Cover and text design by Charlene Eldridge Wheeler

The cover design combines symbols of feminist concepts of Peace and Power. The hands held with the thumbs and first fingers touching are an international sign of women's unified commitment to peace within the universe. The labrys is a symbol of independent female power from ancient Crete now adopted by modern feminists. These two symbols combined reflect synergistic movement toward feminist activism.

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Acknowledgments

We enjoy a large circle of friends and companions on our journey toward a feminist future. Many individual women have made it possible for us to share the ideas of Peace and Power. We have not specifically named each individual here, but we appreciate each and every one, and trust that our journey together will grow and develop in the years to come.

Wilma Scott Heide, a dear friend and courageous women's movement leader of the early '70s, gave us the inspiration and determination to venture into publishing the first edition of Peace and Power as Margaret-daughters. She told us that when she first read the book, she wept, both from the joy of seeing feminist ideas presented in this way and from the anguish of not having had the benefit of some of these insights in her early years of activist work. As we conveyed to her many times before her death in 1984, it is because of her own courageous living, and that of women like her, that we have been able to present these ideas in this way.

Patricia Moccia, a woman of vision in our own generation, believed in the possibilities of this process for a wider circle, and facilitated the publication of this edition by the National League for Nursing. This appears at a time of great crisis in the health care system, and at a time of dramatic change for nurses and nursing. As incongruous as it may seem to many, this book is possible in part because of our backgrounds as nurses, and the heritage we carry from many radical nurses, sometimes not-yet-feminists, who lived and worked over the last century.

The groups in which we have worked have been fundamentally important in providing the opportunities to live our values, and to explore new ways of putting our values into action. We now name these groups and individuals in them who have contributed in particular ways to the emergence of our own thinking.

The Emma Collective was a group of women who owned a women's bookstore, now located at 168 Elmwood Avenue in Buffalo, New York. Lisa Albrecht, now at the University of Minnesota and a leader in the National Women's Studies Association, was a member of the Emma Collective at the time that we joined the collective, and she worked with us as we first began to develop the insights that made this book possible.

The Women's Studies Program at the State University of New York at Buffalo has a twenty-year tradition of using a form of rotating chair in their meetings and class gatherings. We have learned not only from some
of these gatherings, but from many individual women who participated in the Women's Studies classes and gatherings over the years.

Various coalitions of women in the Buffalo community, including the Voices of Women Writers Coalition (1982) and International Women's Day (IWD) Coalitions (1982–86), have provided experience and insights that have given form to many of these ideas. In 1983, the IWD Coalition invited Wilma Scott Heide to speak at our celebration, making possible the important connection we formed with Wilma.

Cassandra: Radical Feminist Nurses Network (PO Box 341, Williams-ville, New York 14231) is a network of nurses formed in 1982, committed to developing feminist analyses of issues in nursing and women's health. Our gatherings, as well as our struggles to work together across long distances to carry out responsibilities for the News Journal and the Webstership list, have contributed immeasurably to shaping our ideals.

The Friendship Collective is a group of nurses who gather to study the meaning and significance of women's friendships in nursing. Members of this group are or have been Elizabeth Berrey, Peggy Chinn, Cathy Kane, Christine Madsen, Adrienne Roy, Charlene Eldridge Wheeler and Elizabeth Mathier Wheeler. Throughout this book there are many references to the experiences of this group and the individuals in it.

Participants in the Feminism and Nursing class at the State University of New York at Buffalo, Spring 1982, were particularly influential in our determination to see these ideas in print. Anne Montes (now owner and operator of Emma Bookstore), Adrienne Roy and Penny Bresnick, whom we first met in that class, have remained close friends and have provided many forms of love and support that have made this work possible.
Prologue

Copper Woman warned Hai Nai Yu that the world would change and times might come when Knowing would not be the same as Doing. And she told her that Trying would always be very important.

Anne Cameron¹

A few women, old now, and no longer strong. A few elder women who kept alive what the invader tried to destroy. Grandmothers and aunts. Mothers and sisters. Who must be honoured and cherished and protected even at risk of your own life. Who must be respected. At all times respected. Women who know that which we must try to learn again. Women who provide a nucleus on which we must build again. Women who will share with us if we ask them. Women who love us. And seeming candidates, who have been tested and found worthy, and who are learning the old wisdom. Young women who do not always manage to Do what they Know, and so need our love and help.

Anne Cameron²

Women's wisdom is ageless and timeless, and passes from generation to generation primarily by oral tradition. Women's wisdom is evident in patriarchal scholarship throughout academic, religious and philosophic literature—without credit to the true female origins of the ideas. One of the most devastating results of this fragmentation and wrongful claiming of ownership of women's wisdom is the use of this wisdom in partial ways.

Women in the feminist tradition have been working to re-member³ the wisdom of Doing what we Know, and of Knowing what we Do, moving toward woman-centered realities. While we may not always manage to Do what we Know, the wisdom survives and is being re-learned with every attempt, with every re-attempt. The Knowing is so deeply buried within us, under layers and layers of patriarchal learning and conditioning, that the Trying is extremely tedious. It is at the same time exciting, affirming and encouraging. It becomes easier with every lived experience, especially within the context of a community of loving and protective women.
We believe that one of the reasons that the oral tradition has survived, and is still practiced among women, is that telling is indeed a simultaneous act of Knowing and Doing that springs from women’s wisdom. Writing is also a form of communication that can be both Knowing and Doing.

The written word provides a form that can be more or less enduring in a concrete way, but at the same time becomes static and seemingly frozen in time and space. A major limitation of the written word is that it can be readily destroyed. For centuries, women scholars have recorded women’s wisdom into written form, but much of that writing has not survived.¹

The spoken word, while seeming to disappear once the words are spoken, endures within the heart and mind of the listener and the speaker. Once spoken, it cannot be destroyed unless every person who has heard the words is destroyed. Speaking can be an interaction, as the speaker and the listener attend to the responses of one another. The act of speaking is an emergence, a creating and a form that gives rise to new acts, new thoughts and new forms even as the speech occurs.

The writing of this book grew out of our desire to document the women’s wisdom that has been passed on to us in the oral tradition and through example. We have woven together a wide array of feminist thought that gives form and substance to what we Know and Do. The ideas emerge from depths of experience and knowing within our Selves and from feminist literature (see Notes at the end of the book). In this second edition, we have drawn on our recent work with the Process, as well as on criticisms and feedback from other women.

In our experience, Doing that which comes from women’s Knowing is difficult within the hostile environment of patriarchal systems. We are too familiar with patriarchally structured meetings where we have been out-voted, out-shouted and unheard. We have eventually dropped out, if not physically, in spirit.

Within feminist groups we have experienced wonderfully different ways of relating, where no one is out-voted, out-shouted or unheard. Sometimes we have physically dropped out of these groups as our interests or circumstances changed. However, we have always remained in spirit.

We believe that at this point in history, it is critical for women to come together and create woman-centered interactions and realities. We see small group interactions among women as an ideal place to enact feminist values in a loving and supportive environment.

Language is crucial to creating this environment. For the most part, patriarchal words are what we must use to express our own meanings and wisdoms. In the attempt to reflect our own experience, women are creating new meanings and new words. When the listener does not
comprehend our meanings we depend on both actions and speaking to make our meanings clear.

In this book we use both old words with new (women's) meanings and new words with women's meanings. As a reader, you will not be able to observe actions that might enrich comprehension. But you will, as you begin to create the Process in your own time and space, begin to comprehend and create meanings that emerge from your own wisdom and experience.

To emphasize the importance of women's working together to learn and create our realities based on feminist values, we use female nouns and pronouns in the first nine chapters. In Chapter 10, we use both female and male terms, acknowledging the importance of feminist ideas in a variety of groups.

Just as we learned this Process, we have passed this knowledge to other women in words and action—defining, clarifying and describing as we all participated in the Process together. It feels awkward to us to define the Process by its parts, but we do not know a better way—in writing—to give a total picture.

This edition of the Handbook expands on the ideas in the first edition, and includes several new sections. The first two chapters of the Handbook provide the Ideas upon which the Process is built. Chapter 3 describes what it means to make the commitment to feminist values and process. Chapter 4 gives guidelines for forming a group's Principles of Unity. Chapters 5 through 8 provide a description of each component of the Process in action. Chapter 9 gives brief guidelines for periodic transitions, such as changes in group membership.

Since the publication of the first edition, we have seen the power of this Process to change existing patriarchal systems. This has been particularly evident in classrooms, and as a result we have included Chapter 10 on the use of Feminist Process in the classroom and other not-yet-feminist institutions. There are many adaptations that are needed, and usually the ideals of Peace and Power are realized only partially within these settings. But our experience, and that of many others who have used the Process in these settings, confirms that the Trying is well worth the effort.

Finally, the Notes at the end of the book not only provide the traditional "references" to literature that we quote, cite or otherwise use in the text, but also honor specific experiences, women and ideas that have influenced this work. Like the traditions that have emerged in the work of other feminist authors, the Notes are a valuable resource of information and readable in their own right.

Throughout, we have included examples from our own experience of how the Process works. The details of the examples have been changed
and the names of the women fictionalized. These examples are intended to clarify a simple—but certainly not easy—process.

While writing and revising this book, we have been keenly aware that we cannot directly address the questions or thoughts that might arise as you read, something we would be able to do in a group where we could interact. Since the first edition, we have received many comments, suggestions, insights and criticisms from women who have used the book. We have now integrated these ideas that many have contributed to this work-in-process. We encourage and welcome your criticisms and responses to this new edition, so that we may all move toward the realities where Knowing will once again be the same as Doing.
Chapter 1
What It’s All About: Peace

Today, we must have the courage to look beyond... We must have the faith to prepare the field and plant the crop we want to harvest in the years ahead.

Sonia Johnson, 1984

Can we be like drops of water falling on the stone
Splashing, breaking, dispersing in air
Weaker than the stone by far
But be aware that as time goes by
The rock will wear away
And the water comes again

Meg Christian and Holly Near, 1976

Peace is both the intent and the process from which feminist activism arises. To fully enact Peace requires that as individuals we re-think how we approach group interactions and what it is that we want to get done. Peace is both the means and the end, the process and the product. By enacting we also achieve.

To explore the idea of Peace as intent/process, we have created an acronym. The acronym builds an understanding of a feminist concept of what Peace is and what it is not. Each of the components of the acronym reflects a commitment that guides the ways in which individuals relate to one another within the context of group process. Each letter of the word PEACE represents a concept of intent/process from which actions arise:

Praxis
Empowerment
Awareness
Consensus
Evolvement

PRAXIS

Praxis is thoughtful reflection and action that occurs in synchrony, in the direction of transforming the world. Most of us have limited knowledge of praxis, since we exist in a world where “knowing” and “doing”
are rarely the same. We are all familiar with the message "Do as I say, not as I do." When we choose to convey the message that "I know what I do, and I do what I know," we are living our values. Praxis is values made visible through deliberate action. This becomes an ongoing cycle of constant renewal. As our actions are informed by awareness of the values, reasons and ethics of what we are doing, at the same time those very ethics, values and reasons—our thinking and our ideas—are being shaped and changed by our experiences with our actions.

EMPOWERMENT

Empowerment is growth of personal strength, power and ability to enact one's own will and love for Self in the context of love for others. Empowerment is not self-indulgence, but rather is a form of strength that comes from real solidarity with/among those who seek PEACE. Empowerment requires listening inwardly to our own senses as well as listening intently and actively to others, consciously taking in and forming strength.

Awareness is an active, growing knowledge of Self and others and the world in which we live. For the individual, this necessitates a sharp tuning in to the moment. The fundamental method of feminism has been called consciousness-raising, a vital transformation for women in the context of a society that treats women's knowing and experience as abnormal or non-existent. With awareness comes a consciousness that what is defined as "normal" is really abnormal; what is defined as "peace" is really war.

CONSENSUS

Consensus is an active commitment to group solidarity and group integrity. While decision making by consensus is a part of the Process, it is also an internal value that welcomes differences of opinion and an openness to self-evaluation. Perhaps nowhere else are the other elements of Peace enacted more fully than in bringing our full awareness to preparing for reaching consensus.

The group's commitment to decision making by Consensus grows out of mutually defined Principles of Unity where each individual is equally valued when group decisions are made. It means moving away from any action that exerts power over other individuals or groups. Rather, consensus grows from a full integration, a coming to terms, with all perceptions that bear on a particular concern, issue or decision.
EVLVEMENT

Evolvement is a commitment to growth, where change and transformation are conscious and deliberate. Evolvement can be likened to the cycles of the moon, where new and old, life and death, and all phases are ultimately one. What remains constant is the cycle itself. As we experience one another within the context of group interaction, we are changed, especially as we engage in Praxis. A group changes as individuals move in and out or become more or less involved and as the purposes or activities change. Growth and transformations are valued and celebrated with each new cycle. Foundational to this valuing is the notion that we are creating our realities as we live them, thus “there can be no mistakes,” only opportunities for re-creation.

PEACE IS NOT . . .

