



## **Education and Training For Effective Environmental Advocacy**

### **Author**

Whelan, James M.

### **Published**

2002

### **Thesis Type**

Thesis (PhD Doctorate)

### **School**

Australian School of Environmental Studies

### **DOI**

[10.25904/1912/1828](https://doi.org/10.25904/1912/1828)

### **Downloaded from**

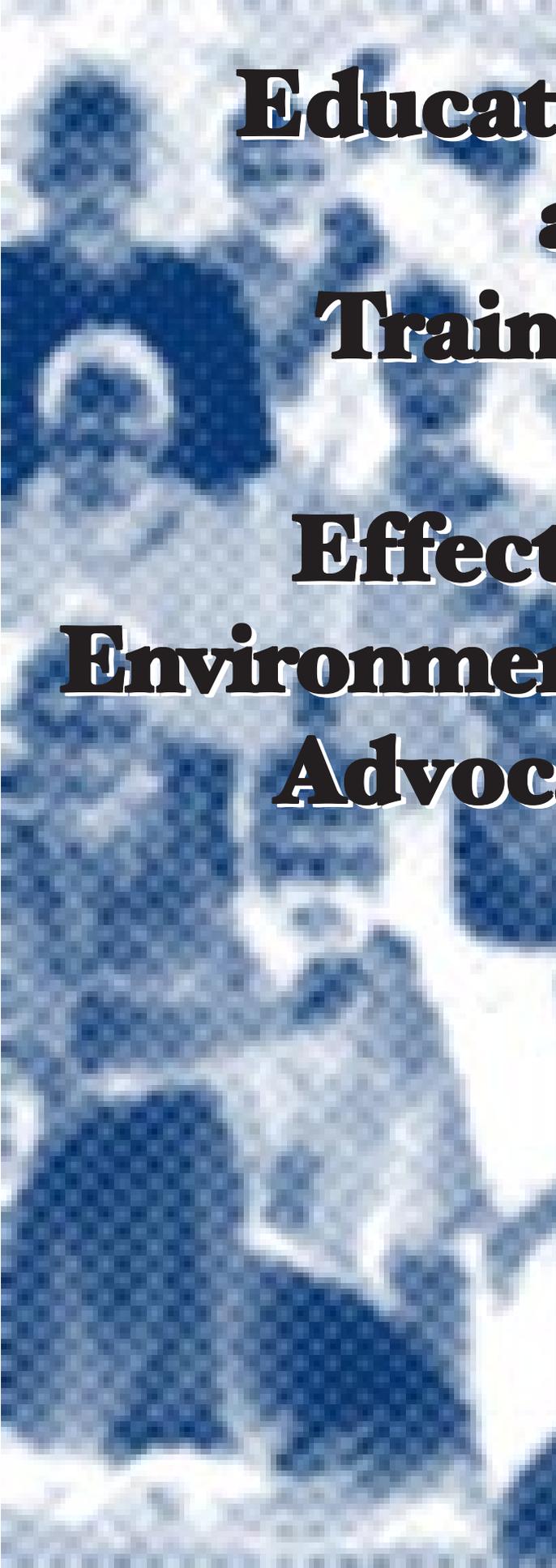
<http://hdl.handle.net/10072/365775>

### **Griffith Research Online**

<https://research-repository.griffith.edu.au>

## **NOTE**

Some images have been removed from the digital version of the thesis for copyright reasons.



# **Education and Training for Effective Environmental Advocacy**

**James M. Whelan**

Bachelor of Arts (UQ)  
Graduate Diploma of Teaching (QUT)  
Masters of Education (UNE)

Australian School of Environmental Studies  
Faculty of Environmental Sciences  
Griffith University

**Thesis**

Submitted in fulfilment of  
the requirements of the  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
at Griffith University

**August 2002**

# **Abstract**

Research on environmental advocacy has tended to focus on outcomes and achievements rather than the processes through which these are achieved. In addition, minimal research has attended in detail to the complexity of environmental advocacy, or explored measures to through which to enhance advocates' prospects of success. The environment movement itself has given scarce attention to promoting the skills, abilities and predispositions that contribute to effective advocacy. Indeed, most environmental non-government organisations (ENGOS) in Australia appear to believe that scientific or expert knowledge will be sufficient to influence environmental decision-makers and consequently provide minimal training or education to enhance advocacy. This thesis is a response to these problems. It seeks to develop an understanding of, and model for, activist education and training in the Australian environment movement.

The two main bodies of literature that inform the study are social movement and

adult education literature. The former provides the context for the study. Social movement theorists present various explanations of how and why environmental activists work for change. These theorists also discuss the organisational structures and modes of operation typically adopted by activists. The second body of literature is utilised in this thesis to provide a synthesis of relevant educational orientations, traditions and practices. Popular, experiential and adult environmental education offer promising strategies for advocacy organisations that seek to enhance activists' skills and abilities. The research questions posed in this study lie at the convergence of these two bodies of literature.

Two empirical studies were undertaken during this inquiry. The first was conducted with the Queensland Conservation Council, an environmental advocacy organisation where the researcher was employed for five years. The study drew on methods and techniques associated with ethnography and action research to identify, implement and evaluate a range of interventions which aimed to educate and train advocates. Three cycles of inquiry generated useful insights into environmental advocacy and identified useful strategies through which advocacy may be enhanced. The second study, a case study based on interviews and observation, explored the Heart Politics movement. The ethnographic research methods utilised in this case study resulted in a rich description and critical appreciation of the strengths and weaknesses of Heart Politics gatherings as activist education.

These two studies contributed to the development of a grounded and endogenous theory of education and training for environmental advocacy. This theory is based on a set of observations concerning the provision of activist education: (1) that most activist learning occurs informally and unintentionally through participation in social action such as environmental campaigns; (2) that this learning can be assessed according to a five-category framework and tends to favour specific categories including the development of social action and organisational development skills rather than alternative categories such as political analysis and personal development; (3) that this

informal learning can be harnessed and enhanced through strategies which situate learning in the context of action and promote heightened awareness of the learning dimension of social action; and (4) that a key obstacle to education and training in the environment movement is a conspicuous lack of professional development or support for the people involved in facilitating and coordinating activist education activities and programs. These people are often volunteers and infrequently possess qualifications as educators or facilitators but are more likely to be seasoned activists. They tend to work in isolation as activist education activities are sporadic, geographically diffuse and ad hoc.

These observations along with other insights acquired through participatory action research and ethnographic inquiry led to a set of conclusions, some of which have already been implemented or initiated during the course of this study. The first conclusion is that strategies to promote the professional development of activist educators may benefit from the development of texts tailored to the tactical orientations and political and other circumstances of Australian environmental advocacy groups. Texts, alone, are considered an inadequate response. The study also concludes that informal networks, formal and informal courses and other strategies to assist collaboration and peer learning among activist educators offer considerable benefits. Other conclusions pertain to the benefits of collaborating with adult educators and tertiary institutions, and professionals, to the relative merits of activist workshops and other forms of delivery, to the opportunities for activist training presented by regular environment movement gatherings and conferences and to the significant merits of promoting and supporting mentorship relationships between novice and experienced activists.

# Contents

Abstract	i
Contents	iv
List of Figures	viii
List of Tables	ix
Statement of originality	x
Acknowledgement	xi
Acronyms	xii

## I

<b>The research problem</b>	<b>i</b>
1.1 Significant life experience	3
1.2 Research objectives and questions	7
1.3 Approach to the study: Activist research	13
1.4 Significance of the study	14
1.5 Concepts and definitions	15
1.6 Scope	25
1.7 Literature overview	33
1.8 Thesis overview	38

2	<b>Literature review - Social movements</b>	42
	2.1 Overview	42
	2.2 Social movements	50
	2.3 Environmental Non-government Organisation (ENGO) strategies	64
	2.4 Social movements: Bureaucracy versus adhocracy	82
	2.5 Conclusion	92
3	<b>Literature review - Educational theory</b>	94
	3.1 Overview	94
	3.2 The relationship between adult educators and the environment movement	95
	3.3 Educational discourses related to environmental activism	103
	3.4 Learning through social action: Informal, nonformal and incidental learning	109
	3.5 Adult education traditions relevant to environmental activism	112
	3.6 Adult education pedagogy and practices relevant to activist education	128
	3.7 Dimensions of activist learning	140
	3.8 Conclusion	171
4	<b>The design and conduct of the study</b>	173
	4.1 Introduction	173
	4.2 Research methodology	176
	4.3 Interpretive and critical methodology and purpose	186
	4.4 Research methods	194
	4.5 Data collection techniques	204
	4.6 Data analysis	215
	4.7 The conduct of the study: Five phases	222
	4.8 Ethical considerations, validity and reliability in insider research	231
	4.9 Conclusion	236
5	<b>Queensland Conservation Council action research study</b>	239
	5.1 Overview	239
	5.2 The Queensland Conservation Council	242
	5.3 Cycle One: Situating the study, scoping and defining phenomena	248
	5.4 Cycle Two: Regional activist workshops	269
	5.5 Cycle Three: 1998 State Conservation Conference	281
	5.6 Looking to the future: Catalytic outcomes	320
	5.7 Conclusion	323

<b>6</b>	<b>Heart Politics ethnographic case study</b>	325
6.1	Activist learning through Heart Politics gatherings	325
6.2	Movement inspiration: Fran Peavey and Interhelp	329
6.3	Heart Politics program and pedagogy	331
6.4	Profile of Heart Politics participants	349
6.5	Heart Politics 1998: systematic inquiry	350
6.6	Research design: Method and techniques	351
6.7	What is learnt?	355
6.8	What is not learnt?	362
6.9	Heart Politics pedagogy	363
6.10	The relationship between Heart Politics and skills-oriented learning	370
6.11	Digging deeper: 1998 Heart Politics focus group with activist educators	377
6.12	Conclusion and implications	380

<b>7</b>	<b>Revisiting the research objectives and questions</b>	382
7.1	Overview	382
7.2	Factors that influence the provision of education in environmental advocacy groups	384
7.3	Forms that environmental activist education takes	387
7.4	Outcomes of activist education	392
7.5	Contributing to the practice and development of education in the Australian environmental movement	399
7.6	Opportunities and recommendations	404
7.7	Looking forwards: Ideas for future research	410
7.8	Looking back: Drawing closure	413

	Bibliography	416
--	--------------	-----

## Appendices

A	Research Proposal	442
B	Environment movement and activist education websites	445
C	Acquiring political acumen (anecdote)	447
D	Memo to QCC Executive and Staff October 1998	449
E	Queensland Conservation Council interview questions	451
F	Bill Moyer Workshop Flier	453
G	Bill Moyer Workshop Evaluation	454
H	Networking Workshop	455
I	QCC 'Speaking Out' training workshop flier	460
J	State Conservation Conference trainers and workshops	461
K	<i>Powerful Voices</i> Evaluation Form	464
L	State Conservation Conference Organising Manual	467
M	<i>Powerful Voices</i> Follow-Up Questionnaire	481
N	Environment Movement Trainers' Questionnaire	484
O	Catalytic outcomes: Cycle advocates' and MAP (anecdote)	488

P	QCC Training Needs Survey March 1999	490
Q	Catalytic outcomes: Earth Raves (anecdote)	493
R	Interview questions: Heart Politics March 1998	495
S	Heart Politics Workshop Prompts, September 1998	496
T	Proposed Curriculum “Environmental Advocacy”	498
U	QCC/FoE Activist training program 2002	509

# Figures

1.1	Thesis structure	38
1.2	Ian Cohen speaking at Gold Coast activist workshop, 2000	74
1.3	Exhibition of banners used during environmental campaigns	80
3.1	Four forms of learning associated with social action	110
3.2	Experiential learning cycle (Kolb 1984)	130
3.3	The ‘spiral model’: Doris Marshall Institute	132
3.4	<i>Green Girls</i> : environmental mentoring	136
3.5	‘Iris’ model of activist learning	140
3.6	The Wilderness Society’s <i>Long Hot Summer Campaign Handbook</i>	152
3.7	<i>Anyone Can</i> campaign manual (QCC)	153
3.8	Eight stages of successful social movements	164
3.9	Four roles associated with effective social change movements	165
4.1	Action research cycle	199
4.2	Data analysis: An interpretive methods continuum	216
4.3	Grounded theory stages	221
4.4	Five stages of emancipatory praxis	223
5.1	Informal structure of the environment movement	244
5.2	First action research cycle of QCC action research study	249
5.3	Second action research cycle of QCC action research study	270
5.4	Bill Moyer explaining Movement Action Plan, Brisbane 1999	273
5.5	Friends of the Earth activists during MAP workshop, Brisbane 1999	273
5.6	Campaign planning workshop with Gold Coast activists, 1999	277
5.7	Campaign planning workshop with National Union of Students, 2000	277
5.8	Third action research cycle of QCC action research study	281
5.9	<i>Powerful Voices</i> conference flier	284
5.10	<i>Essential Skills for Environmental Activists</i> , 1997	286
5.11	<i>Powerful Voices</i> delegates, Samford 1998	295
5.12	Chris Harris’ Strategic Campaign Planning workshop	309
5.13	John Wikkens’ Geographic Information System workshop	310
5.14	Bob Burton’s Fundraising workshop	310
5.15	Katrina Shields’ Maintaining Morale workshop	311
5.16	Bobbi Allan’s Conflict Resolution workshop	311
5.17	Data sources informing Cycle 3 activist education observations	317
6.1	Heart Politics 1999	334
6.2	Heart Politics 1999	334
6.3	<i>How do you sustain your social change work?</i> (Heart Politics 1998)	341
6.4	Trust building during Heart Politics	343
6.5	‘Spiral’ structure informing Heart Politics gatherings	348

# Tables

1.1	Research objectives and related focus questions	19
2.1	Three degrees of environmental response	62
2.2	Suggested categories for environmental advocacy tactics and strategies	69
3.1	A comparison of five educational orientations	104
3.2	Dimensions of activist learning suggested by activist educators	140
3.3	Training themes of the 1996 National Conference of Environment Centres and Conservation Councils corresponding to three aspects of activist learning	149
3.4	Activist training workshops emphasising social action skills	153
3.5	Change theories informing movement theory and action	159
3.6	Activist education activities emphasising personal growth	166
3.7	Conceptual framework for activist education	172
4.1	Research interests and corresponding paradigms	179
4.2	Research methods and phases associated with emancipatory praxis	217
5.1	Data collection techniques and outcomes of each action research cycle	232
5.2	Summary of QCC interviewees' prior activist education and experience	243
5.3	Categories and elements of environmental activism (QCC interviews)	245
5.4	Data sources informing third action research cycle	270
5.5	ENGO support for proposed training programs	273
5.6	<i>Powerful Voices</i> workshop facilitators and topics	275
5.7	Participants' post-conference application of workshop learnings	290
5.8	Pedagogic elements of <i>Powerful Voices</i> workshops	307
6.1	Brief history of the evolution of Heart Politics	311
6.2	Heart Politics themes 1992-2002	315
6.3	Heart Politics keynote speakers and workshop facilitators 1992-2002	321
6.4	Heart Politics elements associated with identified learning objectives	329
7.1	Capacity building projects recommended to the environment movement	374

# **Statement of originality**

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

James Whelan

Date

# Acknowledgements

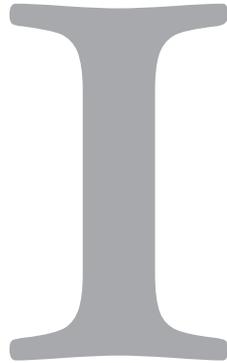
I would like to express my gratitude to the academics and other mentors who have patiently helped me during this project. In particular, I would like to thank my principal supervisor John Fien. I am also indebted to Richard Dunlop and Brian Hoeppe.

During these five years, I have been inspired and encouraged by activist colleagues: critical friends who have affirmed that the inquiry has potential significance for the environment movement, helped identify rich locations for inquiry and generously shared their wisdom. I have been especially inspired and challenged by activists and activist educators including Katrina Shields, Christine Laurence, Steve Chase, Bobbi Allan, Fran Peavey, Carol Booth, Eric Manners, Julie Kirkwood, Shannon Burns, Laura Parsons, John Hepburn, Chris Harris, Bob Burton, Dave Beckwith, Bill Moyer, John Hewitson, John and Theresa McCabe, Trevor Acfield, Leif Lemke, Theresa Gordon, John Sutton, Bob Brown, John Stone and Ian MacKenzie.

I am so grateful to my parents for encouraging me: for teaching me that learning can be a way of life. I know my father would be proud. And finally, thanks to Dan for great neck-massage and coffee. For waiting, and for sustaining me.

# Acronyms

ACF	Australian Conservation Foundation
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANTAR	Australians for Native Title And Reconciliation
CSO	Community Service Organisation
DSP	Democratic Social Party
ENGO	Environmental Non-Government Organisation
FoE	Friends of the Earth
GECKO	Gold Coast and Hinterland Conservation Council
GVEHO	Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations
LETS	Local Employment Trading System
MAP	Movement Action Plan
NECF	National Environmental Consultative Forum
NGO	Non-government Organisation
NIMBY	Not In My Back Yard
NSW	New South Wales
NUS	National Union of Students
NvA	Non-violent Action
PAR	Participatory Action Research
POO	Professional Opposition Organisation
QCC	Queensland Conservation Council
TWS	The Wilderness Society
UK	United Kingdom
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature



## **The research problem**

There is a legendary bird, the huma bird, which lives its entire life flying in the atmosphere high above the earth. Never does that huma bird land on earth. When it comes time, it lays its eggs in the air.

The egg begins to fall to the ground while inside the baby bird gestates then begins to peck its way out of the egg. Even as the egg falls to the ground it is not known whether the bird's beak will harden sufficiently to open the shell of the egg, whether its wings will dry enough for the bird to fly back up into the atmosphere to join the other members of its species.

Will the bird mature in time to avoid being crushed to the ground?

Is this not the condition we human beings are in at this time? Will we mature soon enough to put away our dangerous habits and live sustainably on the earth?

If this species of huma bird continues, that must mean that enough birds get out of the egg before being dashed upon the earth and fly back up into the atmosphere. If it is sustainable for the huma, maybe there's hope for our species too.

(Fran Peavey, pers.comm. February 1999)

Fran Peavey's Huma Bird story eloquently captures the motivation and focus of this study. In this thesis, I will argue that many environmentalists are engaged in a struggle that they experience as no less urgent than that of the unborn huma bird. Environmentalists advocate a significant and rapid change in values and practices in order to protect the health of the biosphere upon which all life depends. They are commonly motivated by a conviction that ecological processes are under threat and that the consequences of inaction or ineffective action are likely to be no less dire than those the huma bird faces if it fails to escape from its shell and learn to fly. Like the bird, environmental activists may be considered poorly equipped for their struggle. Activists are often young and participate in social action voluntarily in loosely structured and under-resourced organisations. This thesis is motivated by a conviction that through appropriate education and training, environmental advocates can acquire and enhance a range of skills, understandings and abilities in order to increase their chances of success.

The purpose of this thesis is to generate 'really useful knowledge'<sup>1</sup> in order to enhance activist education and training in the Australian environment movement. My commitment to this goal stems from a profound personal concern for the conservation of the natural environment, my belief that environmental activists have important roles to play in conservation, and my concern that many activists are poorly educated or equipped to achieve their objectives.

---

1 An expression commonly used by popular educators, possibly originating in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century (see for instance Johnson 1988).

## **I.1 Significant life experience**

This thesis is written in a personal and reflective style, consistent with my research intentions, my location as researcher, my intended audiences and with the novel nature of the field of inquiry. I am an active participant in my field of inquiry: an environmental activist and an activist educator. This inquiry explores questions, issues and possibilities that have been the focus of my personal experience and reflection for a decade. My immersion in social movement practice and literature has helped clarify the questions at the heart of this thesis and motivated me to take a more disciplined approach to the investigation. My curiosity has led me in circles, sustaining my commitment and interest.<sup>2</sup>

Whereas academic inquiry is generally presented in an impersonal manner which emphasises rigour and objectivity, this thesis incorporates insights which have been acquired through personal experience. For reasons including the paucity of literature on activist education, my own development as an activist is treated as a key source of information. Furthermore, the research methods adopted in this inquiry justify a reliance upon personal experience and offer a range of strategies to maximise the validity of research conclusions. This section provides autobiographical reflections pertinent to the study. These reflections describe my own development as an activist, identify significant factors that contributed to this development and explain the motivation for this study.

Four significant life experiences are shared in this section: (1) family history and early adult life; (2) tertiary qualifications and professional experience; (3) environmental advocacy experience and (4) activist education experience. These significant life experiences are described sequentially to develop a sense

---

2 This is discussed in the Research Proposal which is included as Appendix A.

of how the researcher's identity has influenced the topic and purpose of this research.

First, my family background and experiences during childhood and adolescence predisposed me to be interested in activism. My parents were both involved in social justice advocacy and, from an early age, I became an active member of peace and environment groups. I was also interested in social justice and equality: values I expressed as a young parent by taking on the role of primary care-giver for my three sons.

Second, my educational qualifications have contributed to the interest in the relationship between education and social change evident in this study. After qualifying as a secondary teacher, I developed an aversion to institutionalised 'schooling' and returned to part-time study to complete a Masters Degree in adult and community education. The program provided the opportunity to learn about radical adult educators such as Paulo Freire and Miles Horton and to begin to develop my own educational philosophy.

This training led to several years experience with diverse community education projects. During the 1990s, I was involved with projects in rural and indigenous communities that aimed to reduce the incidence of domestic violence, inter-generational poverty, AIDS and HIV and to promote adult literacy, self-reliance and community resilience. During this period, I received inspiring mentorship. In particular, John Hewittson who was Director of the Careforce community welfare and development agency in Central Queensland inspired and challenged me to develop and articulate my beliefs about social change, empowerment and liberation.

A third significant life experience that has motivated and shaped this inquiry is my development as an advocate. As a teenager, I was a keen supporter of

environmental, peace and social justice campaigns. This support was expressed through attending rallies, writing letters, wearing badges and organising fundraising and awareness-raising activities. During my undergraduate years, I joined socialist, union and peace groups where I became further politicised and assumed a more active campaign role, as an organiser and public speaker. During a Heart Politics gathering in 1990, I decided to consider activism my profession rather than a hobby, and committed myself to full-time activism for the following decade.

During these years I worked in a voluntary capacity in community environment groups in three Australian states, occupying both organisational maintenance roles and campaigning or advocacy-oriented roles. Over the course of the decade, I became more effective as an advocate and assumed key roles in the coordination of state and national campaigns to conserve tropical rainforests and old-growth forests, minimise urban air pollution and promote sustainable transport. For several years, I was also active with the Australian Greens and contested the 1993 Federal Election as a candidate. Although I initially held environmental advocates in awe and considered sustainability an elusive and impossible objective, my experiences during this time provided affirmation that change can be brought about by relatively small and under-resourced advocacy groups. Again, I was mentored by several accomplished and prominent advocates under whose guidance I developed the confidence and ability to work with the media, lobby politicians and build the kind of networks and momentum necessary to bring about change.

Finally, the fourth significant life experience that influences this study is my involvement in activist education. During my own development as an activist, I was acutely aware of what and how I was learning. In fact, during the early 1990s, I maintained an activist learning journal in which I reflected on learning experiences and articulated my learning goals. Looking back through this

journal, I can clearly identify the point at which I ceased to consider myself a support person for other activists and began to emulate them. This process was helped considerably by the encouragement and example of mentors. I acquired many activist competencies and skills through mentorship and practice. My learning also involved a more structured dimension. When I first volunteered with The Wilderness Society in the mid 1990s, the Newcastle branch coordinator provided an excellent induction and training program for novice campaigners. He invited accomplished activists, politicians and journalists to facilitate half- to one-day workshops on activist skills. When I replaced Ian as branch coordinator, I continued and built on this program.

Another important activist education experience that influences this study is my participation and involvement in Heart Politics gatherings during the past decade and my relationships with the events' organisers. These gatherings exposed me to a very different approach to activist education: an approach that involved learning in ways that were very different to the technical, analytical and skills-based training emphasised in The Wilderness Society workshops. They created a sense of community, and tapped into deeply-held emotions and commitments.

In summary, these significant life experiences have shaped the topic and informed the conduct of this inquiry. They have sustained my interest in activist learning and motivated this study. Experiences including these have also helped me identify a range of educational strategies that appear to contribute to effective advocacy and warrant further investigation in order to develop a theory to inform activist education programs and practice.

## **1.2 Research objectives and questions**

The research problem at the heart of this inquiry is, “How can education and training enhance the effectiveness of environmental advocates?” For the purposes of this inquiry, this research problem has been articulated as four inter-related research objectives: (1) to identify factors that influence the provision of education in environmental advocacy groups; (2) to analyse the forms of education for environmental advocacy; (3) to assess the outcomes of activist education; and (4) to contribute to the practice of environmental activist education and training in Australia. This section introduces these four research objectives and corresponding questions which were developed to address this central problem. Due to their inter-relatedness, these four objectives are considered in an integrated rather than isolated manner throughout the thesis.

The first research objective was to identify factors that influence the provision of education in environmental advocacy groups. By articulating and pursuing this objective, I effectively differentiated and potentially alienated myself from fellow activists. Environmentalists tend not to closely examine administrative or organisational practices. During most activist gatherings, environmentalists’ discussions almost invariably concentrate on issues and campaigns rather than on the personal development and organisational management involved in effective advocacy. This focus unfortunately fails to address a key opportunity to enhance the effectiveness of individual and collective environmental action: namely, education.

Activists’ education and training efforts can be considered as both internally and externally motivated. On one hand, movements often seek to educate both the broader community. On the other hand, they also educate their own members. These education objectives or strategies might be described as both

internal and external. This distinction is suggested by Newman (1997: 117):

In social movements, people join together on a local, national or international basis and take collective action to oppose, or bring about, some kind of change. To do this, they may need to learn new skills and new information. They may need to examine their own values and assumptions, and the values and assumptions of others. They may need to form new understandings of different kinds of social control, and develop new forms of action to exert or oppose that control. In all these activities, they may generate ideas not previously known. Social movements can be sites for personal and collaborative learning and for the creation of new kinds of knowledge.

This distinction is further explored by Leirman and Kulich (1987: 105) who consider that the external educational objectives of new social movements include provoking changes in target groups through developing awareness and knowledge of issues and propositions. By contrast, these groups' internal educational efforts focus on movement participants generating new insights, skills and social action patterns. Leirman and Kulich (1987: 105) describe social movements as a "social and political experimental learning field (in which) participants can develop and may also learn to communicate and cooperate in a more effective way" through both explicit and implicit learning.

The main concern of this inquiry is the *internal* educational efforts of the environment movement. Accordingly, this study has identified sites where activist training has been or is being attempted and clarified aspects of activism (skills, strategies or tactics) that these activities are intended to enhance. The timing of this inquiry is opportune as environmental advocacy groups in Australia are beginning to recognise the value of training. This study seeks to identify factors explaining this trend.

The second research objective was to analyse the forms that environmental activist education takes. This objective corresponds to the divergent objectives, content and pedagogies of activist education and training activities. This study provides a systematic overview of the forms of environmental

activist programs and activities in Australia and, in less detail, North America. The observed differences between the education activities of various groups correspond to (or can be partially explained through reference to) traditions in adult and community education that are described in Chapter Three. This research objective entails the development of a context within which to appraise education for environmental advocacy. This context is informed primarily by the literature on adult and community education.

The third objective was to assess the outcomes of activist education. These outcomes may include, for instance, skills, attributes and competencies. Environmental advocates may be presumed to seek the skills and resources necessary to achieve their conservation objectives. As such, one obvious way to evaluate activist training programs would be to compare the rate of advocates' campaign success before and after engaging in education and training activities. In reality, however, positive environmental outcomes can rarely be directly or simplistically linked to environmental advocacy. Rather, the relationship between effort and ultimate outcomes is often very complex. This complexity and the limitations it presents to this inquiry are discussed in Section 1.3.4.

For the purpose of this study, activists' accounts have been considered the most appropriate evidence that training activities have enhanced their advocacy work. Environmental activism is motivated by a variety of factors including family, religion, experience and politics. As a result, activists approach their campaigns with different outcomes in mind. Therefore, what is seen as a useful learning experience for one activist is not necessarily valued by another individual. It cannot be assumed that adult learners define the value of learning in the same ways. This is because adult learners are strongly influenced by personality, circumstances and their opportunities to apply learning in their work, domestic and social life. As a result, this inquiry relies

on accounts in order to build a theory of *what works* and *how*. The theory and understandings that emerged during this study are endogenous in that they are based on the testimony and worldview of movement participants, including myself, rather than being exogenous or constructed by an ‘outsider’.

The fourth and final research objective was to contribute to the practice and development of education in the Australian environment movement. The Australian environment movement is conscious of the lack of structured personal and professional development provided for activists. For example, at the 1996 National Conference of Environment Centres and Conservation Councils participants improvised a scene in which a novice activist is recruited to an environmental organisation. For many participants, the script bore a strong resemblance to their induction experiences:

Welcome on board. You can probably find somewhere to sit in the workroom. Just clear Sally’s stuff away. Her computer should be working if you can find a power lead. The campaign files are in one of the piles in the front room and on David’s hard drive. We’ve just heard the Minister is planning a press conference tomorrow announcing the mine is going ahead so it will be crucial for us to respond. You should probably have a media release drafted ready to go. I think some of the groups involved are planning a rally in the next week or two. David has some of the names you’ll need to follow up about that. I think you’re speaking (Whelan, 2000: 64).

This scenario led to a discussion concerning the level and nature of training and support available to movement recruits. In general, participants agreed that the prevailing culture demanded a high level of self-sufficiency, resilience and ‘rugged individuality’.

As a result of this 1996 conference, the National Environment Movement Training Project was initiated. This project resulted in the establishment of a national register of trainers available to environment groups<sup>3</sup> and a small group of activist educators who meet on an ad hoc basis to develop training strategies

---

3 On-line at <<http://www.hydra.org.au/training/Trainers.htm>>

and resources. Since 1996, several environment groups have developed formal training programs for their staff and volunteers.

This fourth research objective reflects the researcher's confidence that environmental advocacy groups have the capacity to significantly enhance their advocacy efforts through appropriate education and training. The extent to which this potential is realised may be increased through relevant research and experience such as this study. On the basis of studies such as this, environment groups may allocate resources to activist education and incorporate teaching and learning priorities in their strategic plans.

The observations and conclusions that unfold through this inquiry are intended to serve as a practical contribution and effectively enhance the environment movement's approach to education and training for activism. Accordingly, there is a strong focus on teaching and learning experiences that can be replicated rather than on variables such as family and social background which may contribute to effective activism but which cannot readily be controlled.

Table 1.1 depicts the correlation between these four research objectives and the ten focus questions around which this inquiry has been constructed and conducted.

This inquiry does not attempt to provide definitive or complete answers to the complex questions explored. Instead, the conclusions reached in this study are offered as a provisional theory and as tentative propositions. In part, this results from the scope of the study being rather broad. It is also a consequence of the scarcity of both theory and practice in this particular field of inquiry and the resulting paucity of directly relevant literature available. Rather than providing conclusive answers, this thesis attempts to chart the range of

Research Objective	Focus questions	Chapters
1. To identify factors that influence the provision of education in environmental advocacy groups.	1.1 How and where is activist education being attempted? 1.2 What are the attributes of these places? 1.3 What aspects of activism do current educational activities aim to enhance?	2, 5, 6
2. To analyse the forms that environmental activist education takes.	2.1 How do environmentalists consider they become effective agents for social change? 2.2 What aspects of activism do current educational activities aim to enhance?	5, 6
3. To assess the outcomes of activist education.	3.1 How is this learning best facilitated? 3.2 What do trainers believe about learning for activism? What educational philosophies do they espouse and practice? 3.3 What success stories are available?	3, 5, 6
4. To contribute to the practice of environmental activist training and education in Australia.	4.1 What conclusions can be drawn from apparently effective programs in terms of content and pedagogy? 4.2 What opportunities exist to enhance the environment movement's provision of appropriate education and training?	5, 6, 7

Table 1.1 Research objectives and related focus questions

practical endeavours which aim to enhance environmental activism and to describe some organising principles associated with a theoretical framework. In addition, the inquiry explores assumptions underlying current practices and their impacts.

The inquiry has involved exploring largely uncharted territory. Teaching and learning for activism appear to be evolving endeavours. During this five year inquiry there have been significant developments. In many instances, I have contributed significantly to these developments. As such, this thesis represents a snapshot in time in an evolving field.

### **1.3 Approach to the study: Activist research**

This brief explanation of the research approach adopted in this study foreshadows a more detailed discussion in Chapter Four. In essence, the study is qualitative and descriptive. It draws strategically on research methods and techniques suited to the purpose of developing an interpretive and critical understanding of activist education in Australia and acting on this understanding. These objectives have been achieved primarily through two empirical studies. The more significant of the two is an action research project conducted with the Queensland Conservation Council. This study involved participant observation and interviews that served to develop a critical and ethnographic understanding of opportunities for intervention and the subsequent implementation and evaluation of these interventions through participatory action research.

The second key element of the inquiry is an ethnographic case study of the approach to activist education associated with the annual Heart Politics gatherings in New South Wales and Queensland. Both studies generated data through observation, interviews and questionnaires. These techniques generated an increasingly accurate, detailed and focused comprehension of activists' strategies and of opportunities for education and training. In both cases, data was validated through member checks and triangulation and analysed thematically. Considered together, the two studies contribute to a critical ethnography of education and training for environmental activists in Queensland.

The approach may be referred to as activist research for three reasons. First, the researcher is an environmental activist. Second, the research has been conducted within activist organisations. Third, the research processes are change-oriented.

## **I.4 Significance of the study**

The subject of this inquiry is evolving rapidly. This thesis documents trends within the environment movement toward increased resourcing of intentional activist education activities. During this research project, the field has evolved dynamically. The inquiry does not present a finished product but part of an ongoing process. By writing in a tentative manner, reflecting on apparently emerging patterns or generalisations, and sharing with the reader my process of exploration and discovery, I have attempted to avoid positivist tendencies.

This inquiry represents an attempt to make a significant and practical contribution within the environment movement. Historically, very little theorising has been evident within the movement. A common cliché is that activists are too busy *doing* to reflect, document or evaluate. There is anecdotal and archival evidence that many environment groups have conducted intentional training work with activists, but very little sign of purposeful documentation of this work. The resultant lack of organisational memory, compounded by the high levels of staff turnover in the movement, has impeded the development of a culture of professional development, organisational learning and cross fertilisation between environment groups.

Ideally, the significance of this research will be assessed according to its catalytic value. In particular, it is hoped that the process of inquiry and resultant knowledge may contribute to the development of practices within the movement that are perceived by activists to be of benefit. From a very early stage in this study there were indications that the inquiry had significant catalytic potential. Colleagues indicated their willingness to be interviewed, made time to discuss interpretations of transcribed interview responses and provided additional leads for further information. Collaborators also followed through on emerging ideas.

## 1.5 Concepts and definitions

This section defines terms and concepts integral to this inquiry. The meaning of the central research question, “How can education and training enhance the effectiveness of advocates?” may benefit from careful definition of terms such as ‘environment movement’, ‘education’ and ‘training’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘activism’ and ‘activists’. The meaning of these terms in relation to the current study is explored below.

### 1.5.1 Environment movement

Several expressions are used to describe non-government organisations (NGOs) oriented toward environmental activism. In the United States and Canada, these groups are often described as an important category of New Social Movement or as part of the Alternative Culture Movement.<sup>4</sup> However, such descriptors may conceal the great diversity of approaches to environmental advocacy adopted by non government organisations. By contrast, the scope of this research is confined to Australian NGOs that pursue conservation objectives through strategies which are primarily based on advocacy.<sup>5</sup>

A simplistic depiction of the environment movement is also offered by media reports which tend to depict the Australian environment movement as lacking structure. When they report on environmental protests, campaigns and issues, reporters commonly refer to environmentalists simply as ‘greens’. This generalisation fails to differentiate between organisations which have distinct structures, priorities and approaches to social change, between the voluntary and professional arms of the movement, and between conservationists and the Australian Greens political party. This lack of

---

4 Greenet On-line available <<http://www.gn.apc.org/index.html>>

5 The World Wide Web addresses for environmental advocacy groups described here are listed in the website bibliography in Appendix B.

precision is compounded by competition between environment groups for media coverage that tends to favour the largest groups and those adopting the most dramatic tactics. The resultant impression is of a noisy, chaotic rabble with no more cohesion than a loose federation. Contrary to such a portrayal, the movement has a well-defined structure. This structure is described in the *Green Pages* which is published by the Australian Conservation Foundation. This directory of non-government environmental groups provides evidence of the relative stability and endurance of the national network of environmental advocacy organisations.

The definition of environment movement adopted in this study primarily includes state-based Conservation Councils and several national ENGOs. Many of these organisations were established during the early 1970s when the Commonwealth government created a grant scheme to support 'peak' or representative non-government environmental organisations in each Australian State and Territory. The conservation councils that were formalised and supported through this scheme (now known as the Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations or GVEHO) represent many member groups that include smaller local and regional groups, individual members and supporters. They are largely funded by the GVEHO and other government grants, membership dues and fundraising. While they each employ between three and twenty staff to fulfil core administrative and campaign roles, they also depend to a great extent on volunteers. Many of the administrative functions of these organisations such as newsletter editing, research, management and public access libraries are undertaken by volunteers.

This study also encompasses several national environmental advocacy organisations that evolved separately from the conservation councils. Greenpeace Australia is part of the Greenpeace International company. Its priorities and operational structure are closely aligned to those of the

international body. The Wilderness Society (TWS) is a national organisation working for the preservation of large and ecologically significant tracts of land and sea. It includes a federation of branches and a national body. The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) is another national ENGO which campaigns on a wide range of environmental issues and publishes a popular journal. Other advocacy-oriented ENGOs include the National Toxics Network, the Australian Marine and Coastal Society and Friends of the Earth.

There are two structures through which these state and national groups are affiliated. The first was imposed by the Commonwealth Environment Minister who convenes meetings with delegates of these groups and refers to them collectively as the National Environmental Consultative Forum (NECF). Groups participating in these meetings include ACF, TWS, Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, the Australian Marine and Coastal Society, state conservation councils and the National Toxics Network. The second structure has been established as a consequence of meetings that are held two or three times each year independent of government influence. These gatherings began in 2000 at the instigation of Peter Garrett of ACF and are referred to as the Mittagong Forum. The environment groups participating in these meetings have now formalised their collaboration by establishing a secretariat.

### **1.5.2 Education and learning**

The central research question presumes that the expressions education and learning are understood mutually by the author and audiences of this thesis. In practice, these words are often used interchangeably to communicate related ideas. A useful distinction between learning and education is given by Murphy (1999: 79) who defines the former as:

an individual, subjective, inventive and dynamic process, within which we acquire the skills, knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours that define our interaction with the world. Education,

on the other hand, is systematic social action to direct this essentially undirected (though not necessarily non-directive) learning process productively to achieve social goals.

Learning is also described as a “change in disposition or capability which persists over a period of time, and which is not simply ascribable to processes of growth” (Gagne, 1965: 3) and as an “observable change in behaviour which is the result of something other than maturation” (Tight, 1983: 88). Learning entails changes in self-organisation, autonomy and self-determination (Sterling, 1996) rather than simply the development of narrowly-defined skills.

The difference between education and learning is explored by Kulich (1987: 170; see also Tight, 1983: 6) who describes education as a “conscious, planned, systematic and sequential process based on defined learning objectives and using specific learning procedures ... designed by an external agent (such as an institution or teacher)”. Learning, on the other hand is described by Kulich (1987: 170) as a “natural process that occurs throughout life and which most of the time is incidental, unplanned and left to chance”. This differentiation is extremely useful in examining activist life where education (planned and formal learning processes) appears much less influential than learning. All activists are influenced by their learning while relatively few receive activist education.

Relevant aspects of the relationship between education and learning are described by Newman (2000) who identifies four distinct forms of learning: incidental learning; informal or nonformal learning; informal education and formal education. Incidental learning is described as a natural, unplanned or chance consequence of experience. Informal learning, on the other hand, is organised but primarily participant-directed. It is often loosely structured. Informal and formal education reflect differing degrees of institutionalisation and imply teacher-direction and accreditation. These four forms of learning are explored further in Chapter Three.

While all four of these forms of learning are considered significant to this inquiry, formal education for activism is uncommon. As a result, this inquiry focuses primarily on incidental, nonformal learning and informal education. Chapter Seven suggests strategies to provide activist education in formal or institutional educational contexts.

### **1.5.3 Training**

Training is an alternative descriptor for intentional education activities and programs. It is commonly used to describe intentional teaching and learning within the environment and other social movements in Australia. Training is also a common term for activist education in the United States where personal and professional development activities for environmental advocates are often referred to as ‘trainings’. In Australia, the expression ‘training’ has acquired a rather narrow and instrumental meaning through its association with the vocational education sector during the past fifteen years. In this context, it has come to imply the development of skills and competencies considered essential for an effective labour force. A similar definition is offered by Jickling (1992: 8) who considers training involves “the acquisition of skills which are perfected through repetition and practice and are minimally involved with understanding.”

A broader and more appropriate definition for the activist development efforts integral to this study is offered by Shields and Allan (1997), founding members of the Social Change Training and Resource Centre. Their efforts to increase environmentalists’ effectiveness have involved several cooperative ventures with environmental advocacy organisations. Shields and Allan (1997) define training for environmental advocacy as a broad concept extending beyond, but including, skills development. Their definition includes:

- Being sufficiently informed on the relevant campaign issue(s).
- Practical and technical skills to do the job.
- Interpersonal skills.
- Making environmental work sustainable.
- Learning from our own and each others' experience.
- Organisational development.
- Political and philosophical frameworks for action.

As such, Shields and Allan (1997) use the term training in a much broader sense than the interpretation associated with vocational education. They consider training involves more than the transmission of information from expert to learner:

It includes opportunities for dialogue with peer groups, reflection and documentation of learning from experience, and other mechanisms for supporting and resourcing activists. Specific topics or skills require different training strategies.

A similarly broad definition of training was developed during the 1999-2000 Capacity Building consultancy initiated by state and national environment groups. The steering group for this project defined training as, “the development of individuals’ interpersonal and practical skills, and the enhancement of organisations’ capacities to meet the challenges presented by particular campaigns and projects” (Parlane and Flowers, 2000: 12). This definition has the added value of established acceptance by many environmental advocacy groups.

Throughout this study, the term training is used in this inclusive sense rather than to suggest the acquisition of vocationally-oriented skills or competencies. The expressions training and education are used interchangeably in this inquiry and are both intended to suggest a broad, non-vocational (in the industrial sense) and learner-directed approach to teaching and learning.

#### **1.5.4 Effectiveness**

Measuring activist effectiveness in the environment movement is an extremely difficult matter. For the purposes of this inquiry, two criteria are used to identify effective advocacy: resilience and results. Effective environmental advocates are those who are able to create “intended, permanent, institutional change” (Snow, 1992a: 16) and those who remain committed, active and motivated.

While this definition appears unambiguous, the concept of effective advocacy proved elusive and complex throughout this inquiry. Several factors which bring complexity to discussions of effectiveness in this study are identified in Section 1.4 (Scope).

#### **1.5.5 Activism, activists and organisers**

Dictionaries provide accessible definitions of activism and activists, describing the former as “a policy of vigorous action in politics, etc, hence -ist” (Oxford Concise, 1995) and the latter as “a zealous worker for a cause, especially a political cause” (Macquarie, 1999). For the purposes of this inquiry a more precise definition was considered desirable. The researcher’s experience as an environment advocate suggested the environment movement defines activism in terms of four criteria: vigour, long-term commitment to social change, self-concept and tactics. Environmental activists often exhibit sustained vigour as they commit a significant amount of time and energy to working toward positive environmental outcomes. Activists’ long-term commitment to social change may be considered as a sustained counter-positioning to institutionalised power relationships which requires skill, energy and constant work (Walkerdine, 1984: 162-184).

For the purposes of this study, the role ‘activist’ also implies self-concept;

whether a person sees themselves as an activist, campaigner or organiser. Interviews conducted during this inquiry suggested individuals who describe themselves as activists consider this to be a key aspect of their role and identity. Finally, environmental activism implies the utilisation of a wide variety of tactics. Established ENGOs often adapt their tactics according to the accepted protocols and knowledge of agencies, industry and elected representatives, and of these powerholders' responses to various strategies. Advocates primarily seek influence through research, lobbying, networking, alliance-building and public education including use of the media. Elements of the environment movement also adopt radical tactics including direct action, both violent and non-violent, and other forms of civil disobedience. This inquiry focuses on environmental activists: people working toward a vision of ecological sustainability. This vision often incorporates but is not confined to goals such as economic and social justice issues, peace and nuclear disarmament.

Initial discussions with environmentalists suggested it was useful to provide synonyms for 'activist' which had a precision of meaning necessary for this study. The two expressions most commonly emerging in these discussions were 'organiser' and 'campaigner'. Both words evoke the same sense of long-term, passionate, intentional and skilled effort oriented toward desired social change. Alinsky (1970: 10-12) and many contemporary North American movement theorists favour the term organiser. It also appears to be gaining currency in Australian non-government organisations.

