection, diffraction is also a physical phenomenon. When light is diffracted, it bends and light waves overlap creating interference patterns, sometimes producing the spectacular colours and rings around the moon. These rings cannot be attributed to the moon or the clouds but are produced through the intra-action of the moon and the clouds.[95] As a metaphor, diffraction, thereby, speaks to entanglements, relationalities, co-production and the effects of intra-actions. Diffraction is an optical "metaphor for another kind of critical consciousness… one committed to making a difference" (Haraway, 1997: 273). Diffraction is a way of understanding the world from within and as part of it, accounting and taking responsibility for how practices matter (Barad, 2007: 88-89). Thus a performative, relational approach renders detached, unrelated reflection oxymoronic, as we are always already in the action. Tanesini argues that what is "important about diffraction is that it does not objectify… Instead it takes into account the effects, the interferences generated by the other" (1999: 184). Reflexivity is re-worked to disclose partiality and situatedness not

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[95] Other examples of the physical phenomenon of diffraction include ocean waves pushing through a gap in a breakwater. The waves diffract as they emerge from the gap in the shape of concentric half circles. The spectrum of colours that can be seen on the surface of a CD is realised through diffraction, as is the swirl of colour in a soap bubble. For a detailed and fascinating explication of the phenomena of diffraction, see Barad (2007).

overview at a distance. By this account, reflexive attention to one's own practices encourages learning and knowing that is modest and self-critical (Rouse, 1996, 2002). For an organisation like the West Street Centre, committed to practising social justice and making a difference in the lives of women and children dealing with the effects of child sexual abuse, Haraway's (1997) and Barad's (2007) notion of diffraction and Rouse's (2002) critical reflexivity appear to offer resonant analytic and imaginative concepts.

Methodological issues

The West Street Centre works within a social justice and feminist framework, viewing sexual assault as a violation of human rights and as a criminal offence against the individual and society. It recognises child sexual assault as a betrayal of trust and an abuse of power (WS documentation, 2007). Major influences on the Centre's work are explicitly identified as feminist post-structural ideas, narrative approaches to therapy and the work of Johnella Bird, a counsellor practitioner, trainer and writer (WS documentation, 2005). This chapter focuses on fieldwork conducted during a capacity building project offering free international training to local counsellors with subsequent monthly consultations over 12 months, to practice the approach learnt in the two-day training and continue learning together as a network. An example of four of our cycles of participatory action research is elaborated in Figure 5 on the next page.

Incorporated within the PAR cycles were multiple modes for collecting data:
- written ethnographic accounts of observations of supervision, training sessions, learning/consultation network sessions, team meetings and informal collegiate exchanges.
- DVDs of counselling practices taped for learning and professional development purposes with the permission of the clients and practitioners involved;
- transcripts of a reflexive practice called prismatic dialogue in which practitioners review issues and situations arising in their counselling practice with their clinical supervisor to extend and improve practice;
- transcripts of reflective discussions with practitioners conducted after each of our observations;
- participation in workplace lunches, morning and afternoon teas;

The issue

West Street Collective

September 2006

Waiting list pressure

Training course

West Street & local counsellors

December 2006

Working with CSA

The monthly

CSA Counsellors Community of practice

March 2007

Learning network

Sensemaking

Co-researchers

June 2007

Co-theorising

First Cycle: The pressure of the waiting list and the capacity building project
Planning
Discussion of the lack of affordable counselling services available for adults and children survivors of child sexual assault and the decision to implement a capacity building project with local counsellors to enable them to work more effectively with people who have experienced childhood sexual assault.
Acting/Observing
Organising free two-day international training course, recruiting local counsellors and designing the evaluation process.
Reflecting
West St counsellors aspirations and reservations in relation to the capacity building project, the current political context and it's impact on managers in the Health bureaucracy not approving counsellors to attend the training and participate in the capacity building project.

Second Cycle: The training course
Re-planning
Developing a strategy to advocate for local counsellors from mental health services being able to attend the training and participate in the capacity building project.
Acting/Observing
Two day training course for local counsellors with internationally recognised trainer/practitioner.
Reflecting
Dialogue between West St counsellors and researchers on perceptions/reactions to the ideas, practices and approaches explored in the two day training.

Third Cycle: The learning network with local counsellors
Planning
Planning the 1st monthly session of the network of local counsellors to build skills and practice the approach explored in the two-day training.
Acting/observing
1st session of the learning network for local counsellors.
Reflecting
Dialogue between West St counsellors and researchers reflecting on experience of the 1st session with the network of local counsellors.

Fourth Cycle: Sensemaking and Co-theorising
Planning
Based on written accounts of observations and transcripts of reflexive dialogues plan paper on practice/reflectivity.
Acting/observing
Writing paper, reading/commenting/analysing the texts.
Reflecting
Researchers and West St counsellors sense-making and co-theorising and discussing implications for next months learning network session.

Figure 4: Example of the West Street Centre PAR cycles

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- documentation by West Street describing and theorizing their approach to practice; and

- training materials for the capacity-building project and learning network.

Feedback, reflection and sensemaking with the West Street counsellors of observations, transcripts and conclusions was an important part of the research process and co-theorising integral to the analysis. Through such engagement I endeavored to develop an appreciation of the social context, values and local ways of organising counselling, group work and education practices at West Street (Ewenstein & Whyte, 2007). My orientation to data collection and analysis was exploratory, intended to generate insights into the situated knowing-in-practice of the West Street Centre workers.

However, with the observational data I encountered the methodological difficulty of 'seeing' and interpreting in-the-moment reflection and reflexive practices that are largely embedded in actions, fleeting and not always visible to the observer. This limitation was partially addressed by the data being collected within iterative cycles. In this way I was able to check with the workers against the observations and interview transcripts, thereby learning more about the often non-verbal reflection processes we had witnessed and what was going on from the practitioner's point of view. In addition, the action research framework enabled me to trace the impact of collective, reflexive discussions on *in vivo* practice observed at a later date. Thus, observation of situated practices combined with verbal and written accounts within iterative PAR cycles enabled me to develop a partial view of the intra-actions of reflexivity and practice and its emergent quality at the West Street Centre.

These observations, however, were never conducted directly in counselling sessions with service participants due to the nature of their highly personal work, confidentiality and ethical considerations. Rather, my discussions with West Street negotiated an ethical but situated way of observing practice in the form of critical organising reflexive practices such as prismatic dialogues and DVDs of counselling practices, discussed below.

Reflexivity and practice at the West Street Centre

In the following sections, I highlight West Street's multiple reflective, diffractive and reflexive practices. Figure 6 distinguishes four forms of such practices, their situated intra-actions, the processes and actors (both human and other-than-human) involved and what emerges from these intra-actions. First, the anticipative practices of reflection made in the flux of practice, when the action is hot and counsellors reflect in the midst of practising. Second, the deliberative practices of reflection involving mindful attention and heedful action in the flow of practice. Third, the organising practices of reflection and diffraction enacted as the staff of the organisation collectively share and scrutinise their knowing and not knowing-in-practice. Fourth, the practices of reflexivity of all involved in the organisation, negotiating within power relations, coming together to create a place where women can speak publicly about issues of sexual violence and enact the West Street Centre community.

The form of the figure indicates the fluidity of boundaries between these multiple practices of reflection and reflexivity and is suggestive of a diffraction or interference pattern on water. This image serves to emphasise that reflexive practices at the West Street Centre are not mirroring or reflecting the same elsewhere but are practical technologies for 'making consequential meanings' and taking account of what becomes and is excluded from becoming.

Anticipatory practices of reflection

West Street counsellors, through their practices, attend in the moment to the personal, the emotional, the cultural, the political, the spiritual and the social. The intra-action between counsellor and service participant involves constant negotiating and making judgements around what issues to centralise and what threads to follow. In Lucia's words "you don't have a script". Observing an intense intra-action of a counsellor and her supervisor in a supervision session I noted:

> This reflective process was forward looking, making judgements in the moment, trying this out, and then only when it was done, did the 'rightness' of the judgement become apparent (WS, 2/5/ 2007: 4-5).

This field observation of 'forward-feeding' (Beckett & Hager, 2002) as anticipatory listening that characterises reflection in the flux of practice was

Anticipatory practices of reflection

Intra-action: *Counsellor/client*

Processes: *Anticipatory listening, improvisation, notetaking*

Emergence: *Future-oriented knowing, situated, embodied judgements*

Deliberative practices of reflection

Intra-action: *Counsellor/client*

Processes: *Mindfulness, skilful use of attention, slowing down the pace, the continuous present*

Emergence: *Deliberative, modest, embodied knowing and 'not-knowing'*

Organising practices of reflection and diffraction

Intra-action: *Counsellor/clinical supervisor and West St collective*

Processes: *Reflective routines, undoing, prismatic dialogue, reflective teams*

Emergence: *Insight and imaginative resources for improved practice. Ethical practice from within organisation, questioning and critique as an aspect of everyday practice Understanding patterns created in intra-action*

Practices of critical reflexivity

Intra-action: *West St collective and community*

Processes: *Community building, learning by participation, clients as consultants, participatory evaluation, community of practice*

Emergence: *Collective action to make a difference in the world, public scrutiny of organisational structures, roles, practices and power relations*

Figure 5: Reflexive, reflective and diffractive practices at West Street

later confirmed by Lucia: "it helps me to move forward to listen to myself whilst I'm saying things". In contrast to some of the accounts of professional practice (for example, Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 2005; Eraut, 1995), West Street practitioners are aware of reflecting in the midst of hot action without interrupting it. This reflection is not only future orientated; it is anticipatory as the practitioner 'holds' themes, threads, feelings, the spoken, the partially spoken, and the emotional quality of the emergent conversation while attending and responding in the intense flux of practice:

Clare: You know, particularly when you come up against things that you know don't fit with, you know, I'm thinking, for example, say of a client that I'm working with I was very aware… of not

> imposing my own values and beliefs upon her but rather staying with her and her process and exploring that for her, but holding my reactions to that and seeing if it was useful for the therapeutic relationship or not. So, yes, definitely you can do it in the moment. I think we've all done in-the-moment reflections (WS, 13/5/2007: 9).

Claire's awareness of her response, her response-ability (Haraway, 2008) in what becomes in the therapeutic relationship, points to the ethical dimension as an irreducible aspect of reflection, reflexivity and the practices of social justice. But what practices might assist these practitioners to hold the themes, to make these context-specific, embodied judgements about what may work best in a particular circumstance?

All of the practitioners I have observed at the West Street Centre constantly take 'notes' in the midst of practice. This note taking supports rather than distracts the practitioner from the intense focus in the moment that therapeutic conversations entail. Repeatedly I observed: the practitioner would pause, for an instant, she would look down at the notes, and seemed to be making split-second judgements, making choices about what to centralise, where to guide the emerging conversation. These 'notes' are not case notes, a formal record. They are personal, idiosyncratic and vary greatly in form from practitioner to practitioner. For example, some of the notes I saw resemble diagrams, with circles, arrows and with some lines drawn over and over for emphasis. Another counsellor's version appears as 'scruffy scribbles' of statements written randomly on the page. The personal notes assist the counsellor, as reflexive co-participant to grapple in the moment with the complexity of the unfolding conversation. The practitioners are in continuing dialogue not just with the service participants but also with their notes.

Improvisation in the midst of practice is implicit in the following conversation:

> Liz: If you're doing good therapeutic work, yes you get kind of more and more experience, but the reality is that you are living in a place of uncertainty.
>
> Lucia: That's the thing about not having a script…
>
> Liz: Yeah the creativity of it. So, yes, you are [flying by the seat of your pants] but it's a certain version of flying (WS, 10/4/2007: 10).

What appears to onlookers as *flying by the seat of your pants* is the situated judgement about what to do next in the co-emergent, unfolding process. Such an illustration is explained by Yanow and Tsoukas conceptually as "based upon

a repertoire that has been rehearsed – practiced – over time. Making the judgement about what to bring into play *in this moment*… is the improvisatory action of bricolage, of at-hand selectivity" (2009: 8). Holistic embedded judgements, responding in the midst of hot action, requires an intense focus in the moment – but how can we better understand what is involved?

Deliberative practices of reflection

In my observations of the workers' practices in a supervision session I noted:

> Clare had a particularly calm, self-contained manner… a considered mindful approach; especially in relation to the way she used language… I had the sense that together Liz and Clare were negotiating the making of meaning. There was a strong sense of exploration… through their dialogue (WS, 2/5/ 2007: 3, 6).

I see this as in-the-moment mindfulness where practitioners hone their attention, focus on what is happening here and now, and slow down the conversation to account for differences, make connections and distinctions with others (Weick, 2006: 1727). The practitioner appears in the present moment to be totally available, offering her attention, engaging in the therapeutic conversation with alertness and care, what Weick and Roberts (1993) term 'heed'. We observed this mindfulness as more than cognitive attention; there was a depth to the listening; a listening that involves the body, the emotions, the mind, and the will. "Our job is to notice," commented one of the practitioners. This skilful knowing-in-action involves acting with respect and regard and always in relation to what's happening in the moment, always being in the continuous present (Bird, 2004).

> Jaq: It's about pace, slowing down the pace, constantly negotiating, it is not about right or wrong but about negotiating, offering. People experience the offering even if they don't take it up (WS, 26/3/2007: 2).

Using the continuous present tense that characterises much of the counsellors' language, here Jaq shows how slowing down and being mindful in the present situation (Weick, 2006) affords negotiating between service participant and counsellor, the offer to reflect on the counsellor's questions.

In addition to this slowing down, reflection in the midst of practice seems to rest on an emptying of the mind. As Yanow and Tsoukas argue, reflection-in-action requires "willingness to be visibly and publicly not-knowing" (2009: 18) which they link to a permeability of the self. Discussing reflection in the midst

of her practice, Lucia demonstrates this willingness to be publicly 'not-knowing':

> Lucia: I'm monitoring myself as to what am I staying curious about and where am I going with it and how am I saying it. If I've said it and it's come out wrong, that's okay, I can change it. I can say 'hang on a second I haven't got that question right' and I can ask it again. It makes me feel looser (WS, 10/5/ 2007: 12).

The West Street Centre workers write about the 'not-knowing' idea of therapy (WS documentation, 2005: 3). It relates to their feminist philosophy, their commitment to declining the expert role and a realisation that although much experience can be shared, there will always be some experience that cannot. It acknowledges situated knowledge the "particular and specific embodiment" of the knower (Haraway, 1991a: 190). This 'not-knowing' involves a deep respect for situated experiential knowing, encourages a wondering curiosity in the practitioner and is coherent with the journeying, emergent character of practice at West Street. 'Not-knowing' involves a stance of wondering, of expansion, of partial perspective and of being uncertain. 'Having an empty mind' and *feeling looser* are integral to understanding how listening is limited by a busy mind, by psychological theories and categories as I observed and noted the trainer highlighting:

> "to be able to listen as you speak, to listen to how you are languaging… to think back, to move forward as you are doing the work is important… I think I can do that because I don't have a busy mind, I don't carry lots of theories in my head, my mind is not busy" (WS, 26/3/2007: 4).

In this way mindfulness involves a process of undoing, of undoing preconceptions, the undoing of subjectivity (Somerville, 2007). The practices of slowing down the conversation, the 'not-knowing' and 'the undoing' combine to enable the moment-to-moment awareness and the skilful use of attention.

> Liz: When you come across secrecy 200 times, then you start to think you do know everything about it and what people are going to present and that's a danger. It's a pitfall. So I think the slowing down aspect of the negotiation and unfolding helps (WS, 10/4/ 2007: 10).

Mindfulness, the offering and skilful use of attention is not easy. It requires, energy, intensity, passion and is hard work (Weick, 2006). But what are the organising processes of reflection and mindfulness that participate in bringing forth both the anticipative and deliberative practices of reflection?

Organising practices of reflection and diffraction

West Street incorporates a range of reflection on practice processes that enable the practitioners to explore their work outside the counselling session itself. They are crucial to knowing-in-practice at the West Street Centre where collective, interactive processes are embedded in organisational routines. These routines of reflection and review are not fixed but are mutually constitutive of changing contexts and practices. Paradoxically, they encourage disruption, doubt and uncertainty as they enable the organisation and its workers to approach their experience with questions and curiosity rather than answers and stability (Jordan, 2008).

So rather than being opposites, routines and surprise are bound together in organising reflection and diffraction practices at West Street. For example, in the following comments the worker discusses how she uses the reflective routine of informally discussing a counselling session with other workers immediately after the session:

> Sharon: There are many times for me where I feel I fall short of being able to link things and join things up in a session or I haven't gone in a particular direction and the difference that makes. One thing that I do – that's one of the things that I would often talk about afterwards where I feel like I've left something out and what difference that might make (WS, 10/4/2007: 9).

In Sharon's talk this organising process of reflection is diffractive. It attends to connections, differences and traces of what may have been excluded. The diffractive practice is speculative, focusing on omissions, their possible effects and difference they may have opened up for clients.

There is an extraordinarily wide range of reflective and diffractive routines intra-twined in the organising practices of the West Street Centre. These organising processes of reflection (Vince, 2002) and diffraction are distributed in terms of both time and space and include: informal discussions with other team members immediately after a session, team co-supervision processes, collective supervision processes with a supervisor who is external to the organisation, six-monthly reviews with each service participant, their counsellor and another team member, and the learning processes of the monthly consultations with the network of local counsellors. The organisation has monthly management committee meetings where organising and work

practices are discussed and reviewed. Finally, they have regular organisation level, reflexive evaluation processes that involve counsellors, management committee members, women who use or have used the service coming together as the West Street Centre community.

The processes of collective reflection on counselling practice emphasise reviewing the actual work, not just talking about the service participant and the work:

> Jaq: How you describe what you do is different to what you actually do. So we need to review the actual work with others [colleagues, clinical supervisor]. We tape it, use reflecting-teams. Other people notice what you're drawn to and what you're not drawn to (WS, 26/3/2007: 2).

In these processes 'outsiders' are enrolled to watch the counselling session *(in vivo)* or on tape to *notice* patterns in what is included and excluded from mattering. This collective organizing process is diffractive, designed to produce multiple perspectives that 'interfere' with the one-on-one therapeutic relationship to produce new possibilities for the client and the counsellor.

Another reflection-on-practice process that I observed, is termed 'prismatic dialogue' (Bird, 2006). Experiential, embodied and identificatory as well as cognitive, prismatic dialogues are designed to engage practitioners at the edge of their knowing and bring forth their imaginative resources. As the name prismatic dialogue suggests, this practice does not aim to mirror but to refract and diffract in order to encourage embodied understanding of the patterns, possibilities and impossibilities created from intra-actions. Observing a prismatic dialogue I commented in my fieldnotes:

> I really felt the emotional power of this practice. I had a bodily response to the conversation… I trembled inside, my throat felt full; my eyes brimmed (WS, 2/5/2007: 5).

Prismatic dialogue highlights the importance of the body and emotions in reflective practice. The body is harnessed as a finely honed instrument that senses and performs patterns of interference (Law, 2000) that enables the practitioner to feel the question, to glimpse what it might be like for the person they are working with to receive certain questions. This capability is clearly illustrated in a prismatic dialogue I observed when Liz was exploring with Jaq (the supervisor) the experiences of a 16-year-old young woman she had been

counselling. When Liz became visibly rattled, Jaq stopped the prismatic dialogue, asked if Liz was all right, deliberately slowed the conversation down and focused on what was going on in the moment, before negotiating the resumption of the prismatic dialogue. Commenting on this prismatic dialogue in a subsequent reflective discussion, Liz elaborated:

> Liz: I think that one of the typical things that happens is that you really engage with the client's experience of how you're working with them and you also engage with your own reactions to that as well… A very embodied kind of experience that I had and that's really useful information… I think the embodied knowing informs all of my practice actually. When I work with the experience of fear, often the women's experiences of fear in the room – we don't know what we don't know and I don't have life experiences of that level of fear. So for me I'm actually having to take an imaginative leap into somebody else's experience of fear (WS, 10/4/2007: 6).

In this prismatic dialogue, we see not only the embodied experiential nature of the diffractive practice, but Liz's awareness of 'not- knowing', the process of 'undoing' and the power of the practice to engage her imagination and emotions as a resource in the emerging process. The prismatic dialogue is thereby an analytical, sensory and imaginative practical technology. It is bound up in what Haraway terms imaginative connection and practical coalition that demands self-critical situatedness and embodiment (Haraway, 1997).