- letting things slide for the sake of friendship
- doing whatever is required to keep on good terms
- criticizing someone behind her back
- being silent at a meeting only to rant and rave afterwards
- letting things drift if they don’t affect you personally
- playing safe in order to avoid blame
- manipulating someone to avoid open conflict
- coercing someone to do what you want
- hearing distortions of truth without refuting them
- indulging another’s behavior when it is destructive

HAVING GOOD INTENTIONS IS NOT ENOUGH

Having the intent of Peace is critical when you are entering a group interaction. However, having the intent is not enough. The behavior that follows is just as essential and is the critical test of intent. Examine how fully your intent flows with your actions by asking questions like these:

- Do I Know what I Do, and do I Do what I Know?
- Am I expressing my own will in the context of love and respect for others?
- Am I fully aware of myself and others?
- Do I face conflicts openly and integrate differences in forming solutions?
- Do I value growth and change for myself, others and the group?
Chapter 2
How We Get There from Here: Power

This transition in our concept of power is radical. It involves seeing power not as a property we own, not as something we exert over others, but as a verb, a process we participate in. This is a huge evolutionary shift.

Joanna Rogers Macy

The challenge for us in developing our personal power is our willingness to recognize that power is within us and in our courageous choice to forgive and release anything that prevents this power from fully manifesting.

Diane Mariechild

We must build a new model of power that is defined as presence: presence of awareness of my own strengths and weaknesses, a deep respect for the SELF of me and therefore a respect for the SELF of others. We must journey toward the individual wholeness of each within the group structure. We must soften and/or relax the barrier between the intellect and the emotions so that the powerful and wonderful material of the unconscious becomes available to the individual and the group. We must be present to self and to others. Power in and of itself is neutral. We must take responsibility for our own actions and choose to know our own intent and the intent of any group before we simply follow a plan of action. Power-over demands that we do things we don’t choose to do. Power-of-presence means we choose carefully and understand our intentions.

Grace R. Rowan

Power is the commitment from which feminist activism arises. There are alternatives to the definition and exercise of power as we have learned it in the world at large. The feminist alternatives are familiar to all of us, but we are not accustomed to thinking of them as power because of our experiences and our learning in the traditions of the patriarchal power model. In a sense, the alternative powers should not be called "alternatives" because they are so central and vital to every woman’s
reality. We call them alternatives only because they are not yet the pre-
dominant mode of action in the world at large.

Even though the feminist alternatives seem idealistic when viewed
through cobwebs of patriarchal thinking, they do work in the context of
a group mutually committed to enacting these powers. It is difficult, but
not impossible, to overcome what we have learned to "know" with our
heads and to recognize the value of learning what we know with our
heads and hearts.

The feminist alternatives are not opposites, but they do contrast sharply
with the patriarchal model. Here, in the column on the left, we list
features of patriarchal power and give some familiar examples. In the
column on the right, we describe the contrasting feminist alternative with
a focus on the values, as well as the process through which they are
translated into action.9

**Patriarchal Power**
The Power of Results emphasizes
programs, goals or policies that
maintain the status quo. Achieve-
ment of the goals justifies the use
of any means: "I don’t care how
you do it, just get the job done."

The Power of Prescription where
change is imposed by authority, the
attitude is paternalistic: "Do as I
say, I know what is best for you."

The Power of Division where there
is a strong impetus toward central-
zation resulting in the hoarding of
knowledge and skills by the privi-
leged few: "What they don’t know
won’t hurt them."

The Power of Force where power
is invested for or against others and
is accompanied by a willingness to
impose penalties and negative
sanctions: "Do it or else...."

**Feminist Alternative**
The Power of Process emphasizes
a fresh perspective and freedom
from rigid programs or schedules.
Goals, programs and time-tables are
used as tools, but are less important
than the process itself.

The Power of Letting Go where
change grows out of consensus and/or
is inspired by leadership; values
the process of gaining Self-knowl-
edge and of cooperation.

The Power of The Whole values the
flow of new ideas, images and
energy from all, nurturing mutual
help networks that are both inti-
mate and expansive. The sharing
of knowledge and skills is viewed
as healthy and desirable.

The Power of Collectivity values the
personal power of each individual.
A group decision where each indi-
vidual has participated in reaching
consensus is viewed as more viable
than a decision made by any one
individual and stronger than a
decision made by a majority.
Patriarchal Power

The Power of Hierarchy where there is a linear chain of command: "I don't make the decisions, I just work here."

The Power of Command where the leaders are aggressive, the followers are passive; leaders are assigned titles, status and privilege: "I will tell you what to do." "Tell me what to do."

The Power of Opposites where issues are polarized and language reflects the values of "good vs. bad," "wrong vs. right": "If you aren't with us, then you are against us."

The Power of Use where exploitation of resources and people is normal: "If you don't want to work for what we are willing to pay, then quit. We will hire someone who will."

The Power of Accumulation where material goods, resources and dollars are used in one's own self-interest, and to gain privilege over others. "I worked for it, I bought it and I own it."

Feminist Alternative

The Power of Unity where responsibility for decision making and for acting on those decisions—is shared in a lateral network. This process values thoughtful deliberation and emphasizes the integration of variety within the group through the process of transforming conflict.

The Power of Sharing where leadership shifts according to talent, interest, ability or skill; emphasizes passing along knowledge and skills in order that all may develop individual talent.

The Power of Integration where situations are viewed in context without arbitrary value-laden judgment. In the process of enacting self-volition, the individual integrates the qualities of self-love with love-for-others and acts with respect for each individual’s entitlement to self-volition.

The Power of Nurturing where life and experience is viewed as a resource to be cherished and respected. The earth and all creatures are viewed as integral to existence.

The Power of Distribution where material resources (including food, land, space, money) are valued for the beneficial uses to which they can be put for all to share, equitably and according to need. Material goods are valued as a means, not as an end in and of themselves.
**Patriarchal Power**

The *Power of Causality* relies on technology to conquer: "The pill is causing you to retain fluid? Here, take another pill that will make you lose fluid."

The *Power of Expediency* emphasizes immediate reward or the easiest solution: "The grant is about to run out and we still have $5,000. How can we spend it quick?"

The *Power of Xenophobia* (fear of strangers) where conformity and adjustment are rewarded: "Be a team player, don't make waves."

The *Power of Secrets* relies on the mystification of process, agents and line of command. The agent who actually has the power rarely implements decisions or takes direct action, but assigns the dirty work to someone else: "I'm just doing what I was told."

**Feminist Alternative**

The *Power of Intuition* where actions and directions are determined by considering the perceived totality of human experience. While technology is considered to be a resource, it is not elected for its own sake or merely because it exists.

The *Power of Consciousness* emphasizes long-range outcomes and ethical behavior. Ethics and morality derived from feminist values are the basis for confronting actions that are destructive and for creating actions that are biophilic.

The *Power of Diversity* encourages creativity, values alternative views and encourages flexibility. The expression of dissenting views is expected, and all points of view are integrated into decisions.

The *Power of Responsibility* focuses on demystification of processes and on naming and being the agent; encourages open criticism and self-criticism that is motivated by love and protection for the individual and for the group.
Chapter 3
Doing It: Making the Commitment

Have you ever . . .

- been in a meeting where two people argued for most of the time and nothing ever got done?
- been at a meeting where you never heard what someone was trying to say because she kept getting interrupted?
- voted against a motion that passed, knowing that your concerns were serious but never heard or addressed?
- left a meeting thinking that you were the only one who was dissatisfied?
- left a meeting and then found out in the hall afterwards what was really going on?
- left a meeting thinking, “There has got to be a better way”?

There is a better way. The better way is Feminist Process—the concepts of Peace and Power in action. The Process is no guarantee of totally satisfactory outcomes or automatic solutions to the dreadful meetings we have all experienced. In fact the methods we describe, if used in a cookbook manner, will certainly fail.

Creating a better way begins with individuals who take personal responsibility for making it happen. The Process will work to create more satisfactory ways of interacting in groups, but its success depends upon each individual’s taking deliberate responsibility to enact the values of Peace and Power within her own behavior.

THE COMMITMENT OF PEACE AND POWER

Individual commitment begins with consciously embracing a commitment to

*Praxis*
*Empowerment*
*Awareness*
*Consensus*
*Evolution*

These commitments, described in Chapter 1, represent the values from which feminist ideas of Power emerge. Embracing Peace internally leads
to conscious commitment to feminist Power in action and behavior, creating new realities in group interactions. There are no prescriptions or "recipes" for how an individual is to act or behave in a group, but it is possible to describe traits and types of actions that tend to emerge from the commitment to Peace and Power. Having a mental picture of what each individual can do to contribute to making the new reality happen helps each woman begin to enact her own responsibility. In this chapter, we focus on the internal work that each individual does in relation to the group process, and the individual actions and behaviors that arise from the commitment to do this work. The following are offered as examples and are not all-inclusive. We are confident that you will be able to add to the list in important ways.

A commitment to the Power of Process means

- giving yourself and everyone else in the group the time to attend to any concern or issue that exists for any individual
- letting decisions emerge gradually, realizing that very few decisions are urgent
- inviting everyone in the group to express any ideas or concerns during the discussion

A commitment to the Power of Letting Go means

- moving away from your own vested interests in order for other women in the group to express their interests fully
- supporting others who are new, or learning something new, in their work of taking on something you are already skilled at doing
- expressing your misgivings or concerns about a situation in the group, but letting the sense of the group prevail when the group needs to move on to something else

A commitment to the Power of The Whole means

- placing your own individual needs and interests within the context of the group
- encouraging working together to equalize power within the group and create empowerment for all

A commitment to the Power of Collectivity means

- taking into account the interests of every member of the group, including those who are not present
- making sure that every concern has been addressed and fully integrated into every discussion and decision
A commitment to the Power of Unity means
- addressing conflict openly, and in so doing working actively to strengthen the integrity of the group
- celebrating values and joys that are shared in common
- keeping the group's Principles of Unity alive as a basis for moving forward

A commitment to the Power of Sharing means
- taking responsibility for leadership and tasks, including things you enjoy doing and can do well, and things you would rather not do but that need to be done
- encouraging others to join in passing skills and tasks along, by assuming tasks from others

A commitment to the Power of Integration means
- listening actively and deliberately to every concern or idea that others bring to the group, and taking active steps to understand and act on others' points of view
- taking actions that encourage bringing things together, rather than polarizing them into opposing points of view

A commitment to the Power of Nurturing means
- treating one another in ways that convey love and caring
- acknowledging that each individual's experience has uniquely qualified her to be where she is at the present
- affirming and rejoicing in the knowledge that each woman in the group has her own power to use in any way she may choose

A commitment to the Power of Distribution means
- taking actions to overcome imbalances in personal material resources among group members
- using resources that are available to the group as a means, not an end
- making all resources that are available to the group equally available to all in the interest of the development of the group and each individual

A commitment to the Power of Intuition means
- taking the time to think, feel and experience the fullness of a situation
• taking actions that seem risky when your gut tells you to go ahead

A commitment to the *Power of Consciousness* means

• talking about why you are doing what you are doing
• exploring with others awareness of feelings, situations, responses and meanings in your experiences

A commitment to the *Power of Diversity* means

• stopping to carefully consider another point of view when your immediate response is to reject it
• taking deliberate actions to keep yourself and the group open to creating accessibility for others who are different or new

A commitment to the *Power of Responsibility* means

• keeping everyone in the group fully informed about the group tasks you are doing and about anything in your personal life that might affect the group as a whole
• acting to make sure that nothing is mystifying, that everything that concerns the group is equally accessible to every member
• actively Checking In and Closing in a spirit of contributing to the growth and development of everyone in the group
Chapter 4
What We Are All About: Principles of Unity

... Imagine how it feels to always belong—belong in a diversified community, for it is the diversity in nature that gives the web of life its strength and cohesion. Imagine a time where everyone welcomes diversity in people because they know that is what gives community its richness, its strength, its cohesion. Imagine being able to relax into our connectedness—into a web of mutually supportive relations with each other and with nature. ...

... Imagine a world where there was collective support in the overcoming of individual limitations, where mistakes weren't hidden but welcomed as opportunities to learn, where there was no reason to withhold information, where honesty was a given. Imagine a world where what is valued most is not power but nurturance, where the aim has changed from being in control to caring and being cared for, where the expression of love is commonplace.

... The very fact that you can imagine these things makes them real, makes them possible.

Margo Adair

Principles of Unity provide a bridge between that which brings us together as a cohesive group and that which distinguishes each of us as an individual. The Principles of Unity provide a grounding from which the group can work together, the ideals toward which the group builds, a focus around which to integrate all individual perspectives in forming decisions, a basis for giving one another growthful criticism, and a foundation for transforming diversity into group strength.

Principles of Unity are statements of mutually shared beliefs and agreements that are formed early in the group’s experience together. Although it is a good idea to write them down, they are not sealed in stone, but are deliberately and thoughtfully revised and changed as the experience of the group emerges and the needs of the group change.

The Principles are the basis for each part of the group’s ongoing process. They also provide an introduction and orientation to individuals who are considering becoming a part of the group. New members may contribute valuable perspectives that can lead to shifts and changes in
the Principles, but the Principles form a grounding for stability within the group as membership changes.

BUILDING PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

Feminist Process is based on a balance between unity within the group and diversity among individuals. Individuals enter a group with differences in style, personality, beliefs and backgrounds, but with some common purpose or motive. In a group committed to Feminist Process, these differences ultimately strengthen the integrity of the group, because the group values and acknowledges the differences openly and works toward reaching mutual understandings of these differences.