Social movement literature provides a range of alternative expressions to describe the individuals in this study. Webb (1984a: 13) for instance uses a variety of descriptors to distinguish between activists' tactical orientations: communicators, protestors, campaigners, community activists, resource collection specialists, manipulators, mobilisers, propaganda experts and complete activists or all-rounders. Leirman and Kulich (1987: 103) distinguish

between three groups of participants in New Social Movements: core leaders and promoters, militants and followers. The distinction between leaders and followers is also developed by Hamilton (1992: 23) who considers advocates introduce new concepts or ideas to societies while followers “adapt and internalise the new concepts.” The focus in this study is the former category. As this inquiry focuses on individuals who demonstrate long term commitment and seek to achieve real and lasting change, the focus is primarily the first of these three sets of participants: the ‘movers and shakers’ (Bullard, 2000: 38).

### **1.5.6 Social change and social movements**

Brief definitions of the expressions ‘social change’ and ‘social movements’ are provided here in recognition that environmental advocacy as examined in this inquiry is collective action which takes place within a tradition of collective action. The term social change is often used by activists to denote the wide range of activities and programs undertaken by the environment movement and other change-oriented groups. While the efforts of environmental activists often appear motivated toward immediate or short-term conservation outcomes, such as the declaration of a national parks or environmental legislation, campaigns are often based on broader and longer term social objectives than these. As a result this inquiry considers environmental advocacy to be an element of a broader social change project as defined by Heaney (2000: 11):

Social change references a redistribution of power and wealth favoring the disenfranchised and poorer classes and tending toward political and economic democracy. Social change aims at a shift in the relative position of classes, not in the position of individuals within one or another class. Social change is not what happens when the offspring of a working class family joins the newly

emerging professional classes, It is what occurs when workers, women or other oppressed groups organize to overcome the hegemony of professional educators or bureaucrats and reclaim control over their lives.

Environmental organisations are often portrayed as collectively constituting a social movement (for instance Bagnall, 2000; Chartier and Deléage, 1998; Doherty, 1999; Dryzek, 1997; Dryzek and Schlosberg, 1999; Gamson, 1975; Jordan and Maloney, 1997; Roberts and Kloss, 1979; Thiele, 1999; Touraine, 1981). Social movements exhibit attributes which are not evident in isolated or individual instances of environmental advocacy. For instance, Crowther, Martin and Shaw (1999: 9; also Welton, 1993) observe that social movement participants are motivated by issues and causes which are collectively defined. They react in an antagonistic manner against opposing groups or interests and adopt shared values, beliefs and purposes. Environmental advocacy, consistent with this notion of social movements, often reflects a coherent attempt to envision, promote and create a fundamentally different and more sustainable society. These attributes of social movements are significant to this examination of activist learning and education.

Although the campaigns of many environmental advocacy groups often aim to effect environmental outcomes which require or imply social change, relatively few articulate social change objectives in their public statements, mission statements or literature. The ultimate objectives of environmental advocates and the extent to which these objectives encompass long-term social change are significant considerations in this study of appropriate educational strategies. This issue emerges strongly through the two studies in this thesis.

## **1.6 Scope**

This inquiry does not purport to consider the full range of groups whose activities may be considered to include environmental advocacy. This section explains the criteria by which a specific subset of groups was selected and the rationale behind this decision. It also identifies and addresses issues associated with the expression 'effective environmental advocacy'. The central research question in this thesis is based on the assumption that it should be straightforward to measure the effectiveness of environmental campaigns and campaigners and to evaluate how education and training activities enhance success. Factors which limit this assumption are discussed here.

### **1.6.1 Advocacy, conservation and education organisations**

Two significant categories of environmental organisations are deliberately excluded from the study: hands-on conservation groups and environmental education groups. Although hands-on conservation groups are held in high regard for their environmental achievements and are generally considered to be working toward compatible objectives of the environment movement, they are not considered directly relevant to this study. These groups include Greening Australia, the Keep Australia Beautiful Council, Landcare and catchment associations, Waterwatch and native animal rescue and release groups. The relationship between groups such as Landcare, and environmental advocacy groups appear superficially to be strong. Landcare groups strive to improve natural resource management practices and to maximise local community involvement in practical conservation projects. The organisation's website reports that in 2000-2001, 8,500 Landcare volunteers donated more than 90,000 hours to improve nearly 75,000 hectares of habitat by planting more than 500,000 native plants. Similarly, Greening Australia's website reports that in 1999-2000, the organisation coordinated 6,000 volunteers who gave over 65,000 hours, planted almost 550,000 native plants and

removed over 26,000 cubic metres of weeds.

The activities and the stated objectives of Landcare and Greening Australia are compatible with those of conservation councils and environment centres, but hands-on conservation groups do not generally confront the structural, legal and political causes for environmental problems in the way that advocacy groups do. In addition, they rarely publicly oppose government policies and practices. Indeed, the time and energy required of these groups to partially restore a small patch of remnant vegetation could be spent lobbying for a change in logging practices across a state or a review of export woodchip licences. Environmental advocacy groups tend to seek political and structural changes rather than highly localised and short-term outcomes.

This differentiation is affirmed by examining the networks and affiliations of advocacy groups. Although conservation councils, ACF and Greenpeace liaise with hands-on conservation groups, they infrequently align with them in campaigns.<sup>6</sup> In addition, few hands-on organisations are member groups of conservation councils.

This differentiation is recognised by environmental advocacy groups which tend to consider the efforts of hands-on groups important but inadequate to achieve sustainability. The Wilderness Society (2001) for instance asserts that for every tree planted with the support of the federal government's one billion dollar Natural Heritage Trust which has funded Australia's Landcare program, one hundred trees have been bulldozed. The shortcomings of 'incrementalist' environmental action is highlighted by advocacy groups that campaign to reduce waste and conserve resources. In 1988, 13.7 million tons of newsprint were produced in the United States, roughly equivalent to sixty-five kilograms

---

6 In fact, many rural Landcare groups campaigned in opposition to the proposed declaration of wilderness areas in NSW in the early 1990s.

per person (Brower, 1990: 137). Although extensive environmental education programs during the following decade achieved the redirection of one-third of this waste-stream toward recycling programs, levels of consumption remain unsustainable. As noted above, environmental advocacy groups tend to tackle issues at a macro-level, seeking structural or government intervention rather than adopting a micro-scale or local focus encouraging individual responsibility. Compared to hands-on, conservation-oriented groups like Landcare, they are more likely to address the causes rather than the symptoms of environmental problems, and to seek structural, political and social change.

The work of the hands-on groups is not primarily activist in nature. As a result, the necessary skills and abilities of participants in the advocacy arm of the movement are likely to be quite distinct from those engaged primarily in planting trees, caring for wildlife or monitoring water quality. The observations of education and training within the environment movement made during this study are not necessarily of direct relevance to hands-on conservation groups, and vice versa.

A second category of groups deliberately excluded by this focus on environmental advocacy is environmental education organisations. This category includes the Australian Association for Environmental Education, the state-based Geography Teachers' Associations and the Royal Geographical Society. Environmental education encompasses a wide range of practices and educational philosophies. Approaches range from efforts to inform target groups through to projects which seek to politicise and galvanise learners to action. Programs which entail straightforward awareness-raising (education *about* the environment) are not considered relevant to this study. Those promoting education *for* the environment and whose objectives include motivating learners to take political action consistent with their environmental concerns, on the other hand, are appropriate to include in this study. One

example is the Smogbusters project<sup>7</sup> which seeks to increase community awareness by providing information about transport and air pollution. This project also actively seeks to mobilise community action around transport and air pollution issues. Education for activism might be described as one end of an environmental education spectrum, with education about the environment toward the other end and green consumerism, which involves a change in values and behaviour but not social change, in the middle.

One differentiating factor between these two types of environment groups (environmental education and hands-on conservation groups) and those adopting activist strategies may be the extent to which participants are motivated by a belief that the biosphere is in peril. Jacobs (1997: 18) argues that environmental activist groups are generally ecocentric and are motivated by a concern for the well-being and continued existence of non-human species and systems. By contrast, groups established to plant trees or educate about the environment appear to be motivated by anthropocentric values including a primary concern for human well-being and quality of life.

The narrow definition of environment movement which focuses on advocacy groups also reflects a methodological rationale (discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four). In order to best comprehend how intentional education and training can enhance advocacy outcomes, this inquiry has considered subjective accounts of activists' experience to be the most useful source of information. There are a number of compelling reasons and distinct advantages in adopting this stance. As a member of community organisations examined in this study, I have immediate access to the accounts of environmental advocates' learning and action. As I am immersed in the movement's cultural life, I am well placed to interpret the subtleties of the responses of colleagues to my questions. This interpretivist approach is also supported by a

---

7 On-line available <<http://www.qccqld.org.au/smogbusters>>

considerable body of contemporary literature (including Smith et al., 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Cantrell, 1993).

### **1.6.2 Defining 'effective' advocacy**

The scope of the study is also somewhat complicated by problems associated with the expression "effective environmental advocacy". This study is based on the premise that environmental advocacy can potentially achieve significant and positive outcomes and that this potential can be enhanced through education and training. In reality, it is extremely difficult to measure with any degree of precision the effectiveness of environmental campaigns. This difficulty results from several factors, five of which are discussed here. Firstly, environmentalists tend to pursue short-term objectives which, by their very nature, are almost impossible to achieve. In many instances, advocates face formidable opposition. Short-term failure should not necessarily be construed to suggest that the activists involved were ineffective. In fact, apparently 'failed' campaigns may conceal the advocacy tactics of highly skilled activists, as was the case in a prolonged anti-freeway campaign described by this researcher (Whelan, 2001a). The changes brought about by 'failed' campaigns which include increased community awareness, enhanced capacity and skills within advocacy groups and shifts in political agendas may well contribute to the success of ensuing campaigns.

A second factor complicating attempts to measure campaign effectiveness is that the short-term conservation outcomes secured through environmental campaigns often come under pressure and are sometimes impossible to safeguard. An environmental advocate who secures a politician's support for specific conservation measures may find this outcome meaningless if the politician loses influence or office during a subsequent election. Although the declaration of a national park is an achievement which is generally

celebrated as a significant campaign success, this accomplishment does not irrevocably safeguard an area of high conservation value from logging, mining or other development. An example serves to illustrate this point. Activists whose efforts had contributed to the conservation of a World Heritage Area in the Springbrook Hinterland in south eastern Queensland predicted there would be renewed pressures on this area and lobbied to secure a political commitment by the incumbent State Parliament that tourist development proposals for the area would be rejected. Despite these achievements, which appear to be reliable indicators of effective advocacy, the same activists subsequently became embroiled in a three year campaign to block construction of a cable car facility within the protected area. Activists are often compelled to fight the same battles repeatedly.

A third factor is that advocacy organisations are often volunteer-based and generally experience high levels of turnover. This characteristic can obscure the organisations' effectiveness as advocates may be inclined to focus on short term and (more) achievable objectives rather than long term and abstract goals. Although many environmental advocacy organisations experience high levels of turnover and activists are considered highly prone to burnout (Shields 1991), environmental issues often take decades to resolve. Paradoxically, advocacy efforts which appear ineffective in the short to medium term may well contribute directly to the achievement of desired outcomes in the longer term. Resilience or persistence was identified as a key attribute of effective advocates by Downtown and Wehr (1997) on the basis of interviews with long-term peace activists. The effectiveness of these resilient activists was measured not so much in terms of demonstrable changes in policies related to U.S. militarism, nuclear armament or power, many of which continued to develop contrary to the ideals of peace activists in recent decades, but in terms of their ability to remain motivated and committed.

The fourth and related factor making 'effectiveness' a complex issue is that advocacy tactics rarely appear to be evaluated in terms of their measurable contribution to ultimate or long-term objectives. This study found minimal evidence that evaluation is either a routine or rigorous practice in the contemporary Australian environment movement. Groups that evaluate campaigns and other activities tend to examine outputs such as newsletters, websites, public meetings, and media releases rather than outcomes. The differentiation between outputs and outcomes is considered by Fien, Scott and Tilbury (2001) to be integral in the evaluation of and differentiation between environmental change programs. To illustrate, an environmental group that prints ten newsletters, visits twenty schools and makes one hundred submissions during the course of a year cannot claim to be effective if environmental practices in target communities remain unchanged. These achievements are outputs rather than outcomes. Since many environmental advocates seek, in the longer term, to contribute to a sustainable society which embodies values, behaviours and technologies which are unlikely to be achieved in their lifetime, the emphasis on outcomes and short-term objectives is understandable.

Finally, the difficulty in articulating a simple or agreed definition for activist effectiveness is compounded by the apparently exaggerated claims made by some environmental advocacy groups concerning their role in effecting conservation outcomes. This exaggeration may be motivated by a desire to attract members, donations or public recognition. When ecologically significant forests in southern New South Wales were protected from logging in the early 1990s, responsibility for this positive outcome was difficult to attribute accurately. The intervention by the New South Wales state government followed an extended forest blockade, years of lobbying and a widespread public education campaign involving several environmental advocacy groups. The Wilderness Society's campaign director arrived by

helicopter at the forest location of the direct action to field media interviews, effectively disenfranchising local activists. This tactic contributed to conflict within the forest conservation sector for the remainder of the decade. Groups including The Wilderness Society, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the South East Forest Alliance and the Nature Conservation Councils of New South Wales and the South East and Canberra printed leaflets and newsletters during this time in which they claimed their activists and supporters were responsible for the campaign's success.

The outcomes of environmental advocacy are often, however, less immediately and unambiguously apparent. The Wilderness Society's campaign during the early 1990s is a case in point. This national ENGO, comprising more than a dozen branches around the country and several thousand actively supportive members, devoted the bulk of its energies to stopping or at least impeding or reducing the exportation of native forest woodchips. At the time, a government-issued licence allowed for the annual export of approximately five million cubic metres of woodchips derived from native forest logging operations. The 'Woodchip Free by '93' campaign was a demonstrable failure. Although The Wilderness Society mobilised thousands, built resilient advocacy organisations and demonstrated widespread public support for an end to native forest logging and woodchip exports (as measured by public opinion polls), the woodchip export quota was actually increased during the campaign.

Experiences like this may partially account for the high level of disillusionment and turnover in most environment groups. This is particularly likely if activists assess their effectiveness according to such concrete outcomes as the cancellation of an export licence. Arguably, The Wilderness Society's campaign incorporated some highly effective strategies and achieved valuable results other than the primary objective.

These significant complexities prevent a simplistic approach to defining or exploring effective advocacy. Other researchers have defined and evaluated environment groups' effectiveness in terms of a very broad range of outcomes and outputs. Innes (1999) considers successful environment groups generate feasible proposals, creative ideas, information and analyses, learning and knowledge, learning and change and outcomes that are just and serve the public good. Kennedy (2000) provides a similarly broad definition of group effectiveness which affirms any outcome which "contributes (or can be reasonably expected to eventually contribute), in whole or in part, to the achievement of current or future on-the-ground natural resource objectives." The inclusive and imprecise nature of these definitions renders the assessment of "effective" advocacy an entirely subjective matter. As a result, this study accepts the testimony of activists as valid evidence of effectiveness.

The objectives of this study present a third factor influencing the scope. My primary interest is in identifying training and education activities which can be intentionally created for environmental advocates and advocacy organisations to enhance effectiveness. As such, I have deliberately excluded from the study issues relating to the important unintentional and incidental learning which may also enhance advocates' effectiveness. This learning may include, for instance, childhood memories or family experiences and the influence of inspirational mentors. These variables do not lend themselves to intervention.

## **1.7 Literature overview**

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this thesis, several fields of literature have been drawn upon. This breadth of literature is consistent with Cantrill's (1992) suggestion that several fields of scholarship are relevant to the study of environmental advocacy. These fields include sociology, anthropology,

communication studies, journalism, public relations and rhetoric, education, social psychology, political sciences. Cantrill provides an affirmation pertinent to this study by observing that interdisciplinary research on this topic “reveals more about what we do not understand than about what we can count on” (1992: 35). The various bodies of literature that are explored in depth in Chapters Two and Three are described briefly here.

The first category of texts informing this study is environment movement literature. While texts on the topic of the environment movement are relatively common, much of this literature is of limited usefulness for two reasons. First, the expression ‘movement’ is often used loosely to encompass and define groups which vary so much from time to time and place to place they have relatively little in common. Theorists often include in ‘environment movement’ groups which are deliberately excluded from this study. As a result, meaningful research into such an assortment of organisations may not provide insights or theory valid and useful to specific types of groups - such as advocacy groups. Second, the environment movement is surprisingly under-theorised. There is particularly little of a critical or theoretical nature written about the contemporary movement and even less by participants. The ethnographic methodology of this inquiry warrants an insider perspective.

On the few occasions that environmental campaigns are documented or evaluated, distribution is minimal and documents do not remain in circulation for long. Practical campaign manuals or ‘how to’ guides for advocacy, whether written by campaigners or academics are not uncommon. Examples include Bobo et al. (2001), Jordan and Maloney (1997), Lattimer (1994) and Robin (1990). In one such publication, the author (Lattimer, 1994: preface) expresses the hope that his practical handbook of activist strategies will be “dipped into, consulted when the need arises and plundered for ideas”. Despite this aspiration, minimal evidence is available to suggest that environmental

advocates actually utilise such texts. Campaign manuals appear to be of limited direct relevance to this inquiry as they are not commonly written by activists, appear to receive minimal distribution (particularly within the movement) and do not appear to be widely utilised by environmental activists. Even activist-authored texts such as Muir (1990), Villiers-Brown (1995) and Runciman et al. (1986) receive minimal distribution and tend to be self-published.<sup>8</sup>

In general, the environment movement has limited capacity to publish or archive campaign documentation. Small environment groups often maintain their own libraries and rarely share resources with each other. This makes the compilation and dissemination of useful texts or the documentation of the movement's history very difficult. A key factor contributing to this lack of institutional memory appears to be the high rate of turnover and burnout often encountered in environmental advocacy groups (Shields, 1991; Murphy, 1999: 37). One possible consequence is that activists may be forced to learn for themselves through trial and error the same lessons as their predecessors. By the time activists are sufficiently experienced, successful and confident to record and analyse their campaigns, many find employment outside the movement or move on to other campaigns.

The second group of texts informing this study is the literature on adult and community education. Adult and community education are relatively new fields of theoretical development, and represent a departure from the more established body of theory and practice relating to educational work with children. Adult learning theory suggests adults approach learning experiences and situations with practical, immediate needs and well-established learning preferences. Community education is often related to controversial social and environmental issues and is commonly oriented toward collective social

---

8 Cohen (1997) is a popular exception and is more a participant account than a manual.

action.

Environmental education, the third body of literature, is sometimes described in terms of three distinct streams: education about, in and for the environment. The third approach, education for the environment, appears to have assumed ascendancy over the other two more conservative or traditional approaches to educational research, curriculum development and practice in recent years. The assumptions evident in environmental education literature about how people learn commitment, acquire skills to bring about change and reconcile concern with empowered action are directly relevant to this inquiry and are echoed in movement literature. It is quite rare, however, to locate environmental educators seeking to motivate activism in the sense intended in this study. Desired outcomes such as guardianship, responsible and informed consumption and conservation are common, while political action which targets power holders is seldom sanctioned by educational institutions.

The fourth category of literature informing this study is that relating to popular education. Paulo Freire, the Highlander Centre and the International Council of Adult Education provide both theory and practice relevant to environmental activism. Freire's education projects in South America (Freire, 1970; Freire and Shor, 1987) which promoted adult literacy and political autonomy and, more specifically, his potent expression of the underlying ideology and intention of this work have influenced institutional and community-based adult education practice internationally. Freire's concern with 'conscientisation' and his rejection of the prevailing 'banking' model of education resonate with observations made during this research project that effective activists draw on a mature political analysis and a range of skills related to social dynamics and relationships in addition to comprehensive technical knowledge.

A fifth relevant body of literature is that relating to citizenship or civics

education (for both adults and children). Curriculum projects in Australian schools have attempted at times (without evident success) to offer more than awareness-raising about the political system and to encompass education for active citizenship and political activism. Curriculum development for civics courses in the United Kingdom (Webb, 1984a) and United States (Woolman, 1996) has generated useful models which describe both the requisite understandings which contribute to activism and the practical instructional approaches necessary to implement civics education.<sup>9</sup>

Within this fifth body of literature, the concept of action competence provides a useful and established framework for understanding and building on training work in the activist community. The definition of action competence provided by Jensen and Schnack (1994: 7) appears to be directly relevant to this inquiry into learning for activism:

‘Competence’ is associated with being able - and willing - to be a qualified participant. And ‘action’ should be interpreted in relation to the whole complex of distinctions concerning behaviour, activities, movement, habits - and then, actions (that are) intentional.

Finally, this study also draws on the work of activist researchers and educators who explore the social change movements within which they are active participants. As noted above, much of this literature is unpublished. This inquiry has relied on discussions with colleagues who share my research interest, notes and archival material and other miscellaneous sources.

---

9 Curriculum which promoted an understanding of and propensity for active citizenship was successfully excluded from the Queensland education system in the 1980s by conservative lobbyists. Similar elements are now integral to the inter disciplinary Studies of Society and Environment curriculum introduced in 2001.

## 1.8 Thesis overview

The relationships between the seven chapters of this thesis are graphically depicted in Figure 1.1.

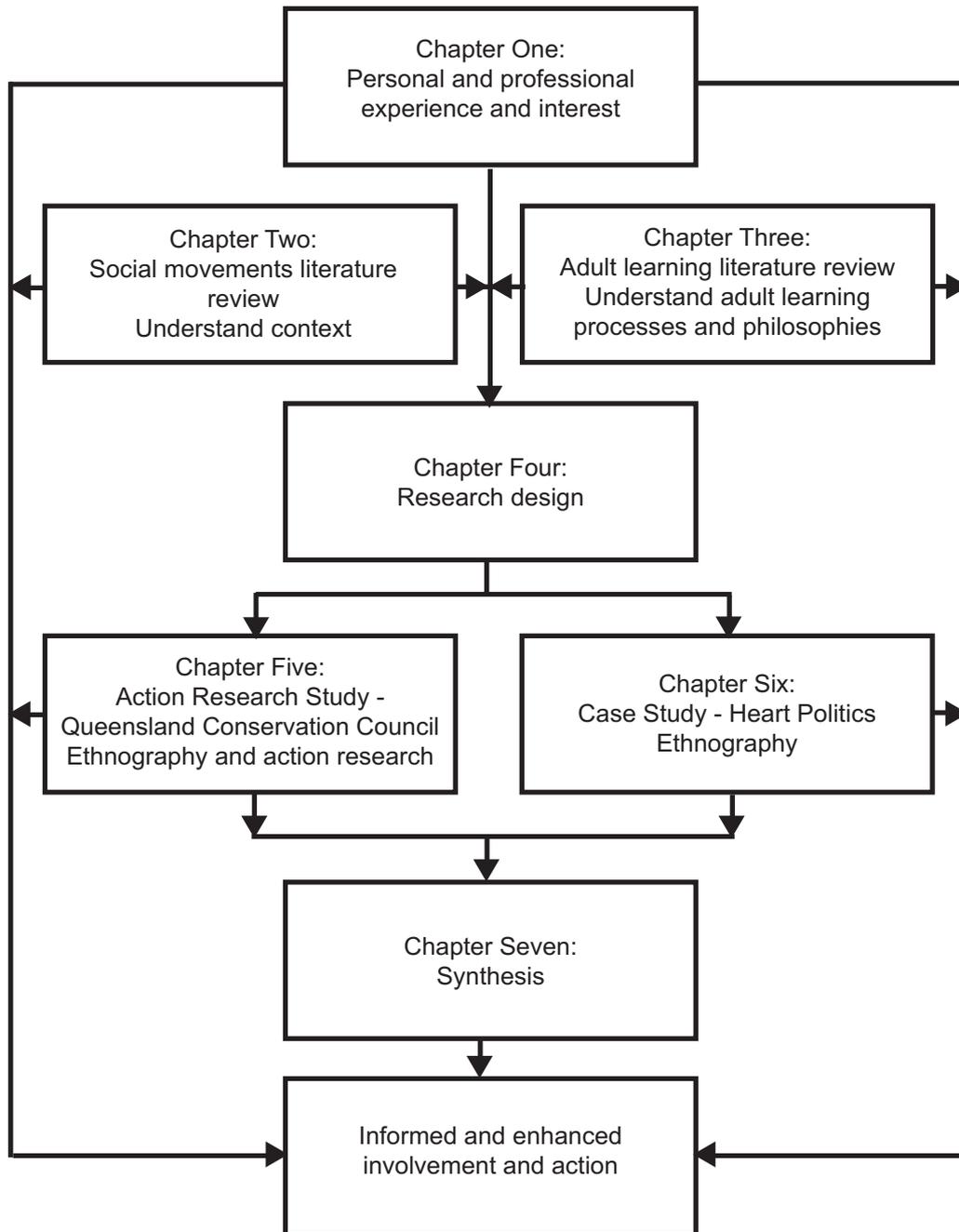


Figure 1.1 Thesis structure

This first chapter has introduced the research topic and question. Research objectives, focus questions and methodological considerations have been

outlined and definitions provided for concepts integral to the inquiry.

Chapter Two examines social movements, mapping the terrain in which this inquiry was conducted. Social movement literature provides clues concerning activists' motivation to participate in the environment movement and suggests the wide range of strategies and tactics employed by environmental non-government organisations (ENGOS). This chapter draws on both movement literature (written both by and for activists) and academic texts in order to explore social movement and collective action theory. The environmental philosophies informing the movement are reflected in a commensurate range of organisational and strategic orientations. The knowledge and skills associated with effective social action suggest a range of teaching and learning experiences.

Chapter Three continues the literature review to explore educational theory and practice directly relevant to the subject of intentional education and training for activism. This synthesis draws from the archives of the environment and other social movements in Australia, the United States of America and elsewhere. Activist training and support programs and institutions provide statements of educational intent, methodology and impacts and suggest activist educators have developed their own educational theories. This chapter describes radical, political and popular educational work oriented toward emancipation, transformation and political action. The chapter includes an examination of educational programs which have involved unionists and farmers, civil liberties campaigners, environmentalists and other activists.

Chapter Four explains the process by which the design of this study was developed and conducted and discusses the research paradigms which influenced the inquiry. Having defined the dominant research orientation as

falling broadly within a qualitative research paradigm, this chapter examines several specific research methods from theoretical and practical perspectives, and identifies the elements of each that are incorporated in this inquiry. Methodological questions associated with participant-observer status are also explored. These considerations identify both limitations and benefits associated with participant research. Chapter Four outlines the potential of grounded theory to reveal patterns and theory while intercepting the artificial imposition of order. Relevant research techniques associated with ethnography and ethogeny are also discussed. As this study aims to maximise collaboration, action research is identified as an appropriate method. Approaches and techniques including interviewing techniques, case studies, accounts and surveys are also discussed.

Chapter Five explores activist training activities within the Queensland environment movement and describes three action research cycles which each entail reflection, planning and collaborative action. The first cycle of inquiry includes interviews with activists employed by the Queensland Conservation Council. The second and third cycles of inquiry entail progressively more strategic and significant interventions including workshops and a state-wide gathering of environmentalists which focused on teaching and learning. Participant feedback and a post-conference survey provide evidence of sustained learning and point to a strong desire for further learning. The educational philosophy of participating activist educators is also examined.

Chapter Six examines the approach to activist training and support incorporated in Heart Politics gatherings. The 'social technology' or pedagogy of Heart Politics gatherings is detailed through an examination of print material, interviews with organisers and participants, structured observation of several gatherings and personal observation. This ethnographic case study includes interviews with organisers and presenters at two Heart Politics

gatherings in 1998, including Fran Peavey whose book inspired and informed the movement.

Finally, Chapter Seven provides a reflection on and synthesis of the research process. This chapter identifies emerging issues and questions requiring further investigation. It explicates conclusions drawn from the study and discusses opportunities and obstacles facing the environment movement in working to enhance activist effectiveness.

# 2

## **Literature review Social movements**

### **2.1 Overview**

This chapter provides a synthesis of relevant social movement literature in order to describe and understand the context within which activists act and learn. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of this study, references for this chapter have been drawn from diverse sources. Personal experience also provides insights and a context for the ensuing discussion. Whereas personal experience is often deliberately excluded from academic writing in general, and the literature review of a PhD thesis in particular, its inclusion in this study was considered vital. The relative paucity of directly relevant academic references on environmental advocacy failed to furnish the richly detailed depiction of the environment movement sought here. Personal experience of the movement in Australia and Queensland help link the abstract social

movement literature to the specific context of this study.

Theory identified here is discussed in light of its relevance to this inquiry in order to illuminate the central question, “How can education and training enhance the effectiveness of environmental advocates?” This chapter describes the environment movement in detail, relating its structures and functions to other social movements. It also explores motivations for environmental activism, strategies, tactics and skills associated with campaigning, and the movement’s contribution to sustainability.

Section One provides a context by identifying the ecological imperatives that motivate the environmental movement and noting the theoretical precedents to this study. Section Two introduces theories concerning social movements in general and the environment movement in particular and explanations concerning activists’ motivations. It also presents a framework to categorise environmental advocacy strategies and tactics. Section Three provides a more detailed depiction of each of six strategic orientations evident in the contemporary Australian environment movement. Finally, Section Four examines the range of organisational characteristics exhibited by environmental non-government organisations (ENGOS) and considers the implications of these structures to activist learning opportunities and priorities.

### **2.1.1 The ecological imperative**

The environmental crisis of our times requires only a brief elaboration. The magnitude and complexity of environmental pressures threatening our planet’s biosphere is well established. Watershed publications such as Carson’s 1962 *Silent Spring* which exposed chemical poisoning, the Club of Rome’s (Meadows et al., 1972) *Limits to Growth* report on the ‘predicament of mankind’ and the

Worldwatch Institute's annual *State of the World* reports depict these acute environmental pressures in a compelling manner.

The extent and nature of environmental and social pressures were also conveyed powerfully by the former United Nations Secretary-General U Thant in 1969.

I do not wish to seem overdramatic, but I can only conclude from the information available to me as Secretary-General, that the Members of the United Nations have perhaps ten years left in which to subordinate their ancient quarrels and launch a global partnership to curb the arms race, to improve the human environment, to defuse the population explosion, and to supply the required momentum to development efforts. If such a global partnership is not forged within the next decade, then I very much fear that the problems I have mentioned will have reached such staggering proportions that they will be beyond our capacity to control (cited in Meadows et al., 1972: :17).

Fundamental changes in behaviour and politics were also advocated in the watershed *Limits to Growth* (1972) which advocated a “basic change of values and goals at individual, national and world levels ... if the world was not to run catastrophically up against natural limits” (Szerszynski, 1997: 152). Comparable warnings of environmental collapse conveyed in subsequent global declarations and U.N. policy statements (see for instance WCED, 1987; IUCN, UNEP and WWF, 1991; UCSUSA, 1992) suggest that the sort of partnership U Thant encouraged, and the necessary remedial human action, has not yet been achieved. In fact, the prospects of achieving sustainability may have diminished. Beck (1998) considers environmental pressures in contemporary *risk society* are absolutely beyond our control, and undermine the very social cohesion and purposefulness required in order for individuals and society collectively to adequately respond.

Generating a social response adequate to address such urgent environmental and social pressures is a complex matter about which there is little consensus. What would such a response involve? How might it be generated? To what

extent does it need to simultaneously require engaging the head (information, knowledge), heart (values, emotions and spirit) and hands (practical measures and action)?

One element of the response is to increase awareness of environmental impacts. This is emphasised by Clover (1996: 96) who asserts that, “More than half of all adults ... are not aware of the basic environmental impact of their own activities.” Likewise, prominent anti-nuclear activist, Helen Caldicott (1999) considers the most immediate obstacle to achieving sustainability is the low level of environmental awareness exhibited by both community members and political decision-makers.

Others consider that strategies to heighten awareness and engage people intellectually are inadequate. Lai (1998: 281) for instance argues that “the emergence of environmental consciousness has rarely transformed the behavioural repertoire of people”. Lai suggests that while most people in the West know about environmental pressures, few participate in pro-environment activities and few sacrifice freedoms such as consumer luxuries or lifestyle options. This conclusion appears consistent with the observation by Healey (2000) that, “People have educational know-how in shovel-loads, but see few ways to put it into practice.” Similarly, Grove-White (1997: 117) suggests that ensuring people know about the environment is insufficient: “We are entering an era in which the easy environmental plums have been picked and in which little future progress will be made without painful costs to many established interests in society.” Although awareness raising may be an ‘easy plum’, generating meaningful social action has apparently proven elusive.

Have efforts to motivate environmentally responsible action and activism through awareness-raising succeeded? Jonathon Porrit (1997: 63), arguably Britain’s most prominent environmentalist, expresses his reservations: “The

easy bit (getting everybody to pay attention to the state of the world and to accept in theory the need to change our ways) is over. Turning that theoretical consensus into operational practice is infinitely harder.”

Nevertheless, local, state and federal environment agencies in Australia prioritise environmental education (awareness raising) ahead of regulatory intervention such as the imposition of harsh penalties for excessive environmental impacts. In Queensland, for instance, the pollution control approach emphasises self-regulation and corporate autonomy. An inadequate budget allocation for prosecution prevents zealous environmental officers from instigating legal action against polluters (Kane, pers.comm. 9/10/01). In fact, when the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency was established in 1999, the stated objective was to work *with* industry. Educational activities conducted within this climate are considered by some environmental activists interviewed during this study as a social paliative, rather than as a genuine attempt to remedy environmental impacts. This emphasis arguably places the burden on community members and consumers rather than on polluters: an allocation of responsibility inconsistent with actual impacts.

This inquiry examines the environment movement’s response to this imperative and is based on the assumption that this collective response contributes significantly to conservation outcomes at local, national and international levels. This assumption is informed partly by the researcher’s personal experience and also by authors such as Touraine (1981: 9) who describes social movements including environmental non-government organisations as “the main actors of society ... more than ever the principal agents of history.” Princen and Finger (1994: ix) agree that NGO action has been “absolutely essential to most international environmental action.” This view is further affirmed by the Rural Advancement Foundation International (Christie, 1998) who consider civil society organisations a third system that

provides a counterbalance to the power of governments (the first system) and industry (second system). Christie (1998: 1) considers non-government advocacy groups play an “extremely important role in international governance, policy formation and programme execution.”

Although politicians, scientists and public servants may share activists’ awareness of environmental issues and solutions, they may be constrained by less latitudes of freedom than activists have to achieve shared goals. Activists often “have the power to reject jobs in which they submit themselves to institutions or to planners with limited ecological perspectives” (Naess, in Drengson and Inoue, 1995: 5). Clearly, this also entails the option to remain unemployed, which is an option also available to scientists, politicians and public servants.

Contrary to the despair about environmental devastation discussed elsewhere in this and other chapters, activists appear to be able to suspend doubts as to whether the world *can* be saved and whether collective action can really make the difference. As a result, activists may be able to sustain their efforts toward a sustainable future consistent with U Thant’s (Meadows et al., 1972: 17) call to action.

### **2.1.2 Theoretical precedents: Uncharted territory?**

This literature review proved a challenging task for several reasons. First, there is a paucity of literature directly relevant to activist education. During early stages in this inquiry, campus-based literature searches found, as Princen and Finger (1994: x) confirm, that while there may be “an abundance of books documenting environmental conditions and prescribing remedies to save the planet, there [is] precious little on the details of what, exactly, key actors, including NGOs [are] doing.” The modest libraries maintained by many

NGOs share this emphasis on the factual and scientific dimension of environmental problems rather than social responses.

Several authors offer explanations for this apparent lack of documentation concerning how the environment movement and individual activists learn to effect change. One such author is Saul Alinsky (1972; 1973) a significant figure in north American social movements who spent decades mentoring and training activists in the peace, student, union and other movements. As an activist and activist educator, Alinsky is remembered for his clear articulation of theoretical frameworks for change. Alinsky's (1972) *Rules for Radicals* and (1973) *Reveille for Radicals* offer detailed accounts of successful campaigns for social and economic justice in the United States between 1900 and 1970. In discussing the strategic choices evident in these campaigns, Alinsky constructs a coherent activist philosophy informed by an astute analysis of power relations and human motivations.

Alinsky considered the lack of an activist literature unremarkable: "All societies discourage and penalize ideas and writings that threaten the ruling status quo. It is understandable, therefore, that the literature of a Have society is a veritable desert whenever we look for writings on social change" (1970: 7). In the same vein, Speeter (1978: 3) comments:

The problem with those of us who have been involved in organizing is we ain't got no culture ... we don't talk about our organizing with each other, we just go on to organize around other issues (confrontational junkies, all). The most dramatic example of this is the lack of real written material on the subject of organizing ... it's virtually impossible to walk into your local library and pick up a book which describes the best tactics to use in winning a rent strike, or discusses ways to stop a nuclear plant or force rich people to pay taxes, even though community organizers have been working in these areas for years.

The literature review presented in Chapters Three and Four suggests that activist literature was more common during the 1970s and has experienced a

decline since that time. Fortunately this inquiry unearthed oases in this desert. Three examples are Runciman et al's (1986) richly detailed analysis of the campaign to save the Franklin River, Green's (1981) activist interviews that explore the same campaign and Hutton and Connors' (1999) history of the Australian environment movement, each of which provide critical accounts of Australian environmental campaigns from the perspectives of prominent participants.

Within environment movement literature, texts focusing specifically on activist education were even more scarce. Arnold, Burke, James, Marton and Thomas (1991) confirm this observation. These authors acquired extensive experience with the Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action in Canada where they developed and facilitated training workshops with activists but observe that educational programs for activists are very seldom documented. They suggest this may reflect a reluctance among social activists to take 'time out', to reflect or think as these pursuits may be seen as a waste of time or a distraction from action (Arnold et al., 1991: 39).

Again, there are notable exceptions to the pattern. In particular, Foley's (2000) theories concerning 'learning in social action' provide insights of direct relevance to this inquiry. Foley (2000: xv) observes that adult education literature has traditionally neglected the learning dimension of social life, including work, family and community, despite the extensive learning gained through these activities. This is explored in Sections 2.3.4 and 2.3.6.

As well as academic and environment movement literature, this thesis has also been informed by biography, autobiography and anecdotes, Internet discussion groups and websites. Indeed, the electronic media that are revolutionising environment movement communication seem to be creating spaces for dialogue which serve to encourage and allow activists to articulate

(in written form) their experiences and to develop theories about social change.

## 2.2 Social movements

The social and political context of environmental activism is a necessary consideration as activists generally act with others and collectively develop and demonstrate particular philosophical orientations toward social change. The definitions of social change and social movements in the previous chapter began to explore this significant aspect of environmental advocacy and its significance to this inquiry.

Environmental activism is often mythologised and misrepresented in the popular media. For instance, environmental advocacy is portrayed as a recent phenomena that emerged in the 1970s and as an individual rather than collective activity. These and other features of environmental activism are discussed in this chapter in order to inform the subsequent examination of activism and learning in specific ENGOs (Chapters Five and Six).

As noted in Section 1.2, the environment movement appears to demand and promote a culture of rugged individualism. Not surprisingly, the image of environmentalists conveyed in the media is often of solitary heroes.<sup>10</sup> Lattimer (1994: 9) perpetuates this impression by alleging that “even the current environmental campaigns, which have redrawn our view of the world in which

---

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, feature articles on Canadian ecologist David Suzuki (*Impulse*, Autumn 1997: 11), prominent environmentalists, Senator Bob Brown (*Green*, Spring 2001: 14-15 and *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, December 8-9, 2001: 22-29), Phillip Toyne and Molly Harris Olson (*The Weekend Australian Magazine*, May 19-20, 2001: 13-20), Judith Wright (*Spectrum*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15/7/00 p.4s) and Swiss rainforest activist Bruno Manser (*The Weekend Australian Magazine*, October 20-21, 2001: 28-33). The fascination with heroics is also evident in the title chosen for a recently-published collection of accounts of toxic campaigns, *Local Heroes: Australian Crusades from the Environmental Frontline*. This title is particularly ironic as my contribution deliberately emphasises collective action and community development.

we live, started in the seventies with little more than a man and a boat.” Contrary to this fascination with modern (male) heroes and heroics, there is ample evidence that contemporary environmental campaigning is influenced by much earlier activist efforts (see Hutton and Connors, 1999) in which women have featured prominently and which has generally been based on collective action requiring strategy and political analysis.

Contrary to the superficial treatment often accorded the environment movement and prominent activists in the popular media and mainstream academic literature that tends to gloss over environmental activism’s origins and complexities, activist groups engaged in critical reflection generate insights useful to the movement. The Comm-Org discussion group,<sup>11</sup> for instance, hosted a discussion during March 2000 to unravel the popular myths surrounding Rosa Parks. Parks is one of the best-remembered activists associated with the Montgomery bus boycott that is considered a turning point in the U.S. civil rights campaign of the 1950s and 1960s. She is often depicted as a seamstress and an ordinary citizen (*Washington Post*, 2000) whose actions and impact were the result of remarkable courage and strength of character. Loeb (2000) observes, “Once we enshrine our heroes on pedestals, it becomes hard for mere mortals to measure up in our eyes”.

With respect to this inquiry, naïve or romantic notions of heroic activists and theatrical campaigns provide minimal access to the understandings necessary to inform effective and efficient strategies and tactics. Loeb and others directly involved with the Montgomery boycott and Martin Luther King’s campaign team (see for instance Moyer, 2001: 120) report that Parks was in fact a seasoned activist with more than a decade’s organising experience. She had attended intensive training programs including a summer school at the Highlander Education and Resource Centre in Tennessee (whose programs

---

11 On-line available <<http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/>>

and philosophy are discussed elsewhere in this chapter). Contrary to the lionisation of social movements and their leaders, a less reverent analysis is essential in order to comprehend how their social action achieves real and lasting change.

### **2.2.1 The environment movement as a social movement**

The international environment movement is perhaps best known for news-grabbing campaigns that involve risk-taking and theatrical interventions. Jacobs (1997: 119) outlines three prominent campaigns. Greenpeace's Brent Spar campaign prevented Royal Dutch Shell from sinking an obsolete oil rig in the North Sea. The European campaign responding to the bovine spongiform encephalopathy crisis harnessed public fears of 'Mad Cow Disease' to compel governments to implement measures to constrain biotechnology. The British anti-motorway direct action campaign stopped the construction of major new motorways and prompted a new national transport policy promoting sustainable transport modes. Recent Queensland campaigns include the environmental campaigns which: (1) blocked construction of a second motorway linking Brisbane and the Gold Coast; (2) led to the passage of the state's first legislation to control land-clearing on freehold land; and (3) contributed to the adoption of the South East Queensland Regional Forest Agreement. Each of these campaigns reflects the articulation of common interests or values and a reaction to prevailing economic and political contexts, attributes generally associated with social movements (Princen and Finger, 1994: 49).

Ecological pressures such as forestry, landclearing and unsustainable transport patterns prompt remarkably diverse perceptions, strategies and issues (Benton, 1997). However, grouping such diverse responses under the 'environment movement' banner results in some confusion, as discussed in Chapter One.

The movement has experienced very rapid growth internationally since the 1960s. The dramatic increases in membership and mobilising capacity are a result, according to Jacobs (1997: 19), of the “deepening anxiety and moral horror at the scale of ecological destruction”. Doyle and McEachern (1998) report that by the early 1980s there were approximately 13,000 ENGOs in the ‘developed countries’ and 2,230 in the developing countries, thirty and sixty percent respectively having formed in the previous decade. As a result, Mellor (1992: 17-18) describes the international environment movement as “burgeoning” and cites the example of Greenpeace which had more than two million members in the early 1990s and Friends of the Earth which comprised organisations in thirty-five countries.

A comparable upsurge in community activism is evident in the distinct but related *civil society* sector. The relationship between this sector or movement and the environment movement is suggested here for two purposes. First, the distinction between the environment and other movements oriented toward objectives that encompass social and economic justice appears much more distinct in Australia than elsewhere. In recent years, Australian environmentalists have increasingly recognised and worked to remedy this isolation. Second, the civil society or *community organiser* movement in the United States appears to offer relevant insights concerning strategies for activist teaching and learning. Activist education traditions in the United States include but are not confined to environmental advocates.

Public participation, as a strategy to promote and create a more sustainable society (Szersnski, 1997: 148) is integral to the eclectic international civil society movement. In the U.S. the movement has a stronger history and is associated with activism (or community organising) to address social justice issues such as housing equity, youth empowerment and migrant workers’ rights.<sup>12</sup> The

---

12 See for instance Comm-Org on-line discussion forum, *Alternatives* journal.

extent of this movement was demonstrated during the Millenium Forum in May 2000 at the United Nations in Washington D.C. that attracted 1,400 representatives of civil society from around the world, united in their commitment to social and economic justice, environment and human rights (Newman, 1999). More recently, 60,000 people participated in the World Social Forum in San Paulo, Brazil.<sup>13</sup> The interests of these diverse groups converge in the notion of *social capital*, which is defined by Cox (1995) as “the processes between people which establish networks, norms, social trust and facilitate cooperation and cooperation for mutual benefit” (see also Putnam, 1995; Newman, 1999: 146). The civil society movement is distinct from civil society generally due to its activist orientation. It is distinct from the environment movement in that its goals, objectives and strategies are not restricted to conservation.<sup>14</sup>

Beck (1998) associates this apparent growth in social movements with social changes associated with *risk society*, a state of social upheaval characterised by political and technological developments which effectively minimise many citizens’ comprehension and potential control of environmentally destructive processes. Beck describes new ‘sub-political’ processes “in which civil society forces - interest groups, social movements and consumer activity - exert influence on and negotiate directly with corporate and administrative institutions” (cited in Jacobs, 1997: 8). Greenpeace’s occupation of the Brent Spar discussed above and similar tactics are described by Beck as a response to a perceived vacuum of power and legitimation. These actions test ‘the system’ in order to establish whether government agencies will act in accordance with their role and responsibility as defined in a democratic society. In an era when corporations are tending towards increased autonomy from

---

13 On-line available <<http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/eng/index.asp>>

14 The Australian civil society movement includes the Robert Theobald-inspired Reworking Tomorrow events and Passion Cafés, on-line networks such as Active (see <http://www.active.org.au>), the Brisbane-based Social Action Office, Community Aid Abroad community campaigner networks and Heart Politics gatherings.

the economic, environmental and social constraints previously imposed by nation states, regulatory or interventionist enforcement is becoming less prevalent.

