Creating an uncompromised place to belong: why do I find myself in networks?

Madeline Church
A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD
University of Bath
October 2004

COPYRIGHT
Attention is drawn to the fact that copyright of this thesis rests with its author.
This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the prior written consent of the author.

This thesis may be made available for consultation within the University Library and may be photocopied or lent to other libraries for the purposes of consultation.

Signed:

Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements	i
Abstract	ii
Introductory Framing	1 - 9
The Back Story	10 - 19
Writing Interlude One	20 - 24
Ways of Being and Knowing: The Ontological, Methodological, Epistemological Triangle	25 - 55
Writing Interlude Two	56 - 59
Episode One: Participation, Relationships and Dynamic Change	60 -108
Part One	60 - 88
Part Two	89 - 98
Part Three	99 -108
Writing Interlude Three	109-110
Episode Two: From Evaluation As Bullying to Evaluation as Inspiration	111-139
Writing Interlude Four	140-142
Writing the End	143-149
Ending the Writing	150-157
Belonging	158-163
Bibliography	164-169
Appendices	170

Appendix I – *Church, et al. (2003) Working Paper 121*
Appendix II – *Church, M. & Bitel, M. (2001) Paper for UKES Conference*
Appendix III – *Nuñez, M. & Wilson-Grau, R. (2003) Toward a Conceptual Framework*
Appendix IV – *Church, M. & Joss, S. (2003) Introduction to Networks*
Appendix V – *Church, M. (2000) Colombia Forum, Issue 22*

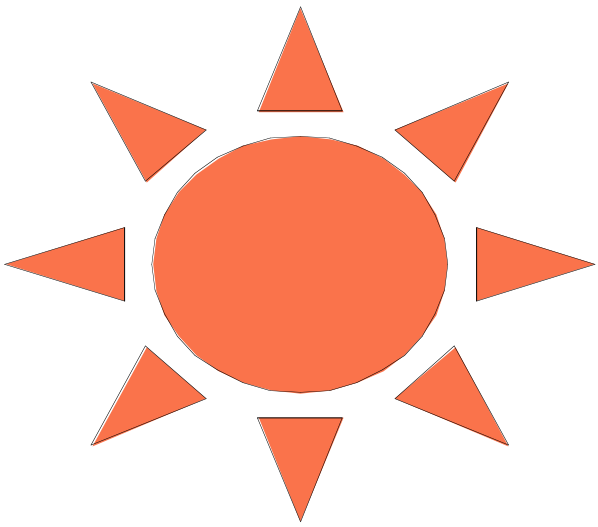
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Photos by Antony Gormley reproduced by kind permission of the artist.

Much love to Kimmett Edgar, Sheila Blankfield, Margaret Church, Eleanor Lohr, Jonathan Gibbs and Mark Bitel for being friends throughout the sometimes arduous, always revealing process of getting to be Mad. Dr. Church.

And many thanks to Jack Whitehead, my supervisor, who never once doubted that I would find myself here.

This one's for us.



Creating an uncompromised place to belong: why do I find myself in networks?

Abstract of PhD Submission
Madeline Church

My inquiry sits within the reflective paradigm. I start from an understanding that knowing myself better will enhance my capacity for good action in the world. Through questioning myself and writing myself on to the page, I trace how I resist community formations, while simultaneously wanting to be in community with others. This paradox has its roots in my multiple experiences of being bullied, and finds transformation in my stubborn refusal to retreat into disconnection.

I notice the way bullying is part of my fabric. I trace my resistance to these experiences in my embodied experience of connecting to others, through a form of shape-changing. I see how question-forming is both an expression of my own bullying tendencies, and an intention to overcome them. Through my connection to others and my curiosity, I form a networked community in which I can work in the world as a network coordinator, action-researcher, activist and evaluator.

I show how my approach to this work is rooted in the values of compassion, love, and fairness, and inspired by art. I hold myself to account in relation to these values, as living standards by which I judge myself and my action in the world. This finds expression in research that helps us to design more appropriate criteria for the evaluation of international social change networks. Through this process I inquire with others into the nature of networks, and their potential for supporting us in lightly-held communities which liberate us to be dynamic, diverse and creative individuals working together for common purpose. I tentatively conclude that networks have the potential to increase my and our capacity for love.

Through this research I am developing new ways of knowing about what we are doing as reflective practitioners, and by what standards we can invite others to judge our work. I am, through my practice, making space for us to flourish, as individuals and communities. In this way I use the energy released by my response to bullying in the service of transformation.