Building Principles of Unity begins with each woman’s sharing her own ideas about the group, why she is interested in forming the group and what she expects from the group. Each perspective is expressed as fully as possible, and then the group begins to identify those ideas around which the group members are clearly unified and those ideas that represent diversity from which to build common understandings.

Ideally, Principles of Unity are formed in the first few gatherings of a new group. For a group that chooses to work using Feminist Process, the decision to shift to this way of working together is the first step in forming Principles of Unity, and that decision becomes one of the Principles.

In our experience, the time invested to form new Principles of Unity or to re-examine existing Principles of Unity is some of the most valuable time spent in group work. Usually a task-oriented group that will meet regularly for a year or more requires two or three half-day gatherings to form a beginning set of Principles of Unity, and regular times set aside thereafter to re-evaluate those principles.

There are at least seven components that a group needs to consider in forming Principles of Unity. Each component becomes a section of the written document, but the specific Principles will vary according to the needs and purposes of each group.

Who Are We?

The name of the group implies a great deal about the group. Once a name is selected, the words used in the name may need specific definition. For example, the word “radical” in a group’s name might be defined as “fundamental; going to the root.”

The group may also need to make an explicit agreement about who the individuals within the group are or will be in the future. For example, a group that is formed to create and maintain a women’s center in the community may deliberately seek participation from a broad base of women in the community, including women of color, women of all sexual
preferences, women of differing economic classes, and so forth. A support group for lesbian women will likely define their group identity as lesbian; a group that is working on the rights of lesbian mothers may actively seek the participation of non-lesbian women as well as lesbians who are not mothers.

An important dimension of defining membership is getting clear on how open the group is to integrating new members and on when and how this will happen. A group that is formed to accomplish a specific, detailed and long-term task may need to initially limit membership to a few members who are able and willing to remain dedicated to the accomplishment of the task. While many groups will choose not to be "closed" groups in relation to membership, there may be periods of time where stability in the membership of the group is needed. Making a specific agreement about how long group membership will remain stable is helpful in preventing misunderstandings within the group, as well as in communicating with others who are not group members.

What Are Our Purposes?

Defining who the group is provides a basis for identifying the group's purposes. A women's center group may have the immediate purpose of finding a space, but then the group needs to identify the purposes for which that space will exist and how it will be used. If one purpose is to provide shelter for battered women, there are additional things to be defined in relation to this purpose, such as if they are going to offer counseling, economic, legal or educational services as well. The possibilities for a group's purpose need to be considered in light of what is realistic for the initial group. The members of a battered women's support group may want to see the group offer a full range of services to women and their children. However, the resources of the group may be such that the initial purpose needs to be limited to fund-raising and educational work. Being clear at the outset about the limits of the purpose can help the group to use their resources and energies in productive ways, rather than in working at cross-purposes.

In each of the following sections, examples of Principles of Unity are provided from our experience with the Friendship Collective, whose purpose was to study the experience of female friendship among nurses.5

What Beliefs and Values Do We Share Around Our Purpose?

Whatever the group defines as its purpose will direct the group to exploring various values and beliefs related to that purpose. Certain values are fundamental to a feminist perspective; stating these values is important to help each member of the group grow in her understanding of the meaning of these values. Having the beliefs and values stated
provides a way for the group to examine how the shifts represented in feminist values create changes in how we act and how we relate to one another.

The beliefs and values that formed Principles of Unity for the Friendship Collective are:

- We believe that friendships among women are fundamental to female survival and growth.
- We believe that women’s friendships that are based on feminist praxis are critical for feminist existence and culture.
- We value all forms of friendship between women.
- We value our own friendships among one another and are committed to living our friendship with deliberate awareness, examining and creating our experience as we go.

What Individual Circumstances or Personal Values Do We Need to Consider as We Work Together?

Having a space where every woman feels safe to speak, to act and to Be is central to the concept of Feminist Process. This space is essential for constructive interactions that are central to woman-defined realities. For many women this means having a space where men are not a part of the group. Given the realities of a male-dominated society, most women’s groups must confront the personal issue of male presence, physically and psychologically. The range of personal values that need to be considered depends on the individuals who are in the group. Differing circumstances of women’s lives create varying expectations and commitments. Women who are single parents or who care for older adults may want careful limits on time and other personal resources demanded by the group. Women who need personal support and time in the group because of crises or difficult personal circumstances may want the group to have more flexibility in relation to time spent together. A woman in a wheelchair not only needs space that is accessible to her, but she also needs the group’s awareness of her particular challenges. A woman who suffers from fat oppression may not need specific physical arrangements, but needs the group’s awareness of the discriminations she experiences and how these can be overcome within this group. Any woman who is a “minority” within a group, whether on the basis of race, age, ethnicity, sexuality, social class, education or any other basis needs recognition and valuing of these differences. Once the group has openly explored the range of personal circumstances of each woman’s life, then the group can agree upon a common set of expectations that everyone values.

Examples of Principles of Unity formed by the Friendship Collective that grew out of personal circumstances and individual values are:
• We will not intentionally take any action individually or collectively that exploits any individual within the group or any other women.

• We will keep at a minimum any financial expenses needed from any individual in relation to our work, and will openly negotiate these demands as they occur.

• We will be conscious of helping one another maintain a balance between the demands of our group work and our personal lives.

• We will maintain careful time limits for our gatherings that are mutually agreed upon by each member of the group at each gathering.

What Do We Expect of Every Member?

Time, energy and commitment expectations can take many different forms. For example, group members might be expected to attend a monthly meeting and contribute to the work of a task group that meets about three hours each week. For another group, each member might be expected to attend a yearly meeting and work on one project of her choosing during the year. Large groups that do not meet together but join in a network to promote communication might simply expect that every member contribute financially to the network, with the work of specific tasks done by smaller groups as they volunteer to assume the responsibility.

How each member is expected to interact within the group is a central consideration in forming Principles of Unity. We are accustomed to entering groups with the unspoken ideal that everyone will be “open and honest.” In reality, we know that in many groups we are not surprised to discover hidden agendas and manipulative behavior. Any form of Feminist Process requires that common expectations for interaction are made explicit, and that they move beyond damaging types of group interactions.

Examples of Principles of Unity that grew out of the Friendship Collective’s expectations for interactions are:

• We will meet once a week until the initial stage of the project is planned, and at regular intervals thereafter we will re-negotiate the frequency of our meetings.

• We will take time to relax and play together.

• We are committed to using Feminist Process, including making decisions through consensus and learning to provide constructive, growthful criticism for one another.
• We will address conflicts, feelings and issues between us openly as soon as they reach our awareness, with the understanding that early awareness may not be perfect but deserves expression.

• We will share skills, leadership and responsibility within the group according to ability and willingness, and will work to nurture these abilities in each of us so that they are shared as equally as possible.

• We welcome any individual’s assuming specific tasks that need to be done that grow out of our mutually agreed direction, and support her initiative in doing so. We expect that each of us will keep every other member of the group fully informed as to the progress of her activities related to the group’s work.

What Message Do We Wish to Convey to the World Outside Our Group?

Every group conveys a message to the rest of the world about who the group is and what the group is all about. Sometimes the message is accurate to the intents of the group, other times it is not. In a feminist group, the message is formed with careful and deliberate intent, and the group constantly examines the ways in which that message is being conveyed. The message that is sought is always consistent with what the group believes and values, but there are still choices to be made in relation to that message.

For example, a group that exists to develop services for battered women may decide to form a message that stresses women as physically strong, powerful and resourceful. Another component of that message might be that women help other women, providing support and assistance in a wide variety of ways. The ways in which members of the group interact in public will be informed by these two messages as central considerations. These messages would grow out of the beliefs the group has about women in general, as well as beliefs about women who are battered.

Examples of Principles of Unity that the Friendship Collective formed in relation to our message are:

• We will work to form a message that is consistent with what we believe about female friendship and about feminist praxis.

• All public presentations will reflect our cooperative, feminist style of working, and will reflect our commitment to sharing of skills, leadership and responsibility.

• We will carefully and constructively criticize each public presentation or written document to examine the message we think we actually conveyed, and to re-form our own commitments and our presentation style as needed to more closely convey the message that we intend.
How Will We Protect the Integrity of Our Group?

Groups that are engaged in activist work, or that begin to create a new reality for women, ultimately encounter outside demands of their time and attention. These demands may place unrealistic burdens on the group, or they may not always be consistent with the direction that the group wishes to take. Conscious awareness and anticipation of these possibilities helps a group develop agreements that can guide responses to outside demands.

Examples of Principles of Unity formed by the Friendship Collective to protect group integrity are:

- All requests of our group will be discussed in a gathering with all of us present, and all decisions made regarding outside demands will be made by consensus of the group.
- Decisions about outside requests will be informed by a primary concern for the protection of each of us individually, our primary commitment to the work of our group and our readiness to respond to the request.
- We will maintain our commitment to feminist praxis and to feminist methods in our work, and will carefully examine all situations that might result in an erosion of this commitment.
- We will seek external funding for our work, but will examine the demands placed on us in relation to accepting funding to assure that whatever demands these are, they do not compromise our primary principles.

ONCE OVER LIGHTLY: THE PROCESS IN ACTION

Feminist Process is an alternative to traditional power structures within groups. Once a group decides to use Feminist Process, each woman must determine her own willingness to work in a disciplined and collective style, her willingness to value and learn from differences among individuals within the group, her commitment to struggle with conflicts openly, her commitment to take ownership for her own behavior, and her reasons and motives for becoming a part of the group.

Each phase of Feminist Process is enacted by individuals who engage in the group with the intent of Peace and commitment to feminist Power. Each phase of the process that is used for each gathering grows out of a group's Principles of Unity—Principles that each individual helps to form or re-form as the group grows.

Groups sit in a circle so that everyone has eye contact. Usually one individual, the Convener, comes to a gathering with an agenda that
provides structure for the gathering. This responsibility rotates among group members every gathering. The Process for each gathering has several distinct components that encourage each individual to put feminist values into practice.

The Convener opens the gathering by beginning Check-In (see Chapter 5), when each woman declares herself fully Present, in mind, body and spirit. Check-In is a time for each individual to focus her awareness on the purposes of the gathering, to share with the group any circumstances that might influence her participation in the process and to bring her individual perspective for this gathering before the group.

Following Check-In, the Convener draws attention to the agenda and begins the process of Rotating Chair (see Chapter 6). Rotating Chair is a mutually shared responsibility for facilitating group interactions. The "chair" refers to whoever is speaking. The primary purpose of Rotating Chair is to promote every woman’s viewpoint being heard, with each woman's input being valued and necessary.

Groups decisions are reached by Consensus (see Chapter 7). Consensus focuses on reaching a conclusion that takes into account all viewpoints and one that is consistent with the group’s Principles of Unity. In contrast to compromise, which is a decision that focuses on what each individual gives up, consensus is a process that focuses on what each individual and the group as a whole gain by the nature of the decision that is reached. Central to the concept of Feminist Process is the idea that a group decision reached by consensus is more viable than that achieved by a majority vote or by any one individual.

The final component of Feminist Process is Closing, a process of ending a gathering or discussion and beginning movement toward the next stage of the group’s process (see Chapter 8). During Closing, each woman shares her Appreciation for something that has happened during the process of the gathering, her Criticism leading toward growth and change, and an Affirmation that expresses her own personal commitment for moving into the future.
Chapter 5

Getting Things Going: Check-In or Check-Out

Check-In is

- making explicit what you expect to gain through group interaction and what you hope for the group during the gathering
- sharing circumstances or events that are likely to influence your participation during the discussions
- reflecting briefly on what you integrated or gained from the last gathering
- actively expressing your commitment to be fully present for the group during this time together
- committing yourself to creating a safe space, arising from your love and care for each individual and the group

THE CONVENER

The one individual who comes to a gathering with a specifically defined role is the Convener. A different individual volunteers to convene each gathering so the task rotates and so that everyone develops leadership skills.

The Convener’s primary responsibilities are to prepare the agenda for the gathering and to begin Check-In. The agenda is written on a chalkboard or large sheet of paper (shelf liner or freezer wrap will do!) and is posted before the group prior to the time the gathering is scheduled to begin. The Convener also identifies announcements or items that need to be mentioned without discussion and presents these just after Check-In.

During the gathering, the Convener assumes a leadership role in relation to facilitating the group’s attending to the mutually agreed upon agenda. The Convener actively listens to the discussion and calls for shifts in the process as facilitator. For example, when the Convener notices that some women have not had an opportunity to speak, the Convener might ask for a Circling process (described in Chapter 6) to give everyone a chance to speak. Or, when she senses that all viewpoints have been heard, she begins the process of decision making by consensus (described in Chapter 7).
Other members of the group can assume these leadership roles at any time, but the Convener remains particularly attentive to group movement. The Convener at no time should be expected to behave like the traditional “Chairman of the Bored”—calling time limits, reminding people to use Rotating Chair, or whatever. Every individual present is responsible for attending to time limits and for facilitating the use of all parts of the Process. Once the gathering begins, the Convener is free to participate in the discussion just as any other member of the group.

The following guidelines are for Conveners to use in thinking about and planning for gatherings:

**Review the Minutes from the last gathering:**
- Are there left-over items that need to be addressed or items that the group decided to carry over to the next gathering for discussion?
- Are there any new resources needed to enhance the discussions of the items brought forward from the last gathering?
- Are there any new developments that will effect the decisions made at the last gathering?