The role and purpose of social movements have been described by Touraine (1981) as a collective effort to promote a social transition from industrial society towards a 'programmed society'. He suggested this transition entailed a decentralisation of power such that 'the State' is no longer the "all-powerful God it was made out to be" (1981: 10-11). Government, Touraine argued, was susceptible to confrontation by social movements through overtly political struggles.

Whereas Beck relates activists' motivation to increased levels and causes of concern, Doherty (1999: 283) suggests environmental campaigns emerge when "ordinary citizens, sometimes encouraged by leaders, respond to changes in opportunities that lower the cost of collective action, reveal political allies and show where elites and authorities are vulnerable." Doherty suggests factors influencing whether and how campaigns emerge include shifts in ruling alignments, increased access to participation and the availability of powerful allies.

Campaigns and organisations identified with the environment movement are perhaps more notable for their differences than their commonalities. Common traits identified by Friends of the Earth (UK) Director Jonathon Porrit include opportunism, tactical flexibility and lack of ideological baggage (Porrit, 1997:15). Porrit considers these features contribute to the movement's enduring strength. Another common attribute of ENGOs is their very flexible and decentralised organisational pattern (Leirman and Kulich, 1987: 103).

Although common attributes of ENGOs can be identified, there are also

significant differences within the environment movement that have resulted in the emergence of ‘schools’ or ‘tribes’ that exhibit divergent philosophies and strategies. These are variously described as *dark green*, *light green*, *purist*, *accommodationist*, *deep ecologist*, *ecocentric*, *anthropocentric* and *technocentric* (Lai, 1998; Benton, 1997; Fien, 1993b). The divide between environmental activists at the radical and conservative ends of this suggested continuum is more than an academic construct. Just as the Green Party in Germany has historically been divided into *fundes* (fundamentalists) and *realos* (those perceived to have a more ‘realistic’ outlook), Australian environmental groups can be categorised according to their tendencies to accommodate diverse concerns and members (conservation councils and the Australian Conservation Foundation for instance) as opposed to those adhering to radical or fundamental philosophies (such as Friends of the Earth, Resistance and the North East Forest Alliance). There are real tensions between groups as a result of these profound philosophical differences and resultant strategic orientations.

### **2.2.2 Participation in environmental advocacy**

According to Baum, Modra, Bush, Cox, Crooke and Potter (1999: 17), fewer than six percent of Australians regularly participate in campaigns to improve social or environmental conditions. The activist inclination of these people distinguished them from the majority of the community. Factors motivating their participation in environmental advocacy offer a potentially important insight for this inquiry. Theories concerning activist traits and backgrounds may also shed light on the types of teaching and learning likely to be most effective within the movement.

Swiss environmental educator and researcher Finger (1992) conducted over 1000 interviews to identify factors motivating people to act for the

environment. He concluded that five key motivating factors are involved: environmental experiences; experiences of activism; fear of environmental problems; environmental information or knowledge; and environmental values orientation. Finger highlights this final factor by comparing the motivations of deep ecologists and New Age environmentalists to those of management environmentalists, political environmentalists and 'anti-ecologists' whose values orientations are technocentric or careerist.

This and other studies have concluded that many activists are motivated by their childhood experiences of areas of high conservation value and their observation of these and other environments deteriorating (see also Fortino, 1997: 204; Orr, 1992: 88.). Shorter (2000) describes collective action motivated by such experiences as a "defence" response associated with a "sense of community responsibility" when "an injustice has been committed against people/animals/environment and others step in to help." The 'grassroots' (White, 2000) or 'Not In My Back Yard' (NIMBY) response tends to be derided by politicians and activists in state and national environment groups. Their derision is ironic as NIMBYism has arguably been the driving motivation in strikingly successful campaigns including the campaign against the duplication of the Brisbane to Gold Coast motorway through koala habitat that became a key election issue and contributed to the change of Queensland state government (see also Bullard, 2000).

An alternative explanation for activists' motivation is provided by Downtown and Wehr (1997: 5-6). Their interviews with long-term peace activists in Boulder, Colorado, revealed reasons why many remained involved in the peace movement for decades. These included: (1) a desire to serve the public good; (2) the opportunity to express deeply-held beliefs; (3) a sense of solidarity and connection with others of a similar ideological persuasion; (4) the opportunity to be a member of an organisation working for a desirable change; (5) a desire

to develop useful organising skills; (6) response to fear and hope (for example, fear of or an actual ecological disaster could suddenly increase membership) and (7) a reaction to the effective recruitment efforts of movement organisations.

Significantly, Downtown and Wehr (1997) did not find peace activists were strongly motivated by the *actual* success of their groups in promoting peace, countering aggressive military programs or opposing nuclear installations. Research into environmental activists' motivations appears to avoid the vexing question concerning whether or not environmentalists' efforts directly result in their intended conservation outcomes.

Another factor associated with activist motivation is prior activist experience. Melucci (1996: 295-296) asserts that, "The first to rebel are not the most repressed and emarginated of groups" (see also Finger 1992). On the contrary, Melucci argues, individuals already involved in social activism are familiar with the "procedures and methods of struggle", have their own leadership and "some degree of organizational ties", can utilise the "extant communications networks to circulate new messages and passwords" and can readily recognise common interests. This precursor to activism was identified by Baum et al. (1999: 17) whose survey of Australians' participation in civic action identified significantly higher rates of participation by citizens who were already volunteering with social groups and non-government organisations than by non-volunteers. Whereas just 4.2% of survey respondents who were not volunteers in community groups reported an involvement in campaigns, 13.3% (nearly three times as many) respondents who were volunteers in community groups also participated in (activist) campaigns. Similarly volunteers were almost twice as likely as non-volunteers to be involved in political parties and to have contacted a local Member of Parliament.

Fear of environmental problems is discussed in the following chapter. Finger (1992: 94) discusses the relationship between values, information and action and describes three degrees of environmental response: minimal behaviour, limited activism and protest behaviour. Typical explanations offered by respondents in Finger's study who exhibited each degree of response are summarised in the following table.

Minimal behaviour	I do what is expected of me (such as recycling, using public transport, etc). I try to learn more about the environment.
Limited activism	I vote for the ones who are committed to the environment I try to inform others. I sign petitions in favour of environmental protection. I am engaged at a local level for the environment.
Protest behaviour	I am engaged at a local level, opposing projects which destroy the environment. I participate in public manifestations for the environment.

Table 2.1 Degrees of environmental activism (Finger 1992)

Respondents exhibiting the third and most activist type of environmental behaviour were distinguished by Finger (1992) from those demonstrating the prior two types of behaviour in that they commonly had prior experiences of activism. All three groups attributed their behaviour to nature experiences, environmental knowledge, values and fear of environmental problems.

Several other authors discuss the instruction, motivation and inspiration activists receive from mentors. Activists often speak of having been influenced by educators, friends and other activists (Fortino, 1997: 204; Orr, 1992: 88; Thomashow, 1996). The benefits of mentorship and arguments in favour of utilising mentorship relationships as a key activist learning and teaching strategy are discussed in Chapters Three and Seven.

Psychological motivations are often considered integral to understanding activism. However, not all psychological profiles of activists are flattering. Roberts and Kloss (1979: 25) suggest a Freudian analysis of student activism may draw the conclusion that protestors are “acting out unresolved Oedipal complexes, attempting to kill the symbolic father (society)”.<sup>15</sup> Hoffer (cited in Roberts and Kloss 1979: 25) considers commitment to a mass movement that advocates drastic change “symptomatic of fanaticism and self-contempt”. Shorter (2000) considers activism may reflect a need for recognition (“look at me mummy”) or a misplaced sense of responsibility (“I’m not worthy”). However, Roberts and Kloss reject such theories as unjustified generalisations.

One of the most facile theories for the explanation of a personal commitment to a radical social movement revolves around the idea that radicals on the Right and Left are psychologically unbalanced, fanatical or immature. This has sometimes been referred to as the stomachache theory of revolution: men and women with personal unhappiness attempt to share their unhappiness with the rest of the world by destructive or irrational acts. In its most crass form, this *adult hominem* approach would consider all student activists as immature, all right-wingers as sexually frustrated, or all women’s liberationists as lesbians in disguise. (Roberts and Kloss, 1979: 24-25)

Despite the ‘martyr complex’ which is a common phenomenon in activist circles where many people work excessive hours and receive salaries at or below the national poverty line, professional ambition is also suggested as a motivating factor for participation in environmental activism and ENGOs. Bookchin (1982: 15) claims the ‘managerial radical’ evident in the environment movement is not a new phenomenon and derided “swinging jeans-clad high-brow elitists from the middle class” and “opportunistic careerists”. Leirman (1987: 103) observed most western environmental activists are well-educated and middle class, young (twenty-five to thirty-five years old) and work in the ‘non-productive’ sectors of society including education, health, social services. Doyle’s (1986: 30) survey of the Queensland environment movement concluded

---

<sup>15</sup> Shields (1991: 37) offers a humorous theory with a cartoon depicting a young peace protestor holding a banner which reads “I hate my father”.

that most active environmentalists in Queensland during the 1980s shared class and educational backgrounds, as well as traits including introversion, obsessiveness and single-mindedness.

Hutton and Connors (1999: 242) challenge these stereotypes which cast activists as middle-class or careerist and observe that,

in spite of government efforts to commercialise all aspects of social life, some of the highly educated, politically aware, mobile young people who might otherwise earn high salaries in large corporations are drawn to the environment movement, thus ensuring the continuation of conflict.

The 'careerist' tag is also rejected by Fortino (1997: 204) who argues that activists' motivations are attributable to an environmental ethic instilled by a love of nature and the inspiration of mentors, "not careerism or the quest for power".<sup>16</sup> Alinsky (1970: 184) similarly argues activists are more likely to be "radicals and activists who have rejected the values and way of life of the middle class ... as materialistic, decadent, bourgeois, degenerate, imperialistic, brutalized and corrupt." Furthermore, Alinsky (1970: 80-81) suggests that effective activists share characteristics such as curiosity, irreverence, imagination (rather than a deep sense of anger), a sense of humour, a vision of a better world, an organised personality, a strong ego and great communication skills and may be described as a "well-intentioned political schizoid" capable of seeing values and political positions as relative.

Careerism and the professionalisation within the movement are significant issues in this inquiry. Education and training priorities and strategies for recruits and short-term volunteers are likely to be very different to those developed to meet the needs of long-term or professional activists. Both types of participant are significant in the environment movement. This is evident

---

<sup>16</sup> Fortino's notion of 'activist' in this context is less advocacy- or change-oriented than that adopted in this study.

in Snow's (1992a; 1992b) extensive study of North American ENGOs which involved surveying and interviewing movement leaders. The study suggested that the "driving force" of many organisations was equally attributed to "savvy insiders who know how to get things done" and "relentlessly dedicated amateurs" and that the interplay between the two was crucial (Snow, 1992a: 6).

An examination of the backgrounds of environmental advocates and their motivation also reveals interesting gender implications, particularly with respect to the environment movement's leadership. Snow (1992a) found a high proportion of female leaders in campaigns and organisations in the United States oriented toward 'brown issues' including urban pollution, toxics and environmental justice such as the siting of hazardous waste dumps.<sup>17</sup> The Citizen's Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes, for instance, is led by Lois Gibbs, whose campaign to ensure a safer environment for her family ultimately led to the relocation of a community and establishment of national decontamination and compensation regulations (Brower 1990: 93). Snow (1992a: 124) observed that most activists exhibiting spontaneous "unprofessional" leadership in Gibbs' organisation are women. He concluded from his interviews with environmentalists that feminist conservationists are motivated to counter the "machismo attitudes towards nature and toward social issues, even within the movement" (1992: 7). Snow's study further suggested that derogatory and gendered stereotypes of activists were promoted by their adversaries: "long-haired men and short-haired women" (1992a: 11). During the last decade, the coordinators of the grassroots-oriented state conservation councils have generally been women. By contrast, the leadership and campaign staff of the professionalised Australian Conservation Foundation during the 1990s has been predominantly male.

---

17 The significant role of women in anti-pollution or toxic campaigns is also evident in Australia. Most of the delegates and organisers of the OzToxics conferences that brought together hundreds of toxic campaigners in 1996 and 1998 were women.

Possible explanations for non-participation in environmental advocacy may also offer insights pertinent to this inquiry. Although levels of community environmental awareness and concern are generally reported to be high, many people express a sense of fatalism concerning the prospects of remedial action. For instance, a recent study of Australian adolescents' environmental views (McLellan, Bauman, Rissel, and Mayne, 1999) found that as many as a quarter felt that the environment was a 'lost cause'. An alternative explanation for non-participation is offered by Grove-White (1997: 118) who considers many environmentally-concerned people nonetheless feel "alienated from and scornful about the (movement's) discourses and activities".

Scepticism about the potential for change does not, however, appear to necessarily deter movement participation. Peace movement researchers Downtown and Wehr (1997) concluded from their interviews with peace activists that most had a long-term perspective and did not expect immediate (or even medium-term) gratification. Campaign success was not identified as a significant motivating factor for long term participation and commitment by the thirty seasoned activists interviewed by Downtown and Wehr. In fact many commented that success is sometimes only discernable in hindsight, due partly to their apparent failure to achieve immediate outcomes. The peace activists possessed an optimistic outlook and a shared reality in which immediate evidence of success was not the highest priority.

Similar factors may explain the movement participation of environmental activists in Australia. A five year anti-freeway campaign was waged by community and environment groups in the Queensland city of Brisbane. Activists opposed the proposed freeway as it would decimate an inner city park, increase air and noise pollution and generate additional traffic. This campaign utilised a wide range of strategies including research and lobbying, community education and public events, direct action, community arts and

networking. Ultimately, the campaign failed to achieve its primary objective and the freeway was constructed. Interviews with the core activists involved in this campaign (Whelan, 2001a) found they did not feel defeated and were determined to continue their efforts to promote sustainable transport. The campaign had provided participants with many learning opportunities through which they enhanced their social change capabilities and networks.

### **2.3 Environmental Non-government Organisation (ENGO) strategies**

In order to explore *how* and *what* activists learn in order to become effective agents for change, it is important to identify the ‘building blocks’ of social action that are associated with environmental activism. Environmental campaigns reflect striking diversity in their objectives, strategies and tactics, requiring a corresponding range of advocacy skills and capabilities. This section outlines tactics and strategies of environmental organising and advocacy commonly described by social movement theorists. Elsewhere in this study, tactics and strategies derived from interviews with activists and from participant- observation are presented. Whereas the categories discussed in this section are exogenous, having been sourced from academic literature, the studies undertaken during this inquiry generate endogenous categories based on the experience and reflections of Australian environmental advocates.

In order to critically examine the processes utilised by environmental activists to effect change, activist-educator Bill Moyer argues it is essential to clearly differentiate between tactics and strategies. Strategies are long term, multi-faceted and generally incorporate a variety of tactics that are considered appropriate to the context, objectives and available resources. Moyer (1990, 1993) argues that this distinction is infrequently made by activists and that many tend to focus primarily on tactics. As a result, they are less likely to

achieve their goals than activists who develop and implement coherent strategies for change. Environmental advocates may, for instance, make use of regular press releases as a tactic in the confidence that the media will report their criticisms of decision-makers and preferred actions and policies. A more strategic approach may be to research politicians' history of voting on the issue and their prospects of re-election in order to propose solutions which are most likely to gain support and exert pressure where politicians are most vulnerable.

Collective action manifests in many forms of participation, including conventional and unconventional, legal, semi-legal and illegal (Newman, 1999: 166). For instance, activist organisations that cooperate with government and industry (see Section 2.3.4) utilise tactics that require different competencies and learnings to radical 'outsider' groups. Further, environmental groups responding to local pressures and working with local groups generally utilise very different tactics from groups seeking to influence international decisions.

There is considerable convergence between the many available lists of social action strategies and tactics. Bullard (2000), for instance, identifies eight prevalent tactics in the environmental justice movement: government legal action and administrative action, private legal action, demonstrations, petitions and referenda, lobbying, press campaigns and violence (p.38). Sharpe (1985) lists one hundred ideas for action including categories such as protest actions, social actions, boycotts and strikes, non cooperation and obstruction: actions by insiders and outsiders and positive direct action. A similarly extensive list of activist tactics is given by Bobo, Kendall and Max (2001). Their accessible and practical *Organizing for Social Change* serves as the training manual for the Midwest Academy's five day organiser (activist) summer schools that are held in various U.S. locations. The list of activist strategies and tactics provided by Bobo et al. resonates with similar lists given by Lai (1998), Lattimer

(1994), Huckle (1998: 60), Scandrett (1999), Schutt (2001: 136) and Benton (1997: 65). An activist-defined list of strategies is suggested in the proceedings of the 1996 National Environment Movement Training Program. Four representative sets of categories for social action are depicted in the table below.

<b>Lai (1998)</b>	<b>Huckle (1988: 60)</b>	<b>Lattimer (1994: 354)</b>	<b>Dobson (1995)</b>
Alternative policy commentary and advocacy	Links with trade unions	Non cooperation campaign	Direct action
Green opinion formation and representation	Community action	Legal action	Class
Environmental education programs		Public education campaign	Lifestyle
Membership recreational and educational activities	Electoral methods	Corporate campaign	Communities
Lobbying for environmental policy change	Appeal to elites	Government lobbying	Action through and around the legislature
Collation of environmental information			

Table 2.2 Suggested categories for environmental advocacy tactics and strategies

These strategic orientations and preferred tactics of environment groups reflect both explicit and implicit understandings of power and change, as discussed in the following chapter. Strategic decisions such as the adoption of direct action rather than lobbying to impede freeway construction (Whelan, 2001a) are informed by both pragmatic and ideological considerations (Alinsky, 1970; Dobson, 1995). Environmental advocacy groups often adapt or re-orient their strategies during campaigns.

At least six strategies can be identified in the literature and offer an appropriate framework for the ensuing discussion: reformist and electoral strategies, education and direct action, electronic communication and interpersonal or creative strategies.<sup>18</sup> This brief discussion is not intended to encompass the breadth of contemporary environmental advocacy efforts.

### **2.3.1 Reformist strategies: Lobbying, consultation and democratic pragmatism**

The contemporary Australian environment movement relies to a significant extent on direct and indirect involvement in government processes, providing alternative policy commentary, researching and promoting preferred policies then lobbying for their adoption. The Queensland Conservation Council is typical of this pattern, with staff and members representing environmental interests on more than fifty advisory committees convened by various levels of government. Although this strategic orientation is considered effective by many reformist-oriented groups and movement theorists (for instance Benton, 1997: 65), a history of the Australian environment movement by Hutton and Connors (1999) suggests environmental advocates may over-estimate their influence in these consultative processes. Hutton and Connors argue that the time-demanding consultative processes to resolve environmental issues adopted by the Hawke federal government in the mid 1980s, and other governments since has led environmental advocates to forget the potency of direct action and other confrontational strategies. These advocacy groups have increasingly tended to accept the relatively insignificant concessions they achieve through lobbying and consultative practices. In this respect, Hutton (2001: 3) considers these groups exhibit a “naïve faith in parliamentary democracy.”

---

<sup>18</sup> The researcher's experience confirms these six strategies capture much of the work undertaken by regional, state and national environmental advocacy groups in Australia.

Dryzek (1997: 92) describes this campaigning approach as *democratic pragmatism*, an approach which engages participants both within and outside government in:

Committee meetings, legislative debate, hearings, public addresses, legal disputes, rule-making, project development, media investigations and policy implementation and enforcement; it can involve lobbying, arguing, advising, strategizing, bargaining, informing, publishing, exposing, deceiving, image-building, insulting and questioning.

This orientation is reflected in a preference for tactics including letter writing and petitions. Democratic pragmatism is a useful description of the campaigning approach that is currently dominant in state conservation councils and the Australian Conservation Foundation. This approach is *democratic* in that it espouses the rhetoric of both participatory and representative democracy and *pragmatic* in that modifications to environmental regulation and management sought by these organisations can generally be achieved without dramatic social change. The formalised decision-making and electoral processes engaged in by environmental lobbyists appears consistent with a liberal-democratic worldview (Dobson, 1995), rather than an ecocentric worldview or an interest in fundamental social change. Democratic pragmatism reflects a belief that democratic institutions are both able and willing to deliver sustainable outcomes through reform and adaptation. Direct action, by contrast, often reflects a lack of confidence in institutionalised decision-making to achieve sustainability.

A range of alternative expressions to describe this pragmatic approach to advocacy are provided by other social movement theorists. Pluralist democracy (Doyle, 2000: 147) reflects confidence in the capacity of civil society and the free market to deliver sustainable development. Reform environmentalism (Brulle, 2000: 174) rests on science and law to resolve environmental problems.

Reformist strategies are an important element of Princen and Finger's (1994: 4-6) analysis of campaign strategies pursued by international environmental organisations to exert consumer opposition to genetically-engineered crops, resist global economic agreements and press for action to curb international climate change. Greenpeace and other international ENGOs commonly target international treaties and conventions, influence institutions and laws, circulate information on environmental offences, bolster international cooperation to strengthen and enforce environmental agreements and treaties, conduct parallel conferences, gain observer status for official decision-making meetings, and target World Bank activities.

These strategies are rejected by other ENGOs whose political convictions favour participatory rather than representative democracy. Environmentalists engaged in the processes of negotiation and compromise consistent with democratic pragmatism risk alienating their grassroots constituency and the broader community. There is a tendency amongst volunteer, community-based Australian environmental groups to criticise the larger groups for their reformist tendencies. Similar challenges are levelled at international ENGOs whose efforts are described by Chartier and Deléage (1998: 34) as, "lobbying for mutual accord on precise questions between partners who acknowledge that each belongs to the elite charged with the destiny of humanity." This approach stands in sharp contrast to the prevailing claim by many environmental advocates that, as delegates of community-based groups, they can articulate community interests more reliably than government or industry representatives.

Not all ENGOs consider reformist strategies capable of delivering desired outcomes. Coggins (1998: 30-31) observes,

Some environmentalists suspect that the wave of enthusiasm for devolution/collaboration springs more from a desire to defend the

West's peculiar caste systems from the onslaught of modern reality than it is a good faith effort to work out mutual problems... History supports the surmise that collaborationism in at least some cases is an insincere rear-guard holding action.

The limitations of reformist strategies are well illustrated by examining the different relationships between former Commonwealth Environment Minister Robert Hill and groups oriented toward reformist strategies, direct action and hands-on conservation strategies. As Environment Minister, Senator Hill had frequent, well-publicised conflict with lobbyists who sought to influence government decisions through direct action. The Minister effectively split the movement by refusing to negotiate with reformist groups that publicly criticised government decisions. He also discriminated in favour of the hands-on conservation movement, granting them legitimacy, standing and generous funding. Senator Hill considered the Worldwide Fund for Nature and Clean Up Australia “constructive” as they were “prepared to work step by step toward specific objectives” (Brown, 2001). These groups are oriented toward environmental management and their lobbying efforts infrequently include public criticism of government policy. By contrast, he commented that the national environmental advocacy groups Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth, both of which adopt direct action when lobbying fails, were “uncomfortable working cooperatively with government” (Bagnall 2000: 29). The Minister also derided groups that adopted direct action tactics and considered “jumping in front of bulldozers” unnecessary and old-fashioned as “we are all environmentalists now” (Hutton and Connor, 1999: 263-264).

### **2.3.2 Electoral strategies**

Electoral strategies may be considered an extension of this reformist approach. Environmental advocates engaging in electoral strategies generally adopt one of two basic approaches: (1) influencing politicians and policies during election campaigns and (2) engaging directly in electoral processes by standing for

election or affiliating with pro-environment parties such as the Greens and Australian Democrats.

Environmentalists often seek to influence the policies of candidates prior to elections, coerce elected officials to fulfil election promises and promote the electoral prospects of candidates with strongly pro-environmental policies (see for instance, The Wilderness Society, 2001; Crossweller, 2001). Prior to most state and national elections in Australia, state and national ENGOs develop, through extensive consultation within the movement, a set of policy requests (or 'claims') by which to assess the environmental credentials of candidates and parties. On the basis of these surveys, report cards are produced to provide a critical assessment of policies and commitments and pre-election media releases are developed. Many of the demands expressed in this way are endorsed and are adopted by political parties as policy commitments (see Hutton, 2001) but fewer tend to be implemented once candidates gain office.

The environment movement in Europe commonly employs electoral strategies. Prominent environmentalists stand as candidates and there is a blurred distinction between the electoral and advocacy wings of the movement. Australian environmental advocacy groups by contrast are generally careful to maintain their distance from the Australian Greens and Democrats, despite the significant difference between the pro-environmental policies of these parties and the cornucopian ('wise-use') environmental policies of the Labor, Liberal and National parties. Few environment groups openly express a political preference during elections. Most focus instead on 'behind the scenes' policy negotiations to secure specific policy concessions.

Green politics represents a rising and influential phenomenon in many countries (Bahro, 1986) where elected Greens are government ministers, councillors and mayors. The Australian Greens, by contrast, remain a minor

party and generally attract only two to three percent of the primary vote compared to the fifteen percent vote the Green Party attracted in Britain during the 1991 European Parliament election (Mellor, 1992: 19). Despite the Australian Greens' relatively low vote, the party exerts considerable influence during election campaigns through preference negotiations. How-to-vote cards issued by the party direct preferences to other parties and candidates who adopt environmental commitments articulated by the Greens and non-partisan advocacy groups.

### **2.3.3 Education**

Environmental advocacy groups often consider education integral to their change strategies. Educational campaigns target schools, universities, adults and communities to raise environmental awareness through mainstream and alternative media, music, publications and websites. Environmentalists also develop and disseminate educational resources to teachers and students and contribute to the development of environmental curricula. State conservation councils, branches of The Wilderness Society and other environmental groups offer free public-access libraries and operate as clearinghouses for environmental research.

Many environmental organisations conduct consumer education programs and promote sustainable lifestyles (Fien, 2000a; Fien, 1993b: 29; Sterling, 2001; Huckle, 1998; Hoeppe, 1995; Harris, 1997). Prominent examples of consumer education strategies oriented toward radical social change include the international, electronically-organised Buy Nothing Day<sup>19</sup> and Car Free Day.<sup>20</sup> Other consumer education campaigns are oriented toward objectives which may be accommodated within prevailing social norms and behaviours without

---

19 On-line available <<http://www.buynothingday.co.uk/>>, <<http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd>>

20 On-line available <<http://www.ecoplan.org/carfreeday/>>

requiring fundamental social or structural change. For example, Lai (1998: 274) describes the group of people who established a Hong Kong environmental non-government organisation as, “a group of people seeking self-actualisation through a green lifestyle”. The organisation established by these people promoted ‘green consumerism’ through strategies such as minimised packaging. This description is inconsistent with the concept of activism central to this research. A ‘green lifestyle’ reflects an individualistic ideology (Jensen, 1997: 12) and an anthropocentric worldview which reflects concern for individual self-fulfilment rather than for ecosystems, habitat and biodiversity and the health of the biosphere.

Another approach to consumer education is the establishment of enterprises to model aspects of a sustainable economy. In recent years, the Friends of the Earth group in Brisbane established three cooperative enterprises in order to raise funds for their intended advocacy work and to serve an educative function. Reverse Garbage provides art materials sourced from industrial waste products, the Bicycle Revolution sells bicycles made from used parts and provides a self-service bike maintenance workshop and PaperNet provides office paper supplies manufactured from 100% post-consumer pulp. Other environment groups promote ‘green’ or less-intensive agricultural and industrial practices through educational programs targeting industry, and primary producers.

For many groups, however, educational efforts appear a secondary focus and are commonly associated with fundraising and membership activities rather than being considered integral to the achievement of the organisations’ central objectives. Fien (1993b: 20) criticises the environment movement’s trivialisation of environmental education:

Much of the environmental movement’s time and energy is going into attempting to protect threatened bits of the environment. Too little of it is used to promote the transition to a sustainable

society.. If you protect this wild river or that forest, the growth economy will just move on to consume others somewhere else.

Environmental education appears to be afforded a relatively low priority by contemporary Australian environmental activists. The following chapter discusses the significance of environmental education both internally (within the environment movement) and externally (as a strategy for change).

#### 2.3.4 Direct action

Direct action often involves large numbers of people and tactics that are intended to physically stop environmental destruction. Examples of mass direct action outside the environment movement include the people's movements that displaced the Marcos government in the Phillipines and led to the destruction of the Berlin Wall. The history of Australian environmental campaigns is often recounted with emphasis on a long and colourful history of direct action. Cohen's *Greenfire* (1997), for instance, suggests that environmental victories to conserve forests, protect the coastline and promote

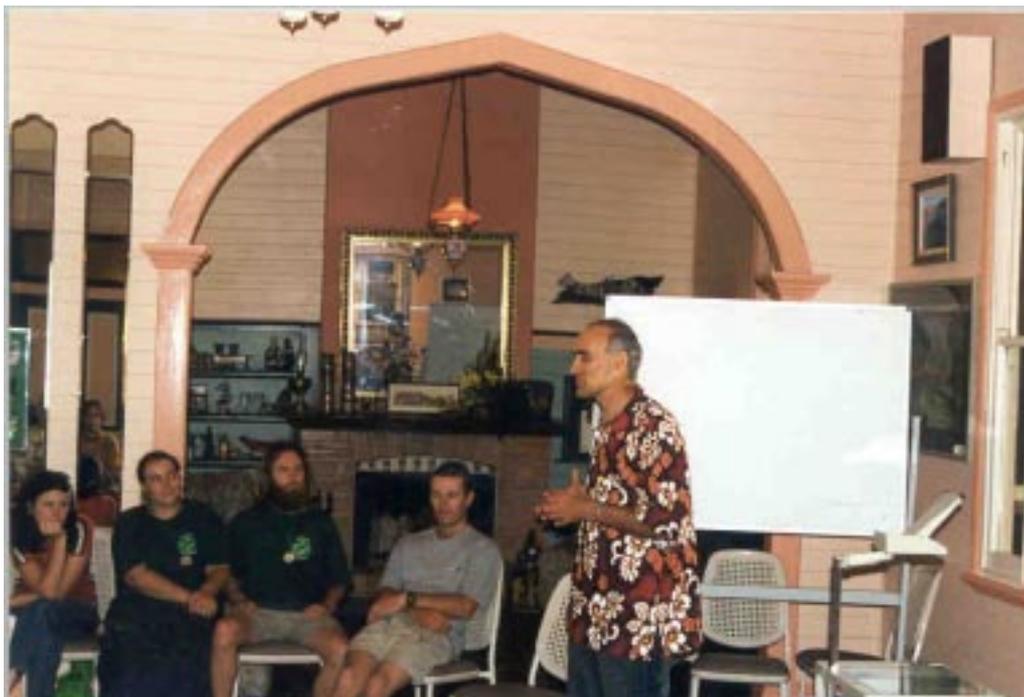


Figure 2.1 Ian Cohen speaking at Gold Coast activist workshop, 2000

disarmament can be attributed to courageous direct intervention by himself and others. *Greenfire* recounts direct action campaigns in the forests of New South Wales, on beaches polluted by sewage outfalls, in threatened Tasmanian wilderness and in the Cape York Daintree rainforest where activists buried themselves up to their necks in the path of oncoming bulldozers to prevent the incursion of a road. Cohen is now a member of the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, having risen to fame through his prominent role in many of these campaigns. A photograph of Cohen on a surfboard riding the bow of a nuclear-armed US warship in Sydney Harbour made peace movement history when it appeared on the front pages of national and international newspapers.

Headline-grabbing stunts remain a favoured strategy through which environmental advocates generate interest in issues. They are often timed to coincide with key decisions or events. For instance, Greenpeace protestors successfully seized the attention of the nation on December 17<sup>th</sup> 2001 by occupying the nuclear reactor in Lucas Heights at a time when the proposed redevelopment of the site was being considered. By penetrating reactor security and flying a light aircraft overhead, Greenpeace successfully demonstrated the risks to local and national security and environment, adding to environmental arguments against the reactor. Earlier in the year, Greenpeace had illegally installed solar panels on the Prime Minister's residence to protest the Commonwealth's lack of action to promote renewable energy or minimise Greenhouse emissions. Other environment groups, including many that have relied on direct action strategies in the past, are generally less inclined than Greenpeace to utilise such tactics.

Direct action is commonly employed by Australian ENGOs as a short-term tactic running parallel to legal strategies and lobbying. Direct action can buy time, enhance media coverage at key campaign moments and generate financial and political support for campaigns. Successful campaigns characterised by

(and publicly associated with) direct action, such as recent British anti-road campaigns and the anti-logging protests in North-East New South Wales forests, generally involve concurrent but less visible strategies that entail legal and administrative processes. It is important to note that direct action rarely achieves campaign objectives, despite the claims of its proponents such as Cohen. For instance, according to Runciman et al. (1986), direct action was not the sole factor responsible for the Federal Government's decision not to dam the Franklin River. Concurrent lobbying, research and electoral strategies were also crucial.

In Australia, direct action appears to have declined since the 1980s as a preferred strategy for environmental change. The relatively large and institutionalised groups rely on government and corporate funding and appear confident of their capacity to effect change through reformist strategies. This confidence is challenged by movement theorists Hutton and Connors (1999), as well as Doyle (2000), who observe that ENGOs have increasingly forgotten "the strategic weapon of traditional adversarial politics, of disengagement and dissent", opting instead for "nice negotiations". Mass mobilisation, in particular, appears to have declined. Compared to the 1970s and 1980s, environment movement rallies during the 1990s were both less frequent and less-well attended. By contrast, the Sea of Hands and Sorry Day events staged by the emerging reconciliation movement were reported as the biggest Australian protests since anti-Vietnam demonstrations thirty years ago.

Obstructionism, eco-terrorism and sabotage (Shorter, 2000; Sharpe, 1985; Road Alert!, 1997; Burrowes, 1996) are relatively uncommon tactics, despite efforts by industry groups and 'environment groups' funded by the timber industry such as the Forest Protection Society to cast environmentalists as dangerous radicals (Beder, 1997; Hagar and Burton, 1999; Burton, 1995, 1996; Megalli and Friedman 1991). The Democratic Socialist Party (DSP) is one of

the few Australian advocacy groups that routinely advocates and organises marches, rallies and occupations of government offices. The DSP is not formally or closely aligned with the environment movement but cooperates with environment groups on a range of issues. It is telling that the DSP and its youth off-shoot Resistance are at times derided by environmentalists who attribute the DSP's lack of apparent political influence to their strategic inertia and lack of creativity.

By contrast, direct action is a dominant strategy of the emergent anti-globalisation movement. In recent years, images of balaclava-clad protestors, baton-wielding police, tear-gas and mass sit-ins have become irrevocably associated with meetings of the World Trade Organisation, World Bank, World Economic Forum and other organisations that shape international trade agreements. An alliance of 450 groups<sup>21</sup> including environmentalists, trade unionists, church groups and community activists organised to disrupt meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington in April 2000 and the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in November 1999. These organisations have successfully mobilised tens of thousands of protestors. A similarly eclectic alliance formed in Melbourne during 2001 to protest during a meeting of the world Economic Forum and again in Brisbane during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in March 2002.

### **2.3.5 Emerging technologies and mass media**

A fifth group of strategies employed by environmental advocates involves emerging technologies that provide opportunities for creative and apparently effective environmentalist tactics. Australian activists including environmentalists were pioneers of the Internet and activists moved more

---

21 Coalition details on-line <<http://www.citizen.org/pctrade/gattwto/shrinksink.htm>>

rapidly than employees in the business and government sectors to embrace electronic communication (Coghlan pers.comm. 12/3/00). As early as 1991, communication within and between branches of the Wilderness Society relied extensively on email. One of the first Australian Internet companies, Pegasus, specifically catered to activists' needs and helped connect Australian environmentalists with global activist and scientific communities.

The highly visible protest action (over 50,000 protestors) triggered by the World Trade Organisation talks in Seattle in November 1999 was fuelled and buttressed by a very high level of global electronic communication. The Independent Media Centre<sup>22</sup> logged two million hits on its website which broadcast first-hand reports from the Seattle protests. The relationship between this protest event and the communication strategies associated with the anti-globalisation movement is of interest to O'Regan (2000) who describes the protesters as, "intricately and tightly linked to one another, much as 'hotlinks' connect their websites on the Internet."

The campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI), a proposed international trade agreement, was primarily internet-based. This campaign generated intense political pressure internationally and forced the abandonment of this proposed trade treaty. Activists involved in other recent anti-corporate or antiglobalisation campaigns have added to the impact of direct action and other established forms of protest by developing a range of on-line tactics which disrupt and disadvantage target corporations and government agencies. During the 2001 Quebec meeting to develop and adopt the North American Free Trade Agreement, digital activists (or 'hacktivists'<sup>23</sup>) collaborated to stage 'virtual sit-ins' of corporate websites in order to disrupt

---

22 On-line available <<http://www.indymedia.org/>>

23 See for instance, BBC documentary 'The Hactivists' screened on ABC 3/5/02 9:50pm which featured the activist organisations Electrohippies, Floodnet and Electronic Civil Disobedience.

business and render the sites inoperable.

Watts (2000) discusses the increasingly significant political role played by the Internet and suggests the speed of Internet communication gives activists an advantage over bureaucracies such as the World Trade Organisation and World Bank, which rely on slower communication and decision-making processes. The apparent advantage that environmental activists have in this respect may become more significant as the World Wide Web assumes an increasingly significant role in public life. In fact, Bagnall (2000: 28) suggests, “There may come a time when decision-making will become virtual too, and the NGOs will discard their placards and their paper chains and their koala suits and conduct all their business in cyberspace.”

White’s (2000) examination of Internet activism raises the possibility that the influence of ecocentric and deep ecology in environmental discourse may lead environmentalists to eschew technology. He suggests conservationists may reject information technology as it is a defining element of consumer society that in turn is identified by some environmentalists as a causal factor for many environmental problems. The proliferation of electronic communications in the Australian environment movement offers no support for this suggestion. An email message distributed by an environmental activist to alert others to a key issue or event is likely to be received by well-connected activists from several sources within hours. Similarly, *What’s New* and *What’s Hot* searches for popular and sophisticated websites will frequently locate the websites of environmental campaign groups like the Rainforest Action Group, Greenpeace and Earth First!.<sup>24</sup> These websites provide a globally accessible and action-oriented face to these campaign organisations.

---

24 On-line available <<http://www.earthfirstjournal.org/>>, <<http://www.ran.org/ran/>>, <<http://www.greenpeace.org/active.org.au>>

### 2.3.6 Interpersonal and creative strategies

The sixth and final category of activist strategies discussed here encompasses interpersonal and creative strategies. While the discussion so far has concentrated on outward action to achieve organisational objectives, activists also develop strategies to support themselves and each other, to work effectively in groups and to build and celebrate an activist culture. Support groups, for instance, offer one useful strategy to help activists withstand the pressures they experience (Downtown and Wehr, 1997). Support groups, accountability groups, activist cells and other similar strategies appear to be much less common in the environment movement than the women's, peace and reconciliation movements. Other interpersonal strategies such as meeting facilitation skills, decision-making processes and conflict resolution are often considered integral to successful campaigning. Given the nature of collective action, activists who develop and practice these social skills are arguably better equipped to lead and mobilise others.



**Figure 2.2** Exhibition of environmental campaign banners,  
National Environment Movement Conference 2001

Festivals, dance and music are also important in building positive identity and cohesion. Visual arts have been a prominent feature of many successful environmental campaigns. Warden (1999) identifies photography as an important aspect of environmental politics and illustrates this point by referring to graphic images that have taken on an iconic status in periods of swaying public opinion.

Particular campaign images remain associated with prominent campaign victories. One notable example is Steve Parish's photograph of Split Rock Bend on the Franklin River which continues to be associated (by activists at least) with the successful campaign to prevent the river being dammed. Recent exhibitions of environmental images and art include "Protest! Environmental activism in NSW 1968-1998" curated at the Justice and Police Museum between December and October 1999 and "Stand Up and Fight! A History of Social Change Over 27 Years (1971-1998)" with photography by John Ellis exhibited at Melbourne Trades Hall in May 1999. These exhibitions documented and celebrated activist campaigns and contributed to the definition of an Australian activist sub-culture. The former also recreated, through installations and artefacts, the atmosphere of forest blockade camps. The identification and celebration of environmental activist cultural identity resonates with efforts within indigenous, Women's, Gay and Lesbian movements. These installations asserted, both visually and textually, that environmental activism is a legitimate and valued aspect of contemporary Australian life in a similar manner to the assertion of cultural identity and pride manifest in the annual Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney.

Street theatre and satire offer another engaging and educational strategy to promote environmental objectives. The Raging Grannies, a theatre troupe of older women, have drawn attention to social and environmental issues in Canada through satire and song (Roy, 2000). Community arts provide other potentially effective strategies through which activists may highlight environmental problems. For example, Brower (1990: 137) describes one environment group's approach to problems associated with consumerism. The group created a 'phantom forest' of 1,800 five-foot stacks of newspapers in a park in Kansas City. Each stack represented a forty-foot pine tree, equal to the timber required to print the city's Sunday newspaper.

Another example of creative expression as a strategy for change and celebration of activism is the annual *Wild Spaces* environment and social justice film festival coordinated by Friends of the Earth which tours Australian cities. Films screened during *Wild Spaces* often depict and celebrate contemporary campaigns.

This brief discussion of environmental advocacy and identification of six apparent strategic orientations depicts a diverse, dynamic and evolving movement. In reality, this diversity is amplified as many groups adopt multiple concurrent tactics. In order to maximise their influence ENGOs often generate creative and novel strategies. Clearly this has implications for the nature of the learning required of effective environmental advocates and for how training and education might best be organised.

The next section provides a discussion of the organisational structures adopted by environmental advocacy groups.

#### **2.4 Social movements: Bureaucracy versus adhocracy**

Just as environmental advocates make use of diverse strategies and tactics, their groups adopt a variety of organisational structures. There is an apparent tension within the environment movement between non-hierarchical or 'grassroots' organisations and those adopting hierarchical and bureaucratic structures. Structure may be seen as an expression of advocacy groups' environmental philosophies. For this and other reasons, organisational structure is likely to be a key factor influencing the focus, form and extent of activist education conducted by ENGOs. It is also an important factor in determining appropriate educational approaches. This section discusses how organisational structure potentially influences the manner in which environment groups approach the challenges of education and training for

advocacy.

The diversity of strategies and tactics favoured by ENGOs reflects a tension within the movement that inevitably influences the organisation of education and training. This tension is best captured in the perennial activist question (O'Connor 1986) concerning whether or not a sustainable society can be brought about through the use of existing state institutions. Some activists doubt whether the entrenched hierarchical structures of government and corporations blamed for environmental destruction can deliver the remedy to crises that are created and perpetuated by these same agencies. Accordingly, activist educators such as Shields (1990: 79) urge ENGOs to “function the way we want the world to be.” Although the activities and structures of some environment groups reflect their commitment to grassroots democracy, collectivism or anarchism, others resemble the corporate entities whose environmental practices activists seek to challenge. The debate concerning the relationship between structures, strategies and objectives of social change groups was clearly articulated three decades ago by Alinsky (1970). He challenged activists who rigidly or ideologically insist upon consistency between means and ends and argued, in effect, that the *ends* of a campaign for social or environmental campaign justify any *means*. Orthodox forms of human organisation may be effective, Alinsky argued, in achieving socially transformative objectives.

In this discussion, the term *bureaucracy* carries political, ideological, strategic, structural, and temporal connotations. Contrary to popular opinion, arrangements and orientations that appear bureaucratic do not, intrinsically, imply a lack of interest in effecting radical social change. Environmentalists may conceivably adopt strategies and structures comparable to the corporate sector in order to undermine and ultimately counteract corporations.

Local, national and international ENGOs display contrasting trends with respect to organisational structure. On the one hand, radical groups such as Friends of the Earth and the North East Forest Alliance and campaigns like Reclaim the Streets adopt structures and activities that seek to embody the social ideals their members associate with an idealised sustainable society. On the other hand, organisations such as Greenpeace, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and (to a lesser extent) state conservation councils resemble government departments or small companies with centralised structures and clearly developed hierarchies. While some environment groups appear to adapt to the mainstream and mirror the structures of the organisations they seek to influence, others are more radical in orientation (Martin, 1982; Doherty, 1999: 278; Newman, 1994). At times these competing discourses coexist within an organisation or campaign and may result in internal conflict. This tension is documented in discussions of both the Franklin River blockade and Terania Creek forest blockade (see for instance Foley, 1991; 1999: 131; Newman, 1994; Runciman et al., 1986).

The contrasting orientations between anarchist or organically structured groups, on one hand, and hierarchical organisations, on the other, are explored in some depth here as this issue appears to hold potential to explain in part the gulf between organisations that provide extensive support and training, and those that leave activists to their own resources.

Lattimer (1994: 9) suggests that “the traditional methods of worker activism - demonstrations and mass actions - have largely given way to a range of *low-intensity* techniques based on research, the use of the media and the legal system and targeted lobbying.” Striking exceptions to Lattimer’s generalisation are not hard to find. Recently, more than one hundred demonstrators were arrested at the Jabiluka blockade for obstructing mining operations. They were mostly young, inexperienced and politically radical, the opposite of the

reformer role Lattimer considers ascendant.