Practices of critical reflexivity

At the West Street Centre, reflexivity is a critical approach to practice and organising that questions how knowledge claims are generated and further, how power relations influence these processes (D'Cruz, et al., 2007). In the DVDs and transcripts, it is possible to discern processes of intra-action with an emphasis on micro-practices, especially in how the practitioners speak. We noted the counsellors consistently raise and interrogate power relations constituted in their intra-actions with individuals, groups and communities:

> Liz: The negotiation of power is such a core [issue] because power and disempowerment around child sexual assault work and the effects are such a foundational aspect of the recovery process for individuals.
>
> Sharon: For me I see those [how you negotiate a power relationship and how you work collaboratively] as two kinds of really fundamental parts of [our} practices, I think they are of particular value when you're working with someone who's had experiences of being totally disempowered through an abusive situation. So they become really critical skills because otherwise you're so easily invited into pathologising the person and it becomes their fault as

well in a whole range of very subtle and awful ways (WS,
10/4/2007: 3-4).

Here Liz articulates the importance of reflexivity well beyond the therapeutic relationship and Sharon draws further distinctions in the complexity of power relations in contexts shaped by child sexual abuse. These counsellors show how reflexivity at West Street is threefold: *critical reflexivity* (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005; Rouse, 2002) by looking outward to the social, political and cultural context and the discourses that saturate child sexual abuse; *self-reflexivity* (Cunliffe & Jun, 2005) whereby the practitioners make distinctions in their own practices and challenge their ways of being; and *relational reflexivity* (D'Cruz, et al., 2007) where the importance of power relations is recognised as counsellors and service participants negotiate meaning together within therapeutic conversations.

Critical reflexive practices at West Street are organisational not just because they are collective but they also encourage organisational structures, roles, practices and power relations to come under public scrutiny (Raelin, 2001). Organisational processes of critical reflexivity have catalysed organisational learning and change and the building of ethical practices from within the West Street Centre. Evaluation of its services has been redesigned into processes such as the West Street community evaluation days with the intention of enabling a greater sharing of power to build a stronger sense of community amongst all involved with the Centre.

Critical reflexivity undertaken collectively by the West Street workers generated their capacity building project with practising counsellors in the region. In turn, the capacity building project not only organised service provision to meet increasing demand but also made West Street practices more visible to other counselling organisations in the region:

> By engaging with this [type of project] we create the possibility of
> exposing, unpacking and deconstructing power relations [to the local
> trainee counsellors]. In doing so, we make power relations more visible and
> are in more of a position to challenge these relations if they do not fit with
> our values (WS documentation, 2007: 5).

Thus, for West Street the enactment of ethical practices is dependant on their willingness and capacity to publicly engage in collective, reflexive, ongoing dialogic processes (Nyhan, 2006). Although organisational level reflexive

practices such as the community evaluation days and the capacity building project do not occur during counselling practice, they are intra-twined. By encouraging an attitude of inquiry and legitimising the willingness of being not-knowing in the presence of others, they sustain and enrich the anticipative and deliberative practices of reflection discussed earlier in this chapter.

The emergent character of social justice practices

Practices at West Street appear to be unfolding, co-emergent processes that are co-produced in the moment. Significantly, this means tacit[96] knowing does not emanate from individual practitioners in ways that drive their actions but rather is generated in the intra-actions that evoke these actions (Fenwick, 2001). Both supervision practices such as prismatic dialogue and therapeutic conversations are emergent relational spaces of threshold and becoming. The practices I observed felt like fluid, co-emergent, journeying processes. The trainer spoke repeatedly of "a travelling process", "a discovery process", "making the destination as we find language together". Here emergent practices and processes make a material, qualitative difference in the lives of those involved with the West Street Centre but their meanings have not yet settled. West Street practices involve indeterminate, open-ended and iterative processes of engagement, description and critical reflexivity (Somerville, 2007). Emergence is immanent in the production of practice at West Street. Emergence means that service participants and workers don't know yet where the process is going. Improvisation and uncertainty, thereby, permeate practice.

The culture, capability and practices that make up the West Street Centre community co-emerge with the qualities, philosophical and political commitments, cultures and capacities of those involved (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000). For example, in our reflective discussions, the West Street counsellors were well aware that it would not just be the local counsellors learning through participation in the capacity building project who would change but the West Street Centre's collective knowing would also emerge differently through these intra-actions, reconfiguring the West Street Centre community. Recognition of the co-emergent character of practice means that reflection and reflexivity at West Street is about "responsibility and

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[96] Tacit here refers to knowing that has become second nature or implicit through practice.

accountability for the lively relationalities of becoming" (Barad, 2007: 393) of which they are part. Thus, reflective and reflexive practices are ethical matters that support the possibility of ongoing responsiveness to the entanglements of self and other (Haraway, 1997, 2008). For the West Street counsellors, self, critical and relational reflexivity are essential capabilities in their intentions to ensure their practices and ways of organising are congruent with their theoretical, political and ethical commitments to practice social justice.

Conclusion

This chapter offers a detailed account of how it is that practitioners in the midst of practice know what to do next. The West Street study suggests that it is through mindful attending and critically reflecting upon what they find themselves doing, feeling and saying that practitioners know how to go on. The West Street Centre with its aspirations to reflexive, ethically-based praxis provides an ideal site for grappling with the intra-relations between different forms of reflective and reflexive practices, ethicality and practising social justice. The performative, relational practice-based perspective challenges Schön's individualistic and cognitivistic account of reflection in professional practice. This case study shows how reflexivity and knowing-in-practice are holistic, in that they attend to personal, social, conative, cultural, spiritual and political factors (Johnsson, Athanasou & Hager, 2005). Reflective, diffractive and reflexive practices are emergent and centre on organic, holistic embodied judgements made and re-made through acting in and on the world (Beckett & Hager, 2002; Orlikowski, 2002). The West Street Centre study shows practices of reflexivity and practising social justice to be irreducibly and inescapably ethical matters. The production of social justice involves ethical interventions. This chapter therefore illustrates the intimate relations between practices of critical reflection, reflexivity and ethicality.

This analysis illustrates how co-emergence, uncertainty and contingency are important qualities in West Street's practices of social justice that aim to make a difference, to generate new meanings, actions and becomings. Practices unfold, are co-produced in the moment and improvisation permeates practices. As co-emergence and ceaselessness are inherent qualities of practising social justice, reflective, diffractive and reflexive practices are critical for understanding and taking account of our part in what becomes and what is excluded from

becoming. Hence, they co-shape, rather than conclude, the production of 'good' practice (Boud, et al., 2006).

The West Street Centre study distinguishes multiple forms of reflective and reflexive practices. First, anticipatory practices of reflection in the flux of practice are future-orientated. They are characterised by anticipatory listening, an anticipatory conversation that goes on with the practice and the materials of the practice in the midst of practising. Second, deliberative practices of reflection, slowdown the mindful attention and heedful action involved in the flow of practice. Such practices require openness to the entanglements of self and other and a willingness to be 'not knowing' in the presence of others. Third, organising practises of reflection and diffraction are repeatedly sedimented in organisational routines and processes that encourage questioning and critique not just in moments of surprise and breakdown but as an everyday aspect of ongoing practice. Thus, routines and surprise are bound together in organising reflective and diffractive practices. Finally, practices of reflexivity facilitate organisational learning, especially as both practitioners and their organisations take account of the power relations and ethics entangled in their part in what becomes and what is excluded from becoming.

This chapter has extended the account of community organisations as doing social justice by illustrating the emergent, always open-ended character of 'good' practice and describing multiple forms of reflective, diffractive and reflexive practices that are crucial in the enactment of social justice practices. At the West Street Centre critical reflexivity involves non-stop curiosity inside situated, mortal, relentlessly relational coming-into-being (Haraway & Gane, 2006). Critical reflexive practices are thereby collaborative, practical technologies sustaining attempts to be awake to and take account of what gets included and excluded from mattering. It suggests collective organising processes of reflection and diffraction, the critical judgements made in the flux of practice and the mindful attention and heedful action involved in the flow of deliberative practising can sustain and co-shape one another. This study supports that view that "reflection works at individual and organisational levels if it is public, participative and authorized" (Nicolini, Sher, Childerstone, & Gorli, 2004: 101).

Furthermore, the performative relational practice-based approach adopted in this thesis illuminates some of the challenges of organised reflexivity and mindfulness. To sustain a reflexive community organisation committed to practising social justice across the boundaries of inequality, difference and dependency requires passion, caring, commitment and courage threaded through doubt, modesty, partiality and ongoing self/other critique (Schneider, 2002). Arguably, paradox, dissent and tensions must be seen as helpful and productive. Reflexive community organisations that attempt to be accountable and responsible for their part in the world's differential becoming (Barad, 2007) may be assisted along this challenging path by the figure of Haraway's 'modest witness' and Yanow's articulation of 'passionate humility' (2007). The 'doing' of social justice in locally-based community organisations such as the West Street Centre requires embodied judgements, enacted in the moment, in spite of and because there are no prescriptions and calculations for action available when social justice is the motivation. The experience of all those involved at West Street Centre shows that the promise of a future exceeds and surprises. Accordingly, inquiring about the possibilities for social justice here and now may be more helpful in taking responsibility and being accountable for what becomes than concentrating effort on generating indicators about pre-specified futures.

CHAPTER 8

Knowing in the community services field of practices: Made to measure

> Not everything that counts can be counted,
> and not everything that is countable counts.
> Albert Einstein.

Introduction

In Chapter 5 I developed a multi-dimensional topology of local community organisations as 'doing' social justice in the midst of 'a world of inequality'. This topology formed the basis for analysis of knowing-in-practice in a community of practitioners and in a community organisation presented in Chapters 6 and 7 respectively. Chapter 6 developed an account of the knowing-in-practice of a community of practitioners working in locally-based organisations in the Illawarra. Chapter 7 investigated how the practising of social justice is enacted within a single community organisation. This case study illustrated how as co-emergence is an irreducible quality of practising social justice, reflective, diffractive and reflexive practices are critical for community organisations understanding and taking account of their part in what becomes and what is excluded from becoming.

In this chapter, I turn my attention away from the particularity of the five locally-based organisations to the intra-relations between the various communities of practitioners, organisations and institutions that constitute the community services field of practices. The Illawarra community services field of practices is a complex network of relationships among local not-for-profit community-based organisations, state and nationally-based non-government agencies, for-profit service providers, faith-based organisations, community services education and training organisations, government public sector service providers and government funding agencies. Gherardi notes, that networks do not have distinct boundaries and may be mapped on the basis of numerous actors and relations which spread out and link with other networks (2006: 196). For example, I could also include within this field of practices, unions such as the Australian Services Union, professional associations such as the Australian

Social Workers Association or the Australian Welfare Workers Association, national and state-based peak bodies and service user lobby groups such as People with Disabilities NSW. The introduction of results-based accountability (RBA) into the Illawarra community services field of practices affords an opportunity to observe relations between communities of practitioners as they intra-act to establish a joint plan, agree on results, performance measures and indicators, and share knowledges about what works to achieve the desired results.

Specifically, this chapter, addresses the following questions: What happens when the local practices of social justice are brought into results-based accountability (RBA) processes with diverse organisations and institutions within the community services field of practices? What are the competing discourses, conceptions of knowledge and material-discursive practices discernable in RBA data sets? What materialises differently from intra-action with RBA? What gets included and excluded from mattering? How is knowledge of the well-being of individuals and communities translated and contested in inter-organisational relations in RBA processes?

These questions are investigated analysing fieldwork data accessed during two RBA training workshops and two sets of RBA planning workshops in 2007.[97] This study of practice-knowing and RBA is, as detailed in Chapter 4, praxis-orientated research using multiple interpretive methods within a feminist-informed participatory action research framework (Treleaven, 2001). We incorporated within these cycles multiple modes for accessing and collecting the data including: written ethnographic accounts of observations of RBA training workshops and RBA planning workshops; transcripts of reflective discussions with Community Sector Action Research Group (CSARG) members conducted after the RBA training sessions and between the first and second workshops of the RBA planning processes; transcripts of sensemaking discussions conducted with CSARG members after the RBA planning processes; copies of documentation, graphs and visual representations produced for and during the RBA training and planning workshops; copies of the two RBA plans produced; copies of correspondence relating to RBA from

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[97] Details of the RBA fieldwork sites and the methods used for accessing and analysing the data are elaborated in Chapter 4.

government funding agencies and peak bodies; and participation in lunches, morning and afternoon teas and informal debrief sessions with the RBA planning workshop organisers and facilitators.[98]

The chapter is organised as follows. First, I introduce RBA. Second, I map the complex material-discursive field of practices and competing discourses identifiable in the RBA data sets. Third, I adopt a performative, relational practice-based perspective to analyse RBA as a technology of representation and as a material-discursive apparatus of performance measurement. Fourth, I investigate what was included and excluded from mattering in intra-action with RBA. Finally, I analyse how knowledge of the well-being of local people and their communities is contested and circulates in a network of relations during RBA.

Results-Based Accountability: An overview

In NSW since the mid-1980s, there has been a shift away from community development practices and local organisations explicitly linked to the activist social movements of the 1960s and 1970s towards a service provision model, what has been called a de-facto welfare state (Hoatson, 2001; Houlbrook & Losurdo, 2008). The increasing devolution of the provision of welfare services to non-government organisations and the introduction of purchaser-provider contractual arrangements, discussed in Chapter 1, have seen increased prominence given to audit and accountability (Baulderstone, 2006b; Espeland & Saunder, 2007; Power, 1994, 1997; Strathern, 2000b). For example, one of the main purchasers of community services in NSW, the Department of Community Services (DoCS), has been gradually transforming its grants programs to non-government organisations from "funding community services" via a submission process to "purchasing welfare outputs" in a quasi-market (Department of Community Services, 2001: ii). Negotiations over whether and how DoCS should develop more rigorous forms of monitoring and evaluation to ensure economy, efficiency and effectiveness have been going on for several years. As a senior DoCS representative explained, DoCS is particularly interested in evaluating the objectives of non-government organisations to see if they are funding those organisations that align with

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[98] A summary of the fieldwork data is included in Appendix 1.

intended DoCS results.[99] An aim of DoCS has been to reduce complexity and in this way form a unified, simplified service system. DoCS argues results-based accountability is the ideal model for realising these aims (Izmir, 2004). DoCS has employed this approach to present a case to treasury in support of the Community Services Grant Program (CSGP) for which there has been no growth funding since 1990. The DoCS submission to treasury highlights that both the demand for services and the costs of providing services have increased significantly since then, resulting in decreased levels of service and operating hours in comparison to 1990 (Izmir, Katz, & Bruce, 2009). Accordingly, DoCS is employing the RBA to translate the contributions of the organisations that are funded through the CSGP in order to secure the growth and sustainability of the funding program.

RBA in its various forms (Friedman, 2005; Hatry, Van Houten, Planz, & Greenway, 1996; Laverge, 2002) is broadly defined by three underpinning ideas: justifying service provision on the basis of outcomes; demonstrating these outcomes by data-based evidence (Houlbrook & Losurdo, 2008); and assuming that setting target outcomes (results) and measuring progress will improve the system. Rosen explains:

> Demonstrating the effectiveness of [social work] practice requires evidence that the interventions used (that is methods, treatments, services or activities) are causally linked, directly or indirectly, to the attainment of the desired outcomes (that is goals or objectives). Demonstrating efficiency requires not only that practice is effective, but also that it is the most cost-effective in relation to its alternatives (2003: 198).

Within New South Wales, RBA has been adopted as part of the state government's financial management framework with guidelines for government agencies to develop results and service plans incorporating a planning approach called results logics (NSW Treasury, 2006: 1). Accordingly, DoCS is currently introducing a new auditing process whereby the non-government organisations from which they purchase services are required to provide evidence that demonstrates how their work aligns with, and contributes to the attainment of DoCS results presented in the results logic

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[99] This interest was expressed both in a public address at the 'Steering Our Futures' conference in November 2006 and during a meeting between the research team and senior DoCS staff.

(Department of Community Services, 2007). This introduction of RBA into the community services field of practices in the Illawarra is a substantial change in accountability and auditing processes. RBA requires major shifts for individual community organisations and especially in relations between state government departments and community organisations.

Friedman's version of RBA

Both NSW treasury and all human services state government departments have specifically endorsed the North American approach to results-based accountability developed by Mark Friedman (Fletcher, 2007). RBA as articulated by Friedman is "a disciplined way of thinking and taking action" (2005: 11) to improve quality of life. It works backwards from the 'bottom line' up, from the results by which accountability can be ascertained, to the indicators and performance measures that provide evidence, to what might get to the evidence. In short, RBA "starts with ends and works backward step by step to means" (Friedman, 2005: 11).

For example, the RBA processes we observed involved large groups of people working collaboratively to come up with results for populations such as children, families, people living with a disability or whole communities. Results are phrased, for example, as 'children are ready for school' or 'safe and clean neighbourhoods'. During the RBA workshops, participants worked in groups of about 10 people to come up with quantitative indicators for each of the agreed results. Below is a photograph of a sample result 'turn the curve' report. These 'reports' produced in the small groups of participants are recorded on a single sheet of butcher's paper and presented to the large group.
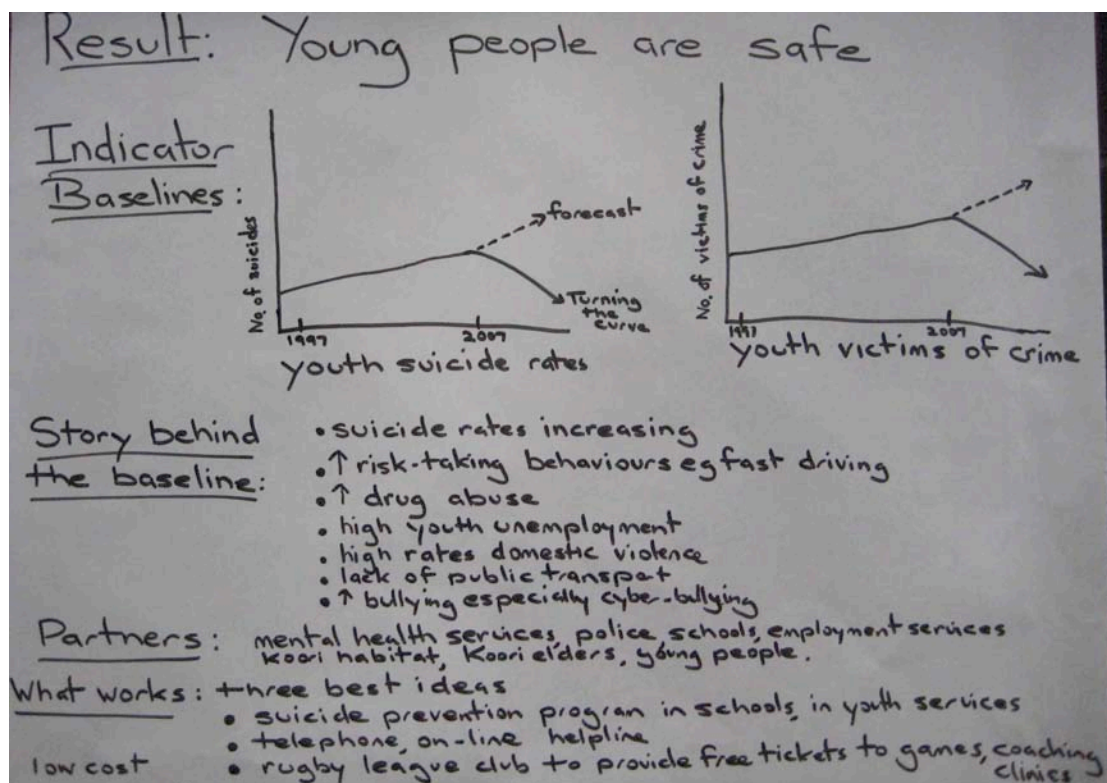
Figure 6: RBA 'turn the curve' result report

This image encapsulates many of the features of a Friedman RBA process. Participants typically work through a step-by-step process. First, they identify the results. Next, they select quantitative measures or indicators for each result and construct a baseline graph tracking an indicator with the history, a projected forecast, and the desired 'turning of the curve'. The factors and causes influencing the baseline are then discussed. The potential partners who have a stake in attaining the result are identified. The solutions, with the stipulation that at least two-thirds have to be low-cost, are chosen and finally a strategy and action plan is agreed (Friedman, 2005).