**Review group process:**
- What individual concerns or needs have been expressed that should be considered in planning for this gathering?
- What group issues have women identified that need to be considered in planning for this gathering?
- What group strengths have been identified that need to be sustained and supported during this gathering?

**Plan the agenda:**
- What announcements need to be shared?
- Are there special time considerations or other individual needs to be taken into account?
- What new items need to be introduced?
- What specific tasks or responsibilities need to be done before the gathering?

**CHECK-IN**

Check-In is a brief statement by each woman present. It centers the attention of the group on the shared purpose for being together. Each
woman shares her own specific expectations for the gathering, so that this can be integrated by everyone present. Once this is done, there are no hidden agendas.

For new groups, each woman may give her name, something about herself and her reason for being present. For new women joining an established group, Check-In can feel intimidating. A lifetime of patriarchal process creates doubts about how safe any space really is. Until a woman feels comfortable within a group she may only wish to share who she is and her purpose for being present.

One purpose for checking in is to address your own ability or limits in attending to the gathering. If you are not sure how fully present you are able to be, you might say, “Things are not good for me tonight, but I want to hear the discussion and participate as much as possible.” You may choose to provide some details that will facilitate the group’s understanding. It is most important to say something about what you hope to gain by being present. Knowing the circumstances that are influencing your ability to attend to the work of the group, and what you are working for on behalf of the group, the group can respond in a supportive and caring way.

There are many other things that may be shared during Check-In. Suppose that during Closing at end of the last gathering, comments were shared about Sally’s constructive way of responding to a situation. Sue reflected on the constructive approach that Sally used and practiced the approach in her own life. This enabled Sue to deal more constructively with a problem she was having. During Check-In, Sue relates what has happened and shares with the group that if the situation had not been examined during Closing, she would not have been able to change what she was doing. It is important for the group that Sue share this experience, not only for sharing her own growth, but also for the group to appreciate the far-reaching consequences of their collective actions.

Check-In need not consume a great deal of time. However, enough time needs to be provided so that each individual speaks.

**Responding to Check-In**

Check-In does not occur in a vacuum. The group briefly focuses energy, time and attention on what each individual has expressed. Some check-ins may require more energy and time than others; some require no response. When women have exciting good news, the group may wish to express their shared joy. When a woman is preoccupied with some circumstance that may interfere with her participation, the group may inquire “How can we best respond right now?” to help clarify what kind of response might be best for the individual and the group. If a woman shares a dramatic event—such as the death of a friend—the group needs
to decide if they wish to suspend the agenda and attend to her distress or whether they wish to alter the agenda in some way to respond to her needs.

CHECK-OUT

Here, we use the notion of Check-Out in two ways. First, if a woman is not able to participate in the gathering in an active way, she should check-out entirely—either from this gathering or from the group altogether. Sleeping or reading a book during a gathering does not constitute participation!

While every individual's Check-In differs in extent and detail, it is vital for each woman to share something about her intent for each gathering. Silence during Check-In leaves others wondering what you are thinking, leaving room for doubts about your intents. Silence at this time interferes with creating a safe space, and with constructive development of the group. If you really can't participate with a spirit of owning your part of responsibility for the group process, then it is time to check-out of the group.

Another kind of check-out occurs when a woman is present and committed to the group but has specific limits on her time and energy for a particular gathering. If you come to a gathering and have to leave at some point before the meeting is over, then explain your situation during Check-In and give the time frame you are committed to. As the time nears, request the chair and remind the group of your need to leave. Give the group time to attend to your concerns or unfinished business, or to make plans for finishing something you might be involved with.

For example, a gathering has been scheduled to end at 10:00 P.M. Neva wishes to leave the meeting at 9:00 P.M. because she is taking an exam the next morning and needs to get a good night’s rest. Neva has been involved in planning for a concert that the group is sponsoring and wants to be present for that discussion. She shares her circumstance with the group and requests that the discussion about the concert be placed earlier than planned on the agenda so that she can be present for it. The group agrees to this priority, and the gathering proceeds. As 9:00 P.M. draws near, Neva requests the chair and shares with the group that she is concerned that there are still some loose ends related to the concert. The group shifts attention to Neva’s comments, wraps up the loose ends and wishes her the best on her exam.
Chapter 6
Turning It Over: Rotating Chair

Rotating Chair is truly "turning it over." Using Rotating Chair turns upside-down the long-accepted custom of hierarchical structures—a linear chain of command where a single individual or an elite group assumes leadership and control. Rotating Chair turns over to each member of the group the rights and responsibilities for leadership, tasks and decisions.

The process of Rotating Chair may initially seem awkward, cumbersome, inefficient and a frank nuisance. We are certain that it is especially tedious to attempt to learn this process by reading. (As we were writing, we increasingly appreciated the oral tradition!) Once women experience the entire process in the context of a group with mutual intent and commitment to Feminist Process, fears and reservations about the process gradually disappear. In fact, it becomes excruciating to try to endure the old ways when we have to go back and deal with the world at large.

ROTATING CHAIR

Rotating Chair is a mutually shared responsibility for facilitating group interactions. Whoever is speaking is the chair. Following Check-In, the Convener gives the announcements. The group then reviews the agenda and identifies any items that need to be included that are not on the agenda. If anyone has a brief item that simply consists of information-sharing, this is a good time to do so. The group may set time limits and priorities on the agenda items. The Convener then focuses the group’s attention on the first item of business. The chair rotates to whoever wishes to speak, and discussion begins.

Once the discussion begins, a woman expresses her desire to speak by raising her hand. The woman who is speaking is responsible for passing the chair to the next individual who raises her hand. The chair is passed by calling the name of the woman you are recognizing to speak next. If more than one woman indicates a desire to speak, preference is given to the woman who has not spoken or who has not spoken recently.

Passing the chair by calling of names is an important tool for a large group to help everyone learn everyone’s name. More important, in a group of any size it is a symbolic gesture that signifies honoring each individual’s identity, and respecting the Presence of each woman for who she is. For the group, calling the next speaker’s name is a clear signal that
you have finished speaking, and that you are indeed passing the chair along.

A woman is under no obligation to relinquish the chair to someone else until she has completed the ideas and thoughts she wishes to share. At the same time, each speaker has the responsibility to facilitate an opportunity for all women who wish to speak to each issue. Each speaker avoids making long, repetitive or unrelated comments that prevent access to the chair for other women.

During the discussion, make notes of your thoughts and allow the woman speaking to complete her thoughts before you indicate your desire to speak. In this way you can attend more fully to the speaker's ideas and allow her the time and space to fully express her concerns. Frantically waving your hand in eagerness to share your thought can be just as distracting and disrespectful as verbally interrupting.

At first, raising your hand can make you feel as if you have gone back to kindergarten! Some women have initially found hand-raising awkward and intimidating. The benefits, however, soon become apparent! Each woman speaking can be confident that she will be heard, that she may complete her thoughts without interruption and that she will not be intimidated by someone with a louder voice. Each woman desiring to speak is assured that she will have the opportunity to do so. A woman with a soft voice knows that she doesn’t have to shout to get attention. A woman who is unaccustomed to speaking in a group is assured of having a space and the time to practice those skills. A woman who speaks slowly, or who pauses to gather her thoughts, is assured that nobody is going to jump in and grab the attention of the group before she completes what she wants to say.

PASSING IT ALONG: NOTES, MINUTES AND ARCHIVES

Everyone who participates in a gathering takes her own notes. These notes facilitate the process of Rotating Chair, but they are not a record of the meeting and are not shared with the group. They are used as a personal tool to remain in touch with thoughts you have while others are speaking. Your own notes make it possible for you to hold on to an idea that you want to share, without interrupting someone else who is speaking. They form a personal journal of your experiences. They can also serve as a personal reminder of what it is you have agreed to do! These notes are invaluable to you as a reference point during Closing.

At least one individual assumes the responsibility for recording the proceedings of the gathering in the form of Minutes. For gatherings that last longer than about an hour at a stretch, it is helpful to pass this task along to different individuals in the group.
There are several reasons for keeping Minutes:

- to provide a permanent record for the group’s archives
- to communicate information to those women who are not present at the gathering, so they can be informed of what happened
- to provide a reference for the Convener of the next gathering
- to help people short on memory figure out what they are supposed to do next

Some groups keep detailed records of all ideas and comments, including who spoke and a summary of what she said. Other groups keep simple records of who was present at the gathering, the decisions made and the major factors that contributed to each decision. The group’s needs may vary from one gathering to the next.

**ACTIVE LISTENING**

Active listening is a vital part of the process of Rotating Chair. This requires a deliberate awareness of how accurately you perceive what other women say. Whenever you are not sure if your perception is accurate, request the chair and ask for clarification. It is helpful to paraphrase in your own words what you understood, so that the woman who was speaking does not have to guess and wonder what you thought she said. Once you have paraphrased what you heard, any misunderstanding can be identified and clarified either by the woman who spoke initially or by others.

**The Tyrannies of Silence and Repetition**

It is difficult for the group to get a sense of group consensus if women consistently do not speak to issues. Silence, when your viewpoint has not been expressed, deprives the group of the benefit of a viewpoint that might not otherwise be taken into account. Remember—this process does not function on the notions of “majority” and “minority.” Even if you are the only one who holds an opinion, this must be taken into account in decision-making. Fundamentally, every viewpoint is taken into account regardless of how many or how few hold that viewpoint.

At the same time, it is not necessary for every individual to address every issue. If your viewpoint has already been expressed, you need not repeat what has already been said, although you may indicate to the group that you agree with what someone has already stated. If you agree with what has been expressed but have a different thought or concern to add, you need to speak.
DIALOGUE

When only two people are present, dialogue is highly desirable. In a group larger than two, dialogue becomes destructive to group process and usually models power-over tactics of traditional meetings. Dialogue in a group promotes argument and debate between individuals and prevents other viewpoints from being heard. The process of Rotating Chair honors each woman’s input as valuable and necessary.

When two women are in energetic opposition to one another’s positions, it is time to have other voices heard. Conflict is growthful and desirable, but dialogue between two individuals in conflict leads to getting caught up in the conflict itself. As other women speak, the group is able to define what the issue really is. At the same time, the two women who are in conflict have an opportunity to reflect on their own positions, hear the thoughts and feelings of other group members, and decide if their thoughts and feelings are facilitating or hindering group process.

Situations arise where one or two individuals have specific information about a certain issue. Directing a question to an individual and engaging in information exchange is not the same as dialogue. Information exchange is simply that—information exchange! The pitfall to watch for is when a group consistently defers to one or two individuals as the “knowledgeable ones.” This is a signal that sharing of information and skills is not happening, and the group needs to give attention to providing the opportunity for everyone to share her point of view or information.

VARIATIONS

The behaviors that are used to rotate the chair are not rules; they are behaviors we have found to be effective in expressing the feminist values and intents of Peace and Power. In addition to the central methods of passing along the chair in Rotating Chair, variations can be used to bring flexibility to the process.

Variations are often needed when the group is small (fewer than six) or large (more than about thirty-five). Small groups tend to be less formal and often slip into “dinner table” styles of discussion. When this happens, everyone gets to speak, but the focus of the discussion gets lost. In large groups, people often do not have the opportunity to speak, and shy people may find it very difficult to speak.

Sparking, Circling and Random Ravings are variations that we have found helpful in a number of circumstances. You will surely find other variations as well!
Sparking

When an issue or a topic generates a great deal of excitement in the group, the discussion often moves naturally into a style that reflects the high energy of excitement. Many individuals begin to speak, sometimes at once, often tossing words and ideas into the air like a fountain.

This type of discussion is Sparking. When it begins to happen naturally, it should be left alone as long as the discussion is providing the group with new ideas and energy to move forward. Once some individuals begin to lose interest, or the ideas are beginning to be repetitive, it is time for the Convener or another group member to assume leadership, asking the group to cease Sparking and return to the more focused style of Rotating Chair.

Sometimes an individual brings an idea or topic to the group that needs Sparking. She can ask the group to enter this style of discussion for a specific period of time, or plan to include Sparking around the idea at a future gathering.

Sparking is a valuable process for creating ideas and energy, but it does not work well to help everyone participate equally or be heard. When it is used, it needs to be used with deliberate intent, with everyone in the group aware that this is what is going on. When it is time to cease, Circling may be used as a transition back to Rotating Chair.

Circling

Circling is a time when open discussion and rotation of the chair is suspended and everyone in the group takes a turn around the circle to speak to an issue. Usually the Convener or another member requests the group to Circle and shares her perception of what the focus of the Circle needs to be.

Everyone speaks very briefly, with her comments limited to the focus for which Circling has been requested. This provides for the group a connection with each woman's point of view at that point in time. It also provides a few moments for each individual to get clearer in her own thinking. Even if some women have nothing specific to contribute at this time, it is important that everyone at least share this with the group.

When the discussion seems to be nearing time for Consensus but this is not yet clear, someone can request a Circle to simply find out if women feel ready to form consensus on the issue. At the end of Sparking, Circling can be a time for everyone to share which of the ideas expressed “sparked” the most for her.