Environmental groups that adopt the structures and organisational philosophies of the corporate world may do so for compelling reasons. One explanation for activists' orientation toward specific organisational structure may be their interest in long-term structural change rather than short term or issue-specific change. Dobson (1995) describes these two orientations as universalistic and particularistic. In some instances, complex and apparently bureaucratic administrative systems are imposed by external funding bodies such as government or philanthropic agencies (Brulle, 2000: 84-87). Many ENGOs are founded by and remain dependent upon external and 'tied' funding. Other emerging ENGOs may reject loose organisational structures in order to assert 'pattern maintenance' in a similar manner to established bureaucracies and perpetuate themselves by exercising control over members. Gamson (1975: 89) contrasts bureaucracies and informal activist networks:

On the one hand we have a nascent organisation without established member commitment or internal control over members. A challenging group starts with no willing agents at its command; at best, it has sympathisers, some fervent and some easily distracted. It faces organised antagonists who possess all the control over members that established bureaucracies possess. The antagonists typically have available to them full-time professionals who can be deployed and redeployed at the will of the organisational hierarchy.

Gamson suggests that challenging groups such as ENGOs can overcome this asymmetry by adapting to the organisational pattern of established groups, adopting their hierarchical arrangements and effectively turning members into agents. Most groups, Gamson (1975) argues, become more bureaucratic over time and are consequently more likely to achieve their long-term objectives.

Clearly defined organisational structure may also help volunteers direct their energy to tasks suited to their abilities and interests. Shorter (2000) suggests

that volunteers who seek to participate in social action through relatively unstructured organisations may spend considerable time contending for positions of power and may fail to find productive occupations and, as a result, participate only intermittently. These concerns were also expressed in an internal 1990s Wilderness Society discussion paper *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*.

Hutton and Connors (1999) discuss the competing trends toward militancy or anarchy on one hand and bureaucracy on the other as reflected in the Australian environment. Their study is of particular relevance to this inquiry as it draws extensively on Queensland and Australian campaigns. The late 1980s Brisbane campaign against a proposed arterial freight route (Route 20), for instance, saw tensions arise when the campaign attracted participants from outside the local community who “brought with them a sense of urgency and an organised approach to gathering information and to mobilising the community” (Hutton and Connors, 1999: 220). The ensuing division within the Citizens Against Route Twenty (CART) coalition resulted in one faction advocating conservative and non-adversarial tactics such as “gathering information and lobbying influential people”, while another emphasised the more radical options of community mobilisation and direct action.

These tensions have also influenced movement development at a national level. Hutton and Connors (1999: 223) describe the political debate within national ENGOs during the 1970s and 1980s.

The major stream wanted a professionalised movement combining mass mobilisations and campaigning with skillful lobbying, so they could become partially institutionalised, as most social movements attempt to do. The minor stream tended to make a more radical analysis of the social changes necessary for an ecologically sustainable society and was sceptical of the ability of parties like the ALP to make difficult decisions on the environment.

This tension also influenced the approach to environmental advocacy adopted

by the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) in the late 1980s when Phillip Toyne replaced long-standing Director Geoff Mosley. This leadership change corresponded to a growing emphasis on a more professional approach to lobbying. Although ACF staff valued Mosley's commitment, encyclopaedic knowledge, thorough research and outstanding policy development work, "his penchant for long, lecturing sessions with politicians and others was felt to be counter-productive" (Hutton and Connors, 1999: 234). Toyne was generally acknowledged to be "a superb negotiator and public advocate with enormous energy and political acumen", the perfect "political carrier" and someone who "possessed the skills to make good connections with those who exercised political power" (p.236). Such personal attributes are shared by many leaders of ENGOs. Toyne, like other effective lobbyists, was able to clearly communicate preferred actions and policies in addition to urging politicians not to pursue a given course of action.

The Australian Women's movement utilised a similar strategy to ACF. From the 1970s to 1990s, feminist activists assumed positions of power. This '*femocrat*' strategy was based on extensive analysis, rigorously evaluated and is widely considered to have successfully promoted and achieved many of the movement's objectives (Newman, 1994: 99-102; Newman, 1999: 151).

Other environmental advocacy organisations experience public scrutiny and criticism from both the general public and the activist community when their pragmatic politics are considered to compromise their autonomy. One established environmental advocacy group attracting this sort of criticism is the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The WWF logo appears on products ranging from biodegradable detergents to children's collectable cards distributed with McDonalds hamburgers. Despite their standing as one of the most influential international ENGOs, WWF has been criticised by many in the environment movement for accepting sponsorship from corporations

such as Rio Tinto whose corporate practices in Papua New Guinea and elsewhere have been associated with human rights and environmental abuses. This kind of pragmatism or compromise is especially condemned by radical environmental groups like Earth First! whose philosophy and strategies assert autonomy from government and corporate funding. Earth First!'s website contains a direct assault on groups such as WWF:

Are you tired of the namby-pamby environmental groups? Are you tired of overpaid corporate environmentalists who suck up to bureaucrats and industry? Have you become disempowered by the reductionist approach of environmental professionals and scientists?<sup>25</sup>

The trend toward mainstreaming or incorporation is also reflected in the decisions by former directors of national ENGOs to work with industry to promote the green credentials of proposed developments. Paul Gilding, former Greenpeace International executive director, now advises businesses through his firm Ecos Corporation. Phillip Toyne, whose career since leaving ACF has shifted in a similar direction, explains this reflects a “growing sophistication amongst the activist community” (Toyne, 1999). By contrast, activists and others may consider Gilding and Toyne motivated by economic self-interest. White (2000), for instance, argues that “important sectors of the environmental movement have become compliant with the corporations and government agencies they should be fighting, absorbed into commercial structures and effectively neutralised.”

‘Mainstreamed’ or coopted environmental groups may superficially appear successful without effecting significant social change. To illustrate, Lai (1998) portrays the decision by key staff in Greenpeace Hong Kong to work as consultants to business groups promoting green consumerism as evidence of their incorporation. He considers the organisation’s personnel more closely

---

25 Earth First! On-line available <<http://www.environweb.org/ef/primer/WhyEF!.html>>

aligned with the liberal right than the left and considers they are more interested in self-actualisation or personal financial gain than in fundamental social change.<sup>26</sup>

Both the United States and Australian environment movement have tended to shift from outsider to insider tactics over time. This trend in the environment movement is described by Snow (1992a: 11) as “successive waves of outsiders moving towards the centre. As they get closer, new waves begin to form on the horizon, and to them, the old outsiders look like insiders” (see also Thiele, 1999; della Porter and Rucht, 2002; Hutton and Connors, 1999).

Several negative consequences are associated with the professionalisation of environmental activists and their organisations. These include cooption (Benton, 1997: 68) and the loss of “the crucial energy of the amateur generalists” (Snow, 1992a: 6). Conversely, incorporation may be seen as a natural stage in the cycle of successful social change campaigns (Princen and Finger, 1994: 50; Moyer, 1990, 1992; Dobson, 1995) and bureaucratisation a natural consequence of longevity.

A significant aspect of ENGOs’ endurance and development of complex administrative arrangements may be their propensity to provide useful teaching and learning opportunities. In the fourth year of the six-year Smogbusters project, a training budget was approved. The Directors of five state conservation councils who made this budget decision agreed unanimously that a high level of expertise was required of project officers and that professional development opportunities were essential. Interestingly, few of these conservation councils have significant training budgets for core staff nor do they routinely audit staff training needs.

---

26 The critique of humanism suggested here is echoed in Newman (1999, 2000) in discussing educational approaches in social movements.

The provision of training may exacerbate or counter the trend toward bureaucratisation (Doherty, 1999: 278). Satirical criticisms of institutionalised ENGOs<sup>27</sup> make a balanced assessment of the merits of alternative organisational structures and philosophies difficult. Bureaucratic ENGOs are criticised on many fronts.

World Environment Day highlights the tension between ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ groups, between those pursuing change through established and sanctioned democratic channels and those expressing dissent in more radical and challenging ways. While many institutionalised groups join with industry and government to celebrate incremental improvements in environmental policy and behaviour, more radical groups rally, boycott, present anti-environmental awards and develop websites exposing ‘greenwash’ and environmental *accommodationism*.<sup>28</sup>

Moyer (1990, 1992; Moyer et al., 2001) suggests that successful campaigns can risk achieving only minor concessions if the fundamental values that motivate the campaign are not maintained. He illustrates this by referring to several advocacy groups whose apparent co-option following initial success effectively neutralised their potency as watchdog or social change organisations. Melucci (1996) tends to agree, and observes that although the institutionalisation of decision-making processes is inevitable and helps dedicate the movement’s resources to the achievement of its goals, this “blunts the movement’s initial conflictual thrust”. Environment groups can further erode the grassroots basis from which they arose by adopting undemocratic decision-making processes that exclude members. Doyle (1986: 27) suggests such processes have been a common feature of the Queensland environment movement, where friendship

---

27 For example, transport campaign journal *Carbusters* (Summer 2000) derides a senior WWF staff member in the U.S. for driving a sports utility vehicle.

28 See <<http://www.cokespotlight.org/>> for an excellent example of on-line consumer activism.

networks, common enemies and factions constitute an ‘adhocracy’. Doyle (1986: 32) suggests this is typical of social movements in western capitalist society that seek to “increasingly formalise relationships so that they reflect the rigid, hierarchical ‘democratic’ mechanisms of the state.”

The limitations of conservative or reformist tendencies are further highlighted by Foley (1999: 111) who suggests the outcomes of this approach to advocacy are likely to fall short of activists’ social change ideals: “History scuttled the optimism of my generation; in time it will show the reformism of the current crop of left-liberals to be similarly illusory.” Bookchin (1982:13) shares this concern, and observed some twenty years ago,

the coming decade may well determine whether the ecology movement will be reduced to a decorative appendage to an inherently diseased society, a society riddled by an unbridled need for control, domination and exploitation of humanity and nature.<sup>29</sup>

Despite these concerns, there is strong evidence that creative, counter-culture and anarchist tendencies are alive and well. Activists are successfully opposing road construction and forest logging through direct actions including tunnelling and occupying trees while their counterparts continue with less immediately effective reformist strategies. City streets are occupied by dance parties, artists and transport activists in regular nonviolent Reclaim the Streets events in many nations.<sup>30</sup> The ‘organised coincidence’ of monthly Critical Mass bike rides<sup>31</sup> in capital cities around the world mobilise tens of thousands through entirely virtual organisation and communication and without formally designated leaders, organisers or roles: “an organised coincidence”. And in many of these locations, activist education appears to be a beneficial factor

---

29 See also Doyle, 1986.

30 On-line available <<http://www.reclaimthestreets.net/>>, <<http://www.urban75.com/rtsfilm/index.html>>

31 On-line available <<http://CriticalMassHub.com/>>, <<http://www.nccnsw.org.au/~cmass/index.shtml>>

in the movement's impact.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a context for the study by briefly identifying ecological pressures and other factors that motivate citizens to participate in collective action and environmental activism. It has also examined a variety of forms and activities through which this collective action is expressed in the contemporary Australian environment movement, ranging from reformist tactics that make use of established administrative procedures, to violent or nonviolent protest action and visual and performing arts. The diversity of strategies and tactics reflects a commensurate diversity in environmental philosophy, social change objectives and available resources. It reflects the divide within the movement between volunteer and professional groups, and may also be influenced by gender. The diversity is likely to warrant an equal breadth in activist education activities to accommodate the range of audiences and their purposes and available resources.

Six categories of environmental advocacy strategies were identified to describe the actions most frequently practiced by the contemporary Australian environment movement. These are drawn from a much more diverse range of advocacy strategies described in social movement literature. Examples of each of these strategies were provided: reformist, electoral and educational strategies, direct action, emerging technologies and mass media, and interpersonal and creative strategies.

Finally, this chapter described the range of structures adopted by environmental advocacy organisations and discussed the possible relationship between these structures, activists' preferred strategies and the corresponding opportunities for and obstacles activist education.

The chapter's main contribution to this thesis is to provide a backdrop against which to consider the approaches to activist education adopted in the two case studies described in Chapters Five and Six. This broader context allows observations made within the two case studies to be generalised to some extent in the subsequent analysis and conclusions. This discussion of the activities of environmental advocates also helps define the potential scope of activist education curricula.

# 3

## **Literature review Educational theory**

### **3.1 Overview**

The literature review in this study is presented in two parts. The previous chapter considered social movements and the contemporary Australian environment movement in particular. It explored activists' motivations, their strategies and tactics, organisational tendencies and achievements. This chapter provides an examination of the learning dimension of environmental activism. Educational theory and practice provide useful insights related to the research questions outlined in Section 1.2. Chapter Three addresses *what* activists might need to learn in order to successfully carry out the strategies described in the previous chapter and achieve their ultimate objectives. This discussion of adult educational ideas and practices also suggests *how* activists

learn and how this learning may be intentionally enhanced.

This chapter situates activist education within discourses that reflect conservative, instrumental, liberal, radical and transformative educational orientations. It examines popular, transformative and environmental adult education traditions and their relevance to activist learning. Educational philosophies and traditions discussed in this chapter provide a framework within which the studies that follow may be subsequently described and examined.

Contemporary activist education is framed in terms of five categories which are developed in Section 3.6. These five categories provide a framework to describe and critique the range of workshops, courses and other training activities observed in the environment movement.

Throughout this chapter, practical examples of activist training activities and programs validate the theoretical discussion. Noteworthy activist educators (Saul Alinsky and Paulo Freire), institutions (Highlander Research and Education Centre) and environmental campaigns (Terania Creek and Franklin River) serve to illustrate how educational discourses, traditions and pedagogies contribute to an understanding of activist learning.

### **3.2 The relationship between adult educators and the environment movement**

Education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no true power potential. Social action without education is a weak statement of pure energy. Deeds uninformed by educated thought can take false directions. When we go into action and confront our adversaries, we must be armed with knowledge as they. Our policies should have the strength of deep analysis beneath them to be able to challenge the clever sophistries of our opponents.

(Dr. Martin Luther King, cited in Shields and Allan, 1997: 1)

The contemporary adult education and environment movements evolved concurrently during the latter part of the twentieth century. Although both movements originated much earlier than their popularisation in the 1970s, their contemporary expression has been defined considerably during the last three decades. The movements share overlapping concerns and ideologies. Both seek to address social and environmental concerns by promoting informed and active citizenry. They are also related in that social action generally entails learning (Newman, 2000). This section explores the historical and contemporary collaboration and cross-fertilisation between adult education and social action. Arguments and evidence that suggests a synergistic relationship between adult education and social movements are used to introduce a discussion of the relationship between the Australian environment movement and adult and popular educators. This section also addresses factors which potentially separate or alienate environmental activists and adult educators.

Partnerships between educators and activists who are interested in compatible social changes offer mutual benefits. For example, by working with adult educators, activists can enhance their understanding of adult learning principles and practices, acquire new skills and networks and collaborate with professionals who are equipped with relevant skills and resources. Conversely, by collaborating with activists, adult educators can direct their knowledge, skills, resources and networks toward achieving change at a societal rather than strictly individual level. They can integrate their efforts with broader movements for change and collaborate in political action to effect positive social change such as the adoption of more environmentally sustainable lifestyles.

These potential benefits are discussed in academic literature (Newman, 1999; Stoecker, 1997). However, as Foley (1999: 134) notes, relationships between

adult education and social movements are less frequently explored by activists:

Most participants in the discussion have generally written from the perspective of the adult education theorist or professional, rather than from the perspective of social movement actors or a broader social interest.

In this respect, this inquiry addresses a significant gap in the available literature. This literature review seeks to address this problem by critically analysing adult literature literature from an environmental activist perspective.

Adult education remains an under-theorised field (Foley, 1995: 5) and there is a paucity of work within this limited literature that deals directly with activism. As a result, it was necessary in the literature review that follows to make a number of generalisations about activist education based on relevant adult education principles and research.

There appear to be at least three types of explanation given by theorists who describe or advocate a divide between adult education and social movements. These explanations can be simplified to suggest educators *should not, can not or do not* contribute significantly to social change movements. The first suggestion rests on the observation that social change is not core business for educators or their institutions. The second suggests educators acknowledge the limitations of their profession. Thirdly, educators are considered to voluntarily stop short of contributing to social change efforts due to apathy, conservative values or ignorance.

Educators are often discouraged from engaging in social activism. Some educational theorists provide cautionary advice, warning educators to refrain from getting involved. Just as researchers are advised to investigate topics of interest without intentionally facilitating change (see Section 4.2.1), Kulich (1987: 174) urges educational researchers to, “remain independent and separate

from any direct responsibility to society (in order to) truly serve society through critical appraisal and diagnosis of its failings.”

Educators including environmental educators often strive to enhance learners’ awareness of social and environmental issues and to promote attitudes and behaviours considered socially and environmentally responsible. This proactive stance generally falls short, however, of either advocating or engaging in social action. According to Sutton (1989: 7),

Although educators may feel left out of the political action, their role is to enable others to call for action... If we are not satisfied with these limited functions of environmental education, we can ourselves take political action with other members of society.

This differentiation between activism and formal or institutionalised education is maintained structurally and culturally. Educational institutions are often state-funded and inextricably bound by and to prevailing political norms. Hamilton (1992: 24) goes so far as to say that,

It is the role of formal education in most societies to maintain the societal status quo. Social change denotes transformation. Formal educational systems do not usually initiate social change, but are called upon to assist in accommodating social changes incorporated into society.

NGOs, by contrast, challenge and subvert these norms. Although the democratic values of adult education suggest a synergy with environmental and other social justice movements, Heaney (2000: 4) considers this theoretical commitment by adult educators glosses over their profession’s tendency to replicate the “structures and values of a culture which privileges the practices of an educated elite over the ‘grass-roots’ and academically untrained educators of adults.”

The divide between educators and social activists is exacerbated by contemporary trends that include the professionalisation of adult education

and the ‘commodification’ of education both through funding constraints and through the competency movement (discussed elsewhere in this chapter). Newman (1999: 87-88) contends that these trends effectively neutralise adult education as a social movement.

The gap between educators and activists is also explained by differentiating between their respective strengths and roles. Although these two groups of professionals can learn from each other and potentially complement each other’s efforts, they are involved in distinct pursuits, draw on different skills and work toward different goals. In this respect, Heaney (2000: 11) observes,

Most front line activists are too committed to local struggles, too preoccupied with the high energy cost of organizing and educating to divert time to ‘dialogue’ on what might ultimately be an academic issue. The sense of alienation which academics sometimes experience as a result of professionalization and isolation within the ivory tower is simply not experienced at the ‘grass-roots’. At the base, a different set of problems are experienced – problems which academics, by reason of their training, are not able to solve.

Similarly, Gronemeyer (1987: 73-74) speaks of the growing respect and modesty of environmental adult educators towards the environment movement:

Environmental education indicates or delineates a *learning* field whereas the environment movement delineates an *action* field ... Ecopedagogy is interested primarily in the politically acting subject whereas the ecological movement is interested in the learning subject - both fail in realizing both [emphasis added].

The distinct roles of educators and activists suggested by Gronemeyer (1987) potentially complement each other. According to Wehr (1987: 93), schools and universities can assist social change movements by producing and transmitting knowledge that is useful to the advancement of social change agendas and by helping prepare adults for active participation in community life and social action.

Notwithstanding the factors that suggest the interests and motivations of

the environment movement and adult educators are quite different, this literature review revealed a complex relationship between these two sectors. The relationship is significant to this inquiry as it presents opportunities for collaboration and synergy between these communities of practice, and strategies to enhance activist education.

The emergence and expansion of radical educational philosophies that promote democratic ideals and student participation in political action reflects the influence of political events such as the 1968 student protests in Europe (Kulich and Leirman, 1987: 8), political activism and counter-cultures (Finger, n.d.). Radical educational ideas and practices which have developed in recent decades, such as emancipatory pedagogy and conscientisation (discussed elsewhere in this chapter), can be linked to the social movements of unionists, environmentalists and civil libertarians. The relationship is dialectic in nature. By this, I mean that changes advocated and achieved by social movements create opportunities and demand for educational innovation. At the same time, educational practices respond and contribute to emerging social and environmental concern and are influenced by landmark reports such as the Club of Rome's (1970) *Limits to Growth* and *Agenda 21* (UNCED, 1992) which emerged from the Rio Earth Summit.

Adult educators are considered to have contributed to the growth and transformation of civil society in the West during recent decades (Newman, 1999: 151). This contribution takes many forms and includes adult educators' participation in and contribution to social groups and NGOs. Less frequently, adult educators make a strategic contribution to social movements as professionals. The North American Alliance for Popular and Adult Education's Environmental Popular and Adult Education program provides a useful model of such collaboration. Clover (1996: 105) describes the intention of this program to,

introduce the practices and philosophies of environmental popular education into the environmental movement in order to help strengthen the educational component of the work and raise awareness within the global adult education movement of the link between ecological and social issues.

In Australia, a relationship of this nature appears to have evolved between several environmental advocacy groups and adult and popular educators associated with the University of Technology, Sydney. Academic Mike Newman was a trainer in the union movement and facilitated the annual Organising Works program with union organisers (Newman, 1994: 9-10). Another academic at this institution, Griff Foley, has made a significant contribution to building linkages between social movements and educational theorists. Foley's case studies of social activism including the 1980s Terania Creek rainforest campaign (Foley, 1991) reflect his grasp of movement dynamics and strategies while remaining solidly focused on the educational dimension of social action. Rick Flowers, director of the UTS Centre for Popular Education, has built extensive networks with social movements. His postgraduate programs and the biennial Education and Social Action conferences bring together activists including feminists, community cultural workers, migrant worker advocates and environmentalists to share and develop informed theory and practice.

The UTS conferences appear to provide the catalyst for dynamic interaction between activists and academics and between activists in different movements who might not otherwise communicate or collaborate. Karen Alexander, a seasoned environmental activist who has played a key movement role since the Franklin campaign, during which she coordinated activist training, commented on these UTS conferences, "I can't believe it has taken twenty years to bring the academy and the movement together" (K.Alexander, pers.comm. 5/12/00). This and similar comments during the conference testify to the excitement generated by UTS' efforts to build constructive relationships with social activist organisations.

The objectives and outcomes of the UTS conferences adhere to Newman's advice (1999: 138) that educators should instigate teaching and learning events to,

bring the members of different social movements together in order to identify and analyse their particular interests and to develop strategies for working together to achieve those interests they hold in common.

The interactions between UTS academics and environmental activists present opportunities for a synergistic relationship. This potential was realised when Flowers joined environment movement veteran Linda Parlane to conduct a six-month training and capacity-building consultancy with state and national ENGOs in 1999. Their on-line dialogue with Australian environmentalists was based around four activist education topics and generated approximately 120 postings from more than forty contributors. These active contributors included key Australian activists and activist educators from Australia, New Zealand and the United States. The on-line, face to face and telephone dialogue generated by this project provided an opportunity for activists to reflect on learning opportunities inherent in their campaigning and to consider the educational needs of their organisations. Toward the end of the project, Flowers, Parlane and Newman led the Mittagong Forum in December 1999 with delegates of state and national ENGOs, introducing them to relevant educational ideas (many of which are considered in this chapter).

The example of UTS illustrates how educational theory and practice can illuminate environment movement practice in ways that are significant to this inquiry. Collaboration between educators and activists also appears to be an integral objective of the Australian EcoPolitics conferences held every year or two during the 1980s and 1990s. Although Ecopolitics strives to bring activists and academics together, it has not achieved this objective to a significant extent (B.Burton, pers.comm. 10/5/01).

The remainder of this chapter examines educational discourses and practices relevant to environmental activism to suggest both *what* activists might learn in order to more effectively achieve their objectives and *how* the learning might occur. The discussion also addresses the philosophical basis of alternative approaches to activist education.

### **3.3 Educational discourses related to environmental activism**

Despite the relatively recent emergence of adult education theory, clearly defined discourses can be identified. Three distinct educational discourses are defined in this section: technical, liberal and radical. Together, these discourses or orientations provide a philosophical framework for the subsequent consideration of educational practices within the environment movement.

Educational theorists examine the goals, values and beliefs motivating education providers, consumers and other participants to identify and discuss a range of discourses. Contemporary education theorists appear to use the expression *discourse* more frequently than *orientation*. Both expressions suggest distinct educational theories and practices and the education philosophies informing them (Kemmis, Cole and Suggett, 1983). In this literature review, the expressions are used interchangeably. According to Newman (1994: 118), the notion of discourse suggests,

more than a set of statements. It consists of the meanings and social relationships embodied in the statements, and of the values, assumptions, and taken-for-granted knowledge that underlie the statements ... discourse is also defined by what is left unsaid and what is not challenged by people making or accepting the statements.

Practices informed by different educational discourses may be distinguished by the way problems are posed and addressed, by educational design (Mezirow,

1983), and by how participants “act, learn and generate knowledge” (Newman, 1994: 98).

Three discourses - technical, liberal and radical - encompass educational practices relevant to this study. The following table contrasts the terminology used to distinguish between educational discourses by several theorists. Descriptors used to describe similar or compatible educational orientations are aligned horizontally.

<b>Arnold et al. (1991)</b>	<b>Habermas (1972)</b>	<b>Mezirow (1983)</b>	<b>Lawson (1989)</b>	<b>Finger (n.d.)</b>
Conservative	Instrumental	Technical		
Liberal	Interpretive / Communicative	Social interaction	Andragogy  Recurrent education	Andragogy  Lifelong education
Transformative	Critical / Emancipatory	Perspective transformation	Radical	

Table 3.1 A comparison of five educational orientations

### **3.3.1 Technical discourse**

The technical or instrumental discourse in adult education has arguably dominated other discourses. Educational practices consistent with this discourse seek to equip individuals for their working lives by imparting skills and knowledge consistent with prevailing social forms and functions. On one hand, this orientation provides both individual and collective benefits by providing transferable skills, allowing individuals to secure satisfying employment and achieve social mobility.

The competency movement (Mayer, 1992; Collins, 1993; AEC, 1992; Chappell,

Gonczi and Hager, 1995), a key national trend in adult education during the last two decades, is consistent with this discourse. Competency-based training is promoted as a strategy to simultaneously meet the aspirations of workers and employers. This manifestation of a technical discourse in adult education has been criticised on various fronts. For instance, Newman (1994: 114-115) asserts that the competency movement turns “activities of the intellect into utilitarian competencies”, treats individuals as “clusters of functions” and consequently represents “a discourse of mediocrity, conformity and control.” He considers this orientation discourages both educators and learners from attending to higher order cognitive processes and values. The emphasis on the acquisition of narrowly-defined utilitarian skills also influences the role of adult educators. In particular, pedagogies associated with the competency movement often involve educators transmitting information and performing technical tasks. This aspect of competency-based education is considered by some critics (Newman, 1994: 122; Chappell et al., 2000: 192) to contribute to a ‘de-skilling’ of adult educators and to prioritise individual over group or social learning outcomes.

The educational terminology associated with the technical discourse reveals the values and motivations of educators and their practices. Adult educators espousing “human resource development” and “economic rationalism” frame their work in terms such as “strategic plans and targeting techniques ... franchising and credit transfers... twilight shifts and accelerated degrees” (Thompson, 1993: 234). This language appears inconsistent with the environment movement’s interest in collective action, resistance, renewal and sustainability. The visions of sustainability promoted by environmental advocates tend to involve values such as cooperation and collectivism rather than individualism and competition which are integral to the technical discourse.

A technical discourse is also suggested by the dominant relationship between education and the State. As an instrument of political influence exercised by government, institutionalised education plays an important role in social selection, hegemony and control. Contrary to the socially progressive objectives espoused by many educational institutions, there is a well-established body of opinion that schools actually function to assign individuals to unequal economic positions and maintain social inequalities (Rubensen, 1982: 59; Apple, 1979; Angus, 1986b). Schools and other educational institutions are considered an “integral component of the cultural, political, and economic institutions of the larger society” (Apple and Beyer, 1988: 4). As such, they tend to reflect and potentially perpetuate the gender, race and class inequities evident in society.

Adult education aligned with this discourse encourages learners to conform to mainstream roles and expectations, prepares ‘good’ citizens, selects the best and brightest, develops the potential for leadership and validates the privileges of an educated elite (Heaney, 2000: 2). The technical educational orientation is also associated with control and manipulation of the social and natural environment (Mezirow, 1983), and may be considered to contribute to the very impacts environmentalists seek to counter.

### **3.3.2 Liberal discourse**

The discourse identified in Table 3.1 as liberal (or humanist or interpretive) is associated by the identified theorists with educational practices that promote personal growth and development, individual autonomy and personal fulfilment. Educational practices associated with this orientation also emphasise communication, interaction and relationships.

Contrary to the technical educational discourse, a liberal orientation advocates an anti-authoritarian stance concerning the construction of knowledge.

Learners are encouraged to engage in criticism and the development of new ideas (Lawson, 1989: 307). This discourse does not cast educators as the primary source of knowledge or authority. Educators motivated by a liberal orientation are disinclined to transmit information or to emphasise knowledge purely for its utilitarian value, as is the case with professional development consistent with a technical discourse.

Humanist ideals create an interesting tension in this inquiry. Although activists share other learners' and educators' interests in autonomy, fulfilment and personal development, their primary motivation is to effect social change. The immediate beneficiaries of activist education may be the individual participants, but approaches that fail to translate personal development into action that engenders broader community change objectives might be described as self-indulgent or naïve. By way of illustration, Friends of the Earth activists acknowledged *they* were the key beneficiaries of their organisation's educational work and that the benefits of personal growth did not always translate into meaningful social action (FoE, pers.comm. 12/11/01). They articulated a range of positive personal growth outcomes which resulted from their collaborative group learning approach and acknowledged they had made minimal progress toward achieving their desired social objectives.

Newman (1994: 19-20) questions the faith which seems implicit in this orientation that personal growth will result in both admirable individuals and equitable societies. This is a relevant consideration in this discussion of environmental activism. The promotion of personal growth or self-actualisation may run directly counter to the achievement of sustainability. New Age environmentalism, for instance, emphasises self-actualisation, wholistic health and healing. Significant and arguably unsustainable industries are built on furnishing the consumer items including clothing, incense, health products, household appliances and international travel that appear to be

indispensable New Age consumables. More significantly, Newman (1994: 164) asserts that humanist educators are idealistic, detached from or ignorant of power struggles, and have trouble taking sides.

We and our learners must always keep in mind that it is *the enemy* - the polluters, the despoilers, the corrupt and the corruptors, the bigots and the racists - who should change.

Despite the hyperbolic nature of Newman's criticism, such criticisms of humanist education approaches (such as Finger and Asún, 2001; Foley, 2001: 28) have significant implications for the following discussion of activist education in the Australian environment movement.

### **3.3.3 Radical discourse**

Radical educational discourse represents a reaction to technocracy (Finger, n.d.) and an interest in the promotion of an enlightened citizenry through heightened awareness of political interests and structures. Marxism, socialism, anarchism and other Leftist ideologies have shaped and are expressed by this educational discourse (Hamilton, 1992). The empowering, critical and emancipatory objectives of radical education promote the liberation or transformation of both individuals and societies.

The educational discourse described as radical, empowering or critical appears most immediately relevant to a discussion of activist learning for two reasons. Firstly, radical education is described as a significant social movement with similar goals to the environment movement. Secondly, adult education literature suggests practitioners operating within this tradition have had a more direct and influential relationship with social movements than those aligned with either technical or liberal discourses.

The radical adult education discourse or orientation is particularly expressed

in popular education practices and ideas that are discussed in Section 3.5.3.

### **3.3.4 Conclusion**

These three discourses do not by any means encompass the full spectrum of educational practice. Nor can educational traditions and practices be conveniently pigeon-holed according to these three identified discourses. Community development approaches to education, for instance, may be considered either liberal or radical. Contemporary educational orientations informed by postmodern theories of the decentred self and power may be similarly associated with liberal or humanist discursive traditions, or may be seen to represent an emerging (fourth) discourse. Nonetheless, technical, humanist and radical educational orientations provide a helpful framework for the following discussion.

The educational discourses discussed above, and the traditions associated with them that are explored in the following sections, provide a framework and language crucial to the inquiry. This framework informs the description and critique of activist learning activities observed during this inquiry's two studies (Chapters Five and Six) and the recommended strategies for enhancing activist learning programs and activities in the environment movement (Chapter Seven).

## **3.4 Learning through social action: Informal, nonformal and incidental learning**

It can be argued that our schools and universities do more harm than good, that is, they turn more people off learning, inquiry, books, ideas, thinking, etc, than they turn on to these pursuits.

(Trainer, 1990: 106)

Educational research often concentrates on institutionalised education.

However, for reasons suggested in this opening quotation, institutions may not provide ideal conditions for activist learning. Similarly, educational literature tends to dwell on formal education that is shaped by predetermined objectives and procedures and a clear delineation of educators' and learners' roles. This study suggests formal education provides an inadequate foundation upon which to base a theory and practice of activist learning. Formal education offers appropriate strategies to address only a limited range of activist education. By contrast, the notion of learning through social action (Foley, 1999; Newman, 2000) provides a more appropriately action-oriented and inclusive framework.

An inclusive definition of adult education is required in order to capture the range of learning processes, contexts and intentions addressed in this inquiry. The Tbilisi Declaration (UNESCO-UNEP, 1978; Tight, 1983: 43) offers an appropriate definition, suggesting that adult education “denotes the entire body of organised educational processes whatever the content, level and method, whether formal or otherwise”. Another framework for adult learning which appears particularly well-suited to the purposes of this inquiry is depicted in the figure below.

<b>Incidental learning</b>	<b>Informal education</b>
<b>Informal learning</b>	<b>Formal education</b>

**Figure 3.1** Four forms of learning associated with social action  
(Newman 2000: 267-268)

The four forms of learning identified in this figure may be considered to encompass the full range of potential activist education activities and to provide a framework within which these activities can be distinguished and organised. Informal education is organised, but generally reflects a semi-structured or unstructured format and is not generally accredited. Informal learning activities are likely to be sporadic and participant-directed. Examples in this study include one-day activist workshops. This type of learning is also informed by media and the communication strategies of pressure groups (Sutton, 1989: 96-97).

Informal learning bridges the gap between informal education and incidental learning. It is intentional, motivated by individuals' recognition of the learning potential of a situation or activity and their conscious decision to learn from experience (Newman, 2000: 268). Informal learning may be unplanned, irregular and unstructured. Examples include the journal I maintained during my early years of activism (described in Chapter One) and the monthly campaign meetings of the Queensland Conservation Council. Activists participating in these meetings engage in isolated campaigns, but share learnings of mutual relevance. Similarly, Wilderness Society activists in New South Wales routinely conduct a participatory evaluation of significant events, inviting the reflections of all participants.

Incidental learning is a natural consequence of adult life or, as Foley (1998: 146) remarks, "All social life has a learning dimension". The significance of incidental learning tends to be negated by professionals aligned with formal and institutional education. Illich (1971: 20) suggests educators overestimate the significance of their teaching and that, "most people acquire most of their knowledge outside school". Incidental learning may also be devalued by social movements due to their prevailing focus on external rather than internal (group or individual) action and change. Reflection is integral to incidental learning

according to Newman (2000: 267) who states that, “It may only be in hindsight that we recognise the learning has taken place.” Chapters Five and Six consider the extent to which activists reflect on what they have learnt through social action (see also Whelan, 2001a).

The case studies conducted during this inquiry provide evidence that each of these four types of learning contribute to effective activism and that frameworks such as Newman’s (Figure 3.1) provide a useful tool to analyse and develop learning opportunities for activists.

### **3.5 Adult education traditions relevant to environmental activism**

This section describes traditions in adult education relevant to this inquiry including andragogy, popular and transformative education, and environmental adult education. Whereas the three discourses discussed above provide a suitable philosophical framework within which to situate activist education, the educational traditions discussed here further develop this contextual framework by illustrating the practical implications of educational philosophy in terms of both pedagogy and practice. These traditions suggest factors that may influence how activists and activist educators approach and perceive learning and present options for consideration by environmental advocacy organisations that seek to develop education and training programs.

#### **3.5.1 Andragogy: Helping adults learn**

We know more about how animals learn than about how children learn. And we know more about how children learn than about how adults learn.

(Knowles, 1984: 11)

The author of this indictment on adult education, Malcolm Knowles, is widely associated with the development and promulgation of a theory of adult

education known as andragogy. This model of adult education is described here in order to identify its relevance and potential contribution to activist education.

Adult education is considered a relatively new field of educational theory (Tight, 1983, Knowles, 1984). A significant contributor to this field, prominent American adult education theorist Malcolm Knowles, popularised the term ‘andragogy’ to differentiate the “art and science of helping adults learn” from “the art and science of teaching children” (Tight, 1983:52). Knowles argued that contemporary educational practices were informed primarily by nineteenth century European monastic and cathedral schools where young boys were taught basic skills (Knowles, 1984:52). Andragogy, by contrast, introduced a model for adult education which was based on contemporary understandings of adult learning.

The influence of andragogy is reflected in contemporary theories and practices in adult education and other social changes. For instance, androgagy emphasises the development of informed and autonomous citizens, consistent with the interests of the civil society and anti-globalisation movements. According to Ten Have, andragogy promotes the “general education of the whole person”, a process he refers to as *vorming* (Ten Have, in Leirman and Kulich, 1987: 5).

The literature on andragogy delineates a set of assumptions that challenge the notion that adults learn in the same way as children. First, proponents of andragogy observe that adults tend to participate in education or learning voluntarily (Knowles, 1984; Brookfield, 1985: 48) as they are motivated by needs and circumstances. They consider adults can recognise their own learning needs and organise their learning around specific problems or challenges. Internal pressures such as the desire for increased job satisfaction,

self-esteem or quality of life are likely to be more motivating to adult learners than external factors such as authority which are commonly used to motivate or coerce children's participation.

Second, adults' approaches to learning are assumed to be influenced by self-concept. Andragogy is based on the assumption that adults consider themselves responsible for their lives, decisions and actions. Accordingly, they are inclined to prefer, insist upon and be capable of learning approaches based on self-direction rather than those involving the imposition of an educator's will. According to Tight (1983: 60), adults are likely to react negatively to being denied autonomy and self-direction in a learning situation. The rigidity of institutionalised education has been considered non-conducive to adult learning by adult educators since at least Lindeman, a key proponent of popular education, argued that adults' intellectual aspirations are unlikely to be "aroused by the rigid, uncompromising requirements of authoritative, conventionalized institutions of learning" (Lindeman, 1926, cited in Knowles, 1984: 160).

A third assumption of andragogy pertains to adult learners' experience. Adults bring extensive prior knowledge and experience to learning situations and can generally be presumed to have accumulated more extensive and diverse experiences than children. Accordingly, learners' experience should be considered an equally significant source of knowledge and insight as the educators' experience (Knowles, 1984: 166).

These factors suggest a pedagogy of adult learning in sharp contrast to prevailing practices of youth education. Brundage (1980: 25) considers adults are most likely to "learn best in situations which provide trusting relationships, opportunities for interaction, novel information presented through a variety of sensory modes and experiences [and] through effective two-way

communication”. These assumptions also suggest that adult learners are likely to value collaboration, processes that involve reflection on personal experience to solve problems (Smith, 1984) and approaches that promote respect and self-worth (Brookfield, 1985: 48).

The assumptions about adult learners and adult learning associated with andragogy appear to inform progressive contemporary educational practices with both adults and children. In fact, western educational practices involving both adults and children increasingly depart from the traditions rejected by andragogic theorists: traditions that emphasised enlightened experts, passive learners and the mechanical transmission of knowledge from the former to the latter. In Queensland, for instance, teacher professional development and curricula such as the Queensland Studies of Society and Environment tend to promote participatory, negotiated and learner-centred pedagogies.

### **3.5.2 Transformative learning**

An adult person has to digest accumulated experiences, information and knowledge in order to leave the immature state comparable to a fly's adulthood. Many people remain maggots, growing larger, richer and more powerful without an accompanying evolution in wisdom.

(Suzuki, 1987: preface)

The educational discourse identified in Table 3.1 as radical, critical or emancipatory is often expressed by adult educators as an interest in ‘perspective transformation’ (Mezirow, 1983; Brookfield, 1985; Rylatt, 1994; Hamilton, 1992; Arnold et al., 1991; Mayo, 1999; Murphy, 1999; O’Sullivan, 1999). Whereas daily life may be considered essentially “a stream of consciousness [and] ... habits” (Jensen and Schnack, 1994: 185), the educational strategies associated with perspective transformation are considered conducive to a heightened sense of awareness of social problems, the “contradictions which lie behind the veneer created by the dominant, hegemonic discourse” (Mayo, 1999: 24-25) and of possibilities for change and agency. Proponents of this educational

approach suggest that by gaining experience and new understandings, learners can transform their perspective to comprehend contradictions inherent in society and to discover opportunities for collective action.

Transformative learning has been described in terms of a movement or progression between three 'life-worlds' (Leirman and Kulich, 1987: 107): the self-evident, the threatened and the critical life-worlds. In shifting from a self-evident to a threatened life-world, individuals develop a sense of dissatisfaction with the (social) status quo. This is described by Brookfield (1987: 26-27) as "a sense of inner discomfort or complexity". The subsequent progression to a critical life-world entails the development of clear visions of the future, knowledge and self-awareness. Importantly, individuals responding to aspects of a critical life-world also develop confidence in, and are motivated by, their capacity to bring about change (Rylatt, 1994: 6; Leirman, 1987: 108).

Transformation is also described as a potential consequence of growth and experience, as individuals move through the "existential challenges of adulthood" (Mezirow, 1983: 125). This is considered to involve cognitive, emotional and action dimensions and to represent an holistic or "total phenomenon" (Finger, 1989: 25), rather than the narrower learning associated with the acquisition of a new skill. New perspectives may emerge from life changes, such as re-entering the workforce or engaging in social action. Adult education strategies used to promote perspective transformation are sometimes described as consciousness-raising, such as the empowering feminist discussion groups described by Newman (1994: 94).

As a consequence of perspective transformation, adults are considered increasingly capable of 'critical thinking' (Newman, 1994; Brookfield, 1985; 1987; Sterling, 2001). This capacity has been described as "a mind that watches itself" (Camus, in Mezirow, 1983: 125), 'meta-learning' (Mandsley 1979 in

Mezirow 1983: 125) or the ability to become “aware of and increasingly in control of habits of perception, learning and growth”. These changes in awareness are summarised by Newman (1994: 44) suggests that “people not only perceive the world more clearly, but also *perceive their perceptions* of the world” (italics in original). Similarly, Berman (1981: 216) discusses apperception, or “the mind’s perception of itself as a conscious agent.”

Two inspiring activists describe their learning in terms of transformation. David Suzuki (1987: preface) considers his life to have been “marked by a series of transformations”. He attributes his changes of perspective to learning experiences which arose from public speaking competitions, his professional development as a scientist, political experiences and conflict with elites. Helen Caldicott (1992: 12), whose peace activism in Australia led to international influence through Physicians for Social Responsibility and Women’s Action for Nuclear Disarmament reflects, “I had been transformed into an activist in the United States, and my life was never to be the same again.” The factors that Caldicott considers contributed to her transformation include early childhood experiences, the influence of family and friends, teachers, reading and feminism.

Transformative and empowering educational practices appear, superficially at least, to be highly relevant to this inquiry. Activists certainly appear motivated to challenge problematic aspects of society by promoting visions of a better world. However, the relationship between personal and social change is a complex one. Discussions of transformative learning tend to emphasise individual change rather than social change. This educational tradition appears consistent with a humanist discourse as it promotes reverence for the individual (Newman, 1994: 107). A liberal or conservative orientation is also reflected in transformative educators’ concern for “an enlightened few” (Arnold et al., 1991: 23). Although political empowerment

is arguably a worthwhile objective, critics such as Newman (1994: 83) consider the promotion of individual self-actualisation as a social change strategy unrealistic and potentially self-indulgent. This argument is also developed by Finger (n.d.: 8), who considers the pursuit of self-fulfilment contrary to the long-term social change objectives of environmentalists:

Given the biophysical limits to industrial development, individual self-fulfilment will necessarily be reserved to a few privileged elites.

Finger's concern appears to be that activist groups that focus on their own self-actualisation and empowerment may turn inadequate attention to those responsible for environmental abuses. Similarly, Newman (1994: 45) suggests, "the oppressors ... and the society these oppressors continue to act in may go unchallenged." Although personal change may be an important precedent or accompanying process on the path toward social change, it should not, perhaps, be presumed that the former leads to latter (Mezirow, 1991: 210).

### **3.5.3 Popular education**

Popular education is the third of four educational traditions discussed here. Practices defined as popular education share an emphasis on the promotion of horizontal or democratic relationships among participants, the prioritisation of expressed needs of community groups, the involvement of learners in planning both educational activities and subsequent action, and explicit recognition of and respect for community knowledge (Hamilton, 1992: 19). Popular educators seek to harness the learning potential of personal experience, promote democratic and collective participation, emphasise the generation of new knowledge and are oriented toward change (Arnold and Burke, c.1990).

Although popular education shares many of the characteristics of andragogy and transformative learning, it differs in its overt commitment to, and links

with, social movements. As such, the popular education tradition is more inclined to present a challenge to the State and mainstream educational institutions and practices. Popular educators work with adults and communities to create participatory strategies for change that resist and challenge dominant social institutions and norms in order to address inequality and injustice (Foley, 1998: 140).