Friedman's RBA framework operates at two levels: performance accountability dealing with programs, agencies and service systems (2005: 65) and population accountability dealing with "whole populations in a community, city, county, state or nation" (2005: 39). RBA combines a means for co-ordinating effort with a performance measurement system. Friedman claims:

> The Results Accountability thinking process is arguably an underlying archetype that connects and unifies business planning models, public health planning models and other data-driven decision making models…

> RBA can be applied to any population challenge from the highest-level consideration of world peace to the economic prosperity of nations and states to the safety of children in a particular community. The same thought progression can be applied to any performance accountability challenge from the management of whole governments to large public and private sector agencies to the smallest program and finally to our personal lives. Results accountability may be the only planning framework of this scope (Friedman, 2005: 146).

Explicit in these claims for RBA and throughout Friedman's writing is the assumption that planning and measuring results has the capability to improve everything from *world peace* to *personal lives*. McAuley and Cleaver (2006) assert that there are undeniable benefits in paying attention not just to what organisations do but also to what they achieve. They, along with other proponents, argue RBA provides a common language and framework for making better judgements about the allocation of resources and for improving the well-being of individuals and communities.

Characteristics of Friedman's version of RBA

The concepts and ideas enmeshed in RBA originate in financial accounting.[100] Friedman himself, in conducting RBA training for community sector practitioners, repeatedly emphasised its links to finance and business during our observations:

> "You come up with a definition of success and move it to the top of the page. Business has been doing this for thousands of years… we don't bring this discipline to our work [in community services]. Everyone else does it except us… More businesslike. More businesslike means baselines, history and forecasts… We need a disciplined process to produce a measurable improvement" (Training RBA fieldnotes, 4/6/2007: 1-2).

These comments valorise business approaches and cast the community sector as needing discipline, as being behind the times, as needing to be more businesslike.

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[100] This is reflected in the name of the organisation Friedman has founded in the USA: The Fiscal Policy Studies Institute. More detailed information about the institute and Friedman's version of results-based accountability can be found at www.raguide.org and www.resultsaccountability.com.

Audit and accountability processes are a relationship of power between scrutiniser and observed in which, according to Shore and Wright, "the latter are rendered objects of information, not subjects of communication" (2000: 59). However, Friedman's version of RBA is different from more traditional audit, accountability and consultation processes in that it attempts to integrate performance measurement, collaborative planning and participatory decision-making.

Most RBA tools tend to focus on performance measures at the program level (Hatry, et al., 1996) or measures of community progress (Redefining Progress, 1997) at the population level with little attention on how to build the links between these levels. However, another distinguishing feature of Friedman's version of RBA is that it attempts to take seriously the link between program-level and community or population-level outcomes (Campbell, 2002).

Audit and accountability processes such as RBA "enrol various social mechanisms that confirm its internal efficacy" (Strathern, 2000a: 3). For instance, RBA tries to evaluate the results of practices without having to deal with the practices themselves. It is possible to go straight to the end-result and by-pass these other practices. RBA specifies, in advance, the form in which the results will be presented: graphs that plot percentage and numeric values. These graphs of indicators also represent 'baselines', 'forecasts' and 'turning the curve' (Friedman, 2005). In looking at outcome as output, RBA measures the 'effect' of practices. RBA may or may not be interested in the practices themselves. Arguably, RBA produces its own effect insofar as the report on results takes the form it itself creates (Strathern, 2000a).

Most of the organisations involved in our study engage in community development efforts and prevention-focused programs. The outcomes that these programs are designed to influence are often far into the future and beyond the community organisation's ability to reasonably collect data (Campbell, 2002). However, Strathern (2000a) explains accountability and audit processes like RBA have an inbuilt 'little gadget' that gets over this problem of accounting for outcomes such as the community connections and relationships developed over decades, the vibrancy of a neighbourhood, or the success of young people in their middle years of life:

> The gadget means that you don't have to wait a generation or two. You can speed up the process. It is very simple; you turn the system of measurements into a device that also sets the ideal level of attainment. In short audit measures become targets (Strathern, 2000a: 3).

The speeding up process is created by limiting the results of observation to data suitable for constructing performance measures. For example, in relation to community development practices, a simulacrum is created of what the community centre should be producing (what its results should be) through a graph, a plan and in the form of a set of performance measures or indicators. According to Friedman indicators are "measures that help quantify the achievement of a result [for example]... The crime rate helps quantify whether we are living in a safe community" (2005: 19-20). Thus in Friedman's view, indicators reveal an objective reality. The shaping of this same reality by the indicators is ignored in RBA. However, Tsoukas illustrates how indicators influence council behaviour in the United Kingdom, serving as "a spur for action" and influencing behaviour in particular directions (Tsoukas, 1998: 794).

The turning of indicators and performance measures into targets is evident throughout our RBA data. For example, in our observations of Friedman's RBA training, he urged participants to:

> "Take each of the measures, create a baseline that shows the history of performance and a forecast of where you are heading if you don't do anything differently"... "Use baselines to set targets. Put baseline charts on the wall... All managers should have these kind of baseline charts on their walls... put them up on the wall" (Training RBA, 4/6/2007: 3).

Translation of RBA into the community services domain

Most versions of RBA originate in North America (see for example, Friedman, 2005; Hatry, et al., 1996; Laverge, 2002; Newcomer, 1997; North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, 1997; Redefining Progress, 1997). Friedman's RBA has been used in over forty states in the USA as well as in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Ireland, Holland, Chile and Norway (Friedman, 2008; Friedman, Garnett, & Pinnock, 2005). Since RBA was introduced into the community services domain by senior policy-makers in NSW Treasury and state government human services agencies, its use has spread throughout the sector. DoCS has funded pilot projects with three peak

organisations – Local Community Services Association (LCSA), NSW Family Services Inc and Youth Action Policy Association – to train and facilitate the implementation of RBA into community organisations in NSW (Working Together for NSW Implementation Committee, 2008). Many large non-government organisations, such as Uniting Care Burnside (2006) and The Smith Family (2007), now use RBA as their planning and performance management framework. RBA provides a clear understanding of what overall results are sought for children, families and communities and what quantifiable improvements to well-being would be required to achieve them (McAuley & Cleaver, 2006). In our interviews, it was the focus on results rather than outputs in RBA that people in our study considered most useful.

Material-discursive practices shaping RBA processes

The focus in this section is on naming the multiple discourses and material-discursive practices discernable in the RBA data sets. These material-discursive practices converge, co-emerge and compete in defining what community services practice is about, what it is trying to achieve, and what counts as knowledge of individual and community well-being for RBA purposes. As detailed in Chapter 4, I adapted Sanguinetti's (1999) method of discourse mapping.

The function of this mapping in the thesis is to open the way for exploring: first, how RBA conceives of community services and knowledge and second, what happens when the local practices of social justice (discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7) are translated into RBA processes involving multiple communities of practitioners, organisations and institutions.

During our observations and reflective discussions of the practices in five community organisations, I noticed that many community sector workers identify with, and speak on behalf of a community, not as individual workers from a particular organisation (Gherardi, 2006). For example, a sole worker in a small community organisation commented about the practices of locally-based community organisations:

> Jaana: We sit close to them, often with a cup of coffee. It's not behind a closed window. We don't get them to fill out paper and most of the time we can spend as much time as that person wants with them. Most of the time. Some of the time we have to leave. But

we're respectful in the way we do that. So it's the whole setting,
our whole way – it's different, (sensemaking discussion,
12/9/2008: 6).

Here Jaana's use of *we* and *our* indicates she is speaking on behalf of a community of practitioners. She talks about their working practices by contrasting them to another unnamed community of practitioners [workers in government bureaucracies]. In this way she asserts the value of *our whole way* of practising over other ways of practising in the community services field of practices. Jaana's indirect criticisms of the working practices of government bureaucracies, enable her to position and legitimate her community of practice within the network of power/knowledge relations in the community services field of practices. Jaana's comments allude to the dissonant voices and various discourses on community services practices that Gherardi argues "interweave to form the texture which interconnects persons, communities, organisations and institutions" (2006: 194) within the community sector in the Illawarra.

Accordingly, I identify three discourses in the fieldwork data each of which express distinctive logics of action shaping community organisations: community organisations as working for social justice locally; community organisations as providing professional-quality helping services to individuals, families and communities; and community organisations as sub-contractors of government requiring co-ordination, alignment and monitoring of effort. These three frames of meaning and their associated material-discursive practices are clustered and re-presented graphically in the Venn diagram (Figure 8), as 'social justice' discourse, 'social service professional' discourse and 'neoliberal-audit' discourse. Although the intra-relations and overlaps between them are significant and constantly hybridising, it is helpful for the analysis to make these temporary boundary cuts. I could have distinguished and named further discourses, so this clustering is necessarily both arbitrary and generic.

I grouped the two main discourses constituting the community sector, historically and traditionally around two clusters of material-discursive practices, which I've termed 'social justice' and 'social service professional' discourse. They are not to be thought of as a binary pair as they evolved in close relationship with each other and significantly overlap in sticky knots of connection, in terms of the practices each tends to produce and embody. Each nevertheless is made up of and makes up a distinguishable set of traditions,

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practices, values and knowledges as discussed below. The 'neoliberal-audit' discourse was discernable throughout the fieldwork data in different ways. At times it could be seen as the discursive 'other' that structured the dialogue implicit within the community practitioners' reflective discussions about relationships with government and in their engagement with RBA. At other times, the 'neoliberal-audit discourse' entangled with both 'social justice' and 'professional social service' discourses. For instance, depicted in the Venn diagram on the next page are a number of concepts and practices through which all three discourses intersected in the RBA processes such as an emphasis on partnership and collaboration, 'good' practice and service provision. By way of underscoring these material-discursive differences, the built spaces and artefacts associated with each discourse are presented in the elaborations of each of the discourses.

Social justice discourse

'Social justice' discourse is strongly evident in our observations of RBA training and processes, in interview transcripts and in the artefacts collected. As illustrated in the Venn diagram, I cluster under 'social justice' a range of material-discursive practices and discourses drawn from the struggles of social movements such as gender, class, race, environmental, Indigenous and disability activism. Closely related are the material-discursive practices of advocacy, lobbying 'empowerment' and valuing diversity and difference. Also included are the intra-connected practices of community cultural development, networking, community management, localism, community education and prevention. In RBA processes the discourses of social justice and neoliberal-audit were threaded together by their joint emphasis on participatory decision-making and volunteers. This discourse of community organisations working locally for social justice is sedimented in physical artefacts. As we (I) immersed ourselves in the fieldwork, the 'look' of local community organisations constituted by and constituting this discourse was plain to see in their built spaces (Yanow, 2006b).[101] The locally-based community organisation is often in a typical, inner-city, domestic house, with a sign on the front wall and access ramps leading into the building. Inside, there are often posters on the wall depicting community issues, social justice 'causes', the Aboriginal flag, and

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[101] Photographs of the built spaces of the 'social justice' community organisations participating in our study are included on pages 120-122.
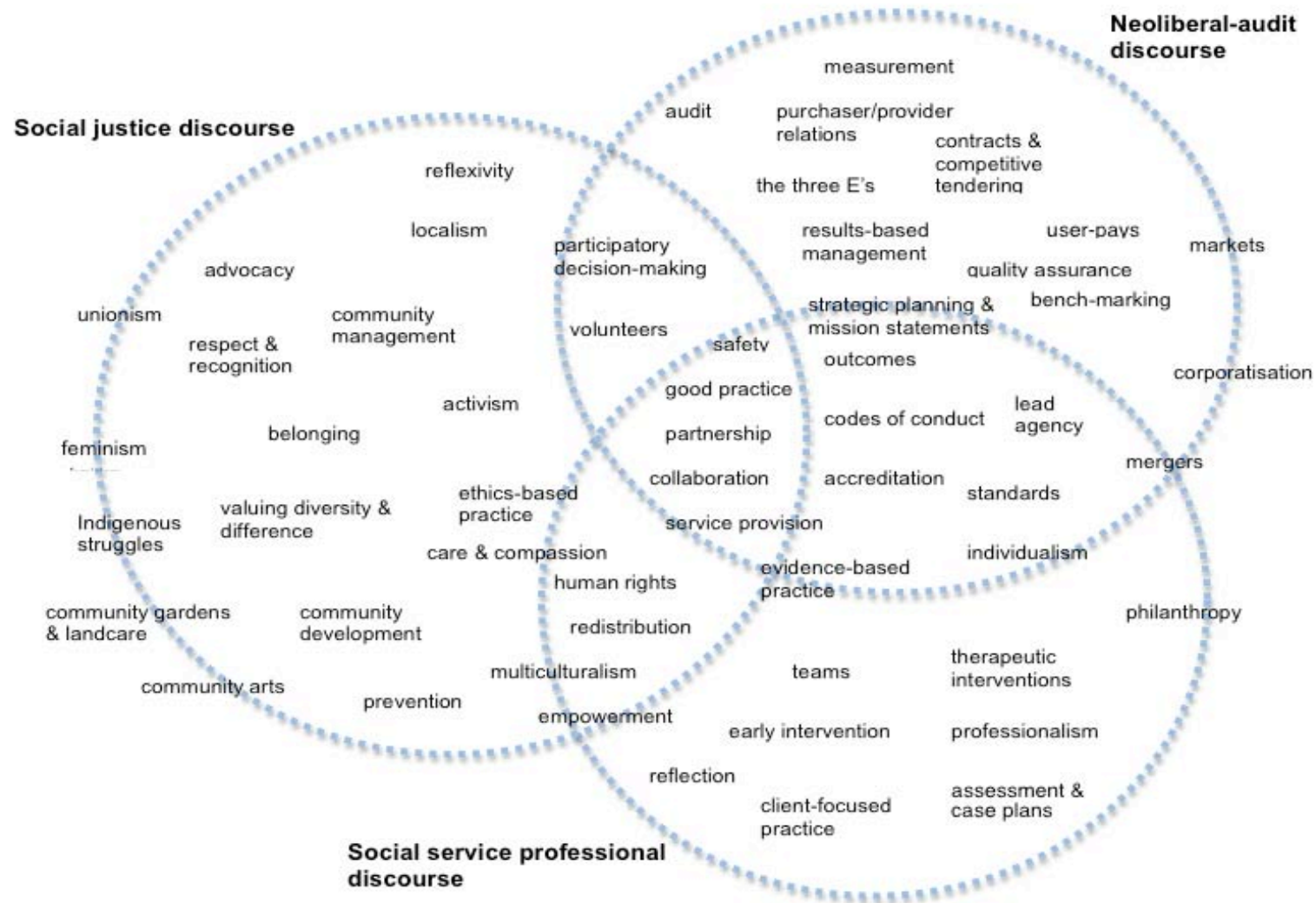
Figure 7: Intersecting and intra-acting material-discursive practices and discourses

photographs celebrating cultural diversity. The sharing of food and cups of tea/coffee is a ubiquitous and significant practice. The décor is often second-hand motley and frugal. The spaces of locally-based community organisations that have been purpose-built usually incorporate a large, cavernous community meeting hall with polished wood floors and a large kitchen. They are often layered with murals or sculptures depicting community life and struggles, produced by participants in community arts projects. The message materialised in the built spaces and artefacts is: 'we are in and with the community'.

Social service professional discourse

Also evident in our observations of RBA training and planning workshops, in interview transcripts and in the artefacts collected is evidence of discourses and practices that can be clustered under the collective term 'social service professional' discourse. These include an emphasis on assisting individuals and families fulfil their potential via client-centred practice, therapeutic interventions, early intervention, assessment and case plans. Such practices are supported through a focus on individualism, teamwork, professionalism, reflection, philanthropy and quality service provision. Some discourses and practices that intersect in the Venn diagram with the social justice discourse are multiculturalism, human rights, redistribution and an ethics of care and compassion. There is also substantial entanglement with neoliberal-audit discourse through the emphasis on evidence-based practice, professional codes of conduct, standards, accreditation, outcomes-focus, mission statements and strategic plans.

'Social service professional' discourse takes material form in the built spaces and artefacts of some large non-government organisations. For example, fieldnotes of observations at the Warrawong Community Centre, describe the offices of a nationally based non-government organisation adjacent:

> It is a modern architecturally-designed building. There is a large reception desk in a waiting area, and the décor quite plush, co-ordinated and uncluttered. The waiting room has comfortable patterned cloth chairs, a huge vase with artificial flowers, prints of 'impressionist' paintings on the wall, a pamphlet rack and magazines to read. It has a professional feel. The reception room is the barrier that separates the public area from the remainder of the building. There are signs about surveillance and security cameras in the window as you enter the building (WCC, 24/4/2007: 1).

In addition, the material-discursive practices of the 'social service professional' discourse require small, private rooms with doors, and produce a calm, quiet feel. The message conveyed is: 'we are here to provide a professional, confidential, helpful service to people, for the community'.

Neoliberal-audit discourse

I formed the third main grouping of discourses by collapsing the discourses and material-discursive practices of neo-liberalism and managerialism discussed in Chapter 1. Under this single generic category, I have clustered material-discursive practices often associated with bureaucratic organisation, evident in our RBA data sets such as quality assurance and control, audit, results-based management and results logic, inputs and outputs, benchmarking, monitoring, counting, measuring and purchaser/provider relations. Another grouping of material-discursive practices often associated with business are also included – corporatisation, user pays, markets, competition, contracting and tendering and the three E's of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Venn diagram illustrates both the significant entanglements with 'social-service professional' discourse and the more distinct boundary separation with 'social justice' discourse.

The government agencies enmeshed in 'neoliberal-audit' discourse are often located in large public buildings (usually concrete, metal and glass), with automatic glass doors, a gleaming floor and a large entry desk with a checking in and out system. Access to various offices is usually by lift and often restricted by way of an electronic swipe card. Décor is colour co-ordinated. Office and information technologies are given a prominent place. The office spaces often consist of open plan areas with workstations as well as individual offices with doors. Allocation of office spaces often reflects the management hierarchy. The message manifested in the buildings and artefacts is: 'we are organised, efficient, controlled and we govern for the community'.

These broad-brush depictions illustrate that community services is a complex, contradictory, hybridising material-discursive field. Gherardi explains every discourse has a corresponding "entrenched texture of alliances, which facilitate the translation and mobilization of knowledge and modes of knowing" (Gherardi, 2006: 195). Such alliances are strongly evident in our fieldwork data,

especially in the discussions of the Community Services Action Research Group (CSARG) and in reflective-discussions with community sector workers.

The following section analyses the conception of knowledge embedded in RBA and how this conception aligns and entangles with the discourses and material-discursive practices outlined above.

RBA: A technology of representation

In this section I argue first, that a representationalist conception of knowledge is embedded in RBA. Second, I show how RBA is a technology of representation and, finally, I discuss how RBA's conception of knowledge contrasts, aligns and converges with the discourses and material-discursive practices depicted in the previous section.

RBA and the representationalist conception of knowledge

In contrast to the performative view we observed when focusing on the practices of locally-based community organisations (Chapters 5, 6 and 7), RBA is premised on a representational view of knowledge. It is not surprising, that RBA adheres to representationalism as this view is deeply entrenched in Western culture so as to appear natural (Rouse, 1996). For instance, all three discourses outlined in the previous section subscribe to representationalism. Although 'social justice' discourse tends to be embedded in a social constructionist perspective and 'neoliberal-audit' discourse tends to be embedded in a realist world-view, proponents of both discourses assume the independently determinate existence of words and things, and that knowledge (in its multiple representational forms such as theoretical concepts models, frameworks, graphs, statistics etc) mediates our access to the world (Barad, 2007).

Within this 'representational idiom', Pickering argues, people appear as shadows of themselves and their practices become abstracted (1995: 6). Certainly, in both the RBA processes I observed, participants appeared like Pickering's 'disembodied intellects,' making knowledge in a field of data, facts, results, observations, graphs and language. From a representational perspective, knowledge takes the form of independent cognitive representations of the world. Representationalism assumes an ontological

distinction between representations and the entities they represent (Barad, 2007). 'Facts' are segregated from 'value' and 'context' and this is achieved by cutting the boundary so as to remove from view the material-discursive practices from which this knowledge is generated (Latour, 1999; Rouse, 1999; Tanesini, 1999). There is, therefore, an assumption that what is represented is independent of all the practices of representing. The eschewal of the often somewhat messy practices and processes involved in producing, using and circulating knowledge enables cognitive representations to be conceived as a simple mirror onto the world (Healy, 2004).