A circumstance when Circling is especially helpful is when tensions are running high, with two or three women at the center of the struggle. Circling can be used to interrupt the dialogue that often begins during
times of tension. Circling gives every individual in the group the responsibility and the opportunity to speak, to share her insights at the moment, or to express feelings that may not already be apparent. Circling provides the opportunity for women at the center of the struggle to listen attentively to the perspectives that others have to offer, and time to do some inner work with respect to the struggle.

Circling can be used to begin the process of bringing closure to an issue, with everyone sharing her thinking on the issue before ending the discussion and moving to another agenda item, to consensus, or to Closing.

Random Ravings

There are times when individuals think of loose ends that were not completely finished during a discussion, or the group leaves a piece of business hanging for lack of clarity on the matter. At some point during the gathering, usually toward the end, loose ends tend to become more obvious. It is helpful to set aside a few moments for everyone to reflect on any items that may need to be mentioned briefly before the group scatters. We call this time on the agenda Random Ravings.¹

As each woman makes her own notes during the gathering, it is helpful to know that there will be time for addressing random ravings. As a reminder, you can circle any note that can be addressed later, and not interrupt the flow of the current discussion. When the time for Random Ravings arrives, a quick review of your notes will help you recall these fleeting thoughts. Also, everyone can scan her notes to see if any loose ends might be dangling that now seem ready to be addressed. If a loose end deserves more discussion, the group can agree to place the item on the agenda for the next gathering.
Chapter 7
Letting It Happen: Consensus

Consensus is an active commitment to group solidarity and group integrity. Arriving at a decision using Consensus while taking into account all viewpoints on a given issue is no easy task! However, it is possible. Once decision-making by Consensus is experienced, it is one of the most rewarding and growthful components of Feminist Process.

Consensus within a diverse group is possible because it occurs within the context of the group's purpose, and is built consciously to be consistent with the group's Principles of Unity. The Consensus-making process, at the same time, contributes to clarifying and revising the purpose of the group and the Principles of Unity.

Central to Feminist Process is the belief that a group decision reached by consensus is stronger and more acceptable to all individuals than one achieved by a majority, where (sometimes large) minority preferences are not taken into account. A consensus decision is also stronger than any decision made by an individual, no matter how well informed that individual.

The primary reason that consensus is more viable than traditional methods of decision-making is because decisions that affect a group influence everyone's behavior. Behaviors arise from beliefs and values. When everyone has participated in shaping a decision, all individuals are able to act in concert with that decision because they understand the considerations that were taken in reaching the decision.

Voting, which sets up a divisive "power-over" dynamic within groups, is not used in the Consensus-making process. Every opinion, even if only one person brings that opinion to the group, is equally valued and carefully considered. As each perspective is considered, it is integrated as an explicit part of the decision, or as a factor that informs the direction the group takes. Consensus should not be confused with compromise. Compromise focuses on what each person gives up in order to be able to live with a decision. Consensus is a process that focuses on what each person and the group as a whole gain by the nature of the decision that is reached.

Consensus is not totalitarian "group-think." Unquestioning agreement to a party line is not consensus. The group's Principles of Unity provide a common focus for examining diverse views, but are a guide, not dogma. A new viewpoint on an issue can challenge the group to re-examine their Principles of Unity, resulting in healthy growth and change. Individuals usually maintain diverse individual perspectives on an issue, while at the same time taking into account the views of others and the overall sense
of the group. Out of this balance grows consensus for the present situation.

CALLING FOR CONSENSUS

When all positions on an issue have been heard (preferably without repetition), the Convener or another member of the group summarizes what appears to be the predominant sense of the group and asks if this summary is satisfactory to all who are present. At this point, any alternate viewpoint is expressed, and the discussion continues with a focus on reaching a conclusion that takes into account all viewpoints. When there are no new possibilities, consensus has been reached.

Although the process at times seems interminable, by encouraging the exploration of areas of controversy and differences of perspective, each individual's thoughts and ideas are considered by everyone. If an issue is not amenable to decision by consensus, the group can decide not to decide at that time and leave the issue open for discussion later. Actually, there are very few decisions that cannot wait. Having to decide "not to decide" carries its own message: more thought and planning need to go into the matter in order to form a sound decision.

If a decision seems urgent and the group is unable to reach consensus, someone needs to call for the group to reflect on how urgent the decision really is. If it is truly not urgent, or if there is an interim decision that can be made, the group leaves the matter open and places it on the agenda for the next gathering. If everyone agrees that it is urgent, then the group must focus on the necessity of reaching a decision and reach a decision that everyone can live with. If a decision is still impossible because someone in the group has concerns that cannot be resolved or integrated into a possible decision, the group must take the time to explore with that individual exactly what her concerns are. That individual is responsible for sharing her purposes, objections and concerns, and exploring in what ways her concerns may be protecting or interfering with the group. Since it is very difficult to be the only one to express a dissenting view within a group, it is the group's responsibility to facilitate this process.

It is not necessary for every member to be present whenever a decision is made. For most decisions, consensus is reached by those individuals present in a group at the time an issue is discussed. This is possible because the group's Principles of Unity guide the process in a direction with which all members are in accord. However, if the decision being considered is one that directly affects the work of members of the group who are not present, the decision needs to be considered only as a proposal until all individuals who are directly affected are brought into
the discussion. Those present for the discussion are responsible for sharing with those not present the full range of factors considered by the group, in either a written account, audio tape or discussions with group members. If those who are not present bring new viewpoints to the matter, then the group continues the discussion over several gatherings to assure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in the discussion and in the Consensus-building process.

**TASK GROUPS: GETTING THINGS DONE**

There are many circumstances when the group (not any individual) delegates responsibilities to a committee, task group or individual within the group. This is common when there are ongoing tasks that require intense work and attention. The group determines what the task group is responsible for and provides guidelines that help that task group accomplish their work in concert with the group’s Principles of Unity. The task group then makes decisions and acts in accord with their responsibility. The task group brings back to the larger group an accounting of their work and issues that require a larger perspective.

One benefit of having task groups for specific or ongoing work is the passing along of skills. A task group usually gets involved in doing intensive work that requires some special skills and knowledge. Learning a skill is done by participating in the work, not by simply hearing about the results of the work. Hearing a finance task group’s report, no matter how detailed, does not help anyone learn how to balance the books!

Task groups that are most effective in getting the job done and in passing along skills are those that have a balance of women who are experienced at the task and those who are learning. This requires a gradual shift over time in who is involved with any task group, so that the work and responsibility rotate.
Chapter 8
Stepping from Here to There: Closing

Closing is

- Peace and Power in action
- evaluating the group’s effectiveness
- gaining self-knowledge and knowledge of the group
- strengthening communications within the group
- resolving conflicts
- focusing on process rather than product
- expressing love and care for individuals and the group

Closing is a time when every group member shares thoughts and feelings about what has happened during the gathering, and about what she would like to happen next. Each individual’s Closing is a three-part statement that includes:

- *Appreciation* for someone or something that has happened during the process of the gathering
- *Criticism* that brings critical, constructive awareness about the processes of the group before the group
- *Affirmation* that expresses her commitment for moving forward with the group’s work and her own individual growth

It is especially at this time that we

- identify and challenge our assumptions
- ask critical questions about our values, ideas and behaviors
- evaluate the context within which events occur
- open our Selves to imaging and exploring alternatives for ourselves and for the group
- take what we have experienced in the group and begin to form what we want for the future

Closing is a cohesive element that brings together the individual’s intent and commitment, and the group’s Principles of Unity. The overall goal of Closing is to strengthen the group and each individual.

Even though Closing is the most growthful part of the process, it initially feels quite risky. Often during Closing, feelings that were undercurrents in discussions during the gathering are expressed openly, some-
thing we are not accustomed to doing. We often withhold feelings of caring and appreciation because we fear they will be misunderstood or misinterpreted. We typically also repress angry or hurt feelings because they are simply not supposed to be acknowledged openly. In the process of Closing, we express these feelings openly so that everyone in the group can develop a fuller understanding of one another and of the group. When this happens, everyone has the benefit of equal access to knowing what is really going on, internally for individuals, as well as within the group.

**THE CLOSING PROCESS**

The Closing process is used primarily to close gatherings. It is also used to close a lengthy or intense discussion on a single topic, particularly during a gathering that lasts a day or longer. When the time to Close arrives, the discussion is laid aside and the focus becomes one of examining the actual process. Commitment to a group using Feminist Process always includes commitment to Closing. It is crucial that all individuals who are present at a gathering be fully Present for Closing.

Closing is always on the agenda. Time is reserved for this component of the Process to occur as the last item on the agenda, usually just after Random Ravings. For a one-hour gathering, at least ten minutes should be devoted to Closing. For a half-day or longer gathering, allow thirty minutes to an hour.

At the agreed upon time, the group takes a few minutes for each woman to reflect on what has happened during the discussion and to review her notes. Each woman then shares her appreciation, criticism, and affirmation.

**Appreciation**

This part of Closing acknowledges something that someone did or said that you appreciate. This is a time to actively nurture one another and your work by sharing your ideas about specific ways in which you and the group benefited from something that happened. For example, if someone's comment in the discussion was a turning point to help clarify an issue for you, or moved the group discussion to a different level, you would state your appreciation for the comment, and share with the group how or why this comment was so important to you and the group.

An appreciation that has the following elements will help you and others in the group build on what has just happened:

- the names of individuals who are responsible for what it is you appreciate
• a brief description of their specific acts or behavior
• sharing what this means to you
• your ideas about what this means in terms of the group’s Principles of Unity

Criticism

Criticism, in a feminist context of love and care, is a critical, precise, thoughtful reflection/action directed toward transformation. It is a tool for becoming aware of actions and behaviors that maintain an unjust and sexist society. When criticism is used with commitment to feminist values, it becomes a powerful tool for reaching agreement on what will be done and why, and how individuals can relate in order to create a future that we envision. By working through disagreements and doubts, a group is better enabled to remain united and can continue to work together when the going gets tough.

Criticism, as we have traditionally known the term, raises fears of being judged unfavorably or being unfairly assigned qualities or intentions that are not our own. We use the term criticism for this component of Closing because of the positive connotations that it carries in the Arts, where developing your art to its finest level depends upon your own and others’ criticisms. This type of criticism identifies the meanings of your work and reveals what creative possibilities need to be further developed.

The art critic brings to the art insights and interpretations that help others to appreciate more fully what the artist has done, and what the art means for the culture as a whole. The critic does not proclaim the “correct” view of the art, but does provide a well-informed, knowledgeable interpretation of the art that helps others understand the art better, even if they don't agree with the views of the critic.

Constructive and effective criticism in a feminist context is like that of a well-developed art criticism. It brings to the group the best that each of us has to offer, with the intent of helping everyone in the group better understand what we are all about. A growthful and constructive criticism includes:

• your own feeling about what has happened
• a specific action, behavior or circumstance that is the focus of your thinking
• specific changes you want to happen
• how your ideas connect with the group’s Principles of Unity

Affirmation

The conclusion of the three-step process of Closing is a statement of affirmation that gives the group a sense of the way in which you are
working to grow as an individual and as a member of the group. Affirmations are simple statements that speak to our deeper Selves. They concentrate our energy on the healing, growthful aspects of our work together. They are a powerful tool for creating change and growth in a direction that we desire.²

An affirmation reflects a reality that is not yet fully a part of your life, but it is stated as if it has already come about. Affirmations grow out of your experiences in the group and often are related to your specific appreciations and criticisms. They also come from the internal work you do apart from the group. For example, at a time when you feel uncertain about a decision, your affirmation might be: "I trust my own inner sense and the wisdom of our group." When you are disturbed by a conflict that seems irresolvable, an affirmation to help transcend the conflict might be: "I reside in the care that we have for each other."³

Initially it is difficult to affirm yourself. Until you are comfortable creating your own, use an affirmation that someone else suggests. As your sense of self-affirmation grows, you will create your own. As you become accustomed to using affirmations as a source of directing your energy to create change, you will become skilled at expressing an affirmation during Closing that moves you and the group from the circumstances of the present into the immediate future in a direction you choose and create.

An affirmation is characterized by the following:

- it is a positive and simple statement.
- it is stated in the present tense.
- it is grounded in your present reality, but also provides a bridge to the future you seek.

**HOW-TOS, HELPFUL HINTS AND HOMEWORK**

Because Closing is of such major importance, the following sections provide more detailed explanations and suggestions.

**Getting Your Head and Heart Together**

Getting ready to participate in Closing requires thoughtful reflection so that you are clear about your content before you speak. Once you are clear about the content of your three-part Closing statement, it is possible to state it briefly and simply.

Most of us have not learned to share our own responses to situations while we are in the situation, and so this does not come easily or naturally. Practice is important. Even more important is a supportive, aware group that is fully committed to each individual's growth.
Written notes that you have taken throughout the gathering become crucial at the time of Closing. Productive gatherings are rarely placid! In the intensity of the discussion you are likely to have thoughts and feelings about what happened and how it was being done. Perhaps your perspective has shifted now that the discussion has ended. You may have become aware of an insight and are now beginning to get clear within. To help get clearer about your thoughts, ask yourself:

- Did I Do what I Know—were my behaviors consistent with my values and with our Principles of Unity?
- Were my actions honestly motivated by love and respect for myself, others and the group?
- Did I remain tuned in and aware, or did I check-out mentally at some point?
- Am I aware of conflicts or differences that still need to be addressed?
- What occurred that promoted my own individual growth and the growth of the group?
- What changes would I like to make in my behavior?!