Popular education has been associated with mass movements in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s (Foley, 2000: 53) and with other workers' and other activist movements. Hamilton (1992: 20) also traces the influence of resistance theory (Giroux, 1983) and the notion of counterhegemony (Gramsci, in Forgas and Nowell-Smith, 1985) in the emergence of popular education.

The curriculum of popular education is considered by the Popular Education Network (1999) to emerge from,

the concrete experience and material interests of people in communities of resistance and struggle; its pedagogy is collective, primarily focused on group rather than individual learning and development; and it attempts to forge a direct link between education and social action.

Brazilian adult educator Paulo Freire is arguably the most frequently cited and inspirational popular educator. Accounts of Freire's community-based literacy programs in South America and Africa continue to inspire radical educators throughout the world to explore their capacity to both facilitate and participate in education oriented toward personal and social emancipation. Freire's relevance to this inquiry is suggested by his identification by activist educators including Alinsky (1970), Coover et al. (1978: 140-150) and Arnold et al. (1991). This is especially noteworthy as this study found very few references to influential adult educators in activist education and training practice and literature.

By contrast to adult education practices associated with the technical and liberal discourses discussed previously, Freire's literacy programs were overtly political. Peasant farmers learnt to read and write through critically analysing power within their communities. By choosing discussion topics such as oppressive political and social arrangements, Freire's staff encouraged participants to develop more informed, critical and empowering perceptions of their social reality and, ultimately, to assume more politically active roles in their communities. Freire's texts introduced a language of adult education that emphasised educators' political responsibilities, advocated a redefinition of the relationship between educators and learners and challenged conventional understandings of the learning process.

Two ideas integral to Freire's concept of popular education were conscientisation or *conscientização* (Freire, 1973) and 'banking education'. The former describes a process or state of heightened awareness related to both self and society consistent with the notion of transformation or emancipation described above. 'Banking education' was Freire's derogatory expression for traditional educational pedagogy which, he considered, treated learners as empty receptacles to be filled (Freire, 1970: 66), Freire (1978: 92) advocated that learners be active participants in the act of making meaning and criticised paternalistic approaches:

The educator must not press his own position to the point that the learner's position is a reflection of his own. At the same time, the educator must not negate, as though from shame, his own insights.

As noted above, Freire's legacy continues to influence contemporary popular educators. For instance, feminist African-American academic, bell hooks,<sup>32</sup> shares Freire's contempt for authoritarian, hierarchical and coercive pedagogies which she considers dominant in mainstream higher education

---

<sup>32</sup> Lower case is hooks' preference.

institutions. Her classes at City College, New York, engage students in dialogue that pertains directly to their experiences (hooks, 1994: 87) and integrates the ideals of critical pedagogy and feminism to identify discrimination based on gender as a significant issue for her students:

Personal testimony, personal experience, is such fertile ground for the production of liberatory, feminist theory because it usually forms the basis our theory-making.

The educational approach favoured by hooks' (1994), 'engaged pedagogy', is characterised by radical openness, critical thinking by both teachers and students, passionate and democratic exchange of ideas and an expression of political activism challenging the status quo through collaborative action beyond the classroom.

Ira Shor is another contemporary American academic who attributes many aspects of his classroom approach to Freire's influence. A transcribed dialogue between the two (Freire and Shor, 1987) brings Freire's work to life for mainstream western educators who might otherwise fail to see the relevance of Brazilian literacy programs to their everyday practice. Shor is a colleague of hooks at City College, New York. His approach to popular education utilises and models nine educator roles: convenor, facilitator, advocate (of missing perspectives), adversary (of oppressive behaviour), lecturer, recorder, mediator, clearinghouse, librarian (Shor, 1980). These roles convey the democratic and political spirit of Shor's educational philosophy. Although Shor's advocacy for popular education favours participatory pedagogies, he also suggests didactic teaching is an effective educational strategy under certain circumstances.

Another exemplar of contemporary popular education is the Highlander Resource and Education Centre in Tennessee. Highlander has played a significant role in popular and activist education since its establishment in

the 1930s. During its early days, Highlander's target audience included workers, unions and the region's rural poor. Its main purpose was to teach the 'art of organising' through literacy, social movement history and strategy (Hamilton, 1992: 15-16). Since the early days, this target audience has diversified to include activists associated with the civil liberties, peace and environment movements. Prominent activists who have participated in retreats and other programs at Highlander include Dr Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Park whose refusal to shift to a bus seat designated for African Americans sparked a wave of activism which effected social and legislative change.

The educational philosophy shaping Highlander's pedagogy was defined by the Centre's founder Miles Horton who believed that "people already know from their experience both the problems and the answers" (Hamilton, 1992: 16). The Centre brings people together to 'learn from each other' (Williams, pers.comm. 24/7/01). Program participants sit in a circle of wooden rocking chairs in a large circular room. This arrangement suggests non-hierarchical relationships and an approach to learning that is relaxed and unrushed. The processes of critical reflection facilitated by members of the education team "help people learn in the course of struggle" (Newman, 1999: 163) by identifying inequality and oppression and developing strategies for collective action.

*Southern Strategies*, a recent Highlander program, facilitated collaborative learning involving youth organisations, leaders of the Latino community and other regional interest groups. The program responded to staff members' concern that social movements in the region were operating in isolation. *Southern Strategies* provides follow-up networking and support. The Centre's staff remain committed to Horton's interest in collective action, organising and community mobilisation (Williams, pers.comm. 24/7/01) rather than individual transformation. Other aspects of Highlander's programs include an emphasis on building relationships among participants, self-facilitation,

‘going deeper’ in learning,<sup>33</sup> strategically recruiting participants, and experiential learning modelled on the Spiral Model (Arnold et al., 1991: 38). These elements of the Centre’s program pedagogy provide strong links to the Heart Politics movement explored in Chapter Six.

### **3.5.4 Environmental adult education**

This section has so far described three traditions in educational practice considered significant to this inquiry. A fourth relevant tradition, being a variation of the third, is environmental adult education. Environmental adult education draws on two educational traditions discussed in turn in this section: environmental education on one hand and progressive adult education practices such as andragogy and popular education on the other.

Environmental education is often a central component of sustainability strategies. A series of international gatherings initiated in response to environmental concerns have promoted environmental education as a major component of measures to arrest environmental decline. Statements adopted during these gatherings include the Belgrade Charter which was endorsed by participants from sixty-four countries during an environmental education workshop held in Belgrade in 1975, the Tbilisi (1977), Thessaloniki (1997) and Hamburg (1997) declarations, *Our Common Future* (WCED, 1987) and *Agenda 21* which was adopted during the Conference on Environment and Development (or Earth Summit) in 1992. These statements suggest an apparent international consensus on environmental education, which is expressed in *Agenda 21* (Chapter 36 ‘Education, Training and Public Awareness’, UNCED, 1992: 77) as follows: “Education can give people the environmental and ethical awareness, values, attitudes, skills and behaviour needed for sustainable development.” They emphasise the capacity for environmental

---

<sup>33</sup> It is interesting to note that this expression also emerged spontaneously during both the QCC and Heart Politics studies.

education in institutional, informal and nonformal educational settings to achieve many social change objectives required for sustainability.

Environmental education is described by many theorists in terms of three streams: education about, in and for the environment (Fien, 1993b, 1995, 2000b; Kahn, 1994; Gough, 1997; Plant, 1998; Pike and Selby, 1990; Huckle, 1983; Clover, 1996; Wals, 1994). The third of these streams, education for the environment, appears to be well-established in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States and reflects an activist or change orientation. This approach to environmental education is considered a “saving tool for change” (Kulich and Leirman, 1987: 11) as it contributes to an active and informed citizenry (Fortino, 1997; Palmer, 1988: 35) by providing environmental knowledge and fostering the development of appropriate skills and attitudes. Contemporary environmental educators also advocate approaches to social learning (Lee, 1993) or ‘learning our way out’ (Milbrath, 1989) that incorporate scientific knowledge and promote individual and collective empowerment. Proponents of education for sustainability promote approaches that increase awareness of environmental problems and their causal or structural determinants, dialogue among stakeholders and active and competent engagement in civic society, including democratic institutions and mechanisms for decision-making (Fien and Whelan, 2001).

This last element is the subject of considerable controversy, and suggests that environmental education may indeed be perceived as a threat to prevailing (and arguably unsustainable) practices and social institutions (see for instance Carr and Kemmis (1990) on socially critical schooling). While Knapp (2000) argues that educators have too often promoted environmental activism rather than appropriate individual action, my experience suggests the inverse is more likely and that many educators feel very reluctant to overtly promote environmental advocacy.

Environmental education is favoured to varying degrees by environmental advocates as an element of their campaign strategies. Among the environment groups embracing environmental education, the Gould League of Bird Lovers communicated their confidence in this strategy by adopting the motto, "Education is more potent than legislation in furthering the cause of conservation" (cited in Hutton and Connors, 1999: 43). Strategies adopted by the Gould League have educated the Australian public about birds and built support for their protection. Other groups that have developed environmental education programs to achieve their objectives include the Wilderness Society (Brisbane and Newcastle branches especially) which trained volunteers to educate school children and community groups about regional wilderness areas and the campaigns for their protection (Whelan, 1994). My observations as a participant-researcher in the environment movement during the past decade suggest, however, that environmental education is seldom pursued as vigorously or consistently as lobbying, direct action and electoral strategies. This may reflect, as Hutton and Connors (1999) suggest, that education has not to date fulfilled its potential, or perhaps that it is considered by activists to be a less effective conservation strategy than measures such as legislation.

Environmental adult education literature (Clover, 1998, 1996) appears to offer greater relevance to this inquiry than texts on school-based environmental education. In part this is simply a reflection of the age and political power of participants. Adults are undoubtedly better situated to influence political decisions concerning the environment. This argument is made by Clover (1996: 93; see also 1998:15) who observes that although most environmental education targets children,

It is adults who control local and multi-national businesses that pollute air, land and water, financial institutions such as the World Bank that displace thousands of people to make way for hydro-electric dams, and run governments at all levels.

Environmental adult education is less constrained by institutional barriers such as those associated with school-based education (parental and political pressure for example) as it is commonly community-based and occurs informally through workshops, seminars and conferences and via the media. Adults participating in environmental education do so autonomously and are, perhaps, more likely to be motivated by a genuine interest in conservation than children. They can be presumed to have achieved a more mature stage of intellectual and social development and accordingly be inclined toward and equipped to engage in advocacy activities. Adult education practices consistent with andragogy and popular education are more conducive to the critical thinking and action-orientation objectives associated with education for sustainability than conventional school educational practices. As a result, environmental adult education contributes to different opportunities for ensuing or concurrent environmental advocacy outcomes.

The relationship between education and advocacy is complex and reciprocal. Three dimensions of the relationship are considered here: (1) education for advocacy; (2) education as advocacy and (3) advocacy as education. The first aspect of this relationship describes environmental education programs that aim to enhance or motivate environmental advocacy. Advocates' learning experiences before and during a campaign, for instance, can be a key factor in their effectiveness. Their environmental education experiences, in particular, are likely to influence the priorities reflected in their campaigning. For instance, Low (2001) suggests that many environmentalists consider feral cats a more significant problem than exotic weeds as they have received inadequate education. Similarly, global warming may be a popular campaign priority because advocates and the general public have been better educated on this subject than others. Global warming is currently the theme of campaigns by the ACF, Greenpeace and all state conservation councils.

The second aspect of the reciprocal relationship, education as advocacy, suggests that education is often incorporated as a tactic in environmental campaigns. This is discussed briefly in Section 2.3.3. The third dimension of the relationship between advocacy and education continues the theme that the two activities are motivated by identical objectives and achieve comparable outcomes. Environmental campaigns certainly appear to have educational significance. Environmental campaigns educate the advocates involved and the community members who observe and are influenced by campaigns. The media strategies of environmental campaigns, in particular, educate the general public. Lobbying and other persuasive tactics specifically seek to educate politicians and decision-makers.

A significant distinction between campaigning and education is suggested by Rose (2000) who considers the former a ‘motivational’ exercise while the latter is a ‘broadening’ exercise. Campaigning “narrows the focus of attention in order to get people to do something that leads to change” and specifically aims to increase people’s motivation. Education, by contrast, provides examples that reveal layers of complexity in order to maximise people’s knowledge. Rose (2000) does not consider education an appropriate strategy for environmental advocates seeking to effect change:

Try using education to campaign, and you will end up circling and exploring your issue but not changing it. Of course all campaigns have some ‘educational’ effect but it is education by doing, through experience, not through being given information. Moreover, information is not power until it leads to mobilisation. If information truly were power, the world would be run by librarians.

Environmental adult education is relevant to this inquiry as it is one of the few sites of intersection between the theories and practices of adult education on one hand and environmental advocacy on the other. The concerns expressed by Rose, however, serve as a reminder that the two communities of practice are engaged in related but significantly different activities.

### 3.6 **Adult education pedagogy and practices relevant to activist education**

In true fact, we know little more than nothing about what part of our educational intentions materialise in the heads and hearts of the consumers.

(Gronemeyer, 1987: 76)

The purpose of this chapter is to develop a purposeful analysis of adult education methods in order to begin to develop appropriate models for environmental activist education. The chapter has thus far examined educators' motivations, objectives and roles. In order to situate educational practices in terms of both philosophical orientations and pedagogic practices, this literature review now turns to the practicalities of adult education. Adult education theorists tend to discuss theory in great depth while failing to describe pedagogy or practice in corresponding or adequate depth (Newman, 1999: 195). The following discussion helps to provide an analytical framework for the critical appraisal of activist learning in the two studies which follow. It achieves this by examining educational strategies that have been associated with programs to help adults develop the knowledge, skills and other attributes relevant to environmental advocacy. This discussion is intended to suggest how activist educators might translate their educational intentions into effective programs.

The technical, liberal and radical educational discourses discussed above inform a corresponding diversity of educational practices. This diversity is apparent when examining the range of adult education practices that encompass "highly manipulative and participatory pedagogies alike, from courses designed to correct deviant behaviour to workshops supporting the social change agendas of oppressed communities" (Heaney, 2000:1). The pedagogical practices described in this chapter are intended to correspond to activist learning. They include didactic instruction, experiential and participatory learning, action research, organisational learning and mentoring.

### 3.6.1 Didactic instruction

Obedience is the great multiplier of evil.

(Holt, 1972: i).

The first of four educational practices discussed here is didactic instruction. Didactic teaching or instruction entails the transmission of information from one person (the educator or expert) to another (the learner). Contrary to the ideals of andragogy, popular education and perspective transformation, didactic instruction ascribes a relatively passive role to learners (Kemmis, Cole and Suggett, 1983) and perpetuates a power imbalance between learners and teachers. While the more progressive traditions entail discovering what is not known, didactic instruction involves transmitting what is known. In this respect, it corresponds to Freire's notion of banking education.

Such teacher-centred approaches appear prevalent in adult and community education practice despite the emergence of radical and empowering ideas and practices in adult learning and Tight's (1983: 162) observation that "teacher-led education does not work after leaving school". This discrepancy between educational ideals and practices is a persistent issue, having been identified by critics such as Holt (1972: 12) who contended some thirty years ago that,

Enough people now believe in learner-directed, non-coercive, interest-inspired learning so that we should be seeing in education far more widespread and profound changes than we have.

Activists and movement trainers may reject didactic educational strategies, due to their own negative experiences of teacher-dominated classrooms that relied on the didactic transmission of 'facts' (Coover et al., 1978: 192). Moreover, just as activists reject and challenge apparently hegemonic environmental discourses and practices, activist educators might be expected to promote radical educational practices aligned with their visions of a just, sustainable and participatory society. The studies undertaken during this inquiry explore

the validity of this assumption.

### 3.6.2 Experiential learning

The second set of educational practices discussed in this section, experiential learning, encompasses a range of strategies that have become increasingly popular in mainstream adult education. Experiential learning owes much of its popularity to Donald Kolb (1984: 21, 40-41), who described a cyclical, four-stage learning model depicted in the figure below.

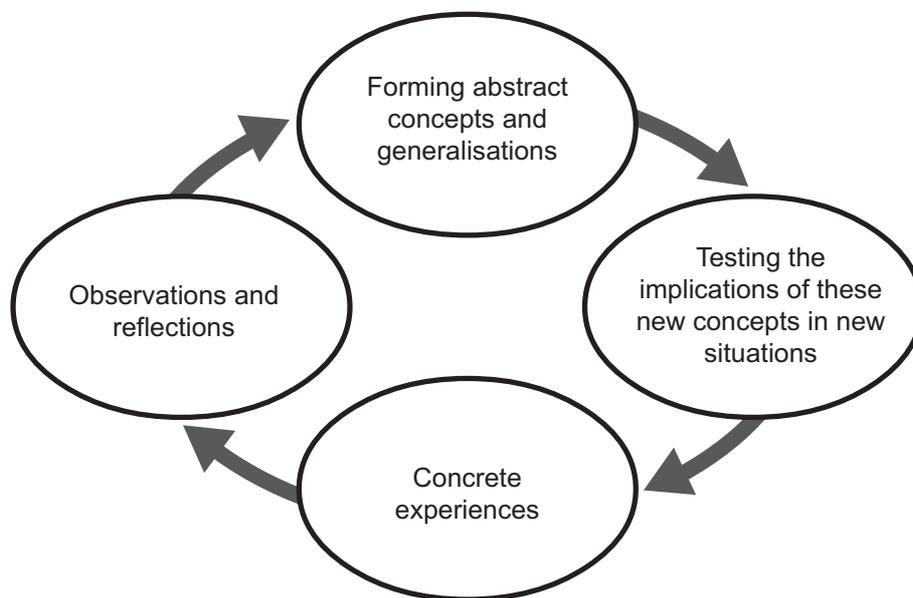


Figure 3.2 Experiential learning cycle (Kolb 1984)

Advocates of experiential learning are inclined to consider didactic teaching or the transmission of educators' knowledge and experience to receptive or passive learners to be "meaningless, oppressive and alienating" (Foley, 2000: 44). Experiential learning, in contrast to information transmission, is learner-centred and seeks to empower learners (Kosmidou and Usher, 1992: 77).

Experiential learning implies a range of educational strategies. Newman (1994: 82-83) describes two approaches to experiential learning. Both utilise methods such as pair and group discussions and exercises to recall and reflect on

experience. Insights are identified through debriefing which follows experience. The differentiating factor between these two approaches is whether educators or facilitators create new experience to inform learning, through games, role plays or simulations for instance, or rely on participants' prior life experience.

Other experiential learning variants include problem-based learning (Chappell et al., 2000: 200) and experience-based learning (Andresen et al., 2000: 225). Although experiential learning may be rejected by some educators as inappropriate to their aims and contexts, advocates consider experiential learning approaches conducive to learning in formal, nonformal, informal and incidental contexts.

Critics, on the other hand, suggest experiential learning may not be especially suitable as a basis for activist education (Kosmidou and Usher, 1992: 78; Newman, 1994: 163). These theorists associate experiential education strategies with a humanist discourse due to the apparent assumptions that learners can be the source of all of their learning and that they can free themselves from hegemonic distortions to develop authentic or emancipatory knowledge. These assumptions suggest for instance that adults living in racist and militant societies can draw on their personal experience to identify how these attitudes are systematically promoted through popular culture, to recognise factors influencing their values and behaviours, and envision social alternatives. These assumptions are challenged by Newman (1994: 163) who suggests educators should,

avoid the experiential forms of adult education that assume the source for all learning comes from within the learner her or himself ... instead, we should encourage sceptical, realistic thinking that generates new and 'really useful' knowledge.

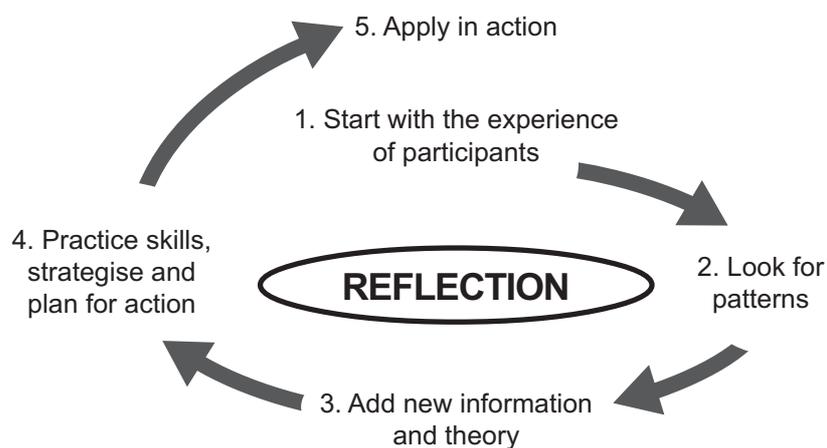
Newman (1994) believes this might be achieved by facilitating peer and group

discussions which require learners to consider perspectives which are unavailable through reflecting on their own experience.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, experiential learning has been adopted by several prominent activist educators. Miles Horton, founder of the Highlander Centre, advocated experiential learning as an appropriate learning strategy for social activists:

We have found that a very effective way to help students understand the present social order is to throw them into conflict situations where the real nature of our society is reflected in all its ugliness.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly the (North American) Doris Marshall Institute developed their ‘spiral model’ to guide activist training programs. Their model (depicted below) adheres closely to Kolb’s four stage learning cycle and reflects assumptions associated with experiential learning. A remarkably similar learning model was described in the Heart Politics case study.



**Figure 3.3** The ‘spiral model’: Doris Marshall Institute (Arnold et al. 1991: 38)

<sup>34</sup> No specific reference details were located for this Horton quote which appears on several Highlander Centre publications.

Another illustration of experiential pedagogy applied in activist workshops is provided by Oppenheimer and Lakey (1982: 65) who describe nonviolence workshops which utilised role playing and sociodrama techniques. Participants were briefed, enacted scenarios then debriefed to evaluate how situations were handled. Facilitators were instructed to:

(a) define the problem; (b) establish the situation, or scene ('scenario'); (c) cast the characters and commence the action; (d) brief and warm up the actors and observers; (e) cut the action when he thinks the point has been made; (g) lead the discussion and analysis of the situation and the behaviour of the participants by getting them and the audience to talk; (h) make notes and plan future tests of the lessons learned from the scenario.

This recommended workshop structure clearly replicates each stage of experiential learning. Oppenheimer and Lakey (1982) provide a range of suitable scenarios within which to explore issues related to nonviolent action and philosophy including civil rights demonstrations intended to block access during an eviction, 'integrate' or undermine the segregationist practices of a barber shop, demand service at a lunch counter, conduct a picket line and deal with harassment during a race riot. Similar workshops conducted by the researcher in Brisbane (Botanic Gardens, April, 2000) utilised similar hypothetical scenarios. The suggested workshop processes mirror the learning phases depicted in both the Spiral Model (above) and in Kolb's model.

Campaign planning and strategy workshops at the Centre for Community Change in Washington D.C. incorporate similar experiential techniques (Beckwith, pers.comm. 8/3/00). Participants graphically depict real or hypothetical situations using cartoons, stick figures, symbols and slogans. They explore relationships and options for change, asking:

Who else has this problem? How do I get them involved? What do we want? Who can deliver it? How can we influence them? What dramatic action could we take? What could happen?

Discussion leads to a role play, then debriefing to consider the merits of strategies adopted. Beckwith encourages activist educators to provide opportunities for ‘real life’ learning experiences and argues that it is “better to actually have them do it.” For instance, during a Baptist Youth Leadership class in 1968, his Civil Rights and Social Change class confronted the business manager of a Maine resort town about restrictive covenants in the cottage deeds and, by staging a demonstration, had the arrangement changed (Beckwith, pers.comm. 8/3/00).

Experiential learning appears appropriate for learning situations encountered within environmental advocacy organisations where participants are concerned primarily with strategies to effect short-term social change and are inclined to consider learning a secondary objective.

### **3.6.3 Learning to learn: Action research, reflective practitioners and learning organisations**

This third set of adult education practices are unified in their shared emphasis on the learning potential of social action. Activists and activist educators seeking to realise this potential ‘learn to learn’ by adopting a conscious and deliberate disposition toward ongoing learning and developing and maintaining learning strategies or habits. In this way, Field (2000: 166) considers experience can be translated into learning by,

becoming aware of one’s own assumptions and thinking processes, developing approaches to explore new avenues, trying those out, seeing what happens, and using the results as a basis for further experimentation.

This approach to learning may be distinguished from experiential learning which is more commonly undertaken in semi-formal or formal settings and is generally directed to some extent by an educator or facilitator. The disposition and techniques associated with ‘learning to learn’ encourage autonomy from

educators. One strategy for learning to learn is action research which is described in detail in the following chapter. Action research forms an integral element of this inquiry. It need not be associated with academic inquiry, however, and provides a simple cyclic approach to learning that entails action, reflection and planning.

Learners equipped for and disposed toward continuous, contextualised and autonomous learning are described by Schön (1983, 1987) as reflective practitioners. Such learners engage routinely in critical reflection as a form of professional development. Activist educator Saul Alinsky (1971) observed, “Some of the most successful activists have treated social struggles as learning experiences” (p.45). This form of reflection also resonates with the learning approaches associated with perspective transformation, critical thinking and dialogue which were discussed previously. For instance, popular education and andragogy are considered by Tight (1983: 68) to be indicative of a trend in adult education toward,

involving adults in ever-deepening processes of self-diagnosis of their own needs for continuing learning ... formulating (their) own objectives ... sharing responsibility for designing and carrying out their learning activities ... evaluating their progress.

Just as individual learners can be encouraged and helped to ‘learn to learn’ or become reflective practitioners, organisations can also be increasingly oriented to promote learning. Organisational learning (Senge, 1992; Argyris and Schön, 1978) and Foley’s (2001) closely related notion of strategic learning build on the learning potential of work situations to offer both individual and collective benefits, personal fulfilment and growth on the one hand and enhanced organisational efficiency and morale on the other. Overcoming institutional impediments such as inertia and developing a learning culture can create significant indirect benefits for employees and their organisations including an increased sense of participation and commitment. Despite these potential

benefits, learning is less often a primary organisational objective than profit or productivity (Field, 2000: 167).

### 3.6.4 Mentoring

Mentoring, the fourth educational approach discussed in this section, is particularly significant in the two studies that follow. Novice activists who seek to enhance their effectiveness often learn from seasoned advocates. Mentorship provides an informal, learner-centred and action-oriented learning opportunity. A notable instance of mentorship observed during this study was the 'Green Girls' group: an informal network of environmental advocates who shared breakfast and campaign stories on a monthly basis in Brisbane.



Figure 3.4 *Green Girls*: Environmental mentoring

Three examples serve to illustrate the learning potential of mentorship. The first is a study by Fortino (1997) whose interviews with three pairs of environmental professionals identified complex and mutual learning relationships. Although the subjects of her study were not activists *per se*,

Fortino revealed informal arrangements for peer mentoring which appear to be transferable to the environment movement. A second example is Caldicott's (1996: 248-249) autobiography in which she reflects on the significance of mentoring in the peace and anti-nuclear movement. Caldicott's role in establishing and building organisations including Physicians for the Nuclear Disarmament and the Movement Against Uranium Mining involved visiting the chapters of these organisations,

to advise and consult and gradually the local leaders assumed responsibility for speaker training ... Sometimes I felt like a mother hen caring for her chicks.

Clearly, Caldicott had assumed the role of a mentor. The third example is Webb's (1984a, 1984b) examination of the learning strategies employed by recruits to a branch of the (British) Anti-Nazi League to develop confidence and competence in the organisation's many activist strategies. His observations suggested activists who developed political skills most rapidly were those who were systematically mentored by experienced activists. Webb (1984b: 3) observed a three stage political apprenticeship through which many novice Anti-Nazi League activists progressed: (1) the "Watch me" stage during which seasoned activists modelled skills such as public speaking or advocacy; (2) the "You have a go and I'll guide you" stage that closely followed; and (3) "Now practice on that" combining autonomy and diminishing supervision.

Anti-Nazi League mentors carefully chose situations to provide opportunities for novices to assume greater responsibility for increasingly challenging tasks. They also engaged novices in debriefing discussions and encouraged novices to value their own judgement. Webb's findings are particularly relevant to the action research study undertaken with the Queensland Conservation Council (Chapter Five). The excessive demands placed on (or perceived by) environmental activists may discourage them from committing to ongoing mentorship relationships. Supervision of volunteers and novice campaigners

in many ENGOs is minimal.

These three references convey the merits of mentorship as a learning strategy for activists. During campaigns, activists are disinclined to engage in activities which appear peripheral to their immediate social change objectives. Mentoring implies more than simply working alongside experienced and effective advocates, however, and can be enhanced through intent. For instance, mentors and mentees might recognise the learning significance of their relationship, as in Webb's study, and articulate learning goals and outcomes.

### **3.6.5 Adult learning roles and relationships**

Sections 3.6.1 to 3.6.4 introduced adult education pedagogies considered relevant to this inquiry. While the behaviour of educators and learners (who does what, for, with, and to whom) is a key aspect of adult learning, the roles and relationships adopted in learning situations also exert significant influence on learning outcomes. Adult learning practices can be differentiated by their apparent objectives, settings, *learning climate* (Tight, 1983), distribution of power and responsibility, degree of integration with everyday life and by the roles ascribed to both educators and learners. This last dimension, the roles assumed by and allocated to both adult educators and learners, is crucial in both categorising and analysing activist education approaches.

Educators adopt a variety of roles that reflect differing degrees of intervention and authority (Newman, 2000: 279-280). At the more traditional extreme, educators seek to control both learners and the learning environment. This sort of role is commonly associated with didactic instruction, for instance. The other extreme is increasingly common in adult education in the community sector including activist education. Having relinquished the contrived authority associated with institutionalised education, adult

community educators in informal contexts seek solidarity with learners and encourage “learning that both derives from and contributes to the action” (Newman, 1994: 189).

Community-based adult educators including activist educators interviewed during this study often refer to their role as that of *facilitator*. This description suggests that learners are self-motivated and autonomous and casts educators as human resources to the learning process, helping to satisfy learners’ needs, including suitable learning conditions. This role engenders a learning environment consistent with the learning styles and preferences associated with andragogy (Knowles, 1984) and popular education. Non-hierarchical settings provide conditions conducive to “open questioning, curiosity, amazement, respect, expression of personally felt meaning, communication, story-telling, doubt, consideration, admitting mistakes [rather than] opposition and contention” (Gronemeyer, 1987: 80). In some settings, including radical feminist adult education pedagogy (Newman, 1999), facilitators’ roles are barely distinguishable from those of other participants. Simply seating learning groups in a circle conveys a powerful message.

The preceding discussion of educational discourses and traditions identified possible inadequacies of a liberal or humanist discourse to provide a framework to describe and comprehend activist education. Radical educational discourse provides the necessary interest in social transformation. This criticism applies similarly to educators’ roles. Newman (1994: 20) suggests that adult educators who restrict their role to that of facilitator may be motivated by the assumptions that “people are potentially nice”, and that “the group process will ultimately produce a satisfactory and healthy outcome” (Newman, 1994: 75). Conversely, he urges adult educators to maintain a clear differentiation between their roles and learners’, to communicate clear expectations and to challenge learners intellectually.

### 3.7 Dimensions of activist learning

The chapter now turns to what activists might need to learn in order to effect change. This discussion represents a synthesis of elements of Chapters Two and Three as it integrates environment movement literature on the one hand and educational theory and practice on the other. This integration is rare in the literature and integral to this study.

Figure 3.5 'Iris' model of activist learning  
(Shields, 2001)

Activist education literature suggests several domains of learning. It appears very few activist educators justify their priorities and activities by referring to a framework that addresses the wide range of skills and knowledge involved in effective advocacy. More commonly, they arbitrarily select particular elements of social action around which to build activist education and training

activities. Shields (1995: 3) concurs with this observation by noting that,

Much of the (limited) writing on education and training for community based activists and social change workers focuses on a particular aspect or limited range of content and does not tend to acknowledge or encompass other aspects.

In order to redress this perceived deficiency, Shields developed the ‘iris’ model (pers.comm. 16/10/01) to depict the twelve domains of activist learning she has identified through her research and practice as an activist educator.

Shields’ model identifies twelve domains of education, training and growth. By placing ‘learning to learn from experience’ in the centre of the iris, Shields implies this dimension influences how activists develop with respect to the other eleven domains and their overall activist development.

A compatible and simpler categorisation of activist learning is proposed by Chase (2000) who depicts a range of significant requisites associated with effective activism. The categories suggested by Chase and Shields are compared to those discussed by Coover et al. (1978) and Ali Kahn (1982) in the Table below.

The emphasis placed on each domain differs considerably between authors and between ENGOs. Particular activist learning dimensions are identified by some theorists but not by others. For example scientific eco-literacy which is emphasised by Chase and emerged as a key aspect of activism in the studies described in Chapters Five and Six does not feature prominently in Shields’ Iris model (above) which places greater emphasis on personal growth and life-skills.<sup>35</sup>

---

35 An alternative categorisation, offered by several interviewees during this inquiry, is that activist learning involves the head, heart and hands. Learnings commonly associated with the head (or rational mind) include political analysis and social theory. The heart (or affective domain) encompasses empathy, relationships and transformative dimension of social change work, while the learnings associated with the hands include proactical tactics such as media skills, volunteer management and fundraising.

<b>Chase (2000)</b>	<b>Shields (2001)</b>	<b>Coover et al. (1978)</b>	<b>Kahn (1982)</b>
Scientific eco-literacy	Research skills – understanding, articulating & contextualising issue		
Organisational development	Strategic planning	Democratic decision making	Organisational development Leadership roles
Social action skills	Practical and technical skills Community & movement building	Community building Nonviolent action & civilian defence Crisis intervention	Organising skills
'Big picture' political analysis	Developing a critical perspective Understanding politics of media & communication		Political education
Personal growth & life-skills	Understanding personal role & priorities People skills Inner resources & spiritual source Ethics & values clarification Personal insight	Consciousness raising Conflict resolution	Personal development

Table 3.2 Dimensions of activist learning suggested by activist educators

The five categories suggested by Chase (2000) provide a coherent framework for the following discussion. These dimensions of activist learning are adopted as a valid framework for this study for two reasons. First, there is a high degree of convergence between authors and movement educators. Second, the categories adequately capture the range of activist training activities observed during this inquiry. The results of an extensive survey of training and other capacity building activities undertaken by ENGOs (Parlane and Flowers, 2000) provide an additional indicator of validity. Responses to these investigators' survey are also readily categorised according to the suggested activist learning domains.

The remainder of this section explores each dimension in turn, to identify the significance of each aspect of activist learning and describe corresponding contemporary training programs and institutions. In conclusion, this section considers how the five domains converge to enhance activism and the development of the ‘well-rounded activist’.

### **3.7.1 Scientific eco-literacy**

The first dimension of activist learning, scientific ecoliteracy, implies the factual knowledge required for effective environmental advocacy. The closely related expressions environmental literacy and ecological literacy are also used Golley (1998) and Capra (1997), Director of the Ecoliteracy Institute in California, to describe the empirical or scientific environmental knowledge required for effective environmental action.

The communication of credible information about environmental problems is the foundation of effective advocacy. This conclusion is supported by Caldicott (1996: 329) who describes how the activists who established branches of Women’s Action for Nuclear Disarmament “desperately needed information concerning the arcane statistics relevant to the arms race, so we prepared a series of fact sheets.” Environmental advocates build their credibility by disseminating reliable information and communicating certainty. As information cannot always be entirely reliable, this creates a perennial tension. Snow (1992a: 13) found that while activists sometimes felt “51% sure”, they considered themselves called upon to “act 100% sure” in order to maintain their standing as experts.

Scientific eco-literacy appears to be prioritised by the Australian environment movement both internally (within the movement) and externally (in the community). The environment movement is widely regarded as a highly reliable source of information concerning environmental problems: indeed

community members consider ENGOs much more reliable than government or industry sources (New South Wales EPA, 1994). Publishing newsletters, journal and websites is a common priority in even the smallest ENGO. This may reflect priorities akin to Caldicott's (1999) suggestion that "people just need to be told". Caldicott bases this pronouncement on her belief that inappropriate or irresponsible behaviour will not be tolerated by an informed populace. She considers politicians and other decision makers can be expected to respond "appropriately" to accurate information, just as she is "enraged by information". This faith in the power of scientific or technical environmental information is questioned by Shields (1995: 3) who observes, "The majority of educational effort by activist groups is aimed at informing people about a particular issue in the (unfounded) hope that this will activate them." Despite Shields' reservations, activist educators featuring in the studies conducted during this inquiry appeared to share Caldicott's preference for didactic lecturing to impart expert knowledge and experience.

The movement's commitment to scientific eco-literacy is also reflected internally. A previous study (Whelan, 1994) that involved a series of interviews with forest advocates revealed that novice activists felt compelled to immerse themselves in the literature, media coverage and other available documentation pertaining to specific environmental issues before developing and implementing advocacy strategies. Not surprisingly, wilderness advocates were required to be 'up to speed' with issues prior to taking on spokesperson roles. In many instances, volunteers did not remain with environmental advocacy groups long enough to acquire this level of expertise.

In contrast to the somewhat narrow concept of environmental knowledge suggested above, the broader notion of ecological literacy provided by Thomashow (1996) and Orr (1992), encompasses knowledge of science, society and self. In contemporary environmental education literature, ecological

literacy has assumed a broad definition incorporating environmental knowledge, action skills, motivation and involvement (Orr, 1992; Hsu and Roth, 1999; Roth, 1992; Golley, 1998). Ecological literacy is informed through the conventional sources of reading and numeracy and also through experiencing nature and society with insight, a sense of wonder and “affinity for the living world” (Orr, 1992: 86). Orr considers this form of literacy radicalising as it comprises knowing, caring and practical competence.

In a similar vein, Finger’s (1989) biographies of seven committed environmentalists suggest that five distinct types of environmental knowledge contribute to activism. Significantly, Finger found technical (botanical, journalist and technical) knowledge about the environment made a minimal contribution to activists’ motivations and actions unless accompanied by non-technical knowledge of the environment, learnt in committed groups, and self-help knowledge. This suggests a holistic definition of knowledge that encompasses other aspects of learning discussed below.

Notwithstanding the potential contribution of eco-literacy to effective advocacy, there are limitations in the extent to which scientific or technical knowledge can prompt effective community and activist responses. Four such limitations are briefly discussed below: (1) levels of environmental awareness are already high; (2) further information may engender despair; (3) the social dimension of environmental problems is perhaps neglected; and (4) science is a value-laden enterprise that serves particular interests.

Several authors (including Clover, 1996; Finger, 1992; Gronemeyer, 1987; Macy, 1983) suggest that environmental awareness is high in many communities and question the merit of conveying further information about environmental problems or reinforcing “what people already know: the environment is in bad shape, our comfortable lifestyles make it worse and the complexity of

environmental problems makes them hard to solve” (Wals, 1994: 137).

In fact, environmentalists are labelled as doomsayers in popular satire, by some prominent environmental educators and by scientists. The *Skeptical Environmentalist* (Lomborg, 2001) is a recent example of an attack on activists’ use and misuse of science. In Lomborg’s populist challenge on ‘doomsayers’, he alleges that the majority of environmental indicators have in fact improved in recent decades, contrary to activists’ exaggerated claims. The author, a statistician, presents a purportedly rational and scientific analysis. This analysis has in turn been criticised by many environmental scientists as inaccurate and misleading. Environmentalists’ warnings are often based on the precautionary principle which asserts that actions potentially damaging to the environment should not be permitted unless proponents conclusively assess risks and demonstrate how these will be managed. Adopting this principle, Brower (1990: 156), warned in 1974 of the risks associated with shipping oil through the Gulf of Alaska. Predictions such as Brower’s were ignored. His warning was vindicated in 1989 when the *Exxon Valdez* went aground in Prince William Sound spilling eleven million gallons of crude oil which covered more than 1,000 miles of shoreline and killed over 1,000 sea otter and 36,400 birds along with whales, porpoises, and seals (Brower, 1990: 156).

One danger of repeatedly warning of ecological catastrophe is that those hearing such warnings may potentially feel overwhelmed and be less inclined to participate in individual or collective action. Macy (1993: xiii) considers information-overload a significant deterrent to empowered action as it contributes to feelings of distress, isolation, apathy and powerlessness. The repression of these feelings, Macy argues, results in paralysis.

It is therefore not sufficient to discuss the present crisis on the informational level alone, or seek to arouse the public to action by delivering even more terrifying facts and figures. Information

*by itself* can increase resistance, deepening the sense of apathy and powerlessness. We need to help each other process this information on an affective level, if we are to digest it on the cognitive level. (italics in original)

In her discussion of environmental adult education ('ecopedagogy'), Gronemeyer (1987: 70) suggests educators tend to believe that wisdom is gained from disaster. This conviction was evident when European activists asserted that the Chernobyl nuclear accident was the "best thing that could have happened to us" (Gronemeyer, 1987: 70), as it created social conditions conducive to movement influence and change. It was also evident when the authors of *Limits to Growth* (1974) suggested that their dire warnings would result in a groundswell of people discussing "not if but how we can create this new future" (p.196). Authors such as Dobson (1999) suggest this confidence may have been premature and that the report of itself has not produced the hoped-for outcomes.

Both actual and possible disasters are utilised strategically in environmental campaigns and educational programs. This distinction is underscored by Ensel (in Leirman and Kulich, 1987) who differentiates between false anxiety, which is at times exacerbated by activists' claims, and real or justified fear. Finger (1992: 78) critiques this "pedagogy of the catastrophes", concluding that "no matter what age, what level of education, what knowledge, and what values orientations, fear appears to lead to learning, yet not necessarily to doing." Similarly, Murphy (1999: 15) relates a "psychology of inertia" to fear, hopelessness and despair. Clover (1996: 103) considers environmental educators have a responsibility to "transmit relevant environmental knowledge" while helping individuals deal with fear and anxiety.

The third possible limitation to scientific eco-literacy is that many environmental problems are essentially social in nature. Their solutions, accordingly, must address the causal social origins of environmental pressures.

This criticism is developed by Princen and Finger (1994: 64-65) who argue,

Public information campaigns conducted in this era of the atomized individual and already high environmental awareness are likely to result in apathy, cynicism and even despair. Solutions of a purely scientific or technological nature, especially if lacking in any social perspective, will further erode the very social and cultural resources which could have transformed them into meaningful social and cultural action.

Consistent with this advice, several Queensland ENGOs including the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast Environment Councils have diversified their activities during recent years to include community development strategies.

A fourth limitation is that scientific knowledge and inquiry are influenced by values and politics. During the past two decades, research funding in Australia has been restructured to favour the interests of industry. To add credibility and broaden their scientific knowledge base, environmentalists often depend on scientists outside the movement. For instance, environmentalists demonstrated a 'scientific consensus' behind their position in their campaign to protect the Oak Ridges Moraine north of Toronto by presenting a petition signed by 450 scientists (Bocking, 2002: 11). Similarly, Queensland environmentalists utilise the 'Scientists' Warning to Humanity' (UCSUSA, 1992) to add validity to their claims.<sup>36</sup> Science can serve diverse interests, however, and may be beholden to investors. Scientists often rely on industry funding (Yates, 2001) and are engaged to act on behalf of polluters (Bocking 2002: 12). Conservation organisations are rarely able to pay scientists. David Suzuki (1987) explains his rejection of an illustrious career in genetics in part due to his realisation that science was not always oriented toward the public good as he had been previously believed. As an activist and educator, however, Suzuki continues to emphasise the importance of sound and adequate environmental knowledge in decision-making.

---

<sup>36</sup> This statement was referenced in QCC media releases during 2000.

Arguably, the broader notion of ecoliteracy encompasses scientific eco-literacy as suggested in Chase's typography of activist learning as well as encompassing other learnings prerequisite to effective advocacy including social action, organisational development skills and personal growth.

### **3.7.2 Organisational development skills**

The second domain of activist learning relates to the suite of organisational development skills required to establish and maintain the sophisticated organisational structures associated with effective advocacy. The environment movement's modest funding base<sup>37</sup> and ambitious change agenda demand efficiencies few other sectors are likely to experience. Lee (1986) suggests the skills required to effectively attend to the organisational demands of environmental advocacy groups entail seven sets of competencies: (1) conducting meetings; (2) organising priorities; (3) analysing objectives; (4) maintaining the organisation; (5) planning; (6) training; and (7) dealing with internal opposition. The complexity of these seven aspects of organisational performance suggests that activists need to develop considerable skill in organisational development.

The 1996 National Conference of Conservation Councils and Environment Centres included the first documented national environment movement training program in Australia. Of nineteen training themes incorporated in the 'training smorgasbord', the majority pertained to organisational development. Table 3.3 (below) shows that six workshops addressed fundraising and financial management, eight addressed the management of staff and volunteers (including boards and committees), information and time and one each focused on legal issues, facilitation skills and project evaluation. Just three themes addressed social action skills and two corresponded to personal

---

<sup>37</sup> The core functions of the Queensland Conservation Council are funded through a grant of approximately \$100,000 per annum. Most of the fifty member groups of this 'peak' body receive considerably less funding and few employ staff.

growth and life skills.<sup>38</sup>

This analysis of the training program suggests a disposition within the environment movement to attend to organisational maintenance and development objectives. However, the apparent priorities of the conference organisers are not reflected in the movement generally, where many ENGOs appear to pay minimal attention to the capacity of their organisations.