RBA as a technology of representation

A representational perspective clearly saturates RBA with its emphasis on performance measures and indicators that represent results, which in turn represent the effects of practices. Friedman, in both the training we observed and his writing, explains:

> Once a set of results and indicators has been developed, it is possible to create an annual report card for a city, county, state or nation. Looking at this kind of report card is like looking in a mirror. People see whether the community's quality of life is getting better or worse (Friedman, 2005: 59).

By naturalising RBA as representational, *a mirror,* Friedman obscures the status of RBA "as itself a form of culturally and historically situated activity, manifested in specific practices and associated artefacts" (Suchman, 2007: 187). The privilege traditionally afforded to 'fact' over 'value' by representationalist views of knowledge is threaded through RBA. For example, in both Friedman's written work (2001; 2005) and in our observations of his training practices, he acknowledges stories, experiences and anecdotal evidence as valuable. However, such data is positioned as less important and segregated from the 'facts of the matter' and numeric measures. For example, a senior, government-agency officer, while training community sector practitioners in RBA emphasised, during our observations:

> "You can't just use qualitative data, you need quantitative data, not just stories… it can't be just hearsay, you need an evidence base… You can use qualitative data but you have to plot it as trends over years" (Training RBA fieldnotes, 18/4/2007: 1).

Later in the same training session, I noted:

> The whole group struggled to come up with any already existing data that would be relevant for this result [community leadership]. When

participants suggested people's experience and stories might be data that they could easily collect, the trainer commented: "It would only be anecdotal evidence. It's not quantitative". Another participant asked: "Does qualitative data count? The trainer replied: "You can use qualitative data but only as a supplement to quantitative data" (Training RBA fieldnotes, 18/4/2007: 4).

Here the privileging of quanta, evident in Friedman's RBA framework, is compounded and institutionalised by the state government representative's devaluing of qualitative evidence. There is an insistence that rich description of the situated and experiential must be, as Healy notes, "codified in a form analogous to the decontextualised, representationally encrypted form characteristic of expert knowledge in order to be credible" (2009: 1646).

The representationalist character of RBA is also evident in the following comments by Friedman in an interview conducted by a peak body for community organisations. In comparing RBA with other results models, he explained:

> A logic model process is a kind of mental model, but it's an incomplete and ultimately flawed model. Results Accountability is also a mental model about how the universe works. Once people understand this way of thinking they can more clearly see a useful way to organise their work... You have to take out the flawed mental model chip and insert a new chip which, is a much richer model of how the world works and then you'll be more successful in solving the problems. So that's my job, to help remove the old chip and insert a new one (Friedman & Handley, 2008: 26-27).

In Friedman's comments, RBA is presented as a cognitive technology of representation (a *mental model chip*) that underscores the Cartesian division between the 'internal' (*the mental model*) and the 'external' (*world/universe*) (Rouse, 1996).

RBA, representationalism and the community services field of practices

As a representational practice, RBA excludes unpredictability, chaos, not knowing, disconnections and the unmeasurable. Instead, "it carves out its own domain of what is going to count as description" (Strathern, 2000a: 4). For example, in an RBA training session we observed the group were trying to come up with measures for a program aimed at community strengthening by supporting local community leaders. The government-agency, RBA trainer decided that a good "low cost measure" would be to give "the community leaders an online examination after they had completed the program to measure their knowledge" (Training RBA fieldnotes, 18/4/2007: 5). In this way, the RBA trainer translated the practices and qualities of community leadership

into an entity and came up with a proxy measure (Power, 2004: 775), an examination, to represent community leadership.

However, it is the capacity to deal with unpredictability, to engage with the disconnections which mean that we live in multiple worlds, and to embrace being in a space of not knowing, of not knowing what is going to emerge or could become, that we observed as characteristic of practices in locally-based community organisations (discussed in Chapters 6 and 7). The community organisations participating in this study value the ephemeral and that which escapes representation. Our observations are confirmed in comments by the co-ordinator of the Multicultural Women's Network:

> Trish: It connects with that stuff that I was saying about the chaos of it. But there is a risk in that. That you don't know. You don't know where exactly this is all going. But there's something really exciting about it at the same time… Because you can see that people are very engaged. Even though they don't know exactly where it's all going… In the moment there's meaning. It's a very creative state to be in, to not know… To know that you're having to be in a process of discovering that as you go. It feels very alive to be doing things that way (MWN, 19/6/2007: 15).

These practices of community cultural development, identified earlier as material-discursive practices in the 'social justice discourse', do not set out to measure accomplishments in the hopes of improving the product. Its open-ended exploratory processes are better suited to story telling and rich descriptions. The community cultural development workers we observed are involved in an ongoing inquiry process, asking: What is becoming? What patterns are emerging from these descriptions, these stories?

> It's about being in a process and just kind of seeing connections, seeing connections between things, seeing shapes starting to emerge (MWN, 19/6/2007: 7).

The community cultural development workers know that they cannot always tell in advance and, most often, do not want to tell in advance. Community cultural development practices are entangled with the unplanned, the unpredictable and the co-emergent as is evident in the following conversation between members of the Network:

> Trish: Collaborative creativity … I mean it's become a process of the way we think and do things together … where we're gathering, gathering and we're getting excited. And there's always a point and it happened last Friday and often Lara is the one who gets to

> that point first. She goes, "So what's going to happen with all of this?"[Laughter] [Over speaking]

Flavia: "Where are we going?"

Maria: But it's about the journey more than the destination. It is beautiful that gathering journey because it's through that gathering that everybody gets to know so much about each other and each other's culture. (MWN, 30/5/2007: 21-22).

In this conversation, the Network members describe how they use *collaborative creativity* in crossing cultures. Community cultural development practices refuse a single context or narrative. On the contrary, these practices embody peoples' stories and activities as they cross cultures and thereby "create heterogeneous social worlds" (Strathern, 2000a: 4) together.

The practices of community cultural development do not require a common language in advance to enable communication between people. From these gathering intra-actions come both divergence and commonality in women's trajectories. From these differences comes much of the creativity and energy of their practices. Trust in the process and the living relations they have with one another make this possible.

The transcript above illustrates the significant differences in the logics-in-action that co-exist in the discourses and material-discursive practices identified earlier in our RBA data sets. 'Neoliberal-audit' discourse tends to be privileged within the RBA processes we observed, particularly the training session facilitated by the senior government-agency officer and in DoCS documentation relating to the introduction of RBA into the services it funds. As a technology of representation, RBA has the capability to turn aspects of community organisations' knowing and practising into forms of information that "are stable, mobile, combinable and comparable" (Miller & Rose, 1990: 7). This capability of representation is arguably consistent with the imperatives of the 'neoliberal-audit' governmentalities. It renders aspects of the local community sector known and re-presented to the 'centre' (state-government department, senior decision-makers and ministers), thereby enabling the 'centre' "to establish control over and convey its preferences to" community sector organisations (Ballas & Tsoukas, 2004: 677).

The emphasis in RBA placed on measuring outcomes for children, families and communities and verifying the effectiveness or otherwise of service provision was a strong theme in our interviews and the documentation of RBA. These aspects of RBA are compatible with the 'social service professional' discourse and the related practices of providing quality services based on the best available evidence.

The capacity to combine measurement practices with participatory planning and partnership when using RBA facilitates the material-discursive practises of neoliberal-audit discourse to thread through and entangle with both the 'social justice' and 'social service professional' discourse. In our field observations, RBA is experienced by the research participants as simultaneously democratic and participatory (for example, the community development and community care planning workshops) and as controlling and autocratic (DoCS decision that all the community organisations its funds must align and adopt the DoCS headline result). RBA appeared not as a stable technology of representation with definite boundaries. Instead, there were multiple versions of RBA (Mol, 1999). RBA was performed and emerged quite differently in various intra-actions in the community services field of practices.

Simultaneously, it is arguable that as a technology of representation, RBA also shapes the discourse of performance in community organisations into standardised reporting forms. RBA shapes how knowledge of local people and community well-being is translated and circulates in the complex network of relations in the community services domain. It is RBA's role as a material-discursive apparatus of performance measurement that is, therefore, discussed in the following section.

RBA: A material-discursive apparatus of measurement

Like all measuring apparatuses, RBA selects aspects of the world for measurement – the world does not present itself in performance measurement terms. These have to be abstracted from far more complex practices. Such processes of abstraction include procedures of simplification and standardisation involving "matters of judgment, priority, choice and interpretation" (Healy, 2004: 192). Through RBA, practices and activities are necessarily decontextualised for the purposes of quantification. Results and

performance measures are disentangled from the complexity of organisational and community life. Power explains: "measurement is based on classification systems that ignore 'inessential' differences and reduce complexity" (Power, 2004: 767).

Calculative practices of complexity reduction

This field study shows how intra-action with RBA translates quality into quantity. Statistics enable the taming of the emergent character of practice in community organisations, thus making the world more controllable (Ballas & Tsoukas, 2004; Hacking, 1975). For example, Friedman (2005) advocates using what he terms 'composite measures' to make qualities such as community vibrancy and development more concrete, graphable and controllable. Composite measures are often also referred to as second-order measures in the literature (Morgan, 2001; Power, 2004). Friedman explains the process:

> The first step is to list all of the characteristics of a vibrant neighbourhood or a developed country. Second, rate each characteristic on an appropriate scale from good to bad. Third, collapse these ratings into a single number by counting the percent of characteristics that rate in the highest categories… We used this method with a large city community foundation that was working with low-income neighbourhoods to help them become 'thriving neighbourhoods'… [After using the composite measures method] We had given an operational definition to a thriving neighbourhood and created a rough way to measure progress. This rating could be plotted as a point on a baseline (Friedman, 2005: 129).

Here Friedman creates a scoring and grading system to measure intangibles, like community vibrancy. Power argues such systems translate qualities into quantities by means of a "code switch in which numeric rankings as pseudo-quanta are aggregated to create a 'score'… It gives measurement systems an 'invented' accuracy which reflects wider cultural anxieties and the need for numbers" (2004: 776). Friedman's example illustrates that the ambition of RBA as an accountability and performance measurement apparatus is to translate qualities, such as thriving neighbourhoods or vibrant communities into quanta capable of further aggregation, calculation and graphing. Transforming complex ineffable qualities into simple rankings, score cards and graphable trends is seductive in providing a sense of control over what can be experienced as an unmanageable world. Such apparent control that numbers provide can be

extremely useful in galvanising people to take action. Both Friedman's training and writing have many examples of 'success stories' of people using RBA to 'turn the curve' (Friedman, 2005).

Power argues:

> The simplicity of a measurement system, which can represent the performance of an entire organization in a balance sheet on one page… is at the heart of this dream of a final and ultimate commensurability. It is as if the reduction of complexity is valued for its own sake as the basis for a shared language to support decision making and for a distinctive policy style (Power, 2004: 774).

This emphasis on simplicity was a dominant theme in all our RBA data. Friedman repeatedly presented the model as "simple" and "common sense". "It can be done in an hour" with "minimum paper", on "a single page" and "in plain language" (Training RBA fieldnotes, 4/6/2007). In the RBA planning workshops we observed, the value of simplicity was also emphasised: "The model is very simple, anybody can use it for just about anything." The RBA workshop participants were encouraged to "use simple speak"; "use plain talk" and "make a list that the person off the street could understand." (RBA workshops fieldnotes, August-November, 2007). This emphasis on simplicity, common sense and plain language combined with the promise of verification are some of the main attractions to using Friedman's version of RBA evident both in our fieldwork data and in written accounts (see for example, McAuley & Cleaver, 2006).

However, some of the difficulties and dangers of using the type of composite measures discussed above are articulated by Shore (2008) in his empirical example of the 'quality star rating' system introduced into universities in the United Kingdom. He argues the allocation of individual scores to each academic was punitive, unfair and caused stress and anxiety. During our fieldwork, an experience of RBA created similar anxiety and was perceived as unfair by the organisations participating in our study.

DoCS (the funding body) decided to assess whether the services it funds align with the new headline result for the funding program. Using RBA, DoCS had previously determined the headline result. DoCS then engaged a consultant, the

international audit firm Ernst and Young, to assess whether the non-government and community organisations it funds align with the new result for the program. Ernst and Young did not, however, directly evaluate the services and activities of community organisations in relation to the new result. Instead, they made their assessment of alignment by comparing the new result to each organisation's report of achievements (the performance measure template of outputs and outcomes that DoCS requires services to submit). DoCS and Ernst and Young employed second-order measurement, that is, a measure (the report on outcomes and outputs performance) was used to assess alignment to a measure (the new result). However, the DoCS performance measures template of outputs and outcomes was not itself designed to align with the new headline result since it had already been in use for several years prior to the setting of the new result for the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP). The results of the alignment assessment process stated that 94.52% of the funded services did not fully align to the result of the program (Department of Community Services, 2007). Each organisation was informed of their individual results in an alignment report and was 'reassured' that:

> If services do not initially align with the results expected from CSGP [the funding program], DoCS will work with them to ensure alignment over a reasonable period of time or assist with the move of these services to other, more appropriate funding programs (Department of Community Services, 2007: 2).

As the community organisations are reliant on these funds to ensure the financial viability of the organisation, this alignment assessment resulted in anxiety, distrust, fear of job losses and suspicion of DoCS intentions. Yet, ironically as a 'measure of a measure' the only valid conclusion, I argue, that DoCS could reliably make on the basis of the results of this alignment assessment was that its own current performance measures do not necessarily align to the new desired result. As an alignment assessment of the programs, practices and 'target' groups of the funded community organisations, I would argue it was methodologically flawed and technically meaningless. As the findings of this alignment process were formalised and distributed across the network of funded services, the finding became cut off from its original 'imperfect database', was mobilised in an unqualified form and is now being used as the basis of new interventions in community organisations (Power, 2004). These new interventions began with discussions between a Community

Programs Officer, (the DoCS officers responsible for managing the relationship with the organisations funded by the CSGP) and individual community organisations in relation to the assessment of their alignment to the new headline result. Following these discussions, some of the organisations participating in this study were alarmed about the potential impact of the alignment assessment on their future survival. However, these interventions were abruptly interrupted when the state government announced a royal commission to investigate the statutory work of the Department of Community Services (DoCS). Consequently, community organisations funded by the CSGP have been left wondering whether DoCS intends to resume efforts to align funded organisations and cease providing grants to those organisations that the assessment deemed do not align.

Not just peering, interfering[102]

In contrast to the alignment assessment process, discussed in the previous section, Friedman (2005; Friedman & Handley, 2008) stresses that it is important not to let accountability and performance measurement methods interfere with the service. In short, according to its originator, RBA should peer not interfere. Friedman's advice is based on the view that performance measurements reveal pre-existing values of the properties of independently existing services as separate from the measuring agencies (Barad, 2007). However, from a performative, relational perspective, RBA cannot be an apparatus to peer and measure innocently, from a distance. Rather, it is part of the performance measuring apparatus intra-acting and shaping the phenomena that becomes (Barad, 2007). RBA, a complex of material-discursive practices, constrains and enables what can and cannot be said. RBA is what Barad refers to as "a boundary-drawing practice" (2007: 140) intra-acting in the community services field of practices, iteratively reconfiguring that which is included and excluded from mattering, productive of and part of what materialises. From a performative, relational perspective, RBA as a material-discursive apparatus of measurement has no intrinsic boundaries but is an open-ended dynamic of practices (Barad, 2003, 2007). Yet, these boundary-making practices of RBA are implicitly acknowledged by Friedman: "Performance accountability draws fences around the thing to be measured" (Friedman, 2001: 3.3).

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[102] This phrase is adapted from Hacking's (1983) "Don't just peer, interfere".

There is much anxiety expressed in the literature about the push to measure everything and the current prevailing 'trust in numbers' (Campbell, 2002; Fischer, 2001; Power, 1997; Shore, 2008; Strathern, 2000b). This anxiety is also expressed by some of the community practitioners in our study. For example, the co-ordinator of the Multicultural Women's Network discussing RBA commented:

> Trish: Results. Yeah. I can already see that they can start to distort a process and distort your kind of way of thinking about it and ultimately how you might do things. That you might end up doing things in a way that no longer has those results, precisely because you're trying to do it to achieve those results. Do you know what I mean? (MWN, 19/6/2007: 23)

Here Trish identifies one of the potential dangers of calculative practices such as RBA. They can distort the character of what they claim to measure. Power concurs arguing performance measurement systems can have "perverse consequences [as they] tend to make visible and valuable only a part of a complex whole" (2004: 774). Measurement systems can thereby create conditions that erode the very activities being measured. They risk inducing those being scrutinised to focus on the measures as targets to be managed (Power, 2004: 774).

The undermining effects of a new outcomes-based accountability and audit regime[103] were keenly felt at Southern Youth and Family Services:

> Julia: I think there are some [of the previous] government's accountability processes that are working detrimentally against relationships with young people… the youth workers are locked into how many numbers they've got to get and how they've got to do it. Their diary is controlled by Centrelink and they have removed – government has, I believe, quite deliberately removed any capacity for community development, training infrastructure support, all that.

> Felicity: It goes back to what we were talking about earlier about the client contact as well. At the moment because we do have to have all this data all these numbers and everything It's constantly looking at numbers. I dream of the data, the numbers at night. It's all I see and yeah the quality and depth of the client contact has really declined in the last couple of months because of the pressure of the data and monitoring requirements… It's harder to keep that

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[103] This reflective discussion was conducted in September 2007, a couple of months before the last Australian Federal Government elections. The accountability and monitoring system discussed was introduced by the previous Liberal conservative government. SYFS is hopeful that the Labor Government will change the accountability performance measures and funding contracts. Indeed, the Federal Government has announced an inquiry into these matters that is being conducted by the Productivity Commission (2009).

relationship and the trust going within the strict monitoring requirements (SYFS, 12/9/2007: 29-30).

The participants argue that the accountability and monitoring requirements of a program designed to assist homeless and at-risk young people to obtain employment or participate in education and training programs, is paradoxically making it more difficult to engage with and build relationships with homeless and at risk young people. In effect, the accountability requirements and performance measures have arguably become 'fatal remedies' (Sieber, 1981).

In this example, the turning of outcomes (results) into targets, far from simply mapping reality, pushes the organisation towards a form of organising where they have appointments with young people in the office for set periods of time, rather than their usual practice of meeting them in informal settings with more open-ended time frames. The experience of Southern Youth and Family Services supports Tsoukas's (1998) view that pre-determined indicators shape organisations:

> towards the bureaucratic form of organization… Holding an organization accountable on the basis of how well it achieves certain targets… tends to push the organization to formalize the behaviour of its members and centralize its functioning, in order to make sure it conforms to outside expectations (Tsoukas, 1998: 794-795).

Participants from Southern Youth and Family Services are not opposed to accountability requirements based on outcomes. Their critique concerns how dimensions of their performance as youth workers and managers are constructed by calculative practices in ways that, they claim, are not conducive to achieving the program outcomes themselves:

> Julia: We've always kept outcome data long before other agencies did and long before it was popular; we've been doing that for 15 years… We believe we can prove through *our data* that the extra push for employment and all those things has not made any difference but we have diminishing relationships, diminishing confidence with the young people, diminishing ability to form relationships, those sorts of things. So in spite of data and evidence we have [had] a government that pursues a particular thing, a particular way (SYFS, 12/9/2007: 35).

The CEO's comments indicate that, in her view, the performance monitoring system is more concerned with defining performance and modifying the behaviour of both young people and youth workers in the interests of control

than in representing phenomena neutrally. Performance measures, Power explains, "trade on the cultural acceptance (if not trust) of numbers to change visibilities, to construct accountabilities and to challenge existing practice (Power, 2004: 776).

Other community organisations in our study are also 'tripping up' over, what Power (2004) refers to as, the 'perverse' effects of performance measurement. During our observations of an RBA process, one of the study participants explained the effect of specified, output-based, performance measures on community care services:

> For example a family tell us what they would really like is to be able to have a weekend away with the whole family, rather than respite care for a weekend. But the performance indicator is the number of respite hours delivered. That's what counts (Comm. Care RBA, 20/9/2007: 4).