**Being Specific about the Agent**

We have all learned to obscure responsibility for events and actions. Sometimes owning responsibility can be uncomfortable because we regret what we are doing or have done. Often it is difficult to own responsibility because of false modesty or shyness. Sometimes we feel a misguided concern about protecting a “confidence.” Sometimes we are hesitant to name someone specifically because of fear that she will be personally offended, or embarrassed. Sometimes our discomfort comes from a general sense of something that has not been clearly thought through.

Naming an instance and an agent(s) (especially when the agent is yourself) is critical for growth to occur. Being obscure and mystifying a concern creates a lack of trust, suspicion and divisiveness. Naming the agent helps everyone in the group to understand more about the context of the issues. It makes it possible to move forward to build trust and trustworthiness between members of the group.

Consider the following examples:

**Mystifying statement:** “The checkbook ledger has been well maintained for the past few months. This will make taxes much easier to prepare this year.” Although everyone in the group may know who has been keeping the checkbook lately, and who is going to prepare taxes, this statement discounts the individuals and makes them anonymous. It creates divisiveness because of the implied message that someone before
had not done a good job of keeping the checkbook (which may not be at all what you are referring to, or which may not be true).

**Demystifying statement:** “Anne, you have done a wonderful job of keeping the checkbook. I appreciate how much this will help me in getting taxes prepared this year.” This statement lets everyone in the group know how well Anne, specifically, has been doing her job of keeping the checkbook balanced. It carries the message that Anne has a skill that others might want to know about. It lets everyone know that the speaker owns the responsibility for getting taxes prepared, and that she sees her task as dependent upon the work that others are doing. The focus on the present situation effectively erases the implied mystifying message about what happened in the past.

**Mystifying statement:** “I can’t stand all this clutter!” Here you are owning the fact that you see the clutter, and that you are irritated. The mystification and divisiveness in this statement arises from the fact that each person in the group begins to wonder if you are irritated with her clutter, specifically, or what she might have done to bring on this outburst. The matter of the clutter becomes only a vehicle for expressing your irritation, which may be irritation with the clutter, but it also could be irritation with a person. This lack of clarity breeds distrust, suspicion and divisive power-over relations.

**Demystifying statement:** “I am irritated with this clutter. I am not sure who is responsible, but it seems to me that it is worse after Jane, Becky and Joan have been here for their publicity meeting. Maybe we need more storage for their art supplies. Or maybe we are all just getting careless about leaving things around. I am willing to help work out a solution. What do other people think?” Here the fact that you are not sure about who is responsible is stated, and your uncertainty is more believable because you go on to identify a group who may be contributing more than others. You are also offering a possible solution and stating your personal intention to help solve the problem. This leaves you accessible to the group in the event that they find your compulsion over clutter irritating! There is no room for suspicion, and the level of trust and cohesiveness can build within the group because of the message that “we are in this together.”

**Being Specific about Your Feelings and Your Observations**

A feeling statement is a precise communication of what is happening within yourself. It carries no hidden messages about what anyone else has done or is doing. An observation statement is a clear description of what you or someone else has done or said. An observation does not
include what you think another person meant or what you suppose they intended.

Since it is risky to own and communicate feelings, the tendency is to imply something about what someone else is doing or saying. There is a vast difference between labeling a woman "arrogant" and owning your own feelings of jealousy and competitiveness because she is good at what she does. Being clear about your feelings encourages you to take ownership of your feelings and avoids blaming or guilt-tripping another person. It lets the other person(s) know what is going on with you in such a way that you are accessible. Compare the following statements:

**Interpretive/blaming statement:** "I feel rejected because I am never included in things." Even though the word "feel" is used, this statement avoids your own feelings of hurt and implies that someone has behaved with the intent of rejecting you. You may think someone has rejected you because of something specific she said or did, but your feeling is anger, hurt or fear, regardless of the intention of the other person.

**Constructive statement:** "I am hurt because you didn't tell me about the change in our meeting time." This statement communicates exactly what you are experiencing, states a fact about what has happened and can lead to a constructive response. The response might clarify a misunderstanding: "I was disappointed that you weren't at the meeting. I expected that you would be there because I left a message tucked in your door on Tuesday afternoon. In the future, I will make sure that I get the information to you directly."

**Interpretive/blaming statement:** "Sue, you are so irresponsible. You are always late." This statement inappropriately assigns a personality trait to Sue. Being labeled "irresponsible" puts Sue in a box without any openings. Your statement is a judgment that merely intimidates Sue and everyone else in the group and creates divisiveness.

**Constructive statement:** "Sue, I am irritated because you have been thirty minutes late for the last four meetings. This is very disruptive to the group." This statement clearly communicates what you are feeling and identifies the behavior that you have observed and how it affects the group. Sue can then address what circumstances in her life have led to her being late, or she can ask the group to change the meeting time. The group may need to take the time to re-assess the time of gathering and perhaps renegotiate a time that is better for everyone.

**Stating What You want**

When giving criticism directed toward something that needs to be done or that needs to change, it is important to provide a clear, specific state-
ment of what you want. It is important to focus on what you do want. Stating what you want is not a demand, and it does not mean that the group will respond by giving you what you want! What it does accomplish is moving the group toward a solution or toward a constructive response to your criticism. If your criticism turns out not to be valid for others in the group, the group can sort that out and still attend to your concern as valid for you.

Our old habits lead to two tendencies: stating what we don’t want or merely implying what we want with some indirect or non-specific comment. Compare the effectiveness of each of the following statements:

**Constructive statement of what you want:** “I want two women to help with this coalition.”

**Saying what you don’t want:** “I don’t think we should have too many women on this coalition.”

**Implying what you want indirectly:** “People in this group just aren’t willing to get involved.”

**Responding to Appreciation and to Criticism**

The most difficult thing to learn about both appreciation and criticism is how to take them! No matter how well delivered, neither appreciations nor criticisms are easy to hear, especially in front of a group.

When you receive an appreciation, you have the following responsibilities:

1. Remain in an active listening posture while the person who is sharing the appreciation has completed her thoughts. Do not interrupt her or respond directly to her. Appreciation is shared not only for you to hear, but for the entire group to learn and grow from. Your response would interrupt this process.

2. Most often you need only listen actively. If you do respond verbally in the group, graciously accept the appreciation. Our socialization nurtures habits of discounting compliments, or putting them down in some way. We tend to say things like “Oh, it was nothing” or “Well, I could have done it better.” These responses discount the person who has shared her appreciation and detract from the growthful effect that the appreciation, as well as your own actions, could have for the entire group.

When you receive a criticism, you have at least four responsibilities:

1. Make sure you understand clearly what the criticism is. This usually means that your first verbal response, if any, is to paraphrase what you perceive the criticism to be.
2. Wait to hear the perspectives of others in the group. Usually
different people have different perceptions of a situation, and
hearing these will help you decide how well the criticism “fits.”

3. Weigh within yourself the validity of the criticism or how fair or
accurate you think it is. Sometimes you will know immediately
that the criticism is fair. More often, you will need at least a few
minutes or several days to reflect on the criticism and integrate
it.

4. Respond in a constructive manner. For a valid and fair criticism,
the most constructive response is a behavioral response—you take
the criticism to heart and change your behavior! If you decide
that the criticism is not fair, share your thoughts with the group.

It is difficult to respond to criticism without offering defenses or apol-
ygies, and often we don’t even recognize when we are doing it. Defenses
or apologies do not contribute to the growth of the group, yourself or
other individuals. Compare the following responses:

Constructive response: “I think that you are right, Jane. I will work on
this during the coming week and would like to have people tell me how
they perceive what I am doing.” Or if you think there is an element of
unfairness about the criticism: “I think that Jane has not taken into
account the fact I have no transportation.”

Defensive response: “I think that Jane is right, but I was working as hard
as I could to get this task completed.” Or, “Give me a break. I’m doing
the best I can.” If you think that the group has not recognized the work
that you have put into the task, then share this thought with the group,
but focus on what you are feeling and thinking about your future behav-
ior in relation to the criticism.

Apology: “I know that Jane is right, and I am very sorry. What more
can I say?” There is a lot more that you can say—and do. Being sorry
does not make things right, nor does it help you or the group move
forward. If you feel regretful about what happened, share your feeling
of regret and indicate what you and the group can learn from the situ-
ation.

Putting It Together

It is easy to lose sight of how all the pieces of a well stated criticism
work together. The following situation provides an example of a criticism
given at the end of a gathering.

Justa became increasingly aware of the ageist implications of a remark
she made in response to Emily, a younger woman in the group. At the
time of closing, Justa shared her criticism: “I am uncomfortable because
of the comment I made to Emily earlier: ‘When you are older, Emily, you will understand.’ I want to examine my own ageism because I am committed to creating a safe space here and think my remark was divisive and obstructive in creating a safe space.”

At first, Emily did not respond. Two other women in the group “made nice” and tried to reassure Justa that her remark was not ageist. They thought the remark indicated Justa’s desire to “help” Emily. Other women in the group shared their perceptions that confirmed the ageist implications of the remark.

After thoughtful reflection and hearing others’ perceptions, Emily was able to tune in to her own sense. She shared with the group that she felt angry when she heard the remark, but her awareness at the time had been only partial. Her immediate response had been to “scold” herself internally, and to rationalize that Justa meant well and therefore she “should” not have those negative feelings. She acknowledged that without the group’s focus, she would have left the gathering with a sense of distance from Justa, a sense of not belonging to the group, most of whom were older than herself, and discounting her own reality. Now that it had been addressed openly, she was able to acknowledge what had happened, and assist the group to examine the meaning of the instance. Once Emily focused the group’s attention on her reality, everyone’s awareness of ageism and its divisiveness increased by leaps and bounds.

**Criticism as Homework**

Sometimes we are able to think clearly and speak artfully at the time of Closing. Often, we can do so only after we have left the group and have done our own internal work at home, especially when it comes to criticism. When you sense that there is a criticism you need to develop at home, indicate during Closing the nature of your concern, and ask the group to wait for a fuller criticism at the next gathering, either during Check-In or as an agenda item.

Artful criticism is given at a time when the group is receptive, open and ready to address the concerns in the criticism. You may need to wait for a time that is right, or ask the group to plan for a time that can be set aside to address the issue.

Artful criticism arises from our deepest feelings, is energized by our emotions and is finely crafted by our clearest thinking. It is shared with others in a manner and at a time when our full awareness (including thoughts and feelings) can be called upon to address the issue. The homework that is required to do this includes getting in touch with the full range of feelings that you experience around the issue and thinking about all of the facts and circumstances that are a part of the situation. It requires thinking through similar circumstances that you have expe-
rienced to search for a perspective that comes from that broader experience and envisioning future possibilities that might emerge from this experience.

Constructive criticism is placed in the context of the purposes of the group. One way to do this is to take time to review the group's Principles of Unity. Think about the present situation in light of each Principle and how the group can be strengthened by addressing the issue you are studying.

The homework of criticism involves carefully weighing possibilities: possibilities for what might be different in a similar circumstance in the future, as well as possibilities for what might now emerge from the situation as it is. Mentally imagine how you and the group might move forward in a direction that you carefully choose rather than a direction that just happens.

As you reflect on the situation, write ideas and thoughts on a sheet of paper. You can go over these notes to sort out which of your ideas are beneficial and constructive, and re-think ideas that may not be constructive. Once you see your ideas on paper, you can explore different ways of saying things, and make sure everything you need to say is there. When you share your ideas with the group, the notes you prepare at home can help you to remain focused, and include your full range of feelings and thoughts, stated in constructive and beneficial ways.

Creating Affirmations

Affirmations often grow out of internal work that we do apart from the group, as well as our experiences in the group. This work involves shifting our attention away from frustrations and problems to possibilities for growth and change. As you reflect on these possibilities, you will begin to form affirmations that provide a message to your inner consciousness that you are receptive to the energy of change moving in a creative, healing direction.

Since the inner consciousness is responsive to repetition, it is important to repeat affirmations to yourself, using the same wording again and again (with shifts in the wording as you find what is most comfortable for you). Repeat the affirmations while you are doing rhythmic activities, such as exercising, cleaning or walking. When you re-enter the group, you will take with you the deep inner resources that you have developed within yourself to more effectively participate in the group.

Here are some examples:

- I value the light and clarity that I bring to situations.
- All that I know is available to me when I need it.
- I believe in myself and our group.
- I care for my Self.
- I am at peace with those I love.
- I am in tune with my intuition.
- I believe in the power of our group.
- I act with confidence in my ability.
- I am nourished by the love we share for each other.
- I willingly release the old and welcome the new in my life.
- I choose wisely because I listen to my inner voice.
- I gladly accept the support of those I work with.
- My love for myself brings love and support to all my relationships.
Chapter 9
Period Pieces

There are things that happen in every group periodically, but not at every gathering. Some of these happenings are pleasant and things that we welcome; others are unpleasant and things that we wish would never happen. In most cases, they are things that are not planned for and can be a source of mystification and frustration. Moving into a new reality requires the best of our creative energies. We do not offer "answers." We do offer ideas that we hope will lead to open discussion and new ideas.