<b>Training Theme</b>	<b>Social action</b>	<b>Organisational development</b>	<b>Personal growth and life-skills</b>
Campaigning skills			
Media strategies			
Meeting skills			
Organisational management			
Information systems			
Volunteer management			
Boards & committees			
Time management			
Personnel management			
Legal issues			
Evaluating your work			
How to organise fundraising events			
Fundraising principles			
Fundraising for large groups			
Marketing & merchandising			
Fundraising for small groups			
Financial management			
Sustainable activism			
Burnout & stress management			

**Table 3.3** Training themes of the 1996 National Conference of Environment Centres and Conservation Councils corresponding to three aspects of activist learning

38 1996 National Conference of Environment Centres and Conservation Councils Conference Papers On-line available <<http://www.earthshare.org.au/training/manual/manual.htm>>.

Organisational development demands are generally acknowledged but struggle for attention as they are considered a lower priority than immediate environmental issues and campaigns. This tension was convincingly demonstrated in 1999, when state and national ENGOs engaged consultants to examine the movement's needs and opportunities for capacity building and training. The findings of their report (Flowers and Parlane, 2000) were affirmed during a workshop that involved delegates of most of these groups held in Mittagong in December 1999. This workshop identified strategic planning, evaluation and financial management as the priority capacity building needs of the majority of ENGOs.

### **3.7.3 Social action skills**

The third domain of activist learning described by Chase (2000) comprises the development and enhancement of social action skills. Skills associated with social action are suggested by environment movement strategies and tactics that have been discussed earlier in Section 2.2.3. Social action skills are arguably the most obvious and widely-discussed aspect of activism (see for instance Bobo, Kendall and Max, 2001; Lattimer, 1994; Lai, 1998; Bullard, 2000). A more subtle definition of skill than the somewhat superficial impression given by lists of campaign tactics is provided by Webb (1994a: 3) who considers activists need to coordinate a range of skills sequentially, and in ways that are purposeful and suited to the specific context in order to achieve declared goals. This definition addresses to some extent the issues related to activist effectiveness raised in Chapter One as it couples action, intent and outcome. To coordinate reformist and electoral strategies, lobbying, direct action, electronic activism and media, interpersonal and creative strategies activists require overlapping sets of social action skills. The following section discusses the place of social action skills in both institutional and community-based educational practices.

Institutionalised education often appears to neglect the development of social action skills. These skills are more often promoted in the informal community education sector. This study identified strategies to promote social action skills through movement publications, workshops and activist training institutions. Training manuals intended to help activists appreciate and acquire social action skills include Villiers-Brown (1996) *Anyone Can* which provides a

template for environmental campaigns and Muir (1990) *How to Mount a Campaign*. The former was published by the Queensland Conservation Council and the latter by the Total Environment Centre in New South Wales, both prominent ENGOs that provide support and leadership to grassroots advocacy groups. Similar activist training publications have emerged from specific environmental campaigns, such as the *Jabiluka Activist Handbook* (1998) and the *Long Hot Summer Handbook* (1992) published by the Jabiluka Action Group and The Wilderness Society respectively. During this inquiry, I observed

Figure 3.7 *Anyone Can* campaign manual (QCC)

ENGOS investing time and energy in developing new social action manuals, apparently unaware that useful publications were already available both in print and on-line.

The following table depicts a variety of training programs intended to promote social action skills. Several of these activities simultaneously address organisational development and other aspects of activist learning. Media and communication skills, lobbying, networking and legal action are the most frequently occurring social action skills promoted by these workshops.

Nonviolent action (NvA) is a common activist workshop theme that corresponds to the emphasis on social action skills. The philosophy and practice of non-violent action in the contemporary environment movement reflect the influence of the social change campaigns of Mahatma Gandhi and Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Nonviolent action was an integral element of both the Indian independence and the American civil rights movements. During the 1980s campaign to prevent the damming of Tasmania's Franklin River, a comprehensive nonviolence training program was administered by the Tasmanian Wilderness Society. Before joining the river blockade and other direct actions in the remote South-West forests, activists were required to undertake nonviolent action training in Strahan. The Franklin tradition appears to have been perpetuated by ENGOS with social change (rather than strictly environmental or biophysical) agendas such as the Wilderness Society and Friends of the Earth.<sup>39</sup>

A similar prescription or precaution was adopted by campaign organisers preparing to bus hundreds of young activists to the proposed uranium mine site in Jabiluka in the late 1990s. Training in NvA was commonly mandatory

---

<sup>39</sup> Other campaigns that incorporate both the tactics and philosophies of NvA are described in editions of the *Nonviolence Today* journal.

Training Event	Training themes
<i>Defending the defenders: protest, the environment &amp; the law</i> Environmental Defenders Office Network, Sydney, 24/10/98	Environmental law, civil rights law
<i>How to communicate social issues</i> Queensland University of Technology 29-30/04/99	Media and communications strategy
<i>Other Ways Other Wise: Active Earth Skills</i> Gold Coast & Hinterland Environment Council, Murwillumbah, NSW 16-17/10/99	Direct action; sustainable living; effective meetings; community arts; lobbying; campaigning; event management; stress and conflict management; networking; fundraising; community building; visioning; volunteer coordination; team building; multi-party negotiation; grant applications
<i>Activist Training Day</i> National Union of Students Brisbane, 29/04/00	Individual and collective action; direct action; autonomous organising; building and maintaining collectives; campaign building; media; planning actions; legal rights; police liaison
<i>Community Action School</i> Burns Academy of Leadership University of Maryland 8-11/06/00	Advanced electoral campaigning; strategy; media skills; activist training; Internet strategy; building effective boards; leadership and mentoring; understanding power relations; grassroots organising; public speaking; effective meetings; newsletters; community collaborations; recruitment; database management; petitions; lobbying; cultural organising and community development; fundraising
<i>Advanced Strategic Questioning</i> Brisbane, 14/08/01	Strategic questioning: non-adversarial social change strategy workshops facilitated by Fran Peavey.
<i>Effective communications in campaigning</i> Queensland Conservation Council Brisbane, 11/10/01	Identifying the audience; creating and delivering the message; polling and focus groups; free media planning; advertising; alignment of internal and external messages; building a public position for your organisation
<i>Community Organising for Community Developers</i> Centre for Community Change, Washington DC	Theory and practice of community organising, social movements. [Three two-day sessions over six months.]
<i>Sierra Club Training Academy</i> Three-day training program	Create public demand for environmental protection; enhance your level of organising skills; establish clear goals and develop a plan to achieve them; develop a succinct message, central theme and stories to resonate with your target audience: learn how to use the media as a primary tactic for winning your campaign; meet and network with activists.
<i>How to be a community activist</i> University of Western Australia Four week course, 2 hours per week	Promote causes, inspire others to join you; raise funds; communicate effectively through the media; legal issues such as freedom of information, defamation and public participation in planning and environmental decisions

Table 3.4 Activist training workshops emphasising social action skills  
(Websites for programs listed here are included in Appendix B)

either before embarking or upon arrival at the protest. The tradition was also evident during recent anti-globalisation protests. For instance, NGOs preparing for the (cancelled) 2001 Brisbane meeting of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting organised NvA training for activists planning to act as marshals during a peaceful rally.

Activist organisations rely on NvA training to achieve several objectives. The workshops reduce the likelihood of violence to or by protestors. The training also helps minimise the negative public perceptions associated with violence. Runciman et al. (1986: v) note the non-violent action training program during the Franklin campaign also served, unintentionally, as a form of social control. Prominent direct action advocate and Green politician Ian Cohen (1997) argues that activists who refused to participate in the training and ongoing non-violence discipline during the Franklin campaign contributed more effectively to both the short-term disruption of engineering works in the World Heritage area and to the long-term defeat of project proponents.

The content and pedagogy of non-violent action workshops vary considerably. Whereas Wilderness Society workshops during the Franklin campaign and more recently have introduced participants to the origins, context and philosophy of non-violence, other organisations conduct NvA workshops essentially to prepare activists for potentially dangerous and frightening situations they are likely to encounter. Rather than helping activists develop informed theories of social change through historical analyses of social change campaigns that have successfully utilised non-violent strategies, these workshops focus on direct action skills. This approach to training, described by Oppenheimer and Lakey (1982: i) below, is familiar to many activists:

The Manual advises wearing two pairs of underwear to avoid injury if you are dragged along the ground. For spectacle-wearers there is a recommended method of taping glasses to your face.

When tear gas is fired, don't run away; instead, join hands and close your eyes, but continue the demonstration. If the police charge, running will earn you a well-placed club. Instead, confront the policeman and try to make it clear to him that you're interested in protecting your rights.

By omitting a critical and historical appraisal of non-violent action, these workshops fall short of promoting political analysis or 'big-picture' learning as discussed below. Alinsky (1971) is particularly critical of movements that embrace the philosophy and practice of non-violence as a mantra. In his 'means and ends' discussion, Alinsky (1971) considered NvA in its historical context, and concluded that Ghandi's exhortation to the Indian people to practice nonviolence was appropriate to their circumstances. Identical strategies, he argued, are destined to fail in other situations.

In addition to these event-specific examples of social action training, a number of institutions offer social action training as a service to social movements. The Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action in Toronto worked with unionists, anti-racist programs and social justice organisations. The Institute's practice was strongly oriented toward collective action, reflecting their conviction that "education must empower all people to act for change" (Arnold, Burke and James, 1991: 4).

The Midwest Academy<sup>40</sup> is one of the oldest and best known U.S. schools for community and citizen organisations and individuals committed to progressive social change. The Academy's annual season of activist training courses (described in Whelan 2002a) is based on their popular text *Organising for Social Change* (2001). The Midwest approach to activist training emphasises social action skills. Their five day training course is offered several times each year in different states. Workshop topics include: understanding power relationships; choosing issues; developing a strategy; building coalitions;

---

40 On-line available <<http://www.midwestacademy.com/>>

holding public officials accountable; and working with the media. The Academy's 'Organising Skills for Campus Activists' weekend workshop includes additional sessions on power relations on and off campus, direct action organising and other methods, how your issues shape your organisation, and the development of strategies and tactics.

Another popular U.S. activist education program is the twelve-month GreenCorp training that recently marked its tenth anniversary. The course attracts several hundred applicants each year from ENGOs for an intake of fewer than twenty. GreenCorp's curriculum is oriented toward social action skills, described by a graduate as "the science and art of organising" (Coplton-Newfield, pers.comm. 2/8/02) . The program also includes an extended placement in 'real' campaign roles. Philanthropic funding provides for a generous stipend for students.

Although this level of philanthropy is not available to Australian ENGOs, they nonetheless have access to a range of resources to enhance social action skills. These resources reside within the formal education system, activist training literature and workshops and informal community networks. Institutional awareness (or memory) of these resources cannot necessarily be relied upon to ensure these resources are effectively utilised. Nonetheless, greater priority appears to be given to social action skills than other aspects of activist learning, and environmental campaigners are likely to be provided with learning opportunities promoting this aspect of activism at some stage of their involvement with ENGOs.

#### **3.7.4 'Big picture' political analysis: Theories of change**

No political party can possibly lead a great revolutionary movement to victory unless it possesses a revolutionary theory and a knowledge of history and has a profound practical grasp of the movement.

(Chairman Mao, in Tight, 1983: 43-4)

The fourth element of activist learning identified by Chase, and implied in this reference to Chairman Mao, entails the development of political analysis to inform and motivate advocacy. The significance of this aspect of activist learning is underscored by activist educators including Newman (1994: 148) who identifies the need for “ideas, a political framework, clarity of values and a clear idea of who our friends and enemies are.” Newman considers political analysis involves the development of *acumen*, an attribute he defines as sharply focused thinking generating undistorted knowledge, “keen insight or discernment” (1994: 48).<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Speeter (1978: 11) argues,

Social change agents need to have some sort of theory of social change which guides their actions and efforts. Even before one sets about deciding on a set of goals for an organization ... one first has to have a theory about how change will occur as a guide to setting those goals.

A comparable notion of political education is provided by Kahn (1982: 206) who considers social action requires the development of, “a sense of the framework within which our organizing takes place.” Kahn suggests this framework may be built on knowledge of relevant issues and their relationship to the “economic, political and social situation in the community and country.” He urges activist organisations to develop a shared vocabulary and understanding of politics and economics. Kahn also considers activist history an important element of political education.

This study found minimal evidence of this form of activist education occurring within Australian environmental advocacy groups. On the contrary, the strategies adopted by many ENGOs appear routine or habitual. These explanations about why particular strategies are adopted were depicted in a recent workshop paper by this researcher (Whelan, 2001b) as, “our group has always organised marches and rallies” or “we are a lobbying organisation”.

---

<sup>41</sup> The expression ‘political acumen’ and its relevance to Queensland environmental activists is explored in Appendix C.

The public statements, internal documents and dialogue of environment groups rarely make reference to political frameworks. This tendency to rely on political action devoid of theory may be a major impediment to the environment movement, especially as supporters are likely to expect movement leaders to articulate convincing theories about how their organisations' chosen strategies will effect desired changes. This lack of 'change theory' and apparent leadership vacuum is demonstrated in a case study by Cameron (1989) who describes a conversation between an environmental activist and a concerned community member who sought advice about effective courses of action. The activist advised the supporter to "stop wasting her time and mine", to "stop dithering and get involved" and not to "spend forever wondering about what she might decide to do ... all she has to do is start DOING. Anything else is bullshit" (Cameron, 1989: 65-66, emphasis in original).

By contrast, the Democratic Socialist Party requires recruits to become familiar with Left wing (Marxist, Leninist, Anarchist, Socialist) political history and ideology as a precursor to engaging in political action. A structured, five-session program of ideological education that explains the history of socialism and Marxism is provided. This practice appears consistent with educational traditions associated with the union movement, the Australian Communist Party (Boughton 1997) and the Mechanics Institutes established in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century which supported "mass ideological work" and "political indoctrination" (Tight, 1983: 24).

A useful concept in this discussion of activism and political analysis is 'collective action frames', which Edwards (1995: 41) describes as "narrative maps guiding movements toward their goals." Edwards considers collective action frames comprise four key elements: (1) interpretations of the injustice or immorality of specific social conditions; (2) an attribution of blame for

them; (3) an action agenda for solving them; and (4) a motivation for taking that action. As the social and political context for social action is prone to change, collective action frames tend to evolve over time “as groups revise them in light of changing circumstances and accumulating experience.” Chase (2000) suggests that activists and their organisations are informed by collective action frames.

Another perspective on political analysis is provided by U.S. activist educator Dave Beckwith (pers.comm. 8/3/00) who suggests that social change organisations can approach the potentially complex mission of developing shared theories of change by asking, ‘What is the project?’ Theories of change are shaped by the nature of the changes organisations seek to effect. Theories of change appropriate to the protection of high conservation areas, for instance, cannot be transposed to campaigns seeking to effect political, structural or social change. Beckwith suggests many activist organisations fail to develop change theories suited to their objectives and that, “If we don’t know where we are going, we’re likely to get there” (pers.comm. 8/3/00).

Chase, Edwards and Beckwith imply that social change organisations struggle to achieve their goals unless they adopt theories of change that are both compelling (motivating to participants) and realistic (informed by social and historical constraints and opportunities). Educational strategies addressing these needs include participatory workshops to develop theories of change (Coover et al., 1978: 9-21), courses of reading, reflection and dialogue.

The following table provides a purposeful sample of theories of change which emerged during this inquiry. Without claiming to capture the full range of change theories underlying contemporary environmental advocacy, this sample conveys the diversity of approaches to change. Each cell implies a distinct set of activist learning demands and opportunities.

The third column of Table 3.5 identifies the five approaches to social change integral to the five-day Midwest Academy training program. The Academy's activist training course incorporates two types of political education. First, trainers discuss the range of approaches to social change described in the table. Second, they describe contemporary social trends and the political landscape in the USA.

<b>Speeter (1978)</b>	<b>Beckwith and Lopez (1997)</b>	<b>Midwest Academy (2001)</b>
Worker control – organise people as workers	Community development	Direct service
Escalating demands: Developing coalitions, electoral politics	Advocacy	Advocacy
Accountability: Organise people as consumers		
Organise: Non participation and non-violent action	Community organising: Mobilising volunteers, confrontation	Direct Action
Freirian approach: Awareness, action, reflection		Education
Poor people's movements: Protest and disrupt	Service delivery	Self-help

Table 3.5 Change theories informing movement theory and action

The theories of change developed by Speeter (in the second column) describe various activist traditions. Speeter (1978: 7-10) recommends activist groups consider four questions in order to develop a 'big picture' or guiding theory of change and situate their approaches within this broader historical context:

- The real situation: What needs changing in the community?
- Vision: What would be ideal community / society look like?
- Analysis: Why is there a gap between the real and the ideal?

- Strategy: What strategies can be developed to work toward solving the problem?

These four questions correspond closely to the four elements considered by Edwards (1995) to comprise a collective action frame. Significantly, Speeter's suggestion promotes collaborative political analysis processes while the political analyses promoted by the Midwest Academy rely on a didactic approach, whereby seasoned activists and educators impart their political analysis and theories of change through lectures (Whelan, 2002a).

Activist educator Moyer (1990: 1) observes, "One of the chief limitations of the effectiveness of activists and their social movements has been the lack of strategic theories and methods." Moyer's Movement Action Plan (MAP) (1990, 1993; Moyer et al., 2001) incorporates an eight-stage model based on phases observed in successful social change movements. The model is intended to help social change groups understand, plan and reflect on campaigns, effectively providing an action agenda for collective action. Movement Action Plan is based on the observation that activists and organisers in many successful social change movements occupy a combination of four roles: rebel, reformer, citizen and change agent (see Figure 3.9). These four roles and the eight campaign stages depicted in Figure 3.8 provide activists with a framework within which to appraise and evaluate strategies for change.

Moyer considers these eight stages of successful social change movements provide activist groups with a medium to long term framework within which to plan, conduct and evaluate their campaigns. Activists familiar with MAP and the many campaign anecdotes Moyer uses to illustrate each stage are encouraged to think and act strategically in order to progress through the cycle. For instance, groups that have successfully demonstrated the failure of official institutions such as environmental regulators (Stage 2) and who are

seeking to strengthen public support might strategically create or capitalise on trigger events (Stage 4) by organising demonstrations or publicising catastrophes.

Without such a model, Moyer argues, many advocates develop unrealistic expectations about the pace and nature of change, are inclined to adopt a short-term perspective and may fail to appreciate their achievements. This is especially suggested in Stage Five: Perception of Failure. In his workshops, Moyer describes periods during which the peace movement neglected to acknowledge the tangible progress made toward disarmament and energy policies with reduced emphasis on nuclear power. Some movements, he suggests, have also failed to appreciate the importance of continuing their efforts once majority support has been achieved or concessions have been granted. Workshop participants are encouraged, through discussing Stage Eight of the model, to consider the merits of playing a 'watchdog' role to ensure commitments are fulfilled.

The four activist roles developed in Moyer's activist-oriented publications and workshops provide another dimension to his theory of change. By discussing the roles described in Figure 3.9, participants in Moyer's workshops develop an appreciation for how each role has contributed positively to successful social change movements, to understand that their campaigns may be enhanced if they learn to adopt roles appropriate to specific stages and situations and to value the efforts of other advocates and groups who occupy different roles.

Moyer facilitates activist workshops internationally with peace, social justice and environmental activists. His MAP model was introduced in Australia through Heart Politics gatherings in Northern New South Wales in the early 1990s. It appears to have influenced the framework for collective action developed by Friends of the Earth (Brisbane). Many of the group's members participated in Moyer's workshops that were organised as part of the action research undertaken during this inquiry. The role with which they tend to identify is that of change agent. This role is reflected in the group's innovative enterprises which serve an community education function to promote both recycling and alternative community-based economic systems.

<b>Rebel</b>	<b>Change agent</b>
<b>Reformer</b>	<b>Citizen</b>

Figure 3.9 Four roles associated with effective social change movements  
(Moyer et al. 2001)

Newman (1994: 66) offers a second example of activist education to enhance political analysis skills. He describes the anti-nuclear movement in the United Kingdom as an ‘informal college’ which fostered collaboration between activists, scientists and academics who, “read technical and political writings and exchanged learning.” Collaboration of this nature, addressing either scientific or political aspects of environmental campaigns, presently appears sporadic. Rather than being informed by a coherent change theory, contemporary environmental activism often appears instinctive, habitual or routine (Whelan 2001b). Activists seem to model their campaigning approaches on colleagues and exemplary environmentalists. Theories concerning how change happens often remain unspoken.

A third example of activist education for political analysis is provided by influential American activist educator Saul Alinsky. Alinsky’s (1971) *Rules for Radicals* advocated a comprehensive analysis of power relations to identify ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ in order to develop strategies to redistribute power more equitably. He promoted pragmatic (or realistic), strategic and skilful tactics including shareholder proxy campaigns and consumer boycotts, which have come to be referred to as “Alinsky-style organising”. His fifteen-month full-time activist training course attracted union, campus and other organisers and addressed, “organizational problems, analyses of power patterns, conflict tactics, the education and development of community leaders and the introduction... of new issues” (Alinsky, 1970: 63). Whereas contemporary environment movement campaign manuals described above dwell on tactics, and attend inadequately, according to Moyer (1990), to the broader question of strategy, Alinsky’s approach demanded an analysis of class, politics and socio-economic considerations as prior to the identification of targets and possible courses of action.

Alinsky’s (1970) pedagogy reflected assumptions consistent with popular

education and andragogy. He treated personal experience as the basis for learning and avoided didactic teaching. Program participants who memorised words and concepts rather than comprehending the underlying principles were, Alinsky considered, ill-equipped to apply their learning strategically to specific situations and tactics. Alinsky (1970: 165) parodied how ‘would-be’ organisers faced with difficult situations who would “retreat into some vestibule or alley and thumb through (*Reveille for Radicals*) to find an answer.”

As noted above, this dimension of activist education appears to be relatively uncommon in the contemporary environment movement and may present a challenge to activist educators who seek to develop a comprehensive curriculum.

### **3.7.5 Personal growth and life-skills**

The fifth and final dimension of activist learning discussed in this section involves personal growth and life-skills. Chase (2000) considers advocates need to develop and practice a wide range of personal and interpersonal skills in order to contribute constructively to collective action. This development also helps activists avoid ‘burnout’, a dilemma identified in activist literature. The wide range of themes encapsulated in this aspect of activist learning is suggested by Shields (1991) who provides resources for activists and ENGOs seeking to promote personal growth and life-skills. Her manual, *In the Tiger’s Mouth*, (1991) provides a collection of exercises and resources that address various personal and interpersonal aspects of social change work including: (1) sustaining and nourishing action; (2) listening for change; (3) building bridges with the opposition; (3) support and accountability groups (see also Green and Woodrow 1994); (4) working together; and (5) rekindling. Shields and her colleague Bobbi Allan (both key informants in this study) established the Social Change Training and Resource Centre in Northern New South Wales and facilitate training with a strong emphasis on personal growth. Both have

contributed significantly to the development of the Heart Politics movement which also reflects this orientation toward personal growth.

Personal development appears to receive less attention in the mainstream environment movement where organisational objectives often relate exclusively to the achievement of immediate conservation outcomes such as the declaration of national parks or opposition to environmentally damaging developments. By contrast, this dimension of activist education appears to be prioritised to a greater extent in the peace, women's and reconciliation movements and in organisations whose environmental advocacy is informed by deep ecology (Seed et al., 1988; Capra, 1997) and environmental justice (Bullard 2000). Environmentalists including Friends of the Earth who espouse the principles of deep ecology and environmental justice consider personal along with the political and structural aspects of social change. Environmental justice advocates adopt strategies consistent with social and economic equity and attend to considerations including class, race, privilege and ideology.

This dimension of activist learning implies a distinct range of teaching and learning strategies. Spiritual knowledge, for instance, may best be developed through “narrative traditions, dance, song, rituals, ceremonies and mentoring relationships” Bowers (1991: 103). These approaches to learning may provide a more holistic sense of empowerment than conventional learning approaches that rely on ‘rational’ reflection or expression. Such strategies are integral to the Heart Politics gatherings discussed in Chapter Six of this study and were introduced as a new element to an annual Queensland activist conference as part of the action research study described in Chapter Five.

The personal growth aspect of activist learning is integral to Macy's (1983, 1991) activist development work. Macy, a Buddhist-inspired activist educator, has made a significant contribution to Australian activist networks through

both her texts (1983, 1991) and her ‘despair and empowerment’ workshops. Macy argues that contemporary social and environmental crises can create a profound sense of powerlessness and despair. Her workshops utilise participatory and experiential processes and encourage participants to articulate their deepest fears in order to connect with their capacity to work for change, based on her belief that the expression of deeply held convictions may help people discover what they feel and know. In this way, ideas and visions may be generated, creating conditions for change and growth. Despair and empowerment workshops aim to allow people to ‘hear themselves’ or “come home to the perceptions and truths they have garnered by living every day and night on a threatened planet” (Macy, 1983: 45).

A significant aspect of Macy’s philosophy of activist education is the conviction that personal growth may occur concurrently with social action. She considers many individuals who support conservation and environmental projects defer active involvement in order to first “get enlightened”, get their “head straight”, get “psychoanalyzed” or overcome inhibitions, neuroses and hangups before they “wade into the fray” (Macy, 1991: 7-8). This justification for delayed involvement is based, Macy suggests, on a presupposition that the world and self are separate and that one must heal one before the other. She asserts that for many activists “love for the world” transcends these inhibitions and that both sets of goals may be pursued at the same time.

Examples of activist workshops oriented toward personal growth are provided in Table 3.6.

### **3.7.6 Integrating the domains: The well-rounded activist**

The preceding discussion considered five aspects or domains of activist learning separately. However, learning through social action may represent an holistic experience that assists and requires activists to develop a

combination of the five learning domains simultaneously. This conclusion was reached by Webb (1984a: 3) who observed “attempts to specify the skills contributing to effective political action are rare”. On the basis of his activist research, Webb asserted that effective advocacy requires a strategic combination and sequence of sub-skills. Furthermore Webb (1984a, 1984b) observed novice activists often exhibit strengths and interests that steer them toward particular types of activism. As a result, some become skilled orators or campaign planners while others are ‘natural’ facilitators or administrators. Others appear to learn in several domains simultaneously and become ‘all-rounders’.

Workshop	Description
<i>Stillness in Action: Blending meditation and action for the world</i> Eudlo, July 7-12, 2000	Retreat facilitated by Bobbi Allan. Influenced by Joanna Macy's methodologies.
<i>Taking Heart in Tough Times: From despair to positive action</i> Maroon Dam, August 21-23, 1998	Retreat facilitated by Bobbi Allan, Simon Clough and Annie Bolitho. Workshop themes included: Learn how to release the energy bound up by distress; Connect with the creative force of life itself; Find or recover your distinctive gifts to bring about change; Identify the skills/qualities you need to learn or strengthen; Make strong connections with others, to support you in your work; and, Clarify your role and the contribution you can make in your neighbourhood, workplace and wider community
<i>Spirituality and Social Change: Radical Relationships, a Holistic Approach to Social Change</i> November 1998	Activist workshops offered by the Echo Bay Centre in the U.S. <sup>42</sup>

Table 3.6 Activist education activities emphasising personal growth

A similar conclusion emerged from Foley's examination of activist learning in the context of the environmental campaign to protect rainforest near Terania Creek in Northern New South Wales in the early 1980s. Activists reported learning experiences consistent with each of the dimensions of activist learning

42 On-line available <<http://www3.sympatico.ca/echobay/social.html>>

described in this section.

Activists acquired new skills and knowledge. They developed considerable expertise in rainforest ecology, expertise that they continued to use subsequently. They developed understanding of the State and its agents (public servants, politicians, judges) and skills in working with and acting on it. They acquired analogous understanding and skills in relation to the mass media. They also developed skills in, and an understanding of, the complexities of building democratic forms of organisation and taking direct action (1991: 39).

This summary identifies learning outcomes including enhanced scientific knowledge, and skills for social action, political analysis and life in general. Foley (1991: 39) also noted forest activists' learning involved the acquisition of organisational development skills which were necessary to develop alternative, democratic organisations. His interviews with activists involved in the Terania campaign suggested features of their learning consistent with Freire's (1970) notion of conscientisation and Mezirow's (1991) perspective transformation (discussed in Section 3.5.2):

The experience of the campaign challenged and significantly altered the campaigners' understanding of the world. The activists moved from assuming the value of the rainforest was self-evident to learning that it was something that had to be struggled for.

The aspects of activist learning identified in Foley's case study appear consistent with Chase's five aspects of activist learning. On the basis of this concurrence, it may be argued that strength in all five aspects discussed in this chapter contributed to the success of the Terania campaign and may be integral to effective advocacy.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter has provided a review of a second and distinct body of literature. Whereas Chapter Two focused on social movements and the

strategies, tactics and motivations of environmental advocates, this chapter has introduced discourses, traditions and pedagogies of adult education that relate to and may help explain activist education and training. This discussion has also included references to specific activist education activities to demonstrate the relevance of adult education models and precursors.

This chapter responds to the second objective of the study by analysing forms that activist education takes in the Australian environment movement. This has been achieved by drawing on adult education literature that specifically focuses on activist education to develop a four-tier conceptual framework to: (1) analyse discourses or philosophical orientations; (2) identify adult education traditions that may influence activist education; (3) specify the pedagogies or educational practices employed by activist educators and (4) categorise activist education according to five suggested dimensions of activist learning.

<b>Discourses</b>	<b>Traditions</b>	<b>Pedagogies</b>	<b>Dimensions of activist learning</b>
Technical Liberal Radical	Andragogy Popular education Environmental adult education Transformative learning	Didactic instruction Experiential education Learning to learn Mentoring	Scientific eco-literacy Organisational development skills Social action skills Political analysis Personal growth and life-skills

Table 3.7 Conceptual framework for activist education

The review of social movement literature and contemporary environment movement documents in this study suggest that the framework is sufficiently broad to encompass the curriculum (or content) and pedagogy (or process) of education for environmental advocacy. This conceptual framework is applied in the two studies that follow.

# 4

## **The design and conduct of the study**

Consider ... the typical training of a PhD student. Some six or seven years might be spent developing expertise, but not for one minute is such a student obliged to think about the goals to which that expertise ought to be applied.

(Trainer, 1990: 110)

### **4.1 Introduction**

The first chapter of this thesis defined and justified the research problem and articulated a set of research objectives and questions. It introduced and justified the over-arching aim of the inquiry, which is to generate a richly detailed understanding of environmental activism and of appropriate educational strategies to enhance the effectiveness of environmental advocates. Chapter One also provided relevant definitions, a discussion of

the scope of the study and a brief autobiography which explained the relationship between this inquiry and the researcher's personal and professional background.

The second and third chapters provided the context for this study by charting two significant fields of theory and practice. First, the literature review focused on environmental and social activism to explore the motivations, strategies and tactics commonly involved in environmental advocacy. The organisational structures and tendencies of environmental activist groups were also examined to provide the context within which activist education and learning occur. Second, the literature review provided an analysis of educational literature, theory and practice. Chapter Three situated activist education and training within a broad educational context and emphasised the largely informal, non-institutional and incidental nature of activist learning.

This fourth chapter explains the research approach adopted for this inquiry. This discussion is structured sequentially according to three distinguishing dimensions of the research approach: research methodology, method and techniques. The complex relationship between these dimensions of the research process is the subject of considerable discussion by methodologists (see for instance Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Lather, 1992; Seale, 1998; Smith et al., 1990; Van Manen, 1990). A useful metaphor to describe this relationship is a bulls-eye comprising three concentric circles. In terms of this metaphor, methodology is the outermost circle as it describes the philosophical framework within which inquiry is conducted. The intermediate circle represents research method and signifies the integrated cluster of techniques applied to the task of framing the research question then gathering and interpreting relevant information: in this instance, about activist education and learning. The innermost circle represents techniques, procedures and the range of practical research strategies useful for gathering and analysing

data.

The relationship between methodology, method and techniques may also be discussed in terms of the alternative metaphor of the construction of a house or building. This metaphor is appealing as it mimics the sequential and developmental stages of a research higher degree. The methodology of this study provides the foundation and influences the shape and conduct of the inquiry. The research method is the architecture or structure built on these foundations. Method refers to “the overall plan of the research study, particularly in terms of how the data are going to be collected” (Smith et al., 1990: 66). It can also be described as “the general procedure by which we go about studying society, including selecting research problems, constructing and evaluating theories, and disseminating our findings” (Comstock, 1982: 370). A researcher’s choice of methods is influenced by the problems they are investigating. Just as the circle of the bulls-eye corresponding to research method sits within the outermost or methodology circle, there should ideally be a harmony between method and deep interest: “the way in which one articulates certain questions has something to do with the research method... there exists a certain dialectic between question and method” (Van Manen, 1990: 2).

Following this overview, Section 4.2 discusses methodology. It outlines the objectives of this inquiry and justifies the change-oriented and interventionist approach adopted throughout this inquiry. This section also discusses issues concerning researcher intention and values-based research which are central methodological considerations in this study.

Section 4.3 justifies the adoption of interpretive and critical research methodologies. This section also discusses issues arising from the researcher’s status as a participant-researcher. Section 4.4 introduces the qualitative

methods utilised in this study. The two key research methods are ethnography and action research. Section 4.4 also discusses the relevance and contribution of these qualitative research methods to the research objectives and to the validity of the study.

Section 4.5 outlines the research techniques and procedures used to both collect and analyse information. Data was primarily collected through observation and interviews and analysed using qualitative procedures associated with grounded theory. The following section details the procedures used to establish the validity and reliability of the conclusions, generalisations and theory that emerged from this analysis. These procedures include triangulation and a variety of validity measures.

Finally, Section 4.7 provides an overview of the conduct of the inquiry, describing each of five phases. The methods and intentions evident in each phase reflect the researcher's increasing knowledge and understanding of activist education and training, the participation of the Queensland environmental activist community and opportunities that arose during the inquiry for collaborative learning and action.

## **4.2 Research methodology**

Noting that research does not take place in a vacuum, but reflects researchers' intentions and backgrounds, Popkewitz (1984: ix) urges researchers to focus on methodological issues early in the research process. He warns that, "To focus solely on techniques and procedures produces certain limitations to the conduct of inquiry". Accordingly, he advises researchers to situate their concepts, methods and techniques within social and philosophical contexts, to consider traditions that influence their studies and to acknowledge their social and cultural circumstances. Researchers are also urged to consider their

values (Lincoln and Guba, 1986: 162) as these influence decisions about what and how to study. By considering these matters early in the research process, researchers can enhance the consistency between their methodology and the topic of inquiry (Carr and Kemmis, 1990).

The following sections address these considerations and identify the research traditions and social and cultural factors that have influenced this inquiry. This section responds to Popkewitz' advice. It addresses broad questions of research methodology in order to provide the context for subsequent sections which address more practical considerations that have influenced the conduct of the study. Methodological questions that were considered pertinent to this inquiry include:

- What is the orientation toward life, view of knowledge and sense of what it means to be human motivating this study (Van Manen, 1990: 27)?
- What 'theory of knowledge' informs the inquiry (Lather, 1992: 87)?
- As a researcher, how do I perceive the world and come to know it (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 14)?
- What personal factors (gender, social situation, sets of ideas, experiences) are likely to shape how I frame and pursue research questions (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 11; Kirby and McKenna, 1993: 42)?

Aspects of these questions are addressed in the following pages. My resolution of these questions served to situate the inquiry within appropriate research methodologies and justified the interventionist and change-oriented approach adopted in this study.

#### **4.2.1 Activist research: Interventionist and change-oriented**

The first epistemological question identified above is, “What is my general orientation toward life ... what does it mean to be human?” My response to this question is strongly influenced by my activism. As an activist, I ascribe enormous value to political autonomy and expression. I believe that that to be fully human involves seeking meaning (rather than routine) in daily activity and acting consistently with personal ethical motivations. I value agency and consider each day’s action (or inaction) a reflection of my values, hopes and fears. Accordingly, this research has been fuelled by my conviction that the project has the potential to contribute positively to the collective effort of the environment movement. This practical and emancipatory orientation ascribes value to knowledge commensurate with the extent to which it is incorporated into activists’ efforts and is considered useful.

This orientation toward knowledge raises difficult research questions. For instance, I cannot claim to be independent or impartial while orienting my research toward specific change objectives and remaining intimately involved. During the inquiry I have been advised by experienced researchers that these features of my inquiry present constraints to the study’s legitimacy and scholarly qualities and that my research may possibly impact adversely on my activist community and practice. Although these concerns are valid, they are far from novel and have been addressed by many contemporary research methodologists. Rather than adopting a more conservative research approach, I have taken heart in the examples of co-travellers and inspiring precedents to this interventionist approach.

Lather (1986: 64) for instance, encourages interventionist researchers with the example of Antonio Gramsci, who in the 1930s, “urged intellectuals to adhere to a ‘praxis of the present’ by aiding developing progressive groups in

their effort to become increasingly conscious of their own actions and situations in the world.” Fay (in Lather, 1992: 87-88) is another researcher whose work confidently sets out to “*change* as well as to *understand* the world” (italics in original). Lather asserts that “overtly values-based, advocacy research openly opposed to the maldistribution of power is neither more nor less ideological than is mainstream research.” Researchers committed to research approaches that challenge the status quo and who contribute to a more egalitarian social order have made an epistemological break (Hess, 1999: 196) from the positivist insistence upon researcher neutrality and objectivity (Lather, 1992: 92).

This break from orthodoxy in research was also a significant feature of Paulo Freire’s political literacy projects (1970) that were briefly referred to in the previous chapter. Freire’s process of ‘dialogue’, was both a form of inquiry and a change-oriented intervention. His research engaged community members in a form of dialogue that generated critical consciousness of political context, and praxis to change oppressive situations (Reason and Rowan, 1981: 29).

Inquiry as intervention appears to be an emerging field, with a growing consensus among action researchers and participatory researchers that “inquiry can be conceptualized and practiced as an intervention process” (Reason and Rowan, 1981: 293; see also Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 89). For example, Jones (in Lather, 1992: 94) explains her “openly ideological approach to inquiry via an explanation of her political view of the world.” Jones’ political activism resonates with activist research approaches described by Egan (2002), Malone (1999), LeCompte (1994), Stoecker (1997) and Tierney (1994).

This orientation is often adopted by researchers who work collaboratively with groups. Inquiry and reflection can lead to heightened understanding, changed practices and subsequent reflection. When research catalyses people

to act to change their situation, researchers are compelled to consider whether this is an acceptable or legitimate research outcome.

The issue of researcher neutrality pervades quantitative research literature and practice. However, the notion or ideal of neutrality is periodically under attack for a range of reasons. Methodologists such as Lincoln and Guba (1985: 160) and Seale (1998: 107) challenge the assumption that research neutrality is desirable. Others go so far as to suggest neutrality is not practically achievable and that a neutral or objective stance is a pretence on the researcher's part. For instance, Skolinowski (in Reason, 1994: 11) argues "Objectivity is a figment of our minds; it does not exist in nature."

Researcher neutrality is a difficult disposition to maintain or adequately defend and may be a questionable virtue. Neutrality implies both a dispassionate viewpoint and a lack of interest in change. Contemporary social science research often reflects a lack of intention. Academic researchers use a wide range of strategies to unravel complex social worlds, revealing multiple interpretations and discourses, but do not necessarily attend equally to the means and ends of their research. Trainer's (1990) critique of orthodox research training, cited at the opening to this chapter, suggests early career researchers are not encouraged to consider the practical and beneficial outcomes that may arise from their research. Research couched in obscure language and conceptual frameworks is, arguably, likely to remain inaccessible to the human actors who are the subject of inquiry, potentially resulting in discourtesy rather than trust or mutuality. Individuals in organisations or groups being researched can experience the relationship as asymmetrical, since researchers derive maximum benefit (such as career advancement) while those participating and cooperating derive negligible benefits.

By contrast, interventionist research is motivated by a curiosity that is practical

in nature. Bulmer (1984: 17) differentiates between idle and practical curiosity and considers the former to be oriented toward knowledge as a self-contained end in its own right “in which possible practical consequences of increasing knowledge are not denied, but are ignored.” Practical curiosity on the other hand involves what Bulmer calls the “why question” in that it seeks answers that will support “values other than knowledge itself - values of health, comfort, safety, efficiency (and) justice.” The research interest reflected in this study responds to Bulmer’s suggested dichotomy by acknowledging an inherently practical curiosity.

My activist research interest is especially affirmed by Lather (1992) who considers ‘change-enhancing’ research with an overtly transformative agenda is a legitimate and emerging field. Her accounts of such research are of particular relevance to research projects, such as this, that involve social change movements. As a feminist research methodologist, Lather (1992: 92) argues that educational research is “increasingly construed as a value-constituted and value-constituting enterprise, no more outside the power/knowledge nexus than any other human creation”. She considers that values-based advocacy approaches to research are emerging as legitimate, partly in response to a growing acknowledgment that disinterested or values-free research is a ‘furphy’ or myth.

In summary, this project can be described as activist research for three reasons: it has been conducted by an activist, activism is the topic and context of the inquiry and the research methods have been determined on the basis of their capacity to effect intended change.

#### **4.2.2 Research paradigms and interests**

This activist and change-oriented research project is consistent with an

emergent research paradigm which is post-positivist, qualitative, interpretive and participatory. This section briefly discusses the research paradigms and underlying interests that frame this inquiry. First, though, I will briefly explain my interpretation of the term ‘paradigm’ as applied to research.

Research paradigms involve beliefs about, and ways of doing, research. Increasingly, research methodologists have argued that the act of constructing and interpreting ‘reality’ depends on temporary ‘goggles’ or ways of seeing that are influenced by values, culture, experiences and assumptions. These ‘windows on the world’ (Zuber-Scerrit, 1991: 12) provide a partial and inherently distorted view rather than an objective or enduring truth. Distinct paradigms generate knowledge that lacks meaning or has a different meaning within other paradigms (Smith et al., 1990: 29; see also Caputo, 1987 in Lather, 1992: 96; Kuhn, 1970).

Research paradigms are also distinguished by asking, ‘What type of understanding is sought?’ (see for example Habermas, 1972; Grundy, 1987; Lather, 1992: 88). Researchers’ responses to this question reveal intentions and suggest appropriate approaches. According to Habermas (1972), three underlying cognitive interests can be detected in human ‘knowledge claims’: technical, practical and emancipatory. A technical interest is reflected in control and management of the environment and, for instance, experimentation and prediction. A practical interest orients researchers toward understanding and interaction, recognising values and considering how meaning is interpreted. Research shaped by an emancipatory interest or orientation strives to promote autonomy, insight, self-reflection and heightened consciousness (Grundy, 1987: 8-17).

These cognitive interests are associated with corresponding research paradigms. Lather’s summary (1992: 88) of the relationship between cognitive

interests and research paradigms is presented in Table 4.1. Lather adopts Habermas’ three interests and adds the emerging research interest of deconstruction. This fourth interest appears to require researchers to interrupt or ‘interrogate’ their own assumptions and “taken for granted positionality” and to avoid the tendency to seek expert or universal knowledge or “stories we have previously held to be true” (Gough, 1998: 171).

Predict	Understand	Emancipate	Deconstruct
Positivism	Interpretive Naturalistic Constructivist Phenomenological Hermeneutic Symbolic interaction Microethnographic	Critical Neo-Marxist Feminist Race-specific Praxis-oriented Freirian Participatory	Poststructural Postmodern Post-paradigmatic diaspora

Table 4.1 Research interests and corresponding paradigms (Lather 1992: 88)

The research paradigms identified in this table are not stable or enduring but transient and competing, consistent with Kuhn’s (1970) description of the evolution of science. Lather (1992), Lincoln and Guba (1985: 15), Denzin and Lincoln (1994) and others describe ‘paradigm shifts’ in social science research as, “the process by which one paradigm breaks down and is replaced by another” (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 71-75). A key paradigm shift considered to have occurred during recent decades has been the trend from positivist approaches which reflected an interest in prediction and control, towards interpretive and critical research paradigms which aim to generate understanding and emancipation. This may be construed as a shift from the left to the right in Table 4.1. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 15) describe this as a transition from (1) prepositivist to (2) positivist to (3) postpositivist research. Guba (1990: 117) describes a related transition from (1) positivist/postpositivist

to (2) constructivist-interpretive, critical (Marxist, emancipatory) to (3) feminist and poststructural. Bredo and Feinberg (1982: 5) depict the polarities of research methodologies as ‘hard’ and ‘soft’, with an evident trend toward approaches aligned with the soft end of this continuum.

Contemporary methodologists interested in these transitions suggest that positivist social inquiry declined in dominance during the late 1990s for several reasons. In particular, it came to be viewed as a ‘bourgeois’ research approach in that it tended to support the status quo. Positivist research was also considered to be value laden and imprecise, to assume passivity and to foster instrumental rationality (technical reasoning) through non-reflective, ahistorical and acritical approaches (Smith et al., 1990: 189-194).

As positivist and quantitative research paradigms declined in dominance, qualitative research emerged during the 1970s and 1980s as an acceptable and popular approach. This trend is considered by Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 9) to reflect shifting research values and purposes:

The old functional, positivist, behavioural, totalizing approaches to the human disciplines were giving way to a more pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended perspective ... The concept of the aloof researcher has been abandoned. More action-, activist-oriented research is on the horizon, as are more social criticism and social critique. The search for grand narratives will be replaced by more local, small-scale theories fitted to specific problems and specific situations.

Other relatively recent trends in qualitative research include the emergence of a growing diversity of research methodologies and a willingness by the research community to experiment with, reinvent and combine research approaches. This methodological liberalisation is variously described as “blurred genres” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 7), a “paradigmatic crisis” (Smith et al., 1990: 109) and a “post-paradigmatic diaspora” (Lather, 1992). The result has been what Lather (1992: 96) describes as a “proliferation of discursive

frameworks for understanding contemporary social inquiry” in which the “complex heterogeneity of discourses about inquiry forces a researcher both to relocate away from secure, one best way approaches and to negotiate the resources of different and contested inquiry problematics.”