This situation means that to improve their performance according to the funding body, the service has to provide the family with more of what they do not want. Tsoukas (1994) describes a very similar self-defeating specification of performance indicators in the provision of meals for the elderly by local councils in the United Kingdom.

It appears that both performance measurement systems that turn pre-determined results into targets and those that rely on tightly specified output measures can have similar effects. Both adhere to a representational conception of knowledge that encourages instrumental action and bureaucratic organisation (Tsoukas, 1998). Such performance measurement apparatus risk shaping locally-based community organisations in the image of the funding bureaucracy.

Interchange Illawarra ensures that performance accountability to funding bodies does not take precedence over their accountability and reponse-ability to families by creatively swerving around the electronic surveillance, output monitoring and reporting system. For example, the Interchange Illawarra workers explained their response to a new risk assessment requirement that they do a reconnaissance to fully assess the environment and identify potential risks in advance, before taking a group of service participants on an outing or activity. Sam explained:

> The requirement is cost prohibitive and time prohibitive. I mean we just
> couldn't possibility do it (Interchange, 12/6/2007: 49).

James, the peer support program co-ordinator commented that the new requirement to do the risk assessment in advance was itself the greatest risk to the peer and social support program (Interchange, 12/6/2007: 49). In response to this new requirement Interchange Illawarra developed a 'community access backpack' that contains all the equipment to safely clean up needles and condoms found in the environment, a first aid kit, sunscreen, waterless soap, as well as medical and other information about each service participant going on the outing. This strategy, of supplying backpacks for every activity, enables Interchange Illawarra to swerve around the pre-assessment requirement while demonstrating they are fulfilling their duty of care obligations.

As an 'autonomous' community organisation with multiple accountabilities, Interchange Illawarra places trust in the local experiential knowledge of the families accessing their service. Interchange Illawarra experience the prescriptive and necessarily reductionist nature of the performance measurement system as misguided. Indeed, rather than a helpful compass to keep their efforts on target, they argue, the current accountability instrument would steer them off course. Rather than responding to these "disciplinary practices of surveillance" and control in terms of either compliance or resistance (Iedema, Rhodes, & Scheeres, 2006: 1111), the strength of Interchange Illawarra's relationships with families enables them to adapt and 'duck' around these bureaucratic requirements.

These analyses illustrate that apparatuses of performance measurement, such as RBA, are both powerful and contingent and do not necessarily have the intended effect of improving outcomes for service users. When RBA, itself an apparatus produced and re-configured in intra-action, intra-acts in the complex material-discursive field of community services, differential boundaries are drawn. These boundaries are "always accompanied by particular exclusions and always open to contestation" (Barad, 2007: 153). Such a view of RBA begs investigation of what its relations to unrepresented practices might be (Suchman, 2007). It is these exclusions and inclusions, what got foregrounded and backgrounded in the RBA intra-actions, processes and documentation that we accessed in the fieldwork, that are explored in the next section.

What gets included and excluded from mattering?

RBA, like any other measuring apparatus makes boundary cuts, so what got included and excluded from mattering during intra-action constituted by and constitutive of RBA? What happened to the local practices of social justice that community sector workers make and re-make in their everyday/everynight work lives (discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7)?

RBA and material-discursive practices of social justice

How social justice practices materialised in the RBA data sets is complex. It varied enormously during intra-action with different institutions and stakeholders in the community services domain. For example, when DoCS applied RBA to the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP), they developed a new result for the funding program: "Disadvantaged children, young people, families and disadvantaged communities are resilient and safe" (DoCS Results Logic Flow Chart for the CSGP, 2008). In this result, I argue that both the discourse and material-discursive practices of social justice are excluded from mattering. Instead, in the DoCS result, responsibility is displaced onto individuals and communities themselves to become resilient and safe. However, significantly this result ignores the need for change in the context and social structures that both contribute to disadvantage and to the need for resilience.

In contrast, social justice was not excluded from mattering in the community care and community development RBA workshops or in the documentation of the written plans that were produced. For example, the target population and results from the community development RBA planning workshops are listed in the following table:

Population	People living in the Illawarra
Results	Good health and wellbeing (including environment)
	Educated
	Safe, caring and connected
	Fair and equitable
	Values diversity
	Economically just (including income, employment, housing)

Table 1: RBA target population and results areas

(Community Development Population Planning Report, 2007: 1)

In this list, the responsibility and possibilities for change are not individualised but also located in social structures and the environment, as illustrated in the result *economically just* above. This list fits clearly within the intersection of the 'social justice' and 'social services professional' discourses depicted earlier in this chapter.

However, the social justice practices of local community organisations evident in our observations and reflective discussions were enacted quite differently during intra-action with RBA involving multiple stakeholders in the community services domain. Perhaps, not surprisingly, in the list detailed above, social justice becomes an end state, results to be achieved, on the scale of the mega and the measurable. One of the workers at Warrawong Community Centre commented:

> Sometimes it's 5 minutes, 5 minutes of feeling respected, of feeling valued
> in someone's life, sometimes it's just being really listened to, what sort of
> result is that? (WCC, 24/4/2007: 4)

The worker points to the different 'modes of ordering' (Law, 1994), different logics and discourses that co-exist in the community sector and in RBA. What is "reduced or effaced in one may be crucial" to others (Mol & Law, 2002: 11). The on-going efforts to contribute to respect in the co-emergence of relations we had observed, faded into undifferentiated background in the privileging of measurable and temporally determinate results in RBA. Community practitioners struggled to work out how to account for the importance of relationships. During observations of RBA training, I noted:

> Brett gave the example of taking 18 months to effectively engage an
> Aboriginal family struggling with severe domestic violence. "How would I
> measure that?" he asked. "These measures are reportable on a yearly basis.
> But it took years to see the result" (Training RBA fieldnotes, 18/4/2007: 2).

Here Brett grapples with the different notions of temporality that co-exist in RBA and in the practices of community organisations. He struggles with the speeding up processes that are characteristic of RBA (discussed earlier) and the dilemmas that arise in relation to accountability reporting to funding bodies.

Some of the social justice practices of inclusion and belonging, such as importance of 'not providing a service' and paying attention to what goes on between people that were strong themes in our fieldwork with community

organisations (discussed in Chapter 6), did not materialise in any of the recorded RBA data. In both our observations of Friedman's RBA training and in an interview he had with the peak body, he emphasised that performance accountability and measurement is always about a *particular service*. For example:

> In performance accountability, you start with the service that you are talking about. Once you have identified the particular service then you can identify your customers, the people you actually serve, and you can identify measures of how the service is working for them, and use those measures to track and improve performance" (Friedman & Handley, 2008: 7).

In this boundary cut that measures service provision, RBA excludes from mattering all the practices that cannot be constituted as 'a service'. Yet, these practices were identified as crucial in contributing to peoples' struggles over recognition, belonging and living justly.

The emphasis in RBA on the outcomes of service provision also renders opaque the possibilities created by the way the service is delivered. For example, community management, the governance model of most community organisations involved in our study, offers the possibility of participation. Not every young person involved in Southern Youth and Family Service participates on the board but inclusion as a possibility signals to young people that the value of their voice and participation is welcome and recognised.

In these examples there is "disattention to whatever exceeds the frame through which recognizable persons, things and processes are made visible" (Suchman, 2007: 202) in RBA. How did it happen that attention to what goes on between people, to the relations between actors (both human and non-human) also disappeared in the RBA processes of data gathering, establishing baselines and indicators we observed? Below are two examples of indicators and performance measures for similar results. The first table shows the indicators identified in the Community Development RBA workshops for the result 'Safe, caring and connected' and the second shows the performance measures for DoCS-funded community centres in relation to the client group and result 'Isolated people are connected to their families, services and their local community'.

Result
The community of people living in the Illawarra is safe, caring and connected
Indicators
# of individual reports of social cohesion
Reduced rates of hospital reported unintentional injury
Confirmed rates of child abuse
Confirmed rates of domestic violence
Reduced rates of road related injury and death
Reduced rates of workplace injury
and % of people report feeling safe
Increase in uptake of services & participation in community activities
and % of older people feel safe using public transport at night

Table 2: Proposed indicators for the result 'Safe, caring and connected'

(Community Development RBA Population Planning Report, 2007: 13)

Primary target group & result	Performance Measures
Isolated people are connected to their families, to services and to the local community	**How much?** # of isolated clients accessing the Centre's services/activities/ programs **How well?** % of isolated clients actively involved in Centre activities/services # of clients participating for the first time in any Centre activity/ services **Is anyone better off?** Improvement in clients' satisfaction with feeling part of their community % of clients who report a new connection as a result of their participation Improvement in clients' satisfaction with whole of life

Table 3: Proposed performances measures for the result 'Isolated people are connected to their families, to services and to the local community'

(Draft performance accountability plan for community services developed by LCSA and funded by DOCS in NSW, 2007: 1)

In both tables, the identified performance measures/indicators capture outcomes for individuals and entities expressed in terms of numbers and percentages. RBA, with emphasis on quantification, is a good means for measuring and graphing 'entities', such as the *number of isolated clients accessing the Centre's services* or *reduced rates of hospital reported unintentional injury.* However, as these tables demonstrate in the measures named, RBA intra-actions are less successful in translating what goes on between people, the relations and practices *between* actors. Even though both results are concerned with peoples' sense of connection and belonging, none of the measures address these phenomena directly.

Our data suggests that the more agencies of observation and measurement focus on the properties of individual entities, the more information is given up on the nature of what goes on between actors. The converse is also the case. For example, in the first phase of our study we employed ethnographic methods to document the practices of community organisations. These agencies of observation provided rich accounts about what goes on between actors in community organisations but almost no quantifiable, overview information, in terms of numbers and percentages. Our data demonstrates that when using performance measurement frameworks that privilege quanta and measurable outcomes for entities, there is a necessary trade-off in relation to the fading from view of practices, relations and entanglements between entities.

Language simplification and the emergent character of practice

In the RBA planning workshops, in which the fieldwork was conducted, we observed the emphasis on plain language results, discussed earlier, combined with the discursive effects of 'neoliberal-audit' discourse and 'social service professional' discourse to exclude the uncertain and emergent character of practice (discussed in Chapter 7). During observations of the community care RBA workshops, small groups were asked to brainstorm results for the target population, and then after each group reported back to the large group, a single list of results was recorded. In my fieldnotes, I describe the shifts and slippages in language that occurred between the lists that small groups came up with to the list aggregated in the large group.

> "sense of hope for the future" became *secure future*
> "sense of control over one's life" became *choice and control*

"sense of belonging", 'belonging to a just community' became *meaningful relationships*

"Happiness, well being, and healthy as possible" became *best health.*

*"*able to stay in own home", "able to care for their family members the way they want to", "able to care for themselves for as long as possible", "living well in the community"**,** perhaps the key results for the community care sector dropped off the final result list altogether.

Concepts like 'just community', 'access, equality and equity' disappeared from the list despite the majority of small groups having the concepts in their original list. Although safety only appeared in one of the small groups list, safe ended up as top of the results list (Comm. Care RBA, 21/8/2007: 4). The final list of results was:

Results
Safe
Best health
Meaningful relationships (Connected, belonging)
Valued
Secure future
Choice and control

Table 4: Community Care RBA workshop results list

(Community Care RBA Planning Report, 2007: 7)

Observations and artefacts concerning the intra-actions between the workshop participants and the RBA language point to the material-discursive nature of RBA. When RBA participants used words like "equity and access, equality and justice", it was explained: "The results have to be in plain English, short and sharp, so that they speak to the person off the street". The same example that Friedman had employed in his RBA training, as an illustration of an ideally expressed results list was used: "Children are safe, at home, at school, out of trouble and off the streets".

These 'ideal' RBA results are culturally bound. Such a list encapsulates what Sennett (1970) argues are features of North American suburban living marked by an intensification of family life, a diminishing of social contact points across difference in the city, an avoidance of risk and conflict, and a focus on planning

to realise pre-determined futures. These results are very different from the emphasis in locally-based community organisations on increasing relations and encounters across the boundaries of difference, inequality and dependency that we observed in the fieldwork.

Instead, the language of the final result list is consistent with 'neoliberal-audit discourse' outlined earlier in this chapter with the individualised focus and emphasis on ideals such as *choice and control*. The uncertainty and ineffability of future results conveyed in phrases like *sense of hope for the future* is eschewed in the translation to *secure future*. The specific, situated practice knowledge and attention to people who are frail aged or people with a disability *living well in the community* which expresses the distinctive character of community care was also lost from the results list. The following transcript, in which a participant in the Community Care RBA workshops is discussing the effect of the RBA 'directive' to phrase results for the person on the street, is taken from a reflective sensemaking discussion conducted after the RBA planning processes:

> Sam: It seemed to simplify it to the point that it left out any of the richness and depth, and that's what left us really unsatisfied … Just the words themselves, like safe, didn't say enough, and sometimes even the adjective that was put with it, wasn't quite enough to really get the power of the result that you wanted to say, and it could be interpreted in a very broad way across a lot of different examples.
>
> Peter: Somebody said about this process that it's like the meaning gets bleached out in the process. When we're talking about practices, and we make them into things.
>
> Sam: It loses the essence of what we mean (RBA sensemaking discussion, 27/11/2007: 9).

Sam's comments confirm that in the RBA process the final results list was generalised and indistinguishable from a generic results list for any human population. The richness, depth and specific character of local practice knowledge was *bleached out*[104] during intra-action with RBA.

RBA and quantitative data collection

Issues surrounding indicators, measures and data collection including the quality, availability and accessibility of data were foregrounded as matters of importance during RBA intra-actions. In all the RBA processes, we observed the

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[104] 'Bleached out' is Iedema's (2003) term and taken up by some members of the research team and research participants during sensemaking discussions.

practices of constructing graphs and searching through already existing data for representative measures was a dominant practice. This emphasis on searching for data, and the significance of data in RBA is clearly illustrated in Thea's comments, one of the organisers of the local RBA processes:

> Thea: We had two kinds of immense difficulties. One in the preparation we couldn't get useful data for the RBA process [for baselines trends etc] and that was incredibly frustrating… For example with disability and carers we found absolutely nothing of value and that was a big impediment to the Community Care RBA day kind of flowing… We had handouts with all the data. We invested so much time – I mean we over, over invested time in trying to prepare, to get those materials for the day and they weren't useful (RBA sensemaking discussion, 27/11/2007: 1-2).

Here, the local organisers of the RBA planning workshops are aware that there is simply not an adequate or feasible indicator currently available for every important result. The process of determining how much energy and effort to put into data searching and collection involves "unavoidable trade-offs between the need to measure outcomes and having sufficient resources to create the outcomes" (Campbell, 2002: 253). Participants in our study noted the emphasis in RBA on collecting data to evidence outcomes, imposes self-defeating costs on small community organisations. For example, a manager of the Illawarra branch of a large non-government organisation commented:

> Megan: It is very difficult for your little neighbourhood centre or your rural neighbourhood centre or rural small family service to actually just get beyond the pressures of delivering a service let alone thinking about RBA data (RBA interview, 4/4/2007: 23).

Megan's views are in accord with the literature warning non-profit agencies about diverting limited resources from activities and programs into the collection and documenting of data for accountability processes (Buckmaster, 1999; Campbell, 2002; Zimmerman & Stevens, 2006).

RBA and consensus

Friedman's RBA emphasises consensus and foregrounds communities' common interests, thereby bracketing communities sometimes diverse and conflicting interests. The consensus perspective was imbued in the graphics used to promote Friedman's training workshop. They consisted of pictures of families standing together, an 'aerial' photo of children from different racial and ethnic backgrounds lying on their backs smiling with their heads together in a circle, and a group of people of different ages and professional backgrounds, including a policeman and a girl in the front, with the caption "deciding to

make a difference together" (RBA training brochure, 2007). During our observations of Friedman's RBA training I noted:

> The model assumes there is agreement on results and that everyone agrees about what constitutes a 'safe community'. Friedman emphasised: "It's really common sense, everyone agrees on ends, we get caught up in the program, the service and we lose sight of the ends." "Everyone argues about means not about ends" (Training RBA fieldnotes, 4/6/2007).

This foregrounding of consensus and common ground is also emphasised in Friedman's writing. For example:

> **Common ground** [emphasis in original] is about the political nature of this work… Look at the political system at the federal, state and local levels, and you see people fighting with each other. Most often they are fighting about means and not ends. There is remarkable agreement in our country that teen pregnancy is bad for our young people… When we articulate what we want in plain language for example, *children ready for school*, *safe communities* and *a clean environment* [emphasis in original], it turns out these kinds of statements are not Republican versus Democrat… They represent a kind of common ground where people can come together and say "Yes, those are the conditions we want in our community, city, county, state or nation" (Friedman, 2005: 18).

In this extract there is an acknowledgement of conflict, *fighting* and a view that such disagreements are unproductive. Friedman proposes that RBA's focus on results is able to enact consensus and common ground, thus excluding dissonance and conflict. These issues of consensus and conflict, are taken up in this section focusing on how knowledge of individual and community well-being is contested and circulates as the various stakeholders, organisations, institutions, discourses, technologies and artefacts intra-act in a network of relations (Gherardi, 2006).

Inter-organisational relations and RBA processes

This section discusses, first, how RBA's practices of consensus and levelling power relations intra-act in a field of practices where antagonism and dissonance are important for both asserting identity and as an impetus for change and improvement in the well-being of local people and their communities. Second, issues of translating practice knowledge where antagonistic intra-relations have already been co-generated and are features of the community services field of practices are discussed.

Consensus and collaboration, antagonism and dissent

As discussed in the previous section, RBA encourages collaboration and consensus. In our observations of both the local RBA planning processes and of Friedman's writing, RBA attempts to give all voices equal weight. It promotes inclusion of multiple viewpoints. For example, the community care RBA workshops was structured so that the decision-makers from DADHC, the government department that funds most of the participating organisations, were positioned as one voice amongst many, as equals. The decision-makers from government bureaucracy contributed as individuals in the RBA small group exercises. In this way, RBA was deployed to flatten power relations. It operated as a levelling process as long as the stakeholders sat around the tables.

The capability to link program level results and population-level results in RBA is based on the assumption that the community of diverse stakeholders have an agreed-upon process and the local governance structures for jointly formulating future results and charting progress in the attainment of results (Campbell, 2002). Our study demonstrates that these conditions do not currently exist in the Illawarra community services field of practices.

Earlier in this chapter, I noted as others have (Sykes, 2006), the multiple discourses which both converged and conflicted with each other in sharing and discussing knowledges of individual and community well-being in the community services field of practices. Gherardi, in her study of safety in the construction industry, argues that when a group of people from different organisational and cultural backgrounds meet to analyse a problem or draw up a plan they "create a discursive community" (2006: 160). Such a discursive community may enable participants to engage in collective sensemaking (Weick, 1995) but can also serve to emphasise that participants remain non-communicating and conflictual. She argues that to assume a situated discursive identity is "a political move in that it involves positioning oneself in a network of social relations structured by power, interestedness and the mobilization of interests" (Gherardi, 2006: 160).

Lack of trust, antagonistic perspectives, the unequal distribution of knowledge and power relations in the community services field of practices were dominant themes in our RBA data sets. These relationalities generate tensions and

incommensurability not just 'common ground', negotiated meanings (Wenger, 1998) and joint action during intra-action with RBA. The lack of trust is illustrated in the following fieldnotes:

> Sam [manager] commented that she didn't really trust RBA would work. "I don't trust what the bureaucrats will do with it." She believes "They will make the performance measures fit to the sorts of boxes they want." Sam added: "They won't do the consultations properly to find out the results that the consumers really want" (Interchange, 1/5/2007: 2).

Other members of CSARG also echoed Sam's concern as to how the bureaucracy would deploy RBA after participation in the local RBA planning workshops. One member, resisting the drive to consensus and collaboration suggested that government department representatives should not have been involved in the RBA planning process and that:

> Sharon: As an industry it would have been far more valuable for us just to have some time together to work out where the hell we are going [laughs], what do we think is important and what are the principles that we might be wanting to embody. Indeed having the bureaucrats there, because there is such a culture of punishment, fear and how high do we jump, it was like it would have been really useful to have something that was just industry-based to be kind of, dare I say, empowering (RBA sensemaking discussion, 27/11/2007: 12).