PERIODIC REVIEW OF PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

There are no formulas that we have found for identifying when a group's Principles of Unity need to be reviewed. Some feminist groups select a season of the year (we have used winter) as a time for looking over what is being done and thinking about changes that need to be made. In other groups the time for taking a new look at the old Principles comes when there is a shift in focus, such as when a task is completed, or when group membership changes.

Reviewing the Principles is vital to the ongoing growth of the group. In some groups, it is a time for each woman to share something of her personal perspective, relating how and why being a part of this group is important to her. As each woman brings her own perspective to the work of the group, the group's common interests and hopes and expectations for the group emerge anew.

Questions that we have found helpful in taking a critical look at our Principles of Unity have been: Are we actually Doing what is implied by this Principle? If not, what are we doing? What Principle is implied in what we are doing? For example, in the Friendship Collective, we began with a Principle that we would expect no financial contribution from any member in relation to our work. In practice, we found that there were expenses involved for women who remained a part of the group, and that for some women these expenses were problematic. Our time for review of our Principles made it possible to address these concerns and find a way to state a Principle that brought the issue into the open.

OPEN OR CLOSED GROUPS?

In principle, feminist ideas usually lead to establishing groups that are inclusive and open to all women who wish to join. In our experience, this
is a decision that needs to be carefully considered, because the work of
the group and the purpose for which the group exists may not lend
themselves to this degree of openness. The dilemma becomes, then, how
to remain open to new thoughts, to integrating diversity within the group,
and yet remain effective in our work.

One way to address this dilemma is to think of these as relative alter-
natives rather than opposing options. There have been times in some of
our task-oriented groups when we have needed to maintain stability in
our membership in order to meet the pressing demands of tasks that
formed our central purpose for gathering. As the demands of the tasks
changed, we experienced a natural flow of movement as some women
left the group (sometimes temporarily) and others joined.

PEOPLE JOINING AN ONGOING GROUP

In every experience we have had with established groups, integrating
new members has always been a welcome, but difficult, transition.

In relatively open groups, we have found that the demands of con-
stantly integrating new women is a major event that requires far more
time and energy than we typically expect. Since feminist groups do not
“work” like typical groups, women who are new to the group are essen-
tially in a foreign land, in the midst of a new culture that may be totally
unfamiliar. The words that are spoken may be that of the predominant
culture, but meanings of words take on a new character that existing
members often take for granted. Women who have not heard the lan-
guage spoken before find themselves in a muddle trying to figure out
what is really going on. Once a group is committed to welcoming new
members frequently, existing members need to be constantly aware of
these dynamics, and need to establish ways to ease the transition. Time
at each gathering needs to be set aside to talk with each woman, and to
explain and clarify exactly what is going on.

Groups that require relative stability in membership may set aside times
during the year when the introduction of new members is the only focus
for gathering. In groups where this has been successful, these events are
carefully planned, with each woman in the existing group taking a
responsibility for a portion of the introduction. We have usually included
a brief oral history of the group, a review of the Principles of Unity, an
orientation to the nature of the work we are doing, and a description of
the activities that are expected of all members.

For example, in the Emma Bookstore Collective, the ongoing success
of running the business depended primarily on each woman’s ability to
staff the store. In addition, we expected everyone to gradually assume
other tasks, such as ordering new stock, managing the finances, planning
for special occasions, working with other groups in the community and taking care of the physical space. New member potlucks were planned four times a year, when women who were interested in joining the Collective could gather with us to consider what was involved in membership. In the three months following the potluck, new members were expected to participate in each of the major activities of the business with an experienced Collective member in order to become oriented to the tasks. In this way, each woman had the opportunity to make an informed decision about remaining involved with the group before she made a lasting commitment.

**MEMBER LEAVING A GROUP**

In groups with a relative openness to membership, leaving the group may be a simple matter of not continuing to contribute financially, or not continuing to attend the gatherings. In groups that exist for a purpose that involves personal development, such as a reading group or a consciousness-raising group, the group’s purpose may lead to a “live and let live” response to someone’s leaving: “she simply needs to move on, and we all accept that fact.”

However, a member’s leaving the group usually creates a void in the group, and so leave-taking needs to be acknowledged openly in some way. In a group where leaving may have significant consequences to the work of the group, it is especially important to state in the Principles of Unity what the group expects when someone leaves. We have found that creating traditions around this event, similar to the tradition of welcoming new members, is helpful in making this a smooth transition for the group and for the woman who is leaving. Since this event represents both an ending and a new beginning, one way to view it is similar to Closing, with an entire gathering devoted to a Closing relative to the leaving of the individual. Each group member takes the time to express her appreciation, criticism and affirmation that the woman leaving and everyone in the group can carry into their separate futures.

**ASKING A MEMBER TO LEAVE A GROUP**

As difficult as it may be, there are times when the energies of the group and of an individual are not harmonious with one another. Whatever the problem is, it must be addressed in some constructive way. The assumption that we can “live together happily ever after” is a mythical belief that simply is not consistent with reality. Ending one phase and beginning a new phase is not necessarily a failure; how we deal with one
another in terms of personal integrity reveals how well we Do what we Know, and Know what we Do.

When a group finds that one member is not able to function effectively as a group member, the issues must first be addressed openly, bringing to the discussion the fullest of intentions to act in a manner consistent with the group's Principles. All possible avenues for resolving the issues are explored. The discussion continues until every member is certain that the avenue that is chosen is one that is good for the group as well as for the individual.

ENDING A GROUP

Ending a group is not a failure. Often it is the celebration of the completion of the purpose for which the group formed. If the purpose was not a specific task that can be wrapped up in a neat package, then knowing when the purpose has been accomplished may not be easy. For example, a group formed to provide support for one another may find that after a few years, women who are in the group have sources of support elsewhere that had not existed when the group was first formed. When this happens, the group may have evolved into something that is no longer of value to the women involved. When coming to the group's gatherings begins to be more of a chore than a pleasure, then it is time to consider that it is time to end the group.

Rather than let a group simply fizzle out, we have found that having a specific event around which this is acknowledged provides a means for everyone to close this phase of her experience, taking something from it into the future. Planning for a gathering for a final Closing of the group can be a rich and growthful experience.
Chapter 10
Classrooms, Committees and Other
Not-Yet-Feminist Groups

*Learning and teaching can take place in the interests of human liberation, even within institutions created for social control.*

*Kathleen Weiler*

When Feminist Process is adapted as a way of interacting in a group that exists within patriarchal institutions, it can be a powerful tool for transformation. We know that the Process we describe has been used in colleges and universities, in young people's church groups, in parent groups associated with schools in the community, in hospital committees and in groups that form Boards of community service agencies. For most of the individuals who have described these experiences to us, the major change they have sought in bringing the Process to their group is a shift in the prevailing power imbalances. For example, nurses and nurses' aides, who rarely had the opportunity to be heard in a committee meeting, began to be able to speak, while the more vocal male members of the group learned the value of listening.

The transformation that emerges from Feminist Process is fundamental to many of the more visible changes that many traditional groups seek. When the necessity of addressing issues from women's perspectives becomes integrated as an essential element for all forms of social change, radical changes emerge.

In existing institutions, we have found Feminist Process is often only partially used, and many of the ideals that are envisioned remain only ideals, not realities. People enter traditional groups such as classrooms and committees expecting that these groups will function in traditional ways. When a different way of working is presented by the institutionally defined leader (who most often introduces the use of a different process), some people welcome the change with gladness, others respond with varying degrees of trepidation, and others object at the outset. When individuals who object have an alternative (for example, they can enroll in another section of a college course), they are free to leave the group and pursue their alternative. Individuals who are initially hesitant, but willing to stay with the group, frequently relate moving stories about the
inner transformations that occur for them during the course of the group's gatherings.³

Whoever introduces this Process may find it helpful to prepare some written or verbal orientation that is specific to the work of the group, integrating information about the Process with what the group is all about. In classroom situations, for example, the teacher can prepare a course syllabus (with this book as required reading!) in a way that reflects use of Feminist Process in this course. A member of a committee might prepare a suggested plan for agendas for meetings, reflecting ways in which Feminist Process can be used in approaching the work of the group.

The ways in which the ideas of Peace and Power influence the work of groups in patriarchal institutions are very similar to the use by groups that are relatively free of institutions. The suggestions provided in Chapter 3 are, in fact, the basis for the suggestions offered here. The differences arise in having to consider certain constraints imposed by the institution, which usually arise from institutionally defined and sustained power imbalances between individuals.

In educational settings, the teacher-student power imbalance is familiar to everyone who has attended school at any level: the teacher has the power to grade, to offer opinions and judgments, and to speak. The student is institutionally defined as a receiver of grades, a receiver of the teacher's opinions and judgments, and a listener. Overcoming these expectations for roles and behaviors is not an easy task, and some of the institutional expectations cannot be ignored (such as the recording of grades to represent the achievement of a certain curricular or institutional standard).

In the sections that follow, we build on the visions of the enactment of Power, with suggestions as to how these Powers and the behaviors that flow from them can be enacted in existing institutions:

POWER OF PROCESS

Objectives, time frames and educational structures of evaluation may be used as tools that provide a structure from which to work, but they are not the focal point. The process is the important dimension, so that once the interaction begins, the structure is only a tool and nothing more. How the interactions happen become the central focus, rather than a precise adherence to a prescribed content. Language is used as a tool to make the process possible, to create mental images that reduce the power imbalances of the institution and create new relationships. The process itself becomes as important a focus for discussion as the "content" in a classroom, or the "business" of the committee. Priorities related to deci-
sion-making shift, so that the urgency of making decisions lessens and the group learns to value the wisdom that comes with the process.

POWER OF LETTING GO

All participants let go of old habits and ways in order to make room for personal and collective growth. Teachers and committee chairs let go of “power-over” attitudes and ways of being; registrants and members let go of “tell me what to do” attitudes and ways of being. All participants move into ways of being that are personally empowering and that also nurture the empowerment of others. All participants provide their ideas related to decisions, but shift to a focus of fully understanding others’ points of view rather than insistence on their own point of view.

POWER OF THE WHOLE

Mutual help networks within the group are encouraged. Every individual is responsible to invest talents and skills for the interests of the group as a whole. Each participant, whether teacher or registrant, leader or member, is accountable to the whole group for negotiating specific agendas, keeping the group informed as to absences, leaving early, arriving late or initiating particular activities within the group.

POWER OF COLLECTIVITY

Each participant is taken into account in the group’s planning-in-process. The group works to address the needs of those who are moving into individual journeys where others may not be going. The needs of those who are having specific struggles are addressed by the group in some way. Individuals do not compete with one another; rather, the needs of all are acknowledged and addressed as equally valuable. Every decision is made with full understanding of every point of view within the group.

POWER OF UNITY

Unity is recognized as coming from the expression of conflict and differing points of view so that the various points of view can be understood by all, and integrated into a richer and fuller appreciation of every individual. Out of this appreciation, each individual participates in clarifying the principles that unify the group. Learning is not merely accumulating the truths that are passed along by an authority, or accepting
those ideas as "truth," but rather is an attitude of actively seeking to understand the possibilities of differing perspectives.

POWER OF SHARING

All participants enter the group with talents, skills and abilities related to the work of the group, and actively engage in sharing their individual talents with the group. Leaders and teachers enter groups with previously developed capabilities that are shared according to the needs of the group and in consideration of the structure-as-tool. Members and registrants enter the group with personal talents, background and experiences that are valued and shared. All participants enter the group open to what others can share, open to learning from every other member.

POWER OF INTEGRATION

All dimensions of the situation are acknowledged to form a whole experience. Each individual’s unique and self-defined needs for the experience are acknowledged and integrated into the process. The first portion of each gathering is used as a time for each individual to express her or his priorities, needs and wishes for the gathering so that these can be integrated as a part of the process for that gathering.

POWER OF NURTURING

Each participant is respected fully and unconditionally, and treated as necessary and integral to the experience of the group. Tasks, activities and approaches are planned to nurture the gradual growth of new skills and abilities, assuring that every participant can be successful both in terms of the goals of the group and in terms of her or his individual needs.

POWER OF DISTRIBUTION

Resources required for the work of the group (information, books, funds, space, transportation, equipment) are made equally available and accessible to all members of the group. Resources that might be purchased by individual members (such as books, equipment, transportation) are shared (for example, through libraries, laboratories, resource rooms or sharing among members), so that any individual who chooses not to use personal resources in this way, or who cannot, has equal access to the material. Issues arising from material inequalities among members are addressed openly to expose and overcome power imbalances perpetuated by economic privilege and disadvantage.
POWER OF INTUITION

The process that occurs and the nature of what is addressed in the group depend as much on the experience of the moment as on any other factor. What emerges as important for the group to address in the moment is what happens. Letting go of what "ought" to happen is valued as a new skill that makes possible what will happen.

POWER OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Ethical dimensions of the process are valued as fundamental to the goals and purposes assigned to the group by the institution. Every decision is considered in terms of its ethical dimensions. A portion of each gathering is devoted to a Closing Appreciation, Criticism and Affirmation where everyone reflects on the process of the gathering, what it meant, what was done, what values are represented in what was done and if these are the values the group intends.