Emerging research paradigms tend to reject the positivist notion that ‘true knowledge’ is determined by nature and propose instead that people are active agents and shape their worldviews by engaging with the lived world. Zuber-Scerrit (1991: 96) describes this trend away from passivist theories of knowledge toward ‘activist’ theories of knowledge which recognise individuals’ capacity to construct knowledge and to develop and replace conceptual frameworks:

(W)e create our ‘prisons’, we can also, critically, demolish them... we are not inevitably limited by our world-views - we do not have to ‘paint ourselves into a corner’ or construe ourselves as being *limited* by biography.

The emancipatory interest acknowledged in this inquiry is consistent with Zuber-Scerrit’s activist theory of knowledge.

Post-positivist research (Lather, 1986, 1992), responds confidently to the apparent weaknesses of positivist research and offers a less ‘straight-jacketed’ research approach. ‘New paradigm research’ with which Lather is associated is a movement which places less emphasis on the researcher’s prior structuring and identification of themes and more emphasis on what people say. Personal accounts are treated as meaningful and informative, and collaboration between researchers and participants is encouraged (Banister et al., 1996: 52-53; Rowan and Reason, 1981; Harré and Secord, 1972).

Although this research project is informed by established research methodologies, it is also influenced by Lather’s (1992) assurance that innovation is valid. The general upheaval and liberalisation in qualitative research circles

encouraged me to experiment and to discover a research approach suited to my specific purpose and context. As a result, this inquiry has utilised a combination of research traditions, precedents and features to address this novel and interdisciplinary topic of inquiry.

### **4.3 Interpretive and critical methodology and purpose**

The research methodology informing this study is both interpretive and critical. The interpretive dimension is evident in the attempt made here to comprehend how environmental activists see their world and their learning. The critical orientation is reflected in the aspects of this study that are geared toward changing and improving conditions through active participation in the activist community. It is also reflected my efforts to examine in a socially-critical manner both activists' worldviews and the social context within which Australian ENGOs operate. This section briefly describes and situates interpretive and critical research paradigms.

Interpretive research approaches were influenced by hermeneutics, the study and interpretation of the bible, and have been increasingly applied to the study of human action (Smith et al., 1990: 34). Central to the interpretive research approach is a focus on the social rather than the natural world: a focus on meanings, discourse, culture, consciousness, ideas, relationships, values, action and interaction. Interpretivists such as Cicourel (1964, cited in Hammersely, 1993), are "critical of the assumption that there is a common universe of discourse among the relevant parties, so that the manifest content can be taken as a valid unit of study". As a result, interpretive researchers seek to become familiar with relative or socially created knowledge, and accept the co-existence of multiple legitimate interpretations of realities. This reflects their disinclination to accept the notion of absolute truth (Seale, 1998: 27).

Interpretivists seek to develop *verstehen* (Smith et al., 1990: 34), which is a form of knowledge or understanding that requires empathic identification with people in order to come to terms with their subjective experience. This sort of knowledge may require extended field work (Bulmer, 1984: 13). An initial challenge for interpretive researchers seeking this form of understanding is to comprehend how people define their situation. To this end, researchers' participate actively in communities and groups' "negotiation of meaning" (Smith et al., 1990: 35) to identify "patterns of meaning". This approach demands interaction rather than detachment in order that researchers can begin to develop explanations and generalisations.

The forms of knowledge developed through interpretive methodology are distinct from *erklären* which offers causal explanation from an external vantage point (Smith et al., 1990: 34). Interpretive research reflects a "politics of critical, relativistic inquiry into society, rather than a politics of social engineering" (Seale, 1998: 27).

A recurring criticism of interpretive research methodology is that the conventionally narrow focus on understandings that are constructed within particular social situations may risk overlooking broader and hegemonic social factors that are not apparent to community members. There is also a risk that researchers who fail to examine and critique factors that limit and shape behaviour and beliefs may be ideologically blind or contribute to the transmission of ignorance or false consciousness. However, Smith et al (1990: 103) assert that interpretive approaches need not be limited in this way: "Focusing on fine-grained detail of participants' meanings does not necessarily involve a consequential blinkering to the wider structures of influence within which these meanings have evolved."

To address these limitations, this study also draws on critical research

approaches. Critical research provides strategies to identify and explore the social and political factors that constrain or otherwise influence human action. Researchers motivated by a critical interest seek sources of illumination in addition to the opinions and testimonials of participants in a given situation. Smith et al (1990: 35) consider critical research involves an additional dimension to interpretive research in that it “focuses on the potential for understandings of human action to be distorted.” This additional dimension is significant, these authors argue, because “knowledge becomes emancipatory, enabling both researcher and researched to free themselves from limiting social forces.” Critical methodology is associated with forms of knowledge that are “utopian and transformative, built on self-revelation and verified in praxis” (Le Compte et al., 1992: 462). Again, this transformative potential is consistent with my activist interest.

The critical research paradigm encompasses methods and techniques which have been utilised to varying degrees in this study and are discussed elsewhere in this chapter. These include critical ethnography, action research, emancipatory research and praxis. These approaches overlap in that they are, to a greater or lesser degree, openly ideological and political, socially critical, concerned with reform or transformation and emancipatory in orientation (Smith et al., 1990: 175-177).

Whereas interpretive methods promote understanding, critical methods promote social action as an outcome of the research process. This distinction need not suggest, however, that interpretive and critical methods are incompatible. On the contrary, research projects such as this one may initially develop understanding of social action through interpretive methods and subsequently shift in focus to develop a macroanalysis of social forces and promote transformative action through critical methods. This sequential shift is advocated by Bredo and Feinberg (1982: 379) and Comstock (1982) whose

five stage model (described in Section 4.7) influenced this study.

#### **4.3.1 Participant or 'insider' research**

Methodological considerations, such as how researchers frame questions about the world and pursue these questions, also reflect personal factors such as gender, social context, ideas and experiences (Popkewitz, 1984). These factors have influenced the design and conduct of this research and the roles I have adopted as researcher. This section briefly examines significant personal issues that influenced how research questions were framed and pursued during this inquiry.

I have been an activist researcher within the environment movement for more than ten years. As a result, the account given in this thesis is an 'emic' or insider's account rather than 'etic' or outsider's account (See Smith et al., 1990: 166; Le Compte et al., 1992: 463). Researching a social world in which I am an active participant has presented both opportunities and challenges. Several issues associated with participant research are briefly discussed in this section, including obtrusiveness, empathy, theoretical sensitivity, 'insider' status, values resonance and reflexivity.

Babbie describes the varying degrees of "participantness" adopted by qualitative researchers. He suggests social scientists have traditionally emphasised objectivity and detachment in order to "avoid getting swept up in the beliefs of a group" (1998: 286). By contrast, researchers breaking from this tradition participate as active members of groups they are researching. The continuum of observer status or 'participantness' is also discussed in terms of obtrusiveness and unobtrusiveness. Banister, Burman, Taylor and Tindall (1996: 19) provide an example of unobtrusiveness by referring to a research project which involved studies of household rubbish: a project that

did not require researchers to interact with the people whose behaviour they were investigating. Moving from this unobtrusive extreme, researchers participate to a greater extent by requesting feedback on and discussion of their observations, inviting participation and collaboration. Degrees of obtrusiveness or participantness inevitably involve practical considerations about how findings are shared with those whose behaviour is being studied.

During this inquiry I have adopted varying degrees of participation. In terms of the four 'ideal type roles' described by Gold (in Banister et al., 1996: 39) and Germaine (1986), I have adopted both 'participant as observer' and 'observer as participant' roles. Alternative roles described by these and other authors include 'complete participant' and 'complete observer'.

In defining my role as an insider undertaking participant research, I have also been influenced by role definitions such as "initiating facilitator" which Reason (1994: 41) associates with cooperative inquiry. Alternative descriptions of participant researcher roles offered by Smith et al (1990: 234) include "benevolent and socially critical researcher", "visionary", "emissary" and, from Comstock (1982), "critical practitioner". These role descriptors may also be applied to the role I have adopted by inviting informants to become co-researchers or partners in the inquiry process. Recognising the benefits of this kind of partnership, Reason (1994) cautions that research exhibiting excessive concern for participative identity among co-researchers may lead to loss of perspective. On the other hand, too much concern for perspective may "leave co-researchers alienated from each other and from their experience" (1994: 31).

I have also been influenced by the work of contemporary feminist researchers whose research within the Women's Movement offers useful insights concerning participation and levels of obtrusiveness. Feminist researchers

embrace trusting relationships between researchers and research participants, consistent with the research goal of furthering the interests of participants (Seale, 1998: 207). Punch (in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 89) considers the Women's Movement has generated a scholarship which emphasises identification, trust, empathy and non-exploitative relationships. A sense of trust between researchers and research participants may result in "a sense of belonging, acceptance, inclusion, greater opportunity to gain access to situations and ideas not normally available to outsiders, access to more intimate and pertinent detail which is not common knowledge" (Smith et al., 1990: 135).

Two qualities associated with participant research are empathy and theoretical sensitivity. My sense of empathy with the activists involved in this study is inevitable as many were colleagues and friends with whom I enjoyed close relationships and shared experiences. Empathic relationships have contributed to the conduct and findings of this study by creating a high level of openness to and appreciation of how informants perceive reality. It has also been informed by theoretical sensitivity, a quality associated with grounded theory research that is described by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 41-46) as,

an awareness of the subtleties of the meaning of data (and) the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meanings to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn't ... to recognise what is important in data and give it meaning.

Theoretical sensitivity can be gained through a variety of sources including literature, professional and personal experience and the analytical process of research. Research approaches that entail the development and testing of preconceived theories are not considered conducive to theoretical sensitivity as researchers risk being unable to 'see around' favoured theories (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 46).

The ‘insider status’ adopted during phases of this inquiry is a feature of ethnographic research and involved immersion in the daily activity and ‘social intercourse’ of the groups studied (Smith et al 1990: 133). Ethnographers recognise the benefits of seeking “immersion in the points of view they are studying [since they] cannot hope to understand the thoughts and actions of subjects unless [they] can *adopt their points of view as true* - even only temporarily” (Babbie, 1998: 288, italics in original).

Insider research presents both strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and risks. One potentially negative consequence of complete participation or immersion which is identified by Seale (1998: 226) is that researchers risk ‘going native’ or developing ‘over rapport’. Seale encourages participant researchers to develop ‘marginality’ by balancing familiarity and distance or ‘strangeness’ in order to understand the perspectives of informants. Babbie (1998: 288) agrees that researchers benefit by retaining a degree of separation in order to perceive phenomena within frames of reference that are unavailable to research subjects.

A second concern associated with insider research is value resonance (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This expression is used to describe resonance between (1) the values of researchers and participants and (2) researchers’ values, the propositions underlying their methodological paradigm and the values underlying the research context. This research project is susceptible to both these aspects of value resonance. The research approach is overtly activist and is therefore consistent with values evident in environmental advocacy organisations. By virtue of my personal history, I assume I share many values with research informants and collaborators. Value resonance presents both opportunities and risks. A key benefit of value resonance identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 178) is that it can potentially enhance research by “allowing inquiry to proceed meaningfully” and producing “findings and interpretations

that are agreeable from all perspectives.” These authors consider value dissonance to be a potential research obstacle, one that may result in findings and interpretations that have limited credibility.

At the same time, however, value resonance may potentially limit inquiry and make it somewhat circular or introspective. For instance it is possible researchers may prefer questions, topics and conclusions that informants find palatable, rather than venturing into territory where knowledge is elusive and where there may be greater potential for change. In addition, research built on caring relationships may lead researchers to overestimate the extent to which their conclusions can be generalised to other situations (Denzin and Lincoln 1984: 419).

This issue is highlighted by considering the relationship between field and research texts. This inquiry comprises both a field text that documents the tasks and procedures undertaken during the inquiry and a research text written for others (in this case, supervisor and examiners). Complex emotional and ethical relationships between researchers and informants may distort or militate against the development of a research text that analyses findings (Clandinin and Connelly, 1984: 419): “just as the researcher’s relationship to participants shaped the field text, the researcher’s relationship to the inquiry and to the participants shapes the research text.”

To ensure these participant or ‘insider’ research concerns were adequately addressed, appropriate strategies were adopted during this inquiry. For instance, I have attempted to examine the broader social context of research findings by reading, reflecting and distancing myself from the ‘activist world’. Strauss and Corbin (1990: 45) emphasise the difficulty experienced by participant researchers in making creative use of their knowledge and experience while simultaneously comprehending phenomena critically rather

than just “thinking imaginatively”. In this study, I have attempted to follow their advice by periodically stepping back to ask, “What is going on here? Does what I think I see fit the reality of the data?” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 45).

The sense of perspective achieved through such strategies is described variously as reflexivity (Seale, 1998; Banister et al, 1996; Anderson, 1989), researcher self-reflection (Smith et al., 1990: 238) and critical subjectivity (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 327). Reflexivity acknowledges the central position of the researcher in “the construction of knowledge” and asserts that “all findings are constructions, personal views of reality, open to change and reconstruction” (Banister et al., 1996: 151). It involves researchers cultivating their capacity to “reflect upon what they are doing and to recognise that social research is itself a form of intervention in the social and cultural world.” (Seale, 1998: 3). Qualitative and new paradigm research methodologies require researchers to accept and acknowledge the personal perspective and bias involved in their knowledge generation. (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 327).

Insider research confronts the attempt by traditional positivist and interpretivist social sciences to “deny the political aspects of knowledge (and) separate the role of the social scientist ... from her or his role as a political actor” (Horkheimer, 1972, in Bredo and Feinberg, 1982: 327; see also Egan, 2002; Stoecker, 1997). This inquiry does not attempt such separation as it is asserted that any weaknesses of participant research are outweighed by its strengths, particularly in relation to the research question at hand.

#### **4.4 Research methods**

Thus far, Chapter Four has concentrated on research methodology. From this point, I turn from the philosophical to the practical dimension of the study

to describe and explain the design and conduct of the study. The following sections introduce the research methods that were utilised during this study, the techniques adopted to collect and analyse data and to ensure its reliability and validity and, finally, the five research phases of the conduct of the study.

The introduction to this chapter described research methodology as the ‘architecture’ of the study: the general procedure for selecting research problems and developing theories. In the discussion of research methodology that followed, a review of qualitative research methodology literature introduced the notion of ‘new paradigm’ research that is amenable to flexibility and experimentation, motivated by values and compatible with interventionist objectives. New paradigm research is also consistent with research projects such as this that seek to address both interpretive and critical objectives. For these reasons, new paradigm research methodology and corresponding methods have provided both the foundation and architecture of this study.

The two qualitative research methods used in this study were ethnography and action research. These methods were applied in an iterative and adaptive manner, consistent with Denzin and Guba’s (1994) observation that a range of related qualitative methods can be used to “get a better fix on the subject matter at hand” (p.2). Approaches that are multimethod in this sense are common in new paradigm research.

#### **4.4.1 Ethnography**

The first of two research methods utilised in this study is ethnography. This method was adopted for its suitability in a study with both interpretive and critical research interests. As previously noted, interpretive researchers seek to develop an understanding of complex social situations that approximates endogenous or participant understandings. In this manner, ethnographers

seek to describe social settings in great detail and in a manner consistent with the perspective of the inhabitants. This is often referred to as ‘rich’ or ‘thick’ description (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 6; Seale, 1998; Geertz, 1973; Eisner, 1975, cited in Smith et al., 1990: 150). In this sense, ethnographers seek to understand what it is like to “walk around in someone else’s shoes” (Wolcott, 1975, in Anderson, 1986: 1). In fact, an ethnographic study may be considered to have succeeded “to the degree it enables the reader to understand what goes on in a society or social circumstance as well as participants” (Banister et al., 1996: 35).

As well as addressing the interpretive interest in this study, ethnography is also consistent with the critical or interventionist objectives discussed in this chapter and elsewhere. In addition to making observations, gaining data from informants and constructing hypotheses, ethnographers may also act upon such hypotheses (Banister et al., 1996: 2).

Ethnographic research often involves a series of stages during which data collection and analysis techniques become progressively more focused and strategic. Starting with an initially broad focus, ethnographers gather information from a variety of sources including case studies, oral history, informer narratives and collaborative research (Anderson 1989). These sources and the observation and analysis of everyday actions and interactions, identify possible explanations of social behaviour. Subsequent research stages tend to focus on these issues and data collection and analysis becomes more purposeful or discriminatory (Seale, 1998: 223).

Two particular forms of ethnographic research are incorporated in this study. The first, anthropological ethnography, is essentially descriptive. As the contemporary Australian environment movement and its educational dimension are under-represented subjects in academic and popular literature,

a descriptive approach provides a useful depiction to contextualise this inquiry. However, anthropological ethnography is considered inadequate by some researchers (including Anderson, 1986: 2), as it fails to “grasp the complexity and uncertainty of social life”. It has also been criticised for failing to address social dynamics such as agency, reproduction and transformation that may remain covert, yet exert considerable influence (Angus, 1986b: 66; Geertz, 1973; Van Manen, 1983; Fay, 1975; Masemann, 1982).

A second and complementary ethnographic method, critical ethnography, addresses this shortcoming by focusing on individuals’ ‘subjective consciousness’: understandings that are taken for granted rather than held up to scrutiny (Anderson, 1986: 8). While pursuing the interpretive goal of gaining insight into participant’s social realities and meaning, critical ethnographers attempt to combine their analysis of “phenomenal, micro-level experience” with “macro-level structural influences” (Anderson, 1986: 7; see also Angus, 1986a). This level of analysis was the focus of Chapter Two.

Critical ethnography differs from anthropological ethnography in that it is more inclined to empower research participants and alter the status quo: to “free individuals from sources of domination and repression” (Anderson, 1989: 249). To this end, critical ethnography may initially involve case studies, participant observation and interviewing and subsequently incorporate action research. Subsequent research phases involving intervention provide opportunities to test emerging theories. In fact, Banister et al (1996: 35) consider this vital to ethnographic research. Critical ethnography works to generate “emancipatory theory”, “spurring the researched to struggle against oppression” (Lather, 1992: 94). The “vivid accounts of negotiated understandings of people’s social situations” (Smith et al., 1990: 232) that are developed through ethnographic research can assist in self-reflection and contribute to improved understandings and material situations.

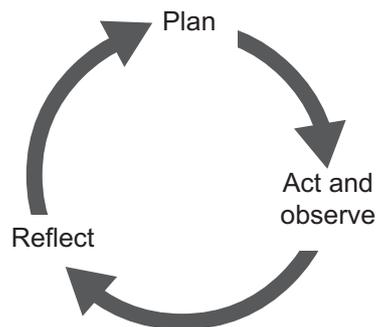
Three aspects of critical ethnography are of particular relevance to this study: the maintenance of shared ownership; active participation and catalytic validity. Techniques to enhance these attributes of the research process are described in following sections. In essence, ethnographic research avoids ‘mystifying’ participants. In response to the criticism that ethnographic studies lack a conceptual structure or theory (Atkinson and Delamont, 1985: 33), critical ethnography holds the potential to ‘dethrone’ or ‘critically unveil’ (Thompson, 1981, in Anderson, 1989: 253) understandings that are taken for granted and to develop knowledge that is not necessarily available to participants. In this respect, it may potentially alienate or threaten research participants, reducing their sense of ownership and the prospect of catalytic outcomes.

Critical ethnography utilises theory in several ways. For instance, judgements based on theory can influence research processes including how data are collected and analysed (Angus, 1986a: 72). Theoretical frameworks are explicated and purposefully utilised throughout the research task. These theories may be drawn from sociological, political or philosophical literature, or may emerge dialectically from data (observation and analysis) during the research project. In either case, theory provides a broader model of society (Masemann, 1982: 9) than an understanding built purely on the basis of the specific situation being analysed.

#### **4.4.2 Action research**

The second and related research method utilised in this study is action research which is a cyclical research method that entails three phases: (1) reflection; (2) planning; and (3) acting and observing. Action research initially involves a broad focus, as reflected in the first three chapters of this text where the environment movement’s strategies and structures and relevant educational

precedents were considered. This focus becomes progressively narrower as research projects evolve. Knowledge gleaned during reflective phases is assimilated by the researcher (Zuber-Scerrit, 1991) in order to develop plans for action. Insights are tested through intervention which in turn leads to observation and further reflection. The process is iterative in that each cycle of inquiry accommodates the insights of preceding cycles.



**Figure 4.1** Action research cycle  
(Kemmis and McTaggart, 1990; Carr and Kemmis, 1990)

Action research originated before the research method liberalisation of the 1970s described above and re-emerged strongly at this time (Lewin, 1946; Polanyi, 1962; Banister et al., 1996: 108). In essence, action research involves studying things by changing them and observing the effects. Banister et al (1996) summarise this fundamental assumption of action research by commenting, “in order to gain insight into a process one must create a change and then observe the variable effects and new dynamics” (p.108).

Action research exhibits three features that are consistent with the objectives and philosophy of this study: (1) it promotes organisational learning and transformation; (2) it empowers people and organisations; and (2) it involves collaborative and reciprocal relationships. This section briefly discusses these three features and identifies specific forms and elements of action research utilised in this study.

First, action research is associated with organisational learning and transformation. Action researchers seek to promote effectiveness and to transform organizations into “collaborative, self reflective communities of inquiry” (Reason, 1994: 49). To these ends, the processes of action research enhance the “quality of attention” of participants, helping them establish the congruence between their purposes, strategies and behaviours (Reason and Rowan, 1981: 145).

McIntyre (2000: 113) associates action research with “a commitment to changing the workplace” and describes it as “working with others in a context on problems experienced by participants.” Action research encourages the development of a critically reflective organisational culture through a variety of strategies. Examples of such strategies are suggested by Argyris and Schön (1978) who speak of haphazard learning, goal-based learning (for instance, through strategic planning and evaluation processes) and learning through critical questioning. Theory derived from the reflective phases of action research is applied in a practical and immediate way. Zuber-Scerrit (1991) asserts action research ideally contributes to improvements in both (1) the researcher’s skills and understanding and (2) the material situation within which the research takes place.

Action research has been applied extensively and to considerable effect in schools (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1990; Carr and Kemmis, 1986), universities (Reason, 1988) and the corporate sector (Foley, 2001). These precedents encouraged me to consider action research a suitable method for this study. I was also encouraged by Zuber-Scerrit’s observation (1991) that adult learning and non-institutional contexts may in fact provide more conducive conditions for collaborative reflection and action than those encountered in educational institutions.

The potential for action research to transform organisations makes it a particularly appealing research method to apply in social movement organisations where energy tends to be directed toward the achievement of short-term, extrinsic and tangible outcomes. As an environmental advocate, I have often observed fellow activists declining to participate in research they did not consider practical or useful.

Second, action research is associated with empowerment and emancipation. Participants in emancipatory action research are “active political agents of reflection and change” (Smith et al., 1990: 211). According to Reason (1994: 48), emancipatory action research has two objectives:

- (1) To produce knowledge and action directly useful to a community through research, adult education and sociopolitical action, and
- (2) To contribute to consciousness raising, or *conscientização* (conscientisation) to use a term popularised by Paulo Freire (1970). People are empowered through the process of “constructing and using their own knowledge: they learn to *see through* the ways in which the established interests monopolize the production and use of knowledge for their own benefit.”

The distinction between these two objectives is comparable to the distinction between micro-level and macro-level analysis in the preceding discussion of ethnography. Just as critical ethnography adds a macro-level analysis to the rich description that is derived through ethnographic research, emancipatory action research complements action research by promoting the development of critical consciousness to inform strategic action (Grundy, 1987; Foley, 2001).

Informed practice and action that arises from self-reflection is often referred to by action researchers as ‘praxis’ (Smith et al., 1990: 181). This study is

especially oriented towards informed action that has been described as facilitated or emancipatory praxis. The former is Comstock's term to describe the intended outcome of research interventions that "enlighten ... subjects as to the irrationality of their social situations" (1982: 279). The latter is an expression associated with Paulo Freire whose community education practices were the subject of discussion in Chapter Three. Freire popularised the expression 'praxis' as a term to refer to informed action arising from enlightenment (1970: 28). His explanation of praxis and its role in addressing his research objectives reflected his critical and emancipatory orientation:

Functionally, oppression is domesticating. To no longer be prey to its force, one must emerge from it and turn upon it. This can be done only by means of the praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.

Freire's persisting influence is evident in McIntyre's (2000: 111) reference to a research project with a Freirian framework that "looked for evidence of participants becoming more conscious of themselves as learners." Similarly, Lather (1986: 73) speaks of Freirian 'empowering research', in which "the methodological task is to proceed in a reciprocal, dialogic manner, empowering subjects by turning them into co-researchers." This involves research methods where "the inquiry process itself is committed to enhancing the personal power of participants" (Lather, 1986: 75).

Literature on emancipatory action research suggests the method is primarily suited to researchers working with under-privileged groups. 'Emancipatory' motivation need not, however, be associated exclusively with efforts to liberate people from oppressive political arrangements or economic injustice. Pope and Denicolo (in Zuber-Scerrit, 1991: 101) describe their action research in educational institutions as emancipatory:

Our action research has been practical both in that it aims to assist the practitioners to understand their implicit theories and related

actions and to assist their professional development. On some occasions it has been emancipatory in that it has fostered a critical response to current organisational constraints and perceived social constraints accumulated through life history.

Although environmental activists are not oppressed in the same sense as the members of Freire's peasant farming communities, they are potentially capable of emancipation from constraints that limit their activist potential. For instance, activist education that helps activists comprehend structural or legal determinants of environmental decisions might empower participants by revealing opportunities to challenge the status quo. Similarly, environmentalists learning about the media may come to see how their efforts are undermined by the media and power-holders through denigration, demonisation and trivialisation.

The third attribute of action research that suggests the method's appropriateness in this study is the emphasis on collaborative and reciprocal relationships. Collaboration is an integral feature of action research. Zuber-Scerif (1991: 94) argues that the active participation of practitioners in theorising and reflecting is an important precursor to meaningful learning and change. This emphasis on independent learning and personal and creative involvement is characteristic of action research methods. It serves to distinguish action research from more conventional methods that rely on researchers to develop model solutions.

Action research takes several forms which are differentiated by the nature and extent of participation and collaboration. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 325) assert that these aspects of research projects become evident by asking three questions. Who owns the knowledge and who can define the reality? Who owns and controls the research process? Whose interests are being served?

In response to such questions, proponents of participatory action research

(PAR) argue that the method rests on the full participation, understanding and cooperation of respondents (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 105) and requires all actors to be equal participants (Grundy and Kemmis, 1982, in Zuber-Skerrit, 1990: 101). Others emphasise collaboration at all research stages (Carr and Kemmis, 1983: 170; Reason, 1994; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This suggests participants contribute to “setting the agenda, participating in the data gathering and analysis, and controlling the use of the outcomes” (Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 329). It is generally noted that these ideals are not necessarily achieved in practice.

This discussion of ethnography and action research has highlighted attributes of both research methods that are compatible with the objectives of this inquiry. It has also provided some detail concerning the techniques of data collection and analysis that are associated with these methods. The following section gives a more thorough and explicit explanation of the specific techniques utilised in this study.

#### **4.5 Data collection techniques**

The introduction to this chapter suggested three inter-related dimensions of the research project: methodology, method and technique. Section 4.5 attends to the third of these dimensions. This study used three main techniques for data collection: accessing existing information, participant observation and interviews. This section also alludes to a wider variety of techniques for data collection that contributed to the study, including surveys and accounts of personal experience.

#### **4.5.1 Accessing existing information**

Qualitative research approaches often incorporate a multitude of data sources, and draw on both pre-existing information and new data generated through the researcher's interactions and observations. Pre-existing data sources include oral history, annals and chronicles, family stories, photographs, memory boxes, personal artefacts, journals, autobiographical writing and letters (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994: 420).

Many researchers have access to a significant body of literature relating to their subject of inquiry. As noted elsewhere however, there is a relative paucity of descriptive, analytical or theoretical documentation of activist education in the Australian environment movement. This absence of prior academic literature necessitated an extensive search for archival materials and oral history in order that the movement's history of activist education could be documented and analysed. Data sources utilised during this search included newsletters, brochures, email correspondence and other ephemera of environment groups. The literature review also entailed extensive World Wide Web research and a three-week study tour of the United States which provided the opportunity to peruse the remarkable activist library of the Highlander Centre in Tennessee and interview international activist researchers.

These data sources helped guide subsequent data gathering techniques which included archival searches, participant observation, tape-recorded interviews and questionnaires.

#### **4.5.2 Participant observation**

A second technique or set of techniques for data collection integral to this study was participant observation. Observation involves describing people and their contexts and describing and interpreting their actions. It can

incorporate both passive techniques such as note taking and photography, and active techniques such as dialogue, interviews and feedback. Potential shortcomings of observation as a data collection technique include its potential to generate findings that are overly subjective, impressionistic or idiosyncratic, its lack of external validity and reliance on the abilities of researcher, and the fact that observation tends to be time-consuming and labour-intensive (Banister et al., 1996: 30). Notwithstanding these limitations, observation served as a particularly useful technique to collect information concerning the behaviour of environmental activists and circumvented their disinclination to document activities.

Another form of observation relevant to participatory research is self-observation. Through self-observation or reflection, researchers stand to gain an increased awareness of their own identity and role in the research process and of factors that may influence or bias how they interpret observations and other data.

The data derived from participant observations that inform this study are drawn from more than a decade's sustained inquiry and include both this project and my Masters Degree. This text focuses on the intentional and structured observations made since April 1998 when this inquiry formally commenced.

### **4.5.3 Interview techniques**

Interviews were a third integral technique of data collection during this study. Interviews are commonly associated with research methods that seek to explore subjective meanings and issues (Banister et al., 1996: 50-51). An interview is essentially a form of conversation that involves the exchange of meaning. Such conversations may be structured or informal and unplanned.

For research purposes, however, it is important that the exchange of meaning involves a degree of rigour: “Before a successful communication cycle can occur, a question must be understood by the respondent in the way the researcher intended and the answer must be understood by the researcher in the way the respondent intended” (Foddy, 1993: 23).

A researcher’s interview technique should be consistent with their intentions and purposes. As such, interview approaches ideally correspond to underlying methodology. For instance, ethnographic, ‘new paradigm’, feminist and postmodernist interviewing techniques (Banister et al., 1996: 52) can be readily associated with corresponding research methods and methodologies.

Fontana and Frey (in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 361-376) describe a plethora of interview approaches, including structured and unstructured, exploratory, pretest, phenomenological, directive and nondirective, group interviews, oral history, creative interviewing, gendered interviews and *forget ‘how to’ rules* interviews. Massarik (in Reason and Rowan, 1981: 201) adds to this interview typology hostile, limited survey, rapport, asymmetrical, trust, depth and phenomenal interviews. Interview techniques appear limited only by researcher imagination and can be highly specific and contextualised, such as Scidman’s (1991, in Fortino, 1997) three session, semi-structured interview technique.

The three main interview techniques applied in this study were *depth*, *phenomenological* and *qualitative* interviews. Depth interviews (Babbie, 1998: 282; Foddy, 1993: 137) rely on the interviewer to use ingenuity in asking impromptu questions “until the particular subject seems to have been wrung dry”. Like other qualitative research techniques, depth interviews provide an insight into the “mind of the interviewer as well as the mind of the person interviewed” (Foddy, 1993: 137).

According to Massarik (in Reason and Rowan, 1981: 201), phenomenological interviews are characterised by:

maximal mutuality of trust, attaining a genuine and deeply experienced caring between the interviewer and interviewee, and a commitment to joint search for shared understanding. Interviewer and interviewee respond to one another as total persons, ready to actively examine both remote and accessible aspects of their lives including experiences, present responses and imageries.

This type of interview requires a fluid timeframe, free access to one another and unstructured or free-form dialogue, rather than a question-answer exchange.

Qualitative interviews share this informality and spirit of cooperative or joint inquiry. Interviewer and interviewee participate fully as human beings in relation to each other and the phenomena of concern. Foddy (1993: 10) suggests “it is generally accepted that qualitative interviews should normally precede the construction of formalised questions” helping “sensitise the researcher to the communicative norms that prevail in the respondents’ community”. These interviews are flexible and continuous rather than “prepared in advance and locked in stone” (Babbie, 1998: 43-47):

The continuous nature of qualitative interviewing means that the questioning is redesigned throughout the project ... each time you repeat the basic process of gathering information, analyzing it, winnowing it, and testing it, you come closer to a clear and convincing model of the phenomenon you are studying.

These three interviewing techniques share an emphasis on flexibility, responsiveness (Kvale, 1996, in Babbie, 1998: 2000) and creativity (Douglas, 1985: xi) on the part of the researcher. In particular, they require concerted attention to the formulation of interview questions, which Foddy (1993: ix) considers receives inadequate attention. ‘Open’ questions that invite descriptive responses are one tool to promote this flexible and responsive

disposition. Closed questions such as those that invite a yes/no response are considered to “lock respondents into arbitrarily limited alternatives” (Foddy, 1993: 127; see also Seale, 1998: 130). Open, questions by contrast, “allow respondents to say what is really on their minds without being influenced by suggestions from the researcher” (Foddy, 1993: 127). They are particularly well suited to the early stages of research projects that precede the development of conceptual categories. Foddy (1993) suggests open questions remain important at later research stages to provide opportunities to elicit unexpected or contradictory information.

A practical shortcoming of open questions is that the interview may not remain focused on the phenomena of specific interest to the researcher. This was an issue during this inquiry, as interviews shifted focus at times from activist teaching and learning to discussions about campaigns, colleagues and other issues of mutual interest.

In addition to face-to-face interviews, this study also made considerable use of email communication to conduct both unstructured and semi-structured interviews. Computer Moderated Communication (Mann and Stewart, 2000), or email, enhanced my access to many informants who were either distant or busy. Both the Heart Politics and Queensland Conservation Council studies utilised email as a key communication mechanism. In the QCC action research study for instance, participants and trainers involved with the 1998 State Conservation Conference responded by email to questions and prompts to detail their learning approaches and outcomes. Similarly, the transcriptions of interviews that had been conducted with members of the Heart Politics organising collective were emailed to them to facilitate member checks as a measure of validation.

#### 4.5.4 Interviews, relationships and interpretation

Relationships between interviewers and respondents make the task of interpreting data derived through this technique a complicated matter. As I knew many of the activists and activist educators interviewed in this study and relied extensively on interviews as a data collection technique, these issues are discussed briefly here.

Respondents to interview questions may be influenced by factors including their perception of the situation and of their relationship with the interviewer. This is particularly likely if the relationship is one involving authority or power. Likewise, respondents may be influenced by their perception of the purpose of the interview; whether they consider it primarily addresses the researcher's objectives only or addresses mutual and negotiated objectives. Smith et al (1990: 140-141) and Lincoln and Guba (1985: 94) suggest such factors may result in interviewees attempting to assist and cooperate, or acquiescing to the researcher. By the same token, as noted above, these factors may result in disinterest.

This issue is further explored by Foddy (1993: 21; see also Banister et al 1996) who asserts that, "Respondents' perceptions of the way the researcher sees them will influence their answers". Moreover, Bulmer (1984: 211-212) describes researcher-respondent interaction as "a subtle and negotiable social encounter in which the respondent is presenting the self which he wants to present or thinks the (researcher) wishes to see." Bulmer suggests that "respondents will constantly try to reach a mutually shared definition of the situation with the researcher".

These factors are significant considerations in this study. Empathy and identification with interview respondents have been described elsewhere as

conducive to the interpretive purpose of this study as they contribute to the development of shared understandings. The same preconditions may, however, result in research conclusions that are limited or biased or prevent the study from achieving critical objectives such as the identification of hegemonic and oppressive dynamics and the facilitation of emancipatory change.

There is no simple resolution to these issues. In general, new paradigm interviewers are urged to dismiss the notion of a “faceless subject and invisible researcher” and to acknowledge that they are neither neutral nor unbiased (Fontana and Frey, in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 372). They are alerted to the significant influence the act of interviewing may have on respondents’ “patterns of awareness of their situation” and on their realities (Reason and Rowan, 1981: 379). Furthermore, researchers who benefit from shared understandings, open access and opportunities for collaboration are encouraged by Denzin and Lincoln (1994) to participate actively while remaining reflexive and mindful of their influence and relationships with respondents.

A further significant issue for researchers utilising interview techniques is the vexing question of consistency between what interviewees *say* and what they *do* (see Foddy, 1993: 3; Bulmer, 1984: 31; Seale, 1998: 26). In this regard, a multimethod research approach provides the additional strength of seeking consistency between conclusions derived from interviews, observation and other data sources. The benefits of this form of triangulation are discussed in Section 4.8.

#### **4.5.5 Ethogeny, accounts and personal experience**

A further technique used to generate data in this study was the collection and analysis of accounts of personal experience. As a technique of data

collection, accounts differ from interview responses in that they are not necessarily prompted by questions that have been formulated by interviewers. They are the ‘building blocks’ of a research method known as ethogeny (Harré and Secord, 1972; Reason and Rowan, 1981; Adelman, 1981; Ellis and Flaherty, 1992; Pitman, 1990; Banister et al., 1996; Davies, 1993). Ethogeny legitimates informants’ ability to “reflect upon and give meaning to their experiences” (Davies, 1989: 3; see also Harré and Secord, 1972: 102). As such, ethogeny may be clearly differentiated from research methods that rely primarily on theoretical and exogenous frameworks to provide explanations and understandings of social behaviour. Instead of relying on their own or other theorists’ explanations, ethogenic researchers rely on actors to explain their own behaviour. Another distinctive feature of ethogeny suited to this inquiry is its intrinsic flexibility and adaptability. This feature is evident in Davies’ depiction of ethogenic inquiry as “free-wheeling in its discussion of how researchers might go about discovering the life worlds of the people they were interested to study”(1993: xiii).

Oleson (in Ellis and Flaherty, 1992: 206) describes accounts as “reflexive narratives of lived experience”. Like a jigsaw, accounts “piece together what the underlying form of that world is really like” (Banister et al., 1996: 93). Ethogenic researchers are especially interested in “trusting accounts”. For instance, Reason and Rowan (1981: 374) suggest that trust potentially transforms research interviews to “a chance to tell somebody about something which was of major importance to (informants) and yet which they might never have talked about before.” Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 415) note that accounts are often shared as story:

When persons note something of their experience, either to themselves or to others, they do so not by mere recording of experience over time, but in storied form. Story is, therefore, neither raw sensation nor cultural form; it is both and neither. In effect, stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. A story has a sense of being full, a

sense of coming out of a personal and social history. People live stories, and in the telling of them reaffirm them and create new ones.

By comparison to interview responses, accounts provide representations of experience that are more subtle and may be considered multi-dimensional. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) outline four perspectives they consider fruitful for researchers who hope to gain an insight into (and from) personal experience. Researchers can explore inward (internal feeling, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions), outward (existential conditions, environmental, reality), backward (temporality, past and present) and forward (looking to the future). The interviews, surveys, observations and reflections informing this inquiry manifest each of these four dimensions.

Research methods that draw primarily on personal experience are criticised on several fronts. From a practical perspective, personal approaches potentially provide data that is too comprehensive or holistic: raw sensory experience that is “next to meaningless” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994: 414). Personal experience methods also trigger emotional involvement. This has traditionally been considered problematic and has been avoided by quantitative researchers (see Ellis and Flaherty, 1992), but is increasingly considered to be a valid form of data in new paradigm research.

Despite these concerns, ethogeny was considered particularly appropriate for this inquiry as it utilises actors’ accounts of their situations and experiences as a key form of data and does not depend on the prior existence of secondary and tertiary literature sources. As noted in Chapters One and Two, the environment movement is typically under-documented and under-theorised. Critical exploration of the reasons for the apparent neglect of intentional teaching and learning demanded innovation with respect to data sources. Individuals who have been in the movement for more than a few years become repositories of living memory and influential figures in shaping the future

direction of environmental organisations. This information can not be accessed in written form. It is rarely documented but can be accessed through verbal accounts of activists' experience.

#### **4.5.6 Sampling**

The research techniques adopted in this inquiry also guided the purposeful selection of people with whom to conduct interviews and from whom to collect accounts. Sampling techniques adopted here were drawn from grounded theory research method (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and involved open, theoretical and discriminate sampling.

Initial sampling was open. During my Masters Degree (Whelan, 1994), I interviewed effective, reflective and articulate activists whenever the opportunity arose. Toward the end of that degree, especially as I analysed interview transcripts and completed the thesis, a number of patterns and themes became evident. At the commencement of this research project which represents a purposeful focusing of the previous inquiry, sampling remained open, but soon became more deliberate. For example, I actively sought interviewees whose work, experience and previous statements suggested they may either support or contradict generalisations or categories that were apparent in other accounts. This shift suggests the benefits of theoretical and discriminate sampling. The former involves the selection of locations for observation and interviews that offer particular relevance to "concepts that have proven theoretical relevance to the evolving theory" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 176). This approach is cumulative in the sense that it builds on prior research processes, is well thought out and planned, and remains responsive to emerging insights. The latter, discriminate sampling, involves the selection of sites, participants and documents that "maximise opportunities for verifying the storyline, relationships between categories and for filling in poorly developed categories" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 187).

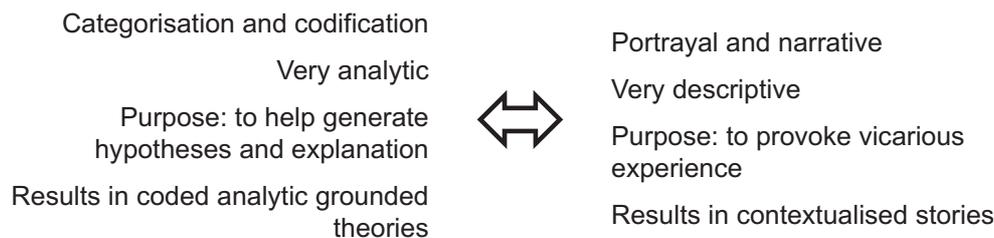
## 4.6 Data analysis

The previous section outlined techniques of data collection. A distinct but related set of techniques were adopted to guide and facilitate the analysis and interpretation of data collected during the study. These techniques are described in this section. They are derived from qualitative research methods including grounded theory and phenomenology.

Analytical procedures generally follow data generation and collection phases. They are utilised to identify and validate patterns, categories and theories. The analysis of interviews, for instance, involves searching for commonalities across and within interview transcripts (Fortino, 1997). Techniques adopted for data analysis are influenced by research intentions and objectives. For example, the interpretive interest motivating this inquiry predisposed me to adopt techniques of data analysis that would generate a detailed description of the social world of environmental activists. This critical interest meant I was also interested in ensuring that data analysis took the inquiry beyond description to generate hypotheses in order to account for emerging findings and justify proposals for action or intervention. The qualitative research methods described in Section 4.4 infer particular inclinations toward data analysis, ranging from rigorous coding and the development of theory to narrative descriptions which relate in detail the human experience of a situation. This continuum is depicted in the figure below.

This tension between description and analysis presents a dilemma for qualitative researchers. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) warn that qualitative, new paradigm researchers may “lose track of the forest for the trees ... find it hard to draw closure to a study ... (and require) “constant attention to (their) intention from beginning to end of the study”. These demands are balanced by the opportunity to redefine the focus of a study in response to “unexpected and interesting events and stories” which may be difficult to incorporate in

less accommodating research methods. The tension between the two ends of the continuum represented in Figure 4.2 may prevent researchers from attending adequately to both analysis and description (Smith et al., 1990: 148). How researchers resolve this tension between focus and portrayal may be influenced by factors such as their audience and purpose.



**Figure 4.2** Data analysis: An interpretive methods continuum  
(based on Smith et al., 1990: 142)

In response to questions concerning the degree of interpretation necessary or desirable in qualitative research, Strauss and Corbin (1990) present three differing views. One approach is to let informants speak for themselves: to adopt a ‘journalist’ role and faithfully record and present informants’ views of reality as reflections of the ‘truth’. A second approach might call on the researcher to present a more ‘accurate’ description by reducing and ordering data. A third possibility is that researchers might extract from data the building blocks of theory in order to provide a framework for action.

Techniques of data analysis adopted in this inquiry correspond to each of these three possibilities. The accounts and explanations of personal experience presented in chapters Five and Six are recounted in sufficient detail to provide first-person accounts and allow informants’ voices to be faithfully communicated. In both the QCC and Heart Politics studies, I have also attempted to derive and validate theory. The analytical techniques employed to reduce and order data and extract theory in this study have been influenced

by grounded theory. These specific techniques are discussed in some detail below.

#### **4.6.1 Data analysis in grounded theory**

Grounded theory is a research method, not simply a set of techniques. Its inclusion in this section of the chapter rather than in the previous discussion of research methods is deliberate. This is not a grounded theory study but, instead, an ethnographic and action research study. It has incorporated only those techniques of grounded theory research that were considered most useful and appropriate.

The goal of grounded theory research is “to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behaviour which is relevant and problematic for those involved” (Strauss, 1987: 34). Grounded theory is inductively derived from the study of the phenomena of interest. It is “discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis.” As such, it is not constrained by an existing theory that a researcher seeks to prove but rather begins with “an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 23; see also Babbie, 1998: 283).