Julia, agreed with Sharon's view and argued:

> Julia: At the same time that we've increased the whole of government approach, the results-based accountability planning, we have actually reduced the advocacy, lobbying and delegation making. So because we've been roped into it... you can't lobby and advocate because you're sitting in the middle of the process with them (RBA sensemaking discussion, 27/11/2007: 13).

Julia is concerned that participation in processes that combine collaboration, partnership and measurement practices restricts the ability of community organisations to participate effectively in policy debates and lobby and advocate about community issues. Her concerns are echoed by others (Geddes, 2006; Hamilton & Maddison, 2007; Maddison, Deniss, & Hamilton, 2004; Onyx & Dalton, 2006; Rix, 2005).

The transcript suggests that, in the community services domain, boundary-drawing practices and dissonance are necessary for both asserting identity and as an impetus for change and improvement in individual and community well-being. In this way, our study echoes Gherardi's finding in the construction industry that "antagonism in principle is the basis for cooperation in practice" (Gherardi, 2006: 162). The Illawarra community services field of practices is

sustained by and sustains tension and diversity, what has been called "agonistic pluralism" (Turnball, 2007).

Within the current configurations of knowledge/power-relations, the governmental deployment of RBA, with its emphasis on performance measurement, co-ordinated effort and consensus, aligns with state government efforts to position community organisations as sub-contractors in purchaser/provider relations. Community organisations in our study are adapting, swerving around and/or resisting this material-discursive positioning and attempting to assert their identity as 'autonomous' community organisations.

Participants in our study experienced RBA's entry in this complex and conflicted field of practices, as creating a paradox of political accountability[105] for community organisations (Notes from meeting with Industry partner, 16/10/2007). Locally-based community organisations involved in our study do not have the scope to be held accountable for changing community-wide indicators, such as the unemployment or crime rate. On the other hand, project level outcomes for which they can be held accountable, such as assisting 10 'at risk' young people into employment or transforming a 'dangerous' public space into a community garden, are specific and local. Thus, community organisations face a conundrum in responding to demands for results-based accountability. If they focus only on the project-level outcomes over which they have the most control, they risk default on the larger question of accountability to the funding agency's statewide results. However, if they try to demonstrate impact of their practices on community-wide outcomes, they risk taking credit inappropriately or shouldering responsibility for indicators beyond their control (Campbell, 2002).

In the community services domain, material-discursive practices often reaffirm and re-enact the agonistic pluralism (Turnball, 2007) of the various communities of practitioners, organisations and institutions. These practices produce the creativity of tension and contestation *over* practice from which co-emerge distinct domains of knowledge, sector identities and organisational

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[105] 'Accountability paradox' is Jos and Tompkins (2004) term.

roles for each community (Gherardi, 2006). These boundary-drawing practices, what Gherardi calls 'mirror games', maintain relations of crucial importance for understanding, negotiation and cooperation *in* practice: dissent and dissonance (Gherardi, 2006).

It is arguable that antagonism and asymmetrical power relations are necessary conditions in enabling contestation, advocacy and working with incommensurability in the community services field of practices. Some writers argue these aspects of the non-government sector contribute to democracy (Maddison, et al., 2004; Mendes, 2005; Onyx & Dalton, 2006; Phillips, 2006; Staples, 2007). The CSARG members recognise the intra-active nature of RBA foregrounds consensus and collaboration and, in turn, leads to redrawing boundaries. They are aware that this redrawing of boundaries can restrain the lobbying, advocacy and dissent activities of some community organisations.

Local practice knowledge, translation and power relations

Most of the organisations participating in our study report a sense that their practices and their organisations themselves are not really recognised or understood by the funding bureaucracies. This situation is analogous to the local knowledge of those working 'on the shop floor' of a large organisation not being recognised by managers at the 'centre' as described by Yanow (2004). She explains that local knowledge developed within a community of practitioners "is typically discounted and dismissed, and sometimes even disparaged, by managers higher up in the organization; and those even higher than that rarely have any knowledge of its existence at all" (Yanow, 2004: S11). In our observations of and conversations with senior DoCS managers, they positioned RBA as a translation device. For example, a senior, government-agency officer facilitating one of the RBA training workshops said:

> "RBA is the means for human services to speak the language of the
> funder"… "You need to speak in the language of Treasury, Treasury
> resents people not being clear" (Training RBA fieldnotes, 18/4/2007: 1).

From a government agency perspective, the community organisations they fund are currently invisible to Treasury and thus un-accountable and un-governable as their officer explained during an RBA training session:

> "we are trying to get CSGP [the funding program] to fit in credibly with the results logic, through the RBA model" (Training RBA fieldnotes, 18/4/2007: 5).

This statement indicates that the state government agency is deploying RBA to translate the contributions of the organisations that are funded through the community services grants program (CSGP) into a form that will be recognised and valued by Treasury, with the intention of securing the sustainability and growth of the funding program.

However, in the intra-actions of local community organisations and the government agency that we observed, some practices, technologies and contributions were rendered 'not known' and some individuals and groups were rendered 'not knowers', as being 'ignorant'. In our observations of the RBA training facilitated by a senior government-agency officer I noted:

> The room was set up in 'expert' style. The trainer was up the front, presenting with power point. She had a work colleague sitting off to the side. The audience was sitting in a horseshoe shape around the room. There were about 40 people present… [in the workshop section] The trainer sat at a desk at front of the room typing into a laptop attached to a data projector (Training RBA fieldnotes, 18/4/2007: 1,3).

The material arrangement of the room was designed to emphasise expertise and 'power over':

> The trainer worked through an example about community leadership with the group, typing straight into the laptop and looking at the screen. When participants suggested the words like belonging, support or capacity building she said: "Capacity building I don't like that, it's a weasel word". She added, "Support what does that mean? It just appears to be nice, another weasel word." A participant responded "I'm a family support worker, so I find that a bit challenging." The trainer replied that Treasury wouldn't like support or capacity building. One of the participants asked, "You want us to think like treasury, why can't Treasury think like us?" The trainer replied: "If you can make Treasury listen, go right ahead but we can't, so I'm sure you won't be able to." A local government worker intervened at this point in the exchange and suggested: "You [the community organisation worker] can use support but say support through material aid". The trainer replied, "Ban the words". A participant challenged the trainer around her apparent aggressive attitude (Training RBA fieldnotes, 18/4/2007: 3).

The senior, government-agency officer's repeated comments in relation to the imperative to present a persuasive case to Treasury reflects how the complexity of contemporary society is making funding allocation an increasingly contested, competitive and fast-changing activity. Perhaps, the constraints on government agency bureaucrats and their "cultural anxiety" to *speak the language of Treasury*

contributes to what the workshop participants report as an excessive quantification and a discounting of their local practice knowledge.

The material-discursive practices of both the government-agency RBA trainer and the workshop participants mobilised "antagonistic discourses in support of their situated identities" (Gherardi, 2006: 225). The workshop continued in this fashion with the workshop facilitator insisting on the primacy of 'Treasury's thinking' and of 'quantifiable measures'. Fewer people participated and increasing numbers of people left until there were only a quarter of the participants remaining in the room. As the above fieldnotes illustrate, in the workshop intra-actions, differing ontologies and epistemologies were discounted, suppressed and gradually erased from both the discussion and the room. I described in the fieldnotes:

> When the trainer inquired as to why so many people were leaving the workshop so early, the organiser from local government responded by saying, "Some women have to go and pick up their kids, they work part-time and finish at 2.30pm". However, my impression was that people were voting with their feet, they were deliberately leaving the workshop (Training RBA fieldnotes, 18/4/2007: 5).

The relations that structure hierarchies of knowledge within the community services domain and position the community organisation practitioners and their collective knowledge in regard to others, especially in relation to government bureaucracies, are enfolded in and through power-knowledge-technology. The dominant logic-in-action rendered the embodied resistance of the community organisation practitioners leaving the workshop, invisible as a form of their resistance (Tuana, 2006). Their resistance was translated as ignorance and as a gendered practice.

The community practitioners 'were made up ' and participated in 'being made up' in these intra-actions as 'incompetent' and 'not professionals'. The above fieldnotes illustrate that the same practices are not important to different knowers, even when exposed to them. The participants from different communities of practitioners, organisations and institutions do not have the same repertoire of concepts to articulate practice knowledge. They have very different stakes in the introduction of RBA and different notions of relevant standards of evidence (Rouse, forthcoming). Unfortunately on this occasion, as

the above fieldnotes indicate, they remain mutually incomprehensible to one another.

Conclusion

The chapter illustrates the significant differences in the ways of ordering things, in the logics-in-action and the competing discourses that co-exist in the community services field of practices. From knowing-in-practice as emergent and unfolding to knowledge as product and plan, from a focus on verbs to a focus on nouns. The mandating of RBA processes into community organisations encourages their focus to shift from matters of practices, doings and actions to matters of the correspondence between results and 'reality' and the measurement and graphing of this correspondence. The intra-actions of these different ways of knowing and different styles and logics will almost certainly mean that state government agencies efforts for alignment will be precarious and incomplete.

Despite the emphasis in RBA on simplification, the majority of participants in our study did not find RBA simple. Perhaps this is in part due to complexity emerging where various discourses and logics-in-action come together and fit comfortably or in tension or both (Mol & Law, 2002). Our study illustrates that when community sector organisations use RBA it becomes a matter of determining which simplifications they will attend to and enact and as they do this, it is crucial they "attend to what these simplifications foreground and draw attention to, as well as what they relegate to the background" (Mol & Law, 2002: 11).

This study of RBA intra-action in the community services field of practice supports Gherardi's (2006) findings that a field of practice is held together through complex and contradictory power relations. Power "is the resource that enables the establishment of the associations that interweave and materialise in the texture of a field of practices" (Gherardi, 2006: 59). However, while RBA explicitly promotes participatory planning and collaboration, the implementation of RBA glosses over the conditions necessary for practising collaboration: recognition of asymmetries in power, resources and trust (Healy, 2009) among those involved in the community services domain .

Many participants in our study found RBA's focus on results helpful but worried that it will be used as a form of micro-management that recreates within the community sector the same bureaucratic strictures that have made contracting out a popular option for government agencies. Similarly to other studies in North America (Zimmerman & Stevens, 2006), some organisations indicated that the demand for outcome measurement compounds their workload and that they struggle with finding ways to get meaningful measures without diverting resources from services, programs and activities into paperwork .

The awareness of data limits and the lack of suitable data available at the local level[106] combined with reluctance in community organisations to focus on a hierarchy of results mandated by the funding body restrains efforts to target outcomes collaboratively.

Finally, many participants in this study regard RBA, which combines performance measurement with participatory planning and collaboration, as a potentially useful framework for co-ordinating effort in tackling community problems. However, our study illustrates that the granting of hegemony to a representationalist conception of knowledge, evident in RBA, hampers inclusion of the local practice experience of both workers and service participants. The implicit privilege granted to 'facts' and quantification in RBA renders practices, relationalities, values and context marginal and often invisible (Healy, 2009). This study suggests that including local practice knowledges and experience in RBA processes is not only a matter of enabling the participation of all interested stakeholders. But crucially it requires facilitating and enacting knowledge spaces that assemble and take seriously all relevant perspectives, viewpoints and diverse knowledges, rather than privileging only those conceived representationally (Healy, 2003; Turnball, 2009).

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[106] For example, the national longitudinal survey called, the Household Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey, collects data on economic and subjective well-being, labour market dynamics and family dynamics (Melbourne Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research, 2009). The survey collects data relevant to many of the results identified in the RBA workshops we observed. However, due to the small number of people and households from the Illawarra contained in HILDA it is not suitable to be used meaningfully at the local and regional level.

CHAPTER 9

Locally-based community organisations: What matters and what counts

> The many who had participated and worked in neighbourhood houses, community centres, childcare cooperatives and schools had built a remarkable architecture of care, compassion and collaboration… It seems to me that they had also developed a knowledge of social justice, a practical substance for what can often seem like vague and perhaps even unrealistic claims… To understand their version of social justice we don't need more studies of disadvantage… Greater trust must be placed in their ideas and in their ability to improvise and find solutions. There needs to be room for surprises – even mistakes – and some acknowledgement that the most effective ways of achieving justice might not be obvious at the beginning or from the outside.
>
> <div align="right">Mark Peel (2003)</div>

Introduction

This thesis has investigated the situated knowing-in-practice of locally-based community organisations and studied how this local practice knowledge is translated and contested in inter-organisational relations in the Illawarra community services field of practices. The research was underpinned by a commitment to studying practice situated in the everyday work context and seeing, hearing and reading directly with and from those involved with locally-based community organisations. This study thereby generated conclusions that were contextually located and enfolded with the realities of practice. Accordingly, the thesis does not claim that the depictions of specific practices in the five locally-based community organisations and intra-relations in the Illawarra community services field of practices are necessarily generalisable to all community sector practitioners, community organisations or the community sector in other regions and countries. What may be of value beyond the specific interests of those involved in this inquiry is: the re-configuring of locally-based community organisations' practices in relation to service participants' struggles over social justice; the articulation of the co-emergent, relational character of practices and their entanglement with critical reflexivity, ethicality and knowing in practising social justice; the practice-based topology of social justice; the implications of these elaborations for governing and auditing of

community organisations by government bureaucracies and for funding policies; and the theoretical and methodological approach developed to identify, name and analyse material-discursive practices and relations in the Illawarra community services field of practices.

In this concluding chapter, I summarise the research and present the conclusions of the thesis. I then identify the five contributions of the thesis that are theoretical, methodological and practical. Finally, I suggest some possible directions for future research.

Thesis summary and conclusions

The impetus for the collaborative research project came from those involved in locally-based community organisations frustrated that despite participation in government-led consultation processes, the resulting policies and plans inadequately take into account their practice knowledge. As discussed in Chapter 1, the funding of locally-based community organisations is gradually diminishing in real terms and in the competitive tendering environment, large nationally-based organisations often attract the new funding sources (Productivity Commission, 2009; Suhood, et al., 2006). The concern of community organisations is that the apparent lack of understanding of their distinctive practice knowing and their contributions to community well-being is threatening their survival.

This practice-based knowledge project began by establishing the Community Sector Acton Research Group (CSARG). We then worked with practitioners, service participants and management committee members from five locally-based community organisations to present an account of their knowing-in-practice, its character and conditions of efficacy. Our practice-based knowledge project finally brought us to an understanding of what happens when this local practice knowledge is translated into results-based accountability (RBA) planning with diverse non-government organisations and government bureaucracies within the Illawarra community services field of practices. The three points of observation investigated during the study: knowing in a community of practitioners (Chapter 6), knowing in a community organisation (Chapter 7), and knowing in the community services field of practices (Chapter 8) enabled this thesis to explore some of the relations and intra-actions from the

single organisation to the institutional at a time when the state government bureaucracy has mandated that community organisations implement RBA to articulate outcomes that can be measured by performance indicators.

The feminist, performative, relational approach established in this thesis employed participatory action research, to achieve an enabling research experience for the participants. This 'advocacy' research aimed to intervene strategically to enhance recognition of the distinctive contributions of community organisations' practice knowledge. The practice-based study provides evidence of what locally-based community organisations do and how they contribute to the well-being of service participants and local communities. Early analysis of the fieldwork data revealed how locally-based community organisations facilitate peoples' experiences of and struggles over humiliation, hardship, belonging, voice, respect, personal and social change. As discussed in Chapter 5, such accounts of the knowing-in-practice of community organisations embody core themes that philosophers and theorists of social justice investigate and analyse. By employing a diffractive method (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1997) to more thoroughly analyse the complexities of the data, the thesis developed a new topology for rethinking social justice as processual and practice-based. It shows how struggles over social justice are a dynamic complex of iteratively enfolded practices of respect and recognition, redistribution and distributive justice, representation and participation, inclusion and belonging. The thesis thereby extends earlier work that frames child and family support services within the politics of recognition (Cortis, 2006, 2007; Houston, 2008b; Houston & Dolan, 2007).

This thesis offers insights into the distinctive features of the knowing-in-practice of locally-based community organisations. The research shows how material-discursive practices such as: supporting and facilitating horizontal relationships between service participants; engaging in activities and processes that 'do not provide a service'; and creating opportunities for people to participate and give back are crucial in service participants experiencing mutual respect, recognition and a sense of belonging. The thesis also articulates that knowing how to work with regard and response-ability in asymmetrical power relations and the quality of these relationships are critical to 'good' practice in locally-based community organisations. Both the 'belonging role' of community

organisations and their contribution of performing respect in ways that reach across the boundaries of inequality, difference and dependency have been largely overlooked both in the current accountability and performance reporting systems, and in the literature.

In this way, the thesis discloses aspects of the purposes, practices and contributions of locally-based community organisations that contest conceptions currently institutionalised in public administration systems. Such a re-conceptualisation offers an alternative to the dominant neo-liberal discourse that positions community organisations as sub-contractors accountable to government for delivering measurable outputs, outcomes and efficiencies in specified service provision contracts.

The study shows that the privileging of a representationalist conception of knowledge, evident in RBA, hampers inclusion of the local experience and knowledge of both workers and service participants. RBA offers a range of tools for simplifying, standardising and co-ordinating both information and effort across the heterogeneity of institutions, organisations and communities of practitioners in the community services field of practices. However, as this study attests, what simplifies and standardises for some stakeholders creates "confusion and mess" for others (Bowker & Star, 1999: 293). Further, the study demonstrates that even within the representational frame of RBA, there is a lack of suitable data available at the regional and local level and the indicators that do exist inadequately capture the characteristics and contributions of locally-based community organisations (Cortis, 2006; Meagher, 2002). Given the difficulties and costs of generating better data and the challenges in developing a political consensus in the community services domain, DoCS efforts to align the community organisations they fund to uniform results and performance measures will almost certainly be precarious and incomplete.

Within the current configurations of knowledge/power relations in the community sector, the governmental deployment of RBA with its emphasis on performance measurement, co-ordinated effort and consensus aligns with state-government efforts to position community organisations as sub-contractors in purchaser/provider relations. This study demonstrates community organisations are swerving around, adapting and/or resisting this material-

discursive (re)positioning and thereby asserting their identity as 'autonomous' community organisations.

The thesis illustrates the significant differences in the logics-in-action and the competing discourses that co-exist in the community services field of practices: from knowing in practice as emergent and unfolding to knowledge as product and plan; from a focus on verbs to a focus on nouns; and from gathering data to provide better maps of reality to cultivating practices for "more bearable ways of living with or in reality" (Mol, 2008b: 46).

This study clearly shows that contrasting conceptions of temporality rub up against each other in the community services field of practices. In the practice of RBA time is demonstrably linear. RBA processes begin with the future-oriented value-laden choice of results, next proceed to the gathering of the 'objective facts' of performance indicator data and then to the 'technical' action. Once the action is over, it can be evaluated against the performance indicators (Mol, 2008b). In the RBA workshops we observed attention is focused on the future. The past to be overcome, improved and surpassed. In this result-oriented view, "the present is only a vanishing point of transition" toward a better future (Haraway, 2007: 2).

In our observations of the practices of locally-based community organisations the past, present and future are knotted together. "There is no single, crucial moment when all relevant facts-values are available" (Mol, 2008b: 54). Issues arise and as they are tackled, new issues emerge, struggles over social justice continue without cease. This research suggests that to enact respect, to make and re-make practices of social justice, people have to be in the present, in face-to-face encounters (Haraway, 2007). There are no guarantees. It is impossible for locally-based community organisations to predict how an attempt to enact social justice will turn out in practice. There are only the ongoing efforts to contribute to just living. Thus, the present has to be taken seriously. Our study demonstrates that within these practices it doesn't make sense to fix the result of a process before the process has begun. Working out the destination is part of the process (Mol, 2008b).

Certainty, simplicity and order are offered and valued in our observations of RBA training and workshops and in Friedman's (2005) book *Trying hard is not good enough: How to produce measurable improvements for customers and communities.* However, a different positioning and valuing is evident in the practices of locally-based community organisations, in which we observed that people try and keep on trying. It is mostly difficult, complicated and "disorderly" (Sennett, 1970). Locally-based community organisations intra-act with the world in materially entangled ethics and politics, looking for what is needed for well-being to flourish (Haraway, 2007; Mol, 2008b).