POWER OF DIVERSITY

Deliberate processes are planned and enacted to integrate points of view of individuals and groups whose perspectives are usually not addressed. The experiences (through writings, personal encounters, poetry, song, drama, etc.) of minority groups, of different classes, of third world people, of women, are given a deliberate focus in relation to whatever the group is addressing.

POWER OF RESPONSIBILITY

Each participant assumes full responsibility as the agent for her or his role in the process. The experience is planned to provide some structure that assures every participant the opportunity to assume a leadership role during the experience. Each individual assumes responsibility to demystify the processes involved in all activities, so that each member of the group has equal access to participating and understanding what is going on. In classrooms, "grades" are viewed as each individual's responsibility; they are viewed as a tool to represent what the individual earns through demonstrated accomplishments. The teacher, like leaders in other types of groups, has a special responsibility to help demystify the workings of the institution and to make explicit her or his political role within the institution.

Taking steps to adapt Feminist Process in patriarchal institutions can be risky, frightening and discouraging. There are failures, and sometimes
groups seem unable to move beyond mere token acts of working in ways that are envisioned here. Often the hoped-for benefits and changes that happen seem completely invisible, only to become visible long after the group has ended.

An important step that can be taken to overcome the isolation, fear and frustration is to create a reality outside of the institution where feminist values can be enacted more fully, within a group or groups committed to creating liberating transformations for all people. Experiencing a community, even though it may be a small group, where the ideals can be more fully realized provides a place of centering, of concentrating our energies in a healing direction, of support for the values that we are seeking to enact and for exploring more fully what might be possible. Then, when the disappointments of the old world come crashing in, the visions of the new possibilities are there, somewhere.
Notes

Prologue

1. Anne Cameron, *Daughters of Copper Woman* (Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell Street, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1981), p. 53. Through the ancient myths of the native women of Vancouver Island, Anne Cameron offers “a shining vision of womanhood, of how the spiritual and social power of women—though relentlessly challenged—can Endure and Survive” (from the back cover). In the Preface, Cameron states: “From these few women, [the native women of Vancouver Island who told her the stories] with the help of a collective of women, to all other women, with love, and in Sisterhood, this leap of faith that the mistakes and abuse of the past need not continue. There is a better way of doing things. Some of us remember that better way.”

2. Anne Cameron, *Daughters of Copper Woman* p. 63. See Note 1, above.

3. Mary Daly uses hyphens like this to convey a new possibility within the word, in this case meaning putting back together the pieces, the ‘members’, of what we know as women. Her book *Gyn/Ecology* is another good example; this book and the *Wickedary* provide more background as to her work with language and word usage (see Note 5, Chapter 2).

4. One of the most important books of this wave of feminism addresses the consistent and persistent erasure of women’s knowledge and women’s writing. In *Women of Ideas and What Men Have Done to Them* (Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), Dale Spender analyzes over three centuries of women’s writing. She concludes: “We are women producing knowledge which is often different from that produced by men, in a society controlled by men. If they like what we produce they will appropriate it, if they can use what we produce (even against us) they will take it, if they do not want to know, they will lose it. But rarely, if ever, will they treat it as they treat their own” (p. 9).

Chapter 1

1. From the campaign literature of Sonia Johnson, Citizens Party candidate for President of the United States, 1984. Sonia’s first book, *From Housewife to Heretic* (New York, Doubleday, 1981), tells the story of her excommunication from the Mormon Church because of her support of the Equal Rights Amendment. Sonia was the first third-party candidate to qualify for federal matching funds for her presidential campaign. Sonia’s second book, *Going Out of Our Minds: The
Meta Physics of Liberation (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1987), chronicles that political journey as well as her personal transformations during that time.

2. From "The Rock Will Wear Away" by Meg Christian and Holly Near; performed by Meg Christian on the album Face the Music, produced by Olivia Records (Box 70237, Los Angeles, CA 90070, 1977). On the album insert, Meg writes: "The theme of the chorus [quoted here] is a common one: many small, weak entities joining together to defeat a larger, stronger one. Holly heard the rock-water imagery in a Vietnamese poem, while I fondly recall the flies in the elephant's nose in Judy Grahn's poem. You haven't really heard this song until you've sung it yourself with a whole roomful of women. For me, that experience is one of those moments when I feel our growing collective strength and purpose..."


4. In A Passion for Friends: Toward a Philosophy of Female Affection (Boston, Beacon Press, 1986), Janice Raymond provides a landmark vision of Gyn/affection, the ability to be moved by, and to deeply move, other women. This profound experience of female friendship, formed in the cultural commitments that women make to their Selves and each other, is the grounding for women's personal and political empowerment.

5. A comprehensive exploration of a feminist concept of empowerment is in the premier issue of Woman of Power: A Magazine of Feminism, Spirituality, and Politics (Spring 1984). The journal is published quarterly by Woman of Power, Inc., P.O. Box 827, Cambridge, MA 02238.

6. Awareness is a central theme of feminist literature. In The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory (Freedom, CA: Crossing Press, 1983), Marilyn Frye explores a wide range of fundamental issues, including oppression, sexism and racism. In her essay titled "Lesbian Feminism and the Gay Rights Movement: Another View of Male Supremacy, Another Separatism," she states: "One of the privileges of being normal and ordinary is a certain unconsciousness. When one is that which is taken as the norm in one's social environment, one does not have to think about it... if one is marginal, one does not have the privilege of not noticing what one is. This absence of privilege is a presence of knowledge" (p. 146).

7. A classic collection of feminist writings from the women's movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s is available in Radical Feminism, edited by Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine and Anita Rapone (New York, Quadrangle, 1973). In the essay "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," Joreen examines the informal elite patterns of decision-making that exist in
structured and unstructured groups, and the essential elements of "democratic structuring" necessary to achieve healthy functioning within a group. These elements include delegation by the group, responsibility to the group, distribution of authority, rotation of tasks along rational criteria, diffusion of information and equal access to resources. Our concept of Consensus builds on and expands these concepts.

8. In *Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1984), Mary Daly states: "Although friendship is not possible among all feminists, the work of Be-Friending can be shared by all, and all can benefit from the Metamorphospheric activity. Be-Friending involves Weaving a context in which women can Realize our Self-Transforming, metapatterning participation in Be-ing. Therefore it implies the creation of an atmosphere in which women are enabled to be friends. Every woman who contributes to the creation of this atmosphere functions as a catalyst for the evolution of other women and for the forming and unfolding of genuine friendships" (p. 374).

Chapter 2

1. Notes from an Interview on "Womanpower" with Joanna Rogers Macy in *Woman of Power* (Spring 1984) p. 12. Joanna Rogers Macy is co-founder of Interhelp (P.O. Box 331, Northampton, MA 01060), an international organization that provides workshops on "Despair and Empowerment in the Nuclear Age." Bobbi Levi, who leads these workshops in Massachusetts, provided this interview for *Woman of Power*.


3. Grace Rowan, "Looking for a New Model of Power," *Women of Power* (Spring 1984), p. 67. She is described in this issue as "the co-founder of a shelter for battered women. She sees herself as a woman with power, and uses this power in her practice as a psychologist and for healing. She is a wise old woman on a journey to wholeness."

4. Power, as defined in patriarchal terms, is the capacity to impose one's will on others, accompanied by a willingness to apply negative sanctions against those who oppose that will. This translates into a "love of power," where the fact of having the power becomes more important, more critical, than what that power is used for or what results from the use of that power. Any measure that is necessary to retain that power is considered justifiable. Further, individuals who are being manipulated or controlled do not recognize these underlying dynam-
ics, because we are so thoroughly taught that the power structure, as it is set up, is the "only way." For a discussion of the prevailing (patriarchal) power model, see The Power Structure: Political Process in American Society by Arnold M. Rose (New York, Oxford University Press, 1967).

5. Our model of patriarchal power and feminist alternatives was originally published in Cassandra: Radical Feminist Nurses Newsjournal, Vol. 2, #2 (May 1984), p. 10. In developing these ideas, we used The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980's, by Marilyn Ferguson, (Los Angeles, J.P. Tarcher, 1980), as a point of reference. Ferguson does not identify the prevailing power model as "patriarchal," but she does contrast that model with transforming power modes emerging today. We borrowed a few of her names for various forms of power, but where we did so we conceptualized them from our own feminist frame of reference.

Nancy Greenleaf provided the insights and suggestions that led to our inclusion in this edition of the patriarchal Power of Accumulation, and the feminist alternative Power of Distribution. In a letter dated February 7, 1989, after reviewing a near-final draft of the manuscript, Nancy wrote: "I found myself wanting to add to your power model . . . something that addresses the power of the 'free market'; a godlike 'invisible hand' that sorts the worthy from the undeserving and assume 'self-interest' as a primary motivational force. This notion of power is inextricably combined with patriarchal notions, but it specifically addresses material (economic) well being. The feminist alternative is the power that accrues through material sharing—of food—of land or space and the de-emphasis on privatization of property. The feminist alternative would mean a commitment to bear witness to and expose material inequality."

We named and described the feminist alternatives from a wide range of feminist theory, as well as our own experiences working in feminist groups. It is impossible to list here all the sources that influenced the creation of this model; however, in addition to the sources cited in Chapter 1, the following sources have been particularly important to us:

Daly, Mary: Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism, 1978; Pure Lust: Elemental Feminist Philosophy, 1984; and Webster's First New Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language (with Jane Caputi), 1987—all titles published by Beacon Press, Boston.
Chapter 4


2. Kathleen MacPherson first identified four components around which the Menopause Collective formed their Principles of Unity. Her experience is related in her doctoral dissertation, completed in 1986 at Brandeis University, titled “Feminist Praxis in the Making: The Menopause Collective.” The components we present here draw on Kathleen’s ideas, as well as the ideas and experience of the Friendship Collective, where we have worked extensively to develop Principles of Unity as our basis.


4. We have participated in groups that range from six to thirty-six in number. In groups smaller than six, it is easy to skip the Process and slide into a more social interaction. In groups as large as thirty-six, the Process has provided a sense of being in a group of “ideal” size, where every participant has a feeling of being included and fully
participating. We do not yet know what the limits of group size might be.

5. In Pure Lust (Boston, Beacon Press, 1984), Mary Daly states: "First of all, Gnomic Nags should note that Real Presence implies being presentient—'feeling or perceiving beforehand.' ... When women are Present to our Selves, ... to be presentient is to be animated with hope. This presentient Presence is Positively Powerful, for it implies our capacity to presentiate, that is 'to make or render present in place or time; to cause to be perceived or realized as present' (O.E.D.). Real Presence of the Self, then, which is participation in Powers of Be-ing, implies powers to Realize as present our past and future Selves" (p. 147–48).

Chapter 6

1. We appreciate Anne Montes for suggesting the idea and the insights for Random Ravings.

Chapter 8

1. We are grateful to Gracie Lyons, who presented this guideline in her book Constructive Criticism: A Handbook (Berkeley, CA: Issues in Radical Therapy Collective, 1976). We have used this book as a source for developing constructive criticism in several contexts. Unfortunately, we have not been able to locate the collective or a source for obtaining the book since 1979. Gracie's approach is based on Marxist/Maoist theory. Our approach draws on hers but comes from a feminist frame of reference.


4. Notice that these questions are drawn directly from Peace, the intent with which we enter the process. See Chapter 1.

5. In an article titled "With Gossip Aforethought" in the first issue of Gossip: A Journal of Lesbian Feminist Ethics, Anna Livia explains the importance of naming the agent and the source of information to build trust, especially when verbal stories we tell one another are our primary, if not only, way to find out what we need to know to work together. "It is reasonable to ask where a particular piece of gossip comes from. If a lesbian refuses to say, it is ostensibly to protect herself and her source. Why does she need protection, and from whom, if she repeats truthfully what she believes to be the truth? ... If you
won't say how you know [about a person or situation], are we to think you made it up yourself?" (p. 62). Gossip is published by Onlywomen Press, Ltd. (38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X OAP).

6. We appreciate Elizabeth Berrey for creating and owning this as her affirmation in the Friendship Collective. It is a statement that reflects what she has meant to us, over and over again, in the work that we do and how we live our lives.

Chapter 10


2. This situation was described to us by Jeanne DeJoseph, a nurse-midwife and administrator at a major medical center in California.

3. For example, registrants have stated:
   “Wasn’t sure what I expected, but I came away feeling like I have an openness for exchange of ideas. I now have difficulty conceptualizing a theory class ‘taught’ (convened, please) apart from Feminist Process. Keep this format, please!”
   “It took me a while to become accustomed to the course format. But I enjoyed it. It was very stimulating.”
   “At first I wasn’t certain about the different format of class sessions. But I have never experienced discussion so enriching. I have never enjoyed writing a paper before. This time I did.”
About the Authors

Charlene Eldridge Wheeler, MS, RN, is President of Margaretdaughters, Inc. in Buffalo, New York and counselor/instructor for the Alcoholism Council of Niagara County. Her nursing practice has been in the areas of Public Health Nursing and substance abuse treatment programs. She has published journal articles on communications, nursing administration, nursing history and feminism. Peggy L. Chinn, PhD, RN, FAAN is professor of nursing at the State University of New York at Buffalo, and editor of Advances in Nursing Science. Her nursing practice has been in the areas of Child Health and Women’s Health. She has published books and journal articles on child health, nursing theory development, nursing education, and feminism.
Wheeler, Charlene Eldridge.

Peace & power