This heterogenous conglomerate of logics-in-action identified in this study illustrates that the mandating of RBA into community organisations encourages their focus to shift from in-the-present matters of practices, doings and actions to matters of the correspondence between future results and 'reality', and the measurement and graphing of this correspondence.

While the divergent ways of thinking, saying and doing interfere with each other and clash, they are also intra-dependent and productive. Our study suggests in the community services field of practices, boundary-drawing practices, dissonance and asymmetrical power relations are necessary both for asserting identity and in enabling contestation, advocacy and improvement in the well-being of local people and their communities. This study, thereby warns that the 'agential' nature of the material-discursive practices and intra-actions enacted in RBA, by foregrounding consensus and collaboration, redraw boundaries in ways that risk restraining the advocacy and dissent activities of community organisations. Advocacy and dissent activities are defining elements of the 'autonomy' and identity of both locally-based community organisations and the social justice practitioners employed in these organisations.

These conclusions have significant implications for how policy-makers, funding bureaucracies, large non-government service providers and community organisations conceive of the purposes, practices and contributions of locally-based community organisations. The conclusions also challenge these stakeholders to re-think how they might design and facilitate accountability and planning processes to enable inclusion of the local practice experience and

the perspectives of both service participants and workers. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss how these conclusions offer practical, methodological and theoretical contributions from the thesis.

Contributions of the thesis

The main contributions of this thesis are in the areas of the community sector, studies of social justice, practice-based studies of organisation and feminist-informed participatory-action research. Specifically, in the following sections I elaborate how the work: first, re-configures the contributions and purposes of locally-based community organisations; second, develops a practice-based topology of social justice; third, provides a critique of results-based accountability; fourth, contributes a feminist relational, performative, theoretical and methodological approach to practice-based studies of organisation; and fifth, generates strategic action, practical outcomes and ongoing processes with and for locally-based community organisations in the Illawarra. Finally, I discuss some of the possible directions for future research.

Re-configuring the contributions and purposes of locally-based community organisations

This practice-based study makes a distinctive contribution by exploring knowing in locally-based community organisations' practices in Australia. Indeed, as noted in Chapter 2, there is little literature generally on locally-based community organisations even though they constitute the vast majority of the community sector in Australia (Lyons & Hocking, 2000; Roberts, 2001; Suhood, et al., 2006). The thesis articulates some of the distinctive features of the knowing-in-practice of locally-based community organisations, which have not been previously reported in the cited literature.

By following Wittgenstein's (1958) advice to reconsider what is always before us, unnoticed and in plain view, this study contributes new conceptions of locally-based community organisations as 'doing' social justice. The research demonstrates that locally-based community organisations make a significant contribution to the well-being of local people and their communities by enacting respect and recognition, inclusion and belonging, representation and redistribution across the boundaries of inequality, difference and dependency. This thesis articulates multiple material-discursive practices that facilitate

service participants' struggles over, and experiences of, social justice. By focusing on the practices and practising of social justice, this study reconfigures understandings of the purposes, contributions and accountabilities of community organisations beyond a narrow discourse of measurable outputs, outcomes and efficiencies. Our observations combined with accounts from workers and service participants challenge the dominant economic and managerial discourse that currently emphasises service provision and the purchase of welfare outputs. By articulating the knowing-in-practice enacted in community organisations that are marginalised and overlooked, the research project makes space for a counter discourse (Deleuze & Foucault, 1977; Moussa & Scapp, 1996). This enables alternative suggestions for framing 'good' practice to be made available.

This thesis makes a contribution in describing the relational and co-emergent nature of 'good' practice in community organisations. The study shows that "a sense of acute situatedness is key in enacting" the complex, flexible, uncertain yet tenacious character of social justice practices (Mol, 2002: 115). The notion of relationality brought to the fore important ideals and practices of belonging, respect, reciprocity and response-ability. The study shows that when people involved in locally-based community organisations are thought of as relational beings, intra-dependency and entanglement become inescapable characteristics of 'being human'. The practices of locally-based community organisations suggest that who we are is always temporary, changing and coming into being. We become with and co-emerge through our entangled intra-relating in the ongoing performance of practices. For instance, 'one' can be multiply positioned as an incest survivor, a psychiatric patient, a health care consumer, a member of the West Street Centre community, a mother and a scientist. Differences, particularities and asymmetries are then characteristic of intra-actions within sociomaterial situations in community organisations. The knowing-in-practice of locally-based community organisations are not equivalent, interchangeable, standardised but materially and discursively distinctive. Each bears responsibility and accountability for enacting social justice "in a thick and consequential present [and]… in a multidimensional matrix of relationships" (Haraway, 2007: 2).

The emphasis on relationality and performativity in this thesis reworks notions of accountability, ethics and 'good' practice in community organisations. Ethical behaviours and relationships are negotiated and practices enacted within situations and do not exist as standards or codes of conduct outside of them. Because different possibilities and impossibilities of becoming exist in each moment, accountability is an ethical call. Acountability is about being responsible and taking account of our part in what becomes and what is excluded from becoming. This alternative conception of knowledge and accountability is shown to be in tension with performance measurement and accountability apparatus that focus on matters of the correspondence between results and 'reality', and the measurement and graphing of this correspondence. This study illustrates that 'good' practice in locally-based community organisations is more about creativity, improvisation, embodied judgements and critical reflexivity than applying already determined interventions and being accountable to performance measures for reaching pre-specified targets.

The study demonstrates that social justice practices cannot be established at a point in time once and for all, but are instead under constant development. The open-endedness of practising social justice thereby requires repeated practices of critical reflection and reflexivity on/in processes, routines and relationships to see if they attend to the needs and concerns in the moment. This study demonstrates that ethicality, critical reflexivity and knowing have to be constantly maintained and produced, in short, practised in community organisations.

This study shows how those involved in locally-based community organisations do not have fixed roles and tasks. Boundaries are fluid. It is often not necessary to distinguish between service participant, community practitioner and management committee member in terms of getting things done and shaping a better life. The 'who' that does the doing shifts and is shared about (Mol, 2008b) .

The analysis in this thesis provides an understanding of the diversity and subtlety of practice in locally-based community organisations. By unravelling and articulating the knowing and ethicality entangled in social justice practices, critical reflexivity within these practices can be mobilised to bring about

improvement in the well-being of local people and their communities. Rather than concentrating efforts on the regulation and standardisation of community organisation practices by evaluating them against uniform, statewide performance measures and rules, these analyses suggest improving individual and community well-being may be more successful when the diversity of ethicality and know-how in practices of community sector organisations are attended to more seriously. Such attention would encourage the adoption of a more pluralistic approach to evaluation and accountability methods (Aimers & Walker, 2008). This approach would encompass methods sensitive and appropriate to the distinctive contributions and practices of locally-based community organisations rather than imposing an RBA approach exclusively.

A practice-based topology of social justice

This thesis offers a new topology for rethinking social justice as processual and practice-based. The study of knowing in a community of practitioners recasts social justice as situated, practical, partial, ongoing processes, made and remade in relations with one another rather than as theoretical and end-state oriented. Broadening the orientation of studies of social justice beyond the legislative, political, and adjudicative institutions to the everyday practices of locally-based community organisations highlights the practical activity of struggling over social justice that goes on in "the shadows of the political sphere" (Honneth, 2003: 122). This shift to the ordinary sites and practices of social justice empirically supports the work of scholars who warn against a singular encompassing theory of justice (Benhabib, 2002; Tully, 2000; Walzer, 1983; Young, 1990). Instead, the focus on practices and practising in this thesis multiplies the picture of social justice and injustices.

The data from our study demonstrate the entanglement of intra-acting forms of social justice practices. The social *and* political *and* economic *and* cultural dimensions intra-act, collaborate, interfere, depend on each other, include one another and co-emerge in struggles over social justice. This practiced-based approach to social justice thereby challenges discourses that either treat redistribution and recognition as separate dimensions of social justice or reduce either dimension to the other. By making visible the myriad of material-discursive practices intra-acting and constituting practices of respect and recognition, practices of redistribution, practices of representation and

participation and practices of belonging and inclusion in community organisations, this thesis takes up the call to "attend to the multiple social forms and locations of injustice" and struggles against them (Yar, 2001: 301).

A critique of results-based accountability (RBA)

Building on research conducted primarily in North America, this thesis provides the first analysis of the deployment of RBA into the community services domain in Australia. It is also the first critique of Friedman's (2005) RBA framework.

This study challenges the representational view of knowledge inextricably entangled with performance measurement and accountability frameworks such as RBA. The thesis warns that the privileging of quantifiable measures evident in RBA may mean that critical knowledge about how locally-based community organisations contribute to individual and community well-being and social justice will be lost. The invisibility of the ethical, relational and political dimensions of community organisation practices, critical to 'good' practice at the 'coalface'[107], is at risk of being reproduced in the current implementation of RBA in the Illawarra (Cortis, 2006; Sykes, 2006). For example, the ongoing efforts to contribute to respect in the co-emergence of relations faded into undifferentiated background in the privileging of measurable and temporally determinate results in RBA. Some of the social justice practices of inclusion and belonging, such as the importance of 'not providing a service' and paying attention to what goes on between people, to horizontal relationships between peers were excluded from mattering during intra-action with RBA.

The improvements in service provision presumed to accompany the implementation of a RBA plan, with endpoint, target results, performance measures and time-frames are by no means guaranteed and, as this study demonstrates, have unintended and sometimes detrimental effects. RBA adheres to a representational conception of knowledge that encourages instrumental action and bureaucratic organisation (Tsoukas, 1998). In this way, RBA risks shaping locally-based community organisations in the image of the funding bureaucracy.

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[107] The metaphor of 'coalface' is chosen in preference to 'frontline' or 'grass-roots' in reference to Illawarra region's history of coal-mining and steel production.

The conclusions of this research demonstrate that if local practice knowledges and experience are to be included in RBA processes more is required than simply ensuring the participation of all interested stakeholders. Facilitating the active involvement of practitioners, management committee members and service participants in the production, translation and articulation of knowledge is more complex and challenging than it is conceived to be in RBA. For instance, the study illustrates that RBA, in both Friedman's texts and in the implementations we observed, glosses over and fails to attend to the conditions necessary for practising collaboration: recognition of asymmetries in power, resources and trust (Healy, 2009) among those involved in the community services domain.

Whilst the view that valuable knowledge is representational in character prevails in RBA processes, practitioner and service participant contributions will continue to be marginalised and diminished through the insistence that they take an 'expert,' quantifiable representational form. This not only thwarts attempts at participatory decision-making, emphasised in RBA, but also reinforces the power relations entrenched in the community services field of practices. The maintenance of the alignments of power relations, affects which aspects of practice knowledge in the community sector are visible, heard and understood, and which practices are considered credible (Rouse, forthcoming). Thus critically, harnessing local practice knowing requires facilitating and enacting knowledge spaces that assemble and take seriously all relevant stakeholder perspectives, diverse knowledges and methods, instead of simply privileging those conceived representationally (Healy, 2003; Turnball, 2009). Descriptive and interpretative 'local' understandings need to be valued alongside calculative, quantitative 'expert' understandings. Such knowledge spaces are required to change "patterns of visibility and recognition" in the community services field of practices (Rouse, forthcoming). Crucial to enacting such knowledge spaces is a shift from conceiving of knowledge as representational towards alternative conceptions such as the performative approach elaborated in this thesis.

A feminist, relational, performative approach to practice-based studies of organisation

By studying the practices of community sector organisations in a bounded locality, this research has taken up the call for more empirical research into working practices generally (Gherardi, 2006; Heath & Button, 2002; Heath, Knoblauch, & Luff, 2000) and in the community services domain, in particular (Osmond, 2000, 2006; Sykes, 2006).

A feminist, performative, relational approach articulated in this thesis offers distinctive theoretical and methodological insights to the ongoing conversations in practice-based studies of organisation.

First, the study contributes an engaged methodology that foregrounds the relations between the understandings and descriptions produced in a practice-based study and their translation and intervention into practice, what Argyris (2003) calls 'actionable knowledge'. This example of feminist-informed participatory action research goes beyond describing practice. It aims to *intra-act with* the community organisation practices studied by disclosing and articulating the practices and related ideals that have been taken-for-granted, overlooked or pushed away. In this way, a post-epistemological conception of knowing and knowledge urges a participatory and situated stance towards inquiry. Co-theorising, co-analysis and collective critical reflexivity provided research participants with renewed ways of looking at and talking about their practice. Feminist-informed PAR intra-actions have the potential to do more than participate; they create possibilities for change, for intervening in what will be and what will be possible. Possibility is what a feminist relational performative approach offers to the ongoing conversation in practice-based studies of organisation as it provides a change-oriented approach, concerned with re-imaginings and reconfigurations of the world.

The literature on organisational knowledge in general, and practice-based approaches in particular, discussed in the Chapter 2, claims that knowing and learning are social, participatory activities, and that people's understanding resides in the practices in which they are involved. In this conception knowledge is not discovered but ongoingly co-created (Orlikowski, 2002; Tsoukas, 1996). The study in this thesis contributes a methodology that, by

adopting a participatory and situated stance toward research practices, provides congruence and coherence between such an epistemic position and methodological processes-in-use.

In this participatory action research, feminist performative, relational conceptualising of the nature of knowledge allowed the research project to combine advocacy and practical intervention into existing relations with a reflexive problematising and scrutinising of those terms upon which the interventions were made (Lather, 2007). Such critical synthesising of theory, method and action is never easily achieved (Frisby, et al., 2009). I realised that giving back the ethnographic accounts of our (my) observations to the research participants for feedback was not nearly enough to interrupt the tendency for research participants to accept them as a 'true account' about what had happened, despite the fact that it was their own actions and practices on which my partial narrative was based. What I learnt about reciprocity and negotiation in asymmetrical power relations tells me that when I next employ observational and ethnographic methods, I may do better by creating a questioning text that signals tentativeness and partiality in a more overt way than the 'expository', descriptive narratives that I used in this study.

Additionally, during the process of the inquiry I have come to understand as others have (McWilliam, 1994) that the geometrical metaphor of 'spiralling' and the neat, developmental, chronological cycling of the four moments of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2001, 1988) do not offer a good fit for the multiple, unpredictable and proliferating processes of this study. Accordingly, this thesis suggests the *rhizome* as a more apt metaphor for inquiry processes, such as this one, which spread horizontally, are non-hierarchical, multiplicitous and become increasingly acentred.

A feminist, relational, performative approach suggests practices, intra-actions and phenomena are of paramount interest to inquiry, interpretation and accountability. Barad's (2007) methodology of agential realism and intra-activity insists that any distinction between knowing the world and the world is produced as part of an enlarged apparatus. Matter and discourse co-emerge in a relational entanglement, enacting their own difference/differentiating and therefore marking the intelligibility of the world. This shift from subjects and

objects interacting to the subjects and objects emerging from intra-activity offers new understandings that have the capacity to foreground in practice-based studies the liveliness of the material world. Knowledge practices are thus "material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world" (Barad, 2007: 91). Knowing always involves power-charged, intra-twined relations among knowers and knowns. This politically engaged stance renders detached, neutral research illusionary and instead requires critical reflexive participation from within in the making and remaking of both better knowing-in-practice and a better world.

Generating practical outcomes and strategic action

As praxis, it is not surprising that the most significant contributions of the study in this thesis are in co-generating practical outcomes, strategic action and ongoing processes with and for locally-based community organisations. Both the CSARG and the PAR cycles conducted with the five community organisations created reflexive spaces in which the research participants co-produced new ways of talking about and re-presenting their practices. Co-theorising with the CSARG re-minded participants of the distinctive contribution and value of practices that were in danger of 'going missing' in intra-action with the economic and managerial discourses currently threaded though social service accountability and funding. As one CSARG member and experienced manager commented, the research project:

> … has 'cracked' some of these issues, providing a critique, a different perspective on so many aspects of the work done in the community sector but also on such developments as RBA… I feel proud to still work in the sector (Email correspondence, 7/3/2009).

The research process refocused and energised CSARG members toward new ways of knowing and framing 'good' practice in order to not only engage more powerfully in their own practice but to work to influence political and policy decision-makers. For example, CSARG members have developed an advocacy strategy, organised meetings with federal and state ministers, members of parliament and senior bureaucrats to discuss the findings of our research and urge the government to commission further research. The intention of these lobbying efforts is to influence social policy and ensure the distinctive perspectives of community sector organisations are heard in political and policy debates. As I was preparing this concluding chapter, the Australian Federal

Government announced an inquiry into the contributions of the not-for-profit sector focusing on methods for measuring the outcomes, impacts and on the factors constraining the work of the sector (Productivity Commission, 2009). In conjunction with the CSARG, the research team is contributing a submission to the inquiry (Keevers, et al., 2009). This submission includes a range of recommendations for improving the recognition of the practice knowledge of locally-based community organisations and their contributions to and impacts on the well-being of local people and inclusive communities. It suggests practical ways of enhancing the capability of performance measurement and accountability frameworks such as RBA to translate and value the different knowledges and the distinctive roles and contributions of organisations that make up the community services field of practices.[108] Several of the organisations participating in this study are also writing their own submissions.[109]

As discussed in Chapter 4, this research project catalysed not only the CSARG members but also the research participants involved in the PAR processes that spread rhizomatically to develop new skills themselves, knowledge and capacities. This learning relates especially to conducting their own research processes and speaking out about their involvement with community organisations and the contributions they make to local people and community well-being.

This study and thesis are entangled with other ongoing projects that continue to proliferate. Perhaps this is due to the paucity of research focusing on locally-based community organisations in Australia combined with the limited opportunities for service participants to be actively involved in policy spaces and processes shaping community services provision. For example, a group of people who use mental health services and their carers have recently approached the Industry partner and members of the CSARG to work with

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[108] The specific recommendations suggested by the research project are detailed in the publication 'Practising social justice, measuring what matters: Local community-based community organisations and social inclusion'(Keevers, Treleaven, Backhouse, & Darcy, forthcoming).
[109] For example, submissions by Southern Youth and Family Services and the West Street Centre are available from the Productivity Commission's website at http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/not-for-profit/submissions

them to investigate and document people's experience of both the mental health system and the complaints process in the Illawarra. The intent of this participatory research is to improve the mental health system locally.

Directions for future research

Because we designed and attempted to enact this inquiry to be as participative and collaborative as possible, the study was necessarily relatively small scale and the thesis relies on data accessed from one region. This feature along with others[110] point not only to both the strengths and weaknesses of the inquiry but also to directions for future research.

First, further research is required into the diverse ways in which locally-based community organisations 'do' social justice and contribute to the well-being of local people and communities. This working knowledge needs to be widely documented and disseminated in order to educate, inspire and ensure it is passed on to the next generation of community practitioners. Using the topology developed in this thesis, research could explore the diversity of material-discursive practices community organisations enact in practising social justice, in different settings, with different service participants and focusing on different issues. For instance, it would be extremely valuable to articulate the knowing-in-practice in locally-based Indigenous community organisations in Australia. Although I (we) talked with some Koori service participants and held discussions with a couple of Koori community leaders and elders, it was a weakness that this study did not include a locally-based Indigenous community organisation. Indeed, the CSARG has already been approached by Aboriginal community organisations to assist in documenting the local 'Koori way' of practising.

Each of the forms of knowing-in-practice identified in this study could be the focus of further studies. For example, more detailed studies on the ways of organising that facilitate 'belonging' and bonded relationships between service participants and between workers and service participants would contribute to the wellbeing of local people and their communities.

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[110] I remind the reader that a number of limitations of the methods were discussed in Chapter 4.

Second, further research could usefully investigate whether and how the material-discursive practices identified in this study intra-connect and impact on improving individual and community health. For example, there is an extensive international research literature demonstrating the centrality of a sense of belonging, a sense of control over one's life and a sense of hope for the future for health and well-being (Berkman, 1995; CSDH, 2008; Wilkinson, 2005). However, there is only limited research, particularly in Australia, on the ways of organising, practising and intervening that are most effective in creating these social and material conditions. Our study suggests that locally-based community organisations may be a fruitful context for exploring such linkages and practices.

Third, this thesis suggests that a crucial way forward is researching, creating and designing knowledge spaces and processes capable of assembling and taking seriously all relevant perspectives, diverse knowledges and methods. Such knowledge spaces would provide occasions in which the epistemic differences between knowers that belong to different communities of practitioners in the community services field of practices could be communicated and learned rather than remaining inaccessible and not recognisable (Rouse, forthcoming). One task for such research would be to investigate knowledge spaces capable of disrupting the representational view of knowledge that is currently presupposed and threaded through performance measurement, accountability and planning frameworks such as RBA.

Final remarks

This thesis assists in articulating the distinctive practice knowing of locally-based community organisations. Experienced together, observations of situated practices, worker and service participant accounts illustrate locally-based community organisations doing social justice in the midst of a world of inequality. The relational practice-based approach offers a different version of the contributions and role of locally-based community organisations from that of the sub-contractual service provision currently institutionalised in government funding policies and programs. Both service participants and workers from locally-based community organisations can provide critical information to policy-makers about the practices necessary for ensuring people can participate actively both in the conditions of their own care and in the

health and well-being of their communities. This study points to the need for accountability and planning processes that recognise and are sensitive to the different knowledges and the distinctive roles and contributions of the diversity of organisations that make up the community services field of practices. Such recognition would mitigate against the 'one size fits all' approach that currently mandates common statewide results and performance measures.

Dependency is ubiquitous in relationships. Relations are almost never symmetrical, equal or calculable (Haraway, 2008). There is an urgent need in our society for practices that express respect across the boundaries of inequality, difference and dependency (Lovell, 2007; Sennett, 2003). This thesis suggests the knowing-in-practice of locally-based community organisations offers guidance for developing such practices and response. These practices of locally-based community organisations, that are currently outside of calculation (of what counts), matter. Haraway argues "relationships are the smallest possible patterns for analysis, the partners and actors are their still-ongoing products" (Haraway, 2008: 25-26). If what matters is to count in the community services field of practices, the patterns of analysis need to shift from focusing predominantly on individual entities to encompassing the relationalities with/in which all involved in locally-based community organisations intra-act and become.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Summary of the fieldwork data

The fieldwork data was gathered and accessed over a three-year period between September 2006 and June 2009. However, most of the fieldwork data was accessed and gathered in 2007 and for several of the organisational sites observations and reflexive discsussions continued throughout 2008.

West Street Centre

- Notes from observation of supervision/staff discussion, 13/3/07.
- Observation notes for capacity building training, 26/3/07 and 27/3/07.
- Transcript of supervision practice session, observed on 27/3/07.
- Observation of first consultation with learning network, 2/5/07.
- Observation of learning network, 6/6/07.
- Transcript of the capacity building project evaluation-staff talking, 13/3/07.
- Transcripts of reflective discussion with four staff, 13/3/07.
- Reflective discussion and transcript, 10/4/07.
- Transcript of the reflective discussion/co-theorising process, 28/5/07.
- Written evaluations of capacity building project and summaries of telephone interviews with participants, May 2008.
- Copies of counselling practice DVDs.
- 2 documents on West Street practice by staff at West Street.
- West Street Centre's notices advertising and explaining the capacity building project.
- Handout notes from and about the workshops.
- Handouts from the learning network, 2/5/07.
- Photographs of the West Street Centre.

Warrawong Community Centre

- Notes from meeting and observations, 27/2/07.
- Observations and notes, 9/3/07.
- Observations and notes, 24/4/07.
- Observations and notes, 25/5/07.
- Reflective discussion and transcript, 23/5/07.
- Observations of launch of Our Voices Our Communities report, 31/10/07.
- Transcript of interview with community arts co-ordinator.
- Transcript of interview with Koori leaders and elders.
- Transcript of interviews with lunch volunteers and participants.
- Transcript of discussion with men's group participants.
- Transcript of interview with men's group co-ordinator.
- Copies of participant feedback on the community lunch.
- Copy of CSGP service specifications and report on achievements.
- Community solutions report.
- Profile of lunch participants.

- Copies of newspaper articles.
- Photographs of Warrawong Community Centre and activities.
- Observations and reflective discussions were also conducted throughout 2008 as part of the 'Stories from the 'Hood: Practising place in the Illawarra' emergent PAR project.

Southern Youth and Family Services

- Observations and notes, 26/3/07.
- Observations and notes, 4/4/07.
- Observations and notes amended by Collin.
- Observation and notes, 16/6/07.
- Observations and notes, 19/6/07.
- Observations and notes: CHAIN amended by Julia.
- Observations and notes: JPET amended by Julia.
- Transcript of SYFS interview, 12/9/07.
- Transcript of speech at AGM, 19/9/07.
- Field notes of observations at AGM.
- Field notes and observations from 30th Anniversary dinner, September 2008.
- Copies of funding agreements.
- Copies of annual reports.
- Copies of brochures.
- Copies of photographs of Southern Youth and Family Services, buildings and activities.

Multicultural Women's Network

- Notes of observations and meeting, 23/3/07.
- Notes of observations, 30/03/07.
- Transcript of discussion, 30/3/07.
- DVD of group and practices.
- Accountability report of activities and practices with photographs.
- Notes from observations of the planning meeting, 18/4/07.
- Copies of minutes and agenda of meetings.
- Reflective discussion and transcript with members of the planning group, 30/5/07.
- Interview and transcript with co-ordinator, 19/6/07.
- Photographs of MWN activities.
- Recordings of songs from Multicultural Women's Performing Group.
- Observations of launch of Our Voices Our Communities report, 31/10/07.

Transcripts and interviews conducted by group members as part of 'Our Voices, Our Communities' emergent PAR project
- Transcript of interview with IMWPG participants, 29/6/07.
- Transcript of interview with IMWPG participants, 29/6/07.
- Transcript of interview with IMWPG participants, 13/8/07.
- Transcript of interview, 12/8/07 with Portuguese group members of MWN.
- Transcript of interview, 7/8/07 with Turkish group members of MWN.
- Transcript of group interview, 9/8/07 with Filipino group members of MWN.

- Transcript of group interview, 16/8/07 with Filipino group members of MWN.
- Observations and reflective discussions were also conducted throughout 2008, as part the emergent PAR projects.

Interchange Illawarra

- Observations and notes, 14/3/07.
- Observations and notes, 1/5/07.
- Documents eg: information on website, minutes of staff meetings.
- Transcript of discussion, 30/5/07.
- Observations and notes from the staff intake meeting, 30/5/07.
- Copy of minutes and agenda accompanying the meeting.
- Reflection discussion and transcript with staff, 12/6/07.
- Copies of photographs of Interchange Illawarra.

Results-based accountability planning processes, training and interviews

RBA interviews
- Interview and transcript with Anna, 20/3/07.
- Interview and transcript with Jaana, 23/3/07.
- Interview and transcript with Janet.
- Interview and transcript with Megan, 4/407.
- Interview and transcript with Bev, 5/4/07.

RBA training
- Observations of RBA training for CSGP funded services, organised by Shellharbour City Council and facilitated by senior, government-agency officer, 17/4/07.
- Observations RBA training facilitated by Mark Friedman, organised by the Illawarra Forum, MacArthur Community Forum and Western Sydney Community Forum for their member organisations, 4/6/2007.
- Notes from talk with Mark Friedman, 4/6/07.
- Transcript copy of interview with Mark Friedman conducted by Peak organisation, March 2008.
- Copies of handouts, work sheets, 'turn the curve' reports, brochures.

Observations of RBA processes in Illawarra
- Community Care RBA planning workshop, 21/8/07.
- Community Development planning workshop, 28/8/07.
- Community Care RBA planning workshop, 20/9/07.
- Community Development RBA planning workshop, 27/9/07.
- Reference group reflective discussion on RBA planning, 6/9/07.
- Notes from informal debriefs with RBA organisers and facilitator.
- Copies of documentation collected from workshops.
- Copies of evaluations from the workshops.
- Copies of reports from each of the days of RBA planning.
- Copies of the two RBA plans.
- Copies of publications produced from the RBA planning processes.

DoCS, peak body correspondence and other documentation relating to RBA
- Copies of correspondence relating to RBA sent to community organisations and Industry Partner.

- Copies of DoCS Results Logic and headline result chart for CSGP funded services.
- Copies of draft results for community centres and for family services.

CSARG sensemaking and other data

- Transcript of sensemaking session with CSARG and participants in relation to observing knowing in practice in 5 community organisations.
- 3 transcripts of sensemaking processes in relation to RBA processes with CSARG and participants, 27/11/07.
- Notes from sensemaking session with CSARG, identifying themes from the data.
- Notes from sensemaking session with CSARG between RBA sessions
- Transcript of sensemaking session with research participants, 1/8/08.
- Minutes of meetings conducted between September 2006 -December 2009.
- Emails and written feedback from CSARG and representatives of the five participating organisations on draft chapters of the thesis.
- Copies of briefing papers and industry update reports produced by CSARG.

Appendix 2: Participant information sheet and consent form

A sample participant information sheet

Dear

We are writing to invite you to participate in the Illawarra Forum/University of Sydney/ University of Western Sydney research project titled *Valuing local NGO knowledge in planning community services.* This action research project aims to improve ways to harness non-government community organisations' knowledge and increase genuine participation in newer planning models, such as Friedman Results and Performance Accountability Framework. This will involve identifying the practice knowledge generated in local community based organisations. The benefits of this study will be both improved recognition and use of local community services knowledge and enhanced participation in the design and delivery of human services to increase the health and well-being of our communities.

The research includes several phases and you have choice about which aspects and how you wish to be involved. Your participation could involve the following:

- Aspects of your work practice could be observed by the researcher to help identify the local knowledge that you draw on. These observations will not be audio or video taped. The hand written record of these observations will not be read or seen by anyone other than the research team.
- The observations of practice will be followed by a reflective discussion with the researcher of approximately 60 minutes duration. Each interview will be audio-taped. No transcripts will be read or seen by anyone other than the research team.
- Participation in a focus group with other community services workers who have participated in the research project talking about the knowledge created and used in community services organisations. This involves one meeting of approximately two hours.
- You could also participate in a planning process with other organisations, community members and relevant government departments. This will involve three, one day, workshops held over a six-month period.

All aspects of the data collection and analysis will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on who participates or the data collected. Your permission will be sought prior to recording your contribution. No individual participants will be identifiable in any papers or reports produced and these will be made available to you.

You can withdraw from the research project at any time without explanation or constraints from the research team.

We would greatly welcome interest in the project from those involved in community services provision in the Illawarra, so please feel free to tell other people about the project.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the research project. If you would like to know anything else about the project please contact either Lynne, Chris, Helen or myself on the numbers over the page.

Sincerely,

Dr Lesley Treleaven

Lynne Keevers
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Dr Lesley Treleaven
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Dr Michael Darcy
Chief Investigator
Email: m.darcy@uws.edu.au
PH: 0297726797

The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee has approved this study. If you have any complaints or concerns about the conduct of this research study you can contact the senior ethics officer, ethics administration, University of Sydney on 02 9351 4811 (Telephone) 02 93516706 (Facsimile) or gbriody@mail.usyd.edu.au.

Sample Consent form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, ...………................ , give consent to my
 (Name, please print)
participation in the research project called *Valuing local NGO knowledge in planning community services.*

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1.   The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

2.   I have read the Participant Information Letter and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.

3.   I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) now or in the future.

4.   I understand that any interviews undertaken will be audio taped.

5.   I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

Signed: ....

Name: ....

Date: ....

Appendix 3: RBA interviews question guide

*Semi-structured Interview Questions Guide focusing on practitioners'
experience of the Results-Based Accountability Framework.*

- Introduce researchers – working on partnership research project between the
  Illawarra Forum, the University of Sydney and the University of Western
  Sydney.
- Explain structure of sessions, length of time.
- Reiterate purpose of research
- Explain that confidentiality means that no researcher will mention the identity
  of the person making any statement.
- Seek permission for recording and reiterate that records will be kept secure in
  offices at the University of Sydney.
- Participants can stop participating at any time and withdraw consent to be
  part of the study.
- Future ideas can be sent to the researcher by email, and explain privacy issues
  related to that.

*Note that the Community Sector Action Research Group (CSARG) will be given the
opportunity to shape final questions for the interviews and focus groups.*

Questions

1. What experience have you had facilitating or participating in planning
   processes based on the Friedman Results Accountability Planning
   Framework?
2. What aspects of the model enhanced the planning process?
3. What aspects of the model inhibited the planning process?
4. What features of the model do you find most useful?
5. What do you see as the challenges in using the model?
6. If you were to compare, the Friedman RBA planning process, with other
   processes you have used or experienced:
   -How was it similar?
   -How was it different?
7. What strategies, techniques or processes would you incorporate to enhance
   the Friedman RBA planning process?
8. What would you change, if you were to use this particular planning
   process again?
9. How successful was the model in coming up with a useful plan?
10. Were those involved able to put the plan into action?
11. If not, what stopped them implementing the plan?
12. What were your perceptions of how other participants found the planning
    process?
13. What sorts of planning situations do you think are most suited to using
    this model?
14. What advice would you offer, to someone who was facilitating a Friedman
    RBA planning process?

Appendix 4: Collaborative analysis of fieldwork data

Valuing local NGO knowledge in planning community services

	www.illawarraforum.org.au/uni_project
	Address for Correspondence: PO Box 53 Jamberoo NSW 2533

Early analysis and identification of the themes evident in our PAR cycles with five local community services organisations

Overview

The research team has attempted to identify the distinctive practice knowledge of local community organisations in the Illawarra. We have observed practices in a range of local community organisations including counselling, youth, disability, community cultural development, CALD, aged care, women's services and a community centre. We have also interviewed and held reflective discussions with workers, participants, service participants and management committee members.

This fieldwork data demonstrates that community services knowing in practice recognises the centrality of social connectedness and social support for well-being. This involves recognising the importance for people of having *sense of control over their lives, a sense of belonging, a sense of hope and shared experiences of fun, joy and friendship.* Local community organisations have a detailed knowledge of the crucial role belonging infrastructure at the neighbourhood level plays in well-being of individuals living in our community. Our research indicates that community organisation practitioners know that well-being can spring from involvement in community groups connected by common interests, able to set their own priorities and agenda. Alongside this valuing of their 'belonging' role, the practices of community organisations recognise that this belonging infrastructure is weakest in poor disadvantaged communities and that *social inequality, injustice and oppression* inhibit a sense of control over your life and weaken social connectedness. Community organisations' knowing in practice demonstrates *an ethics of care* and a commitment to *a politics of compassion*, which assumes a shared humanity of interconnected people and recognises our universal vulnerability to risk and the importance of maintaining human dignity. *Some of the themes that have emerged from the analysis of the fieldwork conducted to date include:*

- **Community organisation practice is extremely diverse**
  The ways of working, the processes used, the interventions, the services, the people using and participating in the services and the organisational structures are very different between the organisations involved in our study.
- **Belonging, participation, ownership, horizontal relationships**
  Ways of organising and practising that create a strong sense of belonging, of ownership and of connectedness, is a strong theme that has been evident, in very different ways at all of the fieldwork sites.
- **Knowing that sometimes what is most significant is 'not providing a service'**
  This knowing-in-practice means that even community organisations funded to provide specific services like counselling or case management or respite, value processes and activities that do not provide 'a service'.
- **Trust and valuing of community development processes, trust in emerging and unfolding moments**
  The emergent, unfolding nature of the practices of community organisations is a strong theme in our fieldwork. Practitioners and participants often make the

destination together as the process develops and unfolds. Ways of working are emergent and not fixed. Processes are employed because the workers have a knowing and a trust that they are good ways of working rather than working to predetermined outcomes or a strategic plan specified in advance.

- **Recognition of the importance of humour, fun, joy and happiness in the well-being of individuals and communities**
- **Valuing of not knowing in community services practice**
Linked to the emergent unfolding nature of community services practice is a valuing of not knowing. This not knowing, often involves a deep respect for situated, experiential knowing. This not knowing is also related to creativity, to problem-solving and to co-producing ways of proceeding and working together.
- **A commitment to social justice, advocacy and an emphasis on locating issues/problems within the structures of society rather than within the individual**
This is a dominant theme evident at all sites and related to the following complex and subtle ways of practising: a sophisticated engagement with working in a power-relation and negotiating power-relationships; a deliberate blurring of the boundaries between workers, management committee members, volunteers and service participants; ethical and values orientations are integral to the judgments embedded in community organisations' practice; recognition of the systemic/structural dimensions of community issues, problems and concerns rather than an individualised approach; importance of advocacy, of standing alongside people.
- **Knowing of the often subtle and complex practices of oppression shaping people's everyday lives**
All sites have a detailed knowing of the practices of oppression and the many forms they take.
- **An ethics of care and a politics of compassion**
A politics of compassion recognises a shared humanity in interconnected people. It recognises that we are all vulnerable to risk.
- **Workers immersing themselves into the community, declining the expert role, distinctive approach to being 'professional'**
Many of the workers who have observed and talked to identify as being *of* the community rather than providing services *to* or *for* the community.
- **Valuing of situated, experiential, local knowledge in community organisations.**
In all of the sites it is evident that community organisations, generate and have access to very situated specific local knowledge.
- **Lack of fit between community organisations practice and the accountability and performance measurement systems currently employed by funding bodies**
There was a strong sense amongst many of the participating organisations that they are not really 'seen' by their funding bodies, that their ways of working and organising are not recognised by the funding bureaucracies. All of the sites commented that the current reporting mechanisms and accountability measures did not reflect significant and crucial aspects of their work and do not adequately capture their practices.
- **Community organisations' way of 'doing' leadership and managing**
Although most of the organisations participating in the research have very flat organisational structures, all of them have very strong, passionate leadership
- **Ways of knowing in practice that emphasise the importance of reflectivity and reflexivity**
- **Workers identities shaping and being shaped by the practices and ways of organising of community organisations**

Appendix 5: RBA workshop observations guide

Observer:	Date:	Time:

Group Dynamics What's going on? -with the facilitator, with the participants, within the groups, -with the government representatives? Who is doing what? What does the energy feel like? Who gets to speak? Who are playing what roles?	
Dominant discourses What discourses are emerging and developing? How extensively are they being recontextualised and operationalised? What language is being used? What discourses are dominant/hegemonic? What is being enabled and constrained?	
Local community services knowing in practice (see attached list) What themes from our fieldwork are being brought forward/ are present in the RBA process on the day? What themes are absent, being silenced, being supplanted? What themes/practices are being lost in translation? How are the practices being translated into language and into RBA formats?	

RBA workshop observations guide

Observer:	Date:	Time:
Materiality/time/space. What objects and artefacts are involved in the RBA workshop? What role do they play? How are people dressed? What do they look like? How are time and space being framed? What does the temporal sequencing look like? What impact is it having?		
Operating assumptions. What are the operating assumptions underpinning the RBA process? How are community services workers identities being represented/ 'made up'? How are community members' identities being represented? How are community organisations being 'made up'? Who 'owns' the process? How are results, measure/indicators, data being conceived?		
What was different about today's workshop compared to the other RBA planning processes we have observed? in terms of group process/facilitation -dominant discourses. -themes from our fieldwork being brought forward.		

Other observations/comments	

Appendix 6: Questions for CSARG sensemaking discussions of RBA data

During the sensemaking discussions we will be exploring the following questions:

1. What has been your experience of the RBA processes you have been involved in?

2a. To what extent does the data you have read, reflect the community organisations' knowing in practice themes described in the document summarising the first phase of our fieldwork? (use examples from the data)

2b. To what extent are they different? If there are differences, how are they different? (use examples from the data)

3a. If the themes arising from the first phase of our fieldwork were to be fully taken up in state government results-based accountability plans, what would they look like?
3b. What might be different about the processes used?
3c. What might be different about the language used?
3d. What might be different about the reporting/accountability forms?

4. What may facilitate the taking up of local community organisations' knowledge in state government planning for community services?

5. What may hinder the taking up of local community organisations' knowledge in state government planning for community services?

6. How might we use the experience of this fieldwork process to improve recognition of local community organisations' practice knowledge?

Appendix 7: Members of the Community Sector Action Research Group

Helen Backhouse

Nerissa Bradley (2008-2009)

Janet Bundy

Sharon Callaghan

Narelle Clay

Vivienne Cunningham-Smith (2006-2007)

Michael Darcy

Helen Dooley (2006-2007)

Melissa Hedges

Annette Hodgins

Lynne Keevers

Helen McGuire

Danna Nelse

Glenda Pearce

Joanne Pollard

Chris Sykes (2006-2007)

Jenny Thompson

Lesley Treleaven

June Williams