This explanation highlights a significant distinction between grounded theory and other forms of theory. The distinction is further emphasised by Strauss and Corbin (1990: 174) who contrast substantive and formal theories. These authors associate substantive theory with the study of a phenomenon in one particular situation or context. They portray formal theory, by contrast, as explanations that emerge from the study of a phenomenon under many types of situations. Formal theories are more likely to be presented as having broad or universal applicability or as ‘grand narratives’. In this respect, grounded theory researchers may value theories that are applicable in a variety of

contexts, but tend not to “make the leap from substantive to formal theory” on the basis of studies that are limited temporally or spatially (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 174). This distinction is important in this study which attempts to generate theory to explain activist education in the contemporary Australian environment movement but makes no claim that the theory applies to other social movements in other contexts.

The method of grounded theory is associated with a range of techniques for data collection, interpretation and verification. In the first instance, data is collected through techniques similar to those associated with ethnography and action research including observation and interviewing. Data analysis in grounded theory involves the development of conceptual categories to explain social behaviour. These categories may, for instance, become evident as recurring themes in responses to interview questions. Ideally, explanatory categories are developed during the study rather than being appropriated from exogenous sources. This is underscored by grounded theorists who consider that borrowing categories from other theories or studies is like “forcing round data into square categories” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 37) and that borrowed categories are “harder to find, fewer in number and not as rich.” This does not imply grounded theory should remain isolated from existing literature, but that such links should be established “after the analytical core of the categories has emerged” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 39).

Evidence such as interview transcripts and observations are then used to illustrate the suggested categories in an analytical procedure referred to as the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 23). This procedure is an important part of the presentation and interpretation of data in the two chapters that follow.

A subsequent interpretive stage is the development of concepts and core

concepts that reflect and explain social action and interaction and form the basis of theory. As categories and concepts emerge, procedures to verify these conclusions are utilised. Evidence is used to test emerging theory. By contrast with quantitative data analysis techniques, hypothesis and explanations in grounded theory are accepted on the basis of “evidence enough only to establish a suggestion - not an excessive piling up of evidence for a proof” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967: 39). Accordingly, drawing closure to a grounded theory study does not require the rigour associated with conventional quantitative research.

Observation, data gathering, the development of categories and concepts, codification, theory development and testing proceed until ‘theoretical saturation’ is evident in one or more ways: “(1) no new or relevant data seem to emerge regarding a category; (2) the category development is dense, insofar as all the paradigm elements are accounted for, along with variation and process; (3) the relationships between categories are well-established and validated” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 188). Researchers utilising grounded theory methods are encouraged to consider their categories sufficient when participants either affirm their adequacy or cease to provide additional categories. This point of saturation is considered essential to generate conceptually-adequate theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 188).

Finally, theory is presented. Glaser and Strauss (1967: 31) suggest theory may be presented as a codified set of propositions, or as a “running theoretical discussion, using conceptual categories and their properties.” This study utilised grounded theory method in a liberal manner, drawing on procedures associated with this method such as theoretical sampling, respondent validation and triangulation (Seale, 1998: 231). These techniques are discussed further in this chapter. Although Strauss and Corbin (1990) articulate precise techniques for grounded theory research, including three distinct procedures

for coding or interpreting data, they also endorse a flexible approach (1990: 59) in their disclaimer that, “while we set these procedures and techniques before you, we do not at all wish to imply rigid adherence to them.”

Grounded theory was incorporated in this inquiry for three reasons. First, grounded theory does not presume the prior existence of theory and literature about the topic of interest. At the time this study was commenced, I had not discovered an activist education literature despite my long-standing prior interest in the topic. Second, grounded theory is responsive to researcher intention and the unique characteristics of the research context. Third, grounded theory is oriented toward collaboration and the practical application of generated knowledge. This feature was particularly attractive as my colleagues had indicated during initial stages of this inquiry that they were interested in collaborating in this inquiry as they considered they would be able to apply the knowledge generated in the process.

Like action research, grounded theory can also facilitate personal and organisational transformation. Glaser and Strauss (1967: 4) make this point by observing that, “Since the categories are discovered by examination of the data, laymen involved in the area to which the theory applies will usually be able to understand it”. The significance of categories or themes that emerge through grounded theory is suggested by research participants’ spontaneous adoption of the categories in discussions about the phenomena concerned (Reason and Rowan, 1981: 382) and their use of the categories to frame changes in personal and organisational behaviour. This degree of adoption or ownership was achieved in the QCC study (Chapter Five) where the categories that were developed to explain dimensions of activist education became part of the organisation’s conceptual language and have helped frame subsequent collaborative projects.

These techniques and features of grounded theory are incorporated in the following figure.

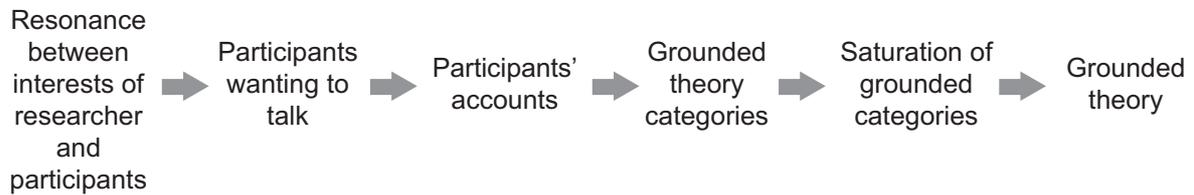


Figure 4.3 Grounded theory stages  
(after Reason and Rowan 1981: 376)

Figure 4.3 incorporates techniques of data collection and analysis discussed in this chapter including accounts and interviews and the development and validation of categories to explain social behaviour. The figure also conveys the importance of collaboration in this research method, and suggests that grounded theory relies on successful collaboration throughout the research process. Participants in this inquiry have collaborated by helping define the research problem, analyse data and suggest how the research findings may be applied. These collaborative strategies are consistent with research methods described by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 27) as endogenous. Grounded theory is considered endogenous to the extent that research participants are given equal rights of determination (Reason and Rowan, 1981: 376, 378) by contrast to exogenous approaches in which researchers remain in control.

A significant benefit of endogenous research is the possibility that the inquiry will be continued once the researcher's (formal) study is concluded. Reason and Rowan (1981) suggest that personal and organisational transformation is most likely to be facilitated by long-term research projects where the categories and concepts used by the participants are taken seriously. They question the validity and quality of data that emerge from research projects which are not interesting to participants: "We may presume that the participants have no reason to go to the trouble of supplying good data" (p.378).

Other data analysis techniques associated with qualitative research methods include counting (frequencies), noting patterns and themes, seeing plausibility, clustering, making metaphors, splitting variables, subsuming particulars, factoring, noting relations between variables, finding intervening variables, building a logical chain of evidence and making conceptual or theoretical coherence (Smith et al., 1990: 150-160). Elements of this 'toolbox' of techniques were also utilised in the analysis of data collected during the two studies that follow.

This concludes the justification of data collection and analysis techniques adopted in the study. The final two sections of this chapter describe the five phases of the conduct of the study and identify and address issues of ethics, validity and reliability.

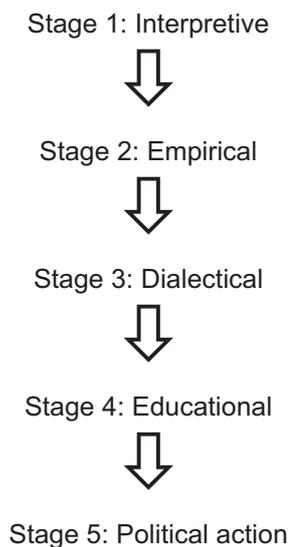
#### **4.7 The conduct of the study: Five phases**

As noted already, the study was conducted in an iterative manner consistent with new paradigm and qualitative research methods and techniques. The conduct of the study involved a sequence of phases which reflected a progressive shift from an initially interpretive orientation toward a more critical and emancipatory orientation as understandings and opportunities emerged. A closely related set of stages are described in Comstock's (1982: 279) model of 'emancipatory praxis'. These stages are identified in Figure 4.4 below.

Comstock's initial interpretive phase entails observation and inquiry to understand social action and its context. The subsequent empirical phase involves analysis through strategies including coding, the development of theoretical constructs, categorisation and validation. The third, dialectical, phase suggests reflection, dialogue, planning and intervention. The fourth

and fifth phases involve education and political action to engage participants in reflection and action and transform both understandings and concrete situations.

The research methods and techniques discussed in this chapter are integrated in Comstock's model. The first stage of emancipatory praxis has clear links with the data collection techniques and descriptive understanding associated with ethnography. The second and third stages involve techniques of data analysis that are associated with grounded theory. The fourth and fifth stages involve intervention and opportunities for action research consistent with the action research and activist orientation expressed in this inquiry.



**Figure 4.4** Five stages of emancipatory praxis  
(Comstock 1982)

Table 4.2 provides an overview of this study and demonstrates how the five research phases coincide with the stages and sequence in Comstock's model. These stages are: (1) situating the study; (2) scoping and defining phenomena; (3) collaborating for change; (4) spirals of action and reflection; and (5) looking to the future. Table 4.2 also identifies the methods utilised in this study during each research phase.

This table indicates the sequential nature of the inquiry and identifies the

research methods that correspond to each research phase. In the sections that follow, these research phases are described in turn.

#### **4.7.1 Phase One: Situating the study**

The first stages of Comstock's model of emancipatory praxis are described as empirical and interpretive, suggesting that knowledge is gained through experience and understanding. Accordingly, the main techniques for generating and collecting data during the first phase of this study were personal experience and reflection, participant observation and accessing existing information. As suggested in Table 4.2, these techniques are associated with ethnography. The knowledge developed during early stages of this inquiry related to: (1) environment movement structures and traditions; (2) activist strategies and motivations; and (3) relevant educational paradigms.

This phase was impeded to some extent by the lack of written documentation within the environment movement. Notable exceptions to this pattern include articulate analyses of the Franklin River campaign by Runciman et al (1986), Green (1981) and Cohen's more recent *Greenfire* (1997). Although written material is uncommon and difficult to access, the environment movement has a rich oral history that was accessed via interviews with seasoned activists.

The initial research phase also served to clarify research objectives and questions and to identify appropriate research methods and techniques. The literature review and initial cycles of inquiry described in the QCC action research study (Chapter Five) shaped the research questions which ultimately came to frame the study. For instance, unstructured interviews with environmental activists revealed a widespread interest in the relationship between significant life experiences and activism. This issue which may have dominated the study did not provide a suitable focus for a change-oriented

study (it is not possible to rewrite activists' history in order to enhance their advocacy) and was subsequently excluded from interviews. Similarly, the keen interest expressed by QCC activists in collaborating for change reoriented my initially ethnographic approach toward action research.

Research phases	Emancipatory praxis stages (Comstock 1982)	Research methods
<i>Phase One</i> Situating the study	Interpretive	Ethnography
	Empirical	
<i>Phase Two</i> Defining phenomena and organising principles	Dialectical	Ethnography Critical ethnography
	Educational	
<i>Phase Three</i> Collaborating for change	Political action	Action research
	Educational	
<i>Phase Four</i> Spirals of action and reflection	Political action	Critical ethnography Action research
	Educational	
<i>Phase Five</i> Looking to the future	Political action	Action research

Table 4.2 Research methods and phases associated with emancipatory praxis

#### 4.7.2 Phase Two: Defining phenomena and organising principles

The second phase of inquiry involved defining the phenomena that relate to, influence and explain activist learning. The interpretivist approach during this phase required the (re)discovery of the (inter)subjective world of language and meaning in the activist community. This phase of the inquiry generated a shared understanding of terms such as teaching, learning, education, training and effectiveness as an important antecedent to collaborative action.

The techniques for data collection and analysis that were employed during the second research phase included: (1) interviewing; (2) obtaining experiential descriptions from others and reflecting on my own experience; (3) journals, diaries and logbooks; (4) observation; (5) using biography as a resource for experiential material and (6) drawing on experiential descriptions in literature.

These techniques were employed in the context of two case studies. Chapter Two referred to other instances of activist research that utilised case studies. In particular, Finger's (1989) case study of environmental activist 'Alain' examined this activist's environmental adult transformation and Webb's (1984a) case study of Anti-Nazi League activists explored the development of activist skills. Case studies incorporate techniques such as those listed above (Atkinson and Delamont, 1985: 48-49) and allow researchers to concentrate on specific instances or situation to identify key interactive factors or events (Bell, 1987: 6; Bulmer, 1984: 210).

These two case studies were located within the Queensland Conservation Council (QCC) and the Heart Politics gatherings respectively. Both case studies were initially ethnographic in nature and utilised techniques including an extensive period of immersion and observation, reflection, description and in-depth interviews with organisers and participants. In the case of the

QCC case study, this ethnographic phase was followed by educational and political action phases.

This second phase also involved the use of techniques to triangulate, validate and analyse the data collected through observation and interviews. For instance, drafts of interview summaries, initial analyses of these interviews and draft chapters of this thesis were shared with participants in order to ensure accuracy, promote reflection and dialogue and generate theory. These techniques established that the derived categories were accurate and comprehensive, achieving *theoretical saturation*. These methods and techniques also served to identify organising principles pertaining to activist training. These principles in turn helped shape the interventions undertaken during the following phases.

### **4.7.3 Phase Three: Collaborating for change**

The third phase of the inquiry involved collaborative intervention with a number of environmental advocacy groups in order to learn more about the obstacles and opportunities for activist education and training. This phase was dialectic in the sense that it involved testing and comparing ideas and points of view that had been identified in the first two phases.

By contrast to conventional research, which tends to be initiated and directed by one party (Reason, 1994: 201), the action research study undertaken with the Queensland Conservation Council incorporated strategies to promote collaboration. Fellow activists participated in tacit and explicit ways through dialogue, collaborative inquiry and action. Their collaboration involved negotiating aspects of the research process, adopting co-researcher roles and suggesting how the inquiry might proceed. The benefits of such collaborative relationships involve purposeful sampling, emergent design and meaningful judgement (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 102-103).

In addition to these tangible benefits, this study also built cooperative and mutual relationships as an expression of social ecology, attempting to match the research method to its intended outcomes. Reason (in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 325) expresses a similar commitment to ensuring synchronicity between research purpose and process:

It seems to be urgent for the planet and all its creatures that we discover ways of living in more collaborative relations with each other and with the wider ecology. I see ... participative approaches to inquiry and the worldview they foster as part of this quest.

Reason suggests collaborative inquiry and collective environmental action are motivated by common concerns. By implication, environmental advocates might be presumed to share a keen interest in developing theories to inform and enhance their action. This presumption is not, however, consistent with my experience as an activist. Theories to explain environmental advocacy are not a common feature of dialogue within the environment movement. This apparent disinclination to develop theory to explain, understand or strategically improve practices may suggest that activists perceive a dichotomy between theory and practice.

A similar dichotomy is evident in the feminist movement “where all concrete action is viewed as more important than any theory, written or spoken” (hooks, 1994: 65-66). According to hooks, marginalised groups risk a further layer of oppression by rejecting theory in an ‘anti-intellectual’ way and failing to consider it useful to social practice. In her analysis of the black rights movement, hooks questions whether activists can “engage in revolutionary black liberation and feminist struggle without theory.” A parallel critique can be developed in relation to the environment movement where the prevailing sense of urgency is not expressed in an interest in theory. “It is not easy to name our pain, to make it a location for theorising” says hooks (1994: 74). She advocates research approaches in which theory “emerges from the concrete,

from the efforts to make sense of everyday life experiences, from my efforts to intervene critically in my life and the lives of others.” A similarly commonsense approach to theory has been adopted in this study.

During this phase of the inquiry I conducted and evaluated a series of short workshops with activists associated with QCC and other regional environment groups. These workshops corresponded to categories of activist education identified through the interviews conducted during both the Heart Politics and QCC studies. The conduct and evaluation of these workshops are described in Chapter Five as a second action research cycle.

As the Heart Politics study was conducted over a shorter timeframe than the QCC action research project it did not provide the same range of opportunities for educational and political action. The key collaborative and educative action undertaken during this case study was a workshop I co-facilitated with Heart Politics veteran and prominent activist educator Katrina Shields in September 1998 (discussed in Section 6.11).

#### **4.7.4 Phase Four: Spirals of action and reflection**

The fourth phase of the study incorporated educational and political action consistent with the final stages of emancipatory praxis. This phase was distinct from the third phase in that it reflected a greater sense of confidence and purpose. Whereas the third phase had involved tentative and discrete interventions to test the ideas and themes that were generated through initial data collection and analysis, this fourth phase involved interventions that were planned and implemented on a larger scale. They were informed by the understandings of activist education that had been developed and validated during the prior action research cycles conducted in the QCC study and interviews and observations in the Heart Politics study.

The most significant element of this phase was a three-day activist training program. This program included workshops that addressed several dimensions of activist learning. The event provided excellent opportunities to further develop and validate theories of activist education.

Collaborative interventions during this phase also led to several unexpected catalytic outcomes. For example, the Movement Action Plan workshop with Bill Moyer inspired a discussion among regional cycling advocates who utilised Moyer's framework to analyse and plan their campaign. Other catalytic outcomes are described in Section 5.6.

#### **4.7.5 Phase 5: Looking to the future (merging the research and the project)**

The fifth phase of emancipatory praxis emphasises political action that is oriented toward the transformation of concrete situations. This phase signifies the convergence between the interests that motivate me as a researcher and those that motivate me as an activist. Phases one to four were primarily intended to generate a useful understanding of activist education. In this fifth phase, this understanding is applied to its intended purpose: namely, to enhance environmental advocacy.

The conduct of this research project was motivated by a prior and deeply held interest that persists beyond the project. For the purposes of drawing closure to the study, certain activities related to this project were excluded from the research text. Several of these projects are mentioned briefly in Chapter Seven.

## **4.8 Ethical considerations, validity and reliability in insider research**

The final section of this chapter shifts from the practical dimension of the study to questions concerning ethical standards and validity. New paradigm and insider research approaches present a range of ethical issues. The liberalisation suggested by new paradigm research literature does not justify a cavalier approach. On the contrary, participant researchers who fail to attend to these ethical issues may risk “unwittingly becom(ing) an unguided projectile bringing turbulence to the field, fostering personal trauma (for both researcher and researched) and even causing damage to the discipline” (Punch, in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 83). The representation of personal stories in this research text raises particular issues of responsibility and care. These issues are highlighted by Clandinin and Connelly (1994: 422) who consider the lives of participants in personal experience research may be influenced by how their experience is portrayed in research texts.

The sweep of ethical issues described by research methodologists include power imbalance, confidentiality, anonymity, accountability, harm, consent, deception, privacy, voluntary participation and protecting, not harming or deceiving participants. Appropriate strategies were developed and adopted during this study to address these issues. These strategies are described in detail in context in Chapters Five and Six. One particular and recurring strategy adopted throughout the study was to check with informants that their transcribed interviews and my interpretations of their accounts were both accurate and fair and that they were willing for the accounts to be represented in this text. As a result of this process I established informants’ consent to include their accounts in this text as well as increasing their interest and involvement in elements of the study.

Research ethics are not necessarily absolute but can be partially dictated by

contextual factors, according to Babbie (1998: 438): “What we regard as morality and ethics in day-to-day life is a matter of agreement among members of a group”. The studies described in Chapters Five and Six involved appropriate strategies for negotiating ethical research relationships and procedures.

A second set of considerations is required in order to enhance the validity of qualitative research findings and procedures (Guba and Lincoln, 1985; Reason, and Rowan, 1981; Lather, 1986; Babbie, 1998; Seale, 1998). In essence, validity involves checking that the research approach actually measured what it intended to and did so accurately. Three measures of validity were considered relevant to this research project: face validity, construct validity and catalytic validity.

The first, face validity, is an indicator of agreement between researchers and their informants concerning the description, interpretation and analysis of statements and behaviours. One common technique to ensure face validity is a member check. Member checks involve asking some or all participants to examine transcripts and tentative conclusions and provide feedback to assist in refinement (Reason and Rowan, 1981; Smith et al., 1990: 229; Lamonski, 1983: 59).

This strategy does not necessarily guarantee face validity. Although ‘recycling’ transcripts and analyses draws validity from the perspectives of both researcher and respondent, both parties may perceive the situation in distorted ways. Lather (1996: 76) argues that the “reciprocally confirming nature of hegemony” requires that analysis “not be limited to the actor’s perception of their situation.” She perceives limits to the “degree to which member checks ... can help establish data validity” and argues that few appropriate mechanisms exist to validate subjective knowledge, as this “is new territory” (Lather, 1996: 77).

The second measure of validity used in this study was construct validity. This form of validity refers to the degree of alignment between the constructs and categories defined in research findings and those articulated by participants. Construct validity also involves other reference points that may define such categories including theory (Seale, 1998: 134) and data derived from sources such as participant observation, document analysis and interviews (Bannister et al 1996: 40-41). In seeking to establish construct validity, Reason and Rowan (1981: 22) assert that, “The wise researcher will at least consult with his subjects to see whether their constructs and intentions concur with his conclusions based on their behaviour during the research.”

Construct validity also relates to the concern in qualitative research that researchers may impose alien theories (Lather, 1986: 67) or reject data that challenge their expectations (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994: 327). The level of construct validity may be enhanced by seeking expert or professional advice to formulate questions and assess “how well questions indicate a concept” (Seale, 1998: 134).

As noted in relation to face validity, construct validity established through member checks does not preclude the possibility that research conclusions will be limited by false consciousness: “A person may misconstrue his world... each individual is not necessarily the best authority on the validity of his own constructs and intentions” (Reason and Rowan, 1981: 22).

A third measure of validity is catalytic validity. Lather (1986: 78) describes this measure of validity as,

The degree to which the research process re-orientes, focuses and energises participants in what Freire (1970) terms ‘conscientization’, knowing reality in order to better transform it... some documentation that the research process has led to insight and, ideally, activism on the part of the respondents.

Catalytic validity is suggested by the extent to which the research process “energises participants to effective political action” (Smith et al., 1990: 229). Outcomes of this nature are consistent with the objectives of this study that are underpinned by a desire to enhance environmental advocacy. Due to the timeframe, nature and required outputs of a research higher degree, however, catalytic validity may be difficult to establish. This measure of validity may by necessity require a longer time frame. For instance, it may become evident as a result of the implementation of recommendations that are made in the final chapter of this thesis. Notwithstanding this qualification, indicators of catalytic validity are provided in the following chapters.

Whereas validity is a measure of the coherence between research conclusions and phenomena under investigation, reliability is an indicator of the extent to which research findings can be replicated through repeated studies (Babbie, 1998: 303): “If you made the same measurement again and again, would you get the same result?” A high degree of reliability suggests research findings can be generalised to other contexts and that research conclusions are “unrestricted as to time and space... assertions that are of enduring value, that are context-free” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 110). Qualitative research approaches typically place less emphasis on reliability and generalisability than quantitative approaches. Accordingly, the emphasis in this study is on depth and specificity.

The validity and reliability of this study’s findings have been established through the use of multiple research methods, data sources and theoretical frameworks, a strategy referred to in qualitative research literature as triangulation (Lather, 1986: 74; Miles and Huberman, 1984: 235; Banister et al., 1996: 115; Bulmer, 1984: 31). Qualitative researchers make use of triangulation procedures in order to maximise their convergence upon truth, to cancel out bias inherent in any single approach and to neutralise liabilities

(Mathison, 1988: 14). Research findings buttressed by procedures of triangulation are arguably more potent than single-method studies. A practical example of triangulation is ethnographic studies utilising surveys to corroborate observational data (Mathison, 1988: 13).

Asking research questions in different ways, looking at phenomena from different angles and utilising different data collection and interpretation tools ideally minimises distortions created by subjectivity and bias in non-quantitative and new paradigm approaches.

Triangulation ideally involves seeking disconfirmation, rather than straightforward convergence or confirmation (Lather, 1986: 69). It may also involve a range of tactics (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 230-242) for testing or confirming findings, including checking for representativeness and researcher effects, weighing the evidence, making contrasts and comparisons, checking the meaning of 'outliers' (exceptions or the ends of distributions), using extreme cases, ruling out spurious relations, replicating a finding, checking out rival explanations, looking for negative evidence and obtaining feedback from informants.

These techniques of triangulation may result in three divergent outcomes: convergence, inconsistency and contradiction. Although convergence may be the desired outcome of the multiple data sources and methods utilised, inconsistency and contradiction are also possible outcomes (Mathison, 1988: 15). Contradictions that become evident through these processes may compel researchers to seek a more holistic or critical understanding of the situation.

Triangulation may take several forms. Data triangulation involves using several data sources, and for Banister et al (1996: 146), "Collecting accounts from different participants involved in the chosen setting, from different stages in

the activity of the setting and if appropriate from different settings within the setting.”

Investigator triangulation involves incorporating the perspective and work of more than one investigator in the research process, “providing the potential to enrich the resultant theory” (Banister et al., 1996: 146). Rowan and Reason (1981: 247) argue that, “Valid research cannot be conducted alone.” At several stages in this inquiry, colleagues collaborated to generate, collect and analyse data.

Methodological triangulation refers to “the use of multiple methods in the examination of a social phenomenon” (Mathison, 1988: 14) which is applied in this study to avoid the inherent “limitations, validity threats and distortions” (Banister et al., 1996: 147) of any one approach.

Theoretical triangulation as applied to the analysis and interpretation of data, ‘embraces multi-theories and breaks through the parameters and limitations that invariably frame an explanation which relies on one theory’ (Banister et al., 1996: 148). This form of triangulation seems particularly important when considering the critical dimension of the research project. Whereas a single social theory may serve to illuminate otherwise obscure attributes of a social situation (revealing false consciousness and hegemonic forces), reference to multiple theories during interpretive stages arguably provides greater insight.

## **4.9 Conclusion**

This is a qualitative study that incorporates an unorthodox and hybrid research design. In this sense, it may be considered ‘new paradigm’. The objectives introduced in Chapter One orient the study toward interpretive and critical methodologies. The research objectives concerning analysis of

forms and outcomes of activist education correspond to research traditions that emphasise understanding. The fourth research objective that articulates my commitment to contributing to the practice of activist education corresponds to critical and emancipatory research traditions.

The study has been conducted consistent with my 'activist' role as a researcher. In particular, action research has provided a suitably change-oriented research method that results in both understanding and praxis. Data to inform this praxis has been collected through conventional sources (academic literature) as well as participant observation, interviews and accounts. Several cycles of inquiry have been conducted, in a variety of locations, developing a composite and multi-layered picture of existing and potential activist education strategies and arrangements.

In this chapter, I have explained this innovative research design in order to justify the decisions made during the inquiry concerning both data collection and data analysis. Several measures have been utilised to ensure the validity of my observations and conclusions. Finally, this chapter has described the phases of inquiry that progressively shifted the focus of the study from understanding educational and political action.

# 5

## **Queensland Conservation Council action research study**

### **5.1 Overview**

This chapter describes the researcher's four years of participatory inquiry and action with the Queensland Conservation Council from 1996 to 2000. The method utilised in the study was based primarily on action research, especially collaborative and participatory modes of action research, Data were collected using techniques including observation and interviewing and analysed qualitatively using techniques associated with grounded theory.

The study comprised three action research cycles of reflection, planning and action. These three cycles reflect each of the five stages of emancipatory praxis described by Comstock (1982). The first cycle entailed interviews with

environmental activists to derive a valid, endogenous and ethnographic understanding of effective environmental advocacy as evident within the Queensland environment movement, and to develop plans for collaborative action. The research strategies that were adopted to derive an understanding of environmental activism and determine appropriate educational experiences to enhance effectiveness were consistent with Comstock's interpretive and empirical stages. Semi-structured interviews were conducted which comprised open questions in order to derive a rich description of the skills and other learnings associated by activists with effective advocacy. This cycle comprised strategies to ensure validity and to enhance the participatory and collaborative nature of the inquiry.

The second action research cycle entailed conducting several workshops which facilitated activist teaching and learning. These personal and professional development activities are described here as *praxis*, as they were collaborative, intentional, change-oriented and arose from reflection (Smith et al 1990: 181; Comstock 1982: 279). This action research cycle corresponded to Comstock's dialectical, educational and political action research stages. The workshops addressed several key dimensions of environmental activism which had been identified during the first action research cycle. Observation, participant evaluation and interviews conducted in conjunction with each activity provided insights, which in turn contributed to an emerging understanding of activist education priorities, opportunities and obstacles.

The third and most significant cycle entailed a state-wide activist gathering. This event included a range of workshops and other learning opportunities. This activist gathering represented an unique opportunity to pursue this inquiry as it was arguably the most significant planned and most comprehensive environmental activist education intervention in Queensland during the past decade. As the researcher played a key role in the development

<b>Action research sequence</b>	<b>Data collection techniques and sources</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>
Precedents and pre-existing data	Accessing existing information Personal experience 1996 National Conference of Conservation Councils and Environment Centres 1997 survey of state and national conservation groups Prior research (Whelan, 1994)	Conceptual framework of content and pedagogy of activist education and training
<i>Cycle 1</i> Interviews with QCC activists	Participant observation Depth, flexible and semi-structured interviews Accounts (ethogeny)	'Thick description' of effective advocacy in Queensland environment groups Identification of opportunities for and barriers to education and training Endogenous model to explain effective advocacy: the skills and attributes required and the 'learning pathways' by which that are acquired
<i>Cycle 2</i> Workshops on topics identified by QCC activists	Participant observation Conference delegates' evaluation and feedback Questionnaires and surveys Triangulation of data sources	Shared interest, mutual understandings and opportunities for collaboration Indications of theoretical saturation Established validity of specific topics and themes for activist education Tentative model for activist education pedagogies
<i>Cycle 3</i> 1998 State Conservation Conference training program	Participatory action research (praxis) Participant observation Conference delegates' evaluation and feedback Survey of workshop facilitators	Conduct of an integrated activist education program Comprehensive evaluation of learning outcomes Endogenous framework of activist education addressing both pedagogy and content Further validation of emerging framework

Table 5.1 Data collection techniques and outcomes of each action research cycle

and evaluation of the activist education element of the gathering, this represented an excellent opportunity to systematically investigate the significance and outcomes of the training program from the perspective of both participants and trainers. This third cycle held the potential to transform both understandings and concrete situations, consistent with the fifth stage of Comstock's emancipatory praxis: political action.

The following table summarises the three cycles of the action research study and identifies techniques for data collection and analysis employed during the study.

Each cycle of inquiry generated data for this study which were collected and analysed, then validated using techniques including triangulation and member checks. The action research project resulted in a range of catalytic outcomes consistent with the research objectives outlined in Chapter One.

The following section provides an overview of the Queensland Conservation Council's history, structure and strategic orientation. It also explains why the organisation was selected as a location for this study.

## **5.2 The Queensland Conservation Council**

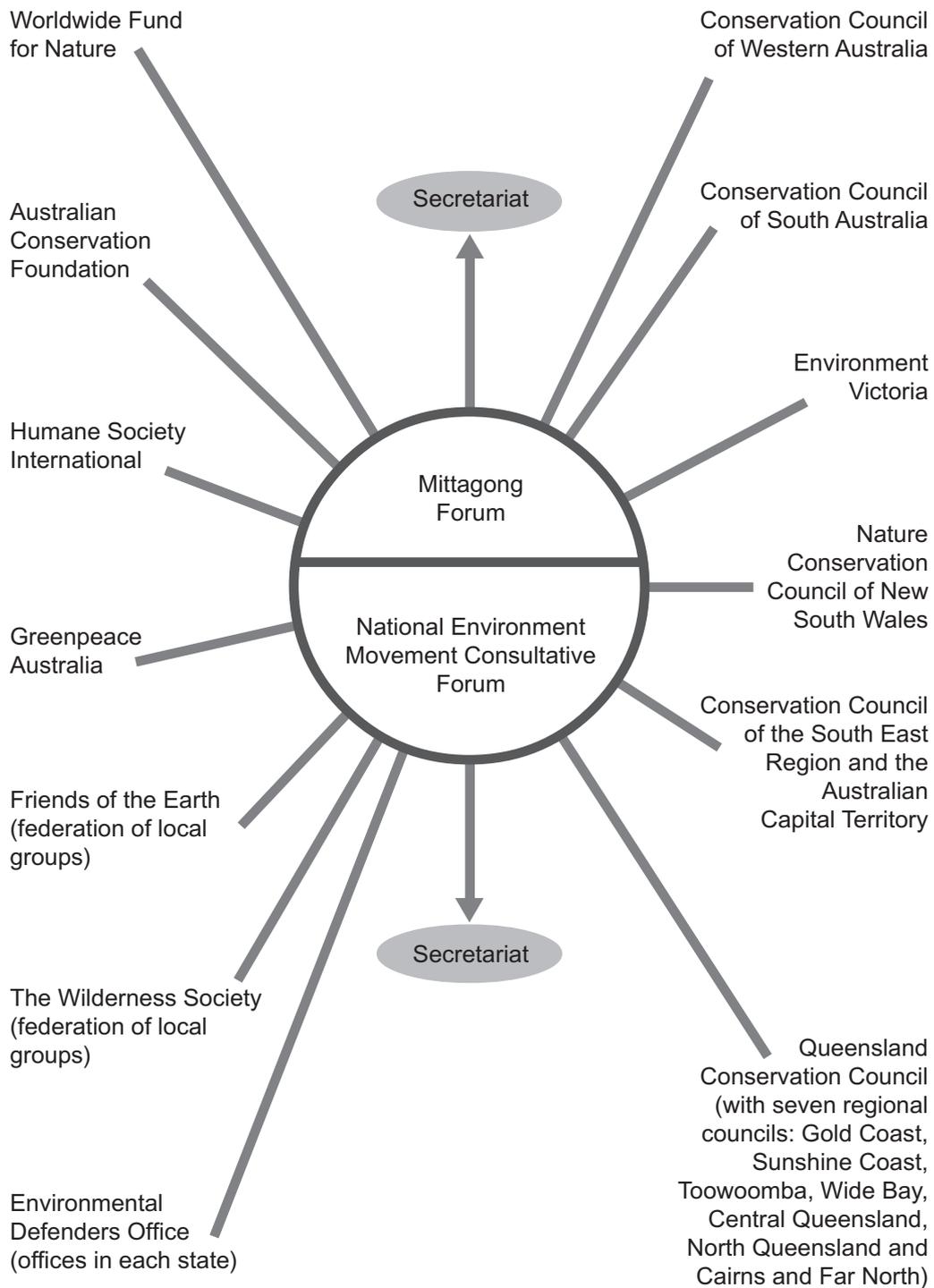
The organisational history of the Queensland Conservation Council (QCC) and the evolution of its relationships with other ENGOs suggest several factors that predispose QCC to specific education and training priorities, opportunities and obstacles.

The Queensland Conservation Council was one of the first conservation councils to be established in Australian states and territories in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The impetus for the Council's formation was provided by

the federal government through the what is now known as the Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations (GVEHO) scheme. This scheme had been promoted by community activists for some years as one way to enhance the level of leadership and coordination among the informal networks of under-resourced grassroots or community based non-government environment groups in each state. The grant provided basic administrative funding and capacity for coordination.

Since their inception, the conservation councils in the five Australian states and two territories have each supported and aligned between forty and two hundred organisations of varying sizes, with widely varying concerns and modes of operating. Collectively, they represent several hundred environment groups. The councils are closely affiliated with their member groups, each other and with three national membership-based groups: the Australian Conservation Foundation, Greenpeace and The Wilderness Society. This coalition of state and national environment groups changes name and form on a regular basis. This is often a response by external factors including the Commonwealth government's consultative mechanisms. During recent years, Commonwealth environment ministers have convened the groups on a quarterly basis to discuss emerging policies, legislation, developments and government initiatives with the Minister, other relevant politicians and senior Commonwealth public servants. The groups participating in these meetings have been referred to collectively as 'Peak' or, more recently, the National Environment Consultative Forum (NECF). These relationships between state, national and international environmental advocacy groups are summarised in the following figure.

The GVEHO scheme has remained a primary funding source for the conservation councils and requires grant recipients to submit annual proposals outlining how they plan to contribute to the advancement of Commonwealth




---

Excluded groups (as per Scope S.1.6):  
 Landcare, Waterwatch and Bushcare groups, catchment associations,  
 Greening Australia and Keep Australia Beautiful

---

**Figure 5.1** Informal structure of the environment movement<sup>43</sup>

---

43 Not all groups that are members of the Mittagong Forum are also members of the NECF. The WWF may be differentiated from many of the others as its activities often emphasize program delivery rather than advocacy. The QCC is the only conservation council with member councils, which in turn comprise many member groups.

environmental priorities. They are also expected to report on the achievement of these outcomes. The scheme also provides for a secretariat function that facilitates dialogue among state and national groups. This brief history of QCC and its state and national networks immediately suggests organisational features likely to influence its approach to both social change on one hand and education and training on the other. Due to its dependence on government grants and relatively stable and bureaucratic nature, QCC is predisposed to eschew radical strategies and opt instead for strategies and tactics described in Chapter Two as reformist, democratic and pragmatic.

In addition to its participation in national networks, QCC also leads a state-wide coalition which has grown during the last three decades and includes most active community-based, advocacy-oriented conservation groups in the state. This coalition includes as many as one hundred smaller organisations. Whereas the 'rank and file' of the movement, including these member groups, are generally volunteers, the QCC has generally managed to employ a coordinator and additional project and administrative staff. The coordinator of QCC is integral to the functioning of both the organisation and the broader Queensland environment movement. Individuals occupying the position of coordinator since 1969 have balanced 'task' roles such as spokesperson, lead advocate, researcher, lobbyist and networker with 'maintenance' responsibilities such as financial and office management.

The distinction between task and maintenance aspects of activism is the subject of considerable debate in activist organisations and activist education texts (eg. Coover et al, 1978). It is significant in this inquiry for two reasons. First, an environmental organisation or group strongly emphasising either task or maintenance priorities may not wish to invest significant resources (time or money) in supporting members' development of skills and attributes associated with the alternative orientation. For instance, a group in which

task priorities prevail and campaign actions are valued above organisational development or personal growth is unlikely to support or initiate education activities to enhance volunteers' skills related to financial management or other administrative skills. Second, ENGOs with a strong task orientation are generally less likely to invest in training and support than those with a strong maintenance interest. Learning, training and support are elements of this maintenance orientation.

Consistent with these generalisations, the QCC prioritises campaigning and has a limited history of organised activist support and training. The leadership and management styles of recent coordinators has overwhelmingly favoured task over maintenance priorities.

During the last decade, the QCC has secured state government grants and additional commonwealth grants to supplement the declining GVEHO grant. Extra funding has allowed the organisation to employ up to eight staff members in addition to the coordinator and administrative officer. These grants are often tied to specific government programs. As a result, the activists engaged to work on funded projects have had complex lines of accountability and loyalty as discussed in Chapter Two. On one hand, they have acted as *de facto* public servants to implement government programs. In this role, they have generally adhered to protocols that prohibit public comment critical of the government. On the other hand, the individuals employed by conservation councils are often seasoned activists who are instinctively political and strategic and averse to unsustainable environmental practices or policies. These conflicting demands are articulated vividly by Doyle (2000: 101):

Imagine you are a professional employee of [a conservation council]. You are an ardent environmentalist operating in poor working conditions, are poorly paid and work longer hours than your contract specifies. Despite these conditions, you have many constituents whom you have to please to keep your job and to continue professionally fighting for the cause that is so important

to you... Apart from these constituents, you also try to remain on good terms with bureaucrats and politicians, corporations, trade unions and other community organisations and coalitions. No other sector places such enormous political and workplace pressures on its key professionals.

Competing demands are exerted by government departments who fund QCC's work and expect campaigners to complement government strategies, and by QCC's constituency who demand activists exert influence on government strategies to bring about change. Between 1995 and 2001, project workers employed under these circumstances appear to have managed this conflict with skill as there is evidence of their having significantly influenced government decisions while simultaneously retaining grants supporting their work.

The organisation's 2002-2004 strategic plan suggests the bulk of QCC's advocacy efforts adhere to Dryzek's (1997) notion of democratic pragmatism. For example, the plan indicates preferred environmental policies and decisions will be promoted by "working within the formal government policy negotiating process to achieve effective regulation", collaborating with government departments, coordinating state conservation sector submissions concerning government decisions, research and public awareness strategies. Despite this emphasis, QCC also promotes and engages in confrontative or radical strategies including electoral tactics and nonviolent direct action which have resulted in the withdrawal of grants by government departments subjected to activist pressure. In these instances, activists' lobbying efforts were effective. For example, a power station proposal was rejected by decision-makers and regulatory powers governing the mining industry were transferred to a newly-created government agency.

In addition to the team of five to ten paid workers, QCC recruits and mobilises volunteers for both administrative (maintenance-related) and campaign (task-oriented) activities. For example, the organisation convenes informal action

groups focusing on priority campaigns. QCC's coordinator and project officers contribute to the efforts of these action groups, providing administrative support, aiding communication between members and leadership, convene meetings and act as spokespeople.

The Queensland Conservation Council was an ideal site for this inquiry into learning for activism for three reasons. First, the organisation reflected both tendencies discussed in Section 2.4. Namely, QCC is an established and relatively stable organisation with strong 'insider' tendencies, rather than adopting radical, confrontational or 'outsider' tactics. At the same time, however, QCC and its member groups include volunteers and professionals, radicals and accommodationists and virtually 'all shades of green'. A second advantage to QCC as a site for this case study was that QCC's network of sixty affiliated groups and its broader environment movement affiliations incorporate large and small organisations working on a very wide range of environmental issues. Third, QCC provided ideal conditions for participatory action research. At the time this study commenced, I had been actively involved with QCC for two years and was an established member of the activist community.

### **5.3 Cycle One: Situating the study, scoping and defining phenomena**

The research design of this study was influenced by Shön's (1983) action-reflection spiral and comprised three cycles of inquiry. Each cycle applied insights and principles that had emerged from prior observation and action. The first cycle, described in this section, comprised: (1) reflecting on my experience with QCC and other ENGOS and activist education projects; (2) planning an initial inquiry to explore effective environmental activism; and (3) acting on this interest by conducting a set of interviews to derive a

framework within which activist learning might be discussed and explored. This cycle, summarised in the following figure, also provided a foundation including shared understandings and identified themes upon which to base further collaborative action.

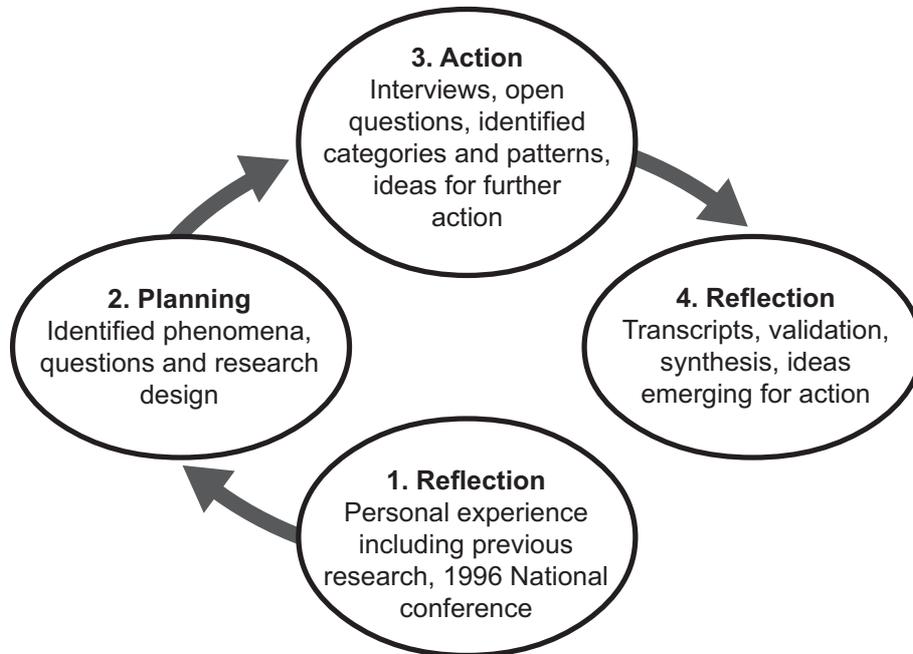


Figure 5.2 First action research cycle of QCC action research study

As activist education is infrequently conducted, documented or analysed, my personal observations and reflections were a significant source of data. During this phase of the inquiry, I reflected on workshops I had participated in, mentorship relationships I had benefited from as well as other the significant activist learning experiences that were briefly discussed in Chapter One. This process served to clarify my research questions, define the specific phemonema associated with these questions, and to consolidate appropriate research methods and techniques.

Next, a series of interviews was conducted with QCC project officers and volunteers in order to: (1) develop a shared definition for ‘effective advocacy’, (2) examine the underlying skills, knowledge and attitudes that constitute

effective activism, (3) assess the extent to which people believe they had acquired these important prerequisites, and (4) analyse how activists might enhance their effectiveness.

In order to establish the organisation's support and the informed involvement of staff and volunteers, I prepared a two-page document (Appendix D) that outlined the purpose and nature of this inquiry. This was circulated to staff, volunteers and the organisation's management committee, who expressed their support for the project. Most QCC activists spontaneously volunteered to be interviewed and expressed a general interest in the inquiry.

Potential informants helped develop the set of questions to include in semi-structured interviews (Appendix E). The interviews were conducted in informal settings including lounge rooms, parks, gardens and kitchens. They were tape recorded, then transcribed in full. These transcriptions were given to interviewees to: (1) ensure their accuracy; (2) elicit additional responses and refine former responses; and (3) prompt identification of emerging themes. A summary organising responses to each question and identifying apparent categories was also prepared and circulated to interviewees for comment.

Interviews with seven activists were conducted over a two-month period. The interview process reflected characteristics associated with depth, phenomenological and qualitative interview approaches (see Section 4.5.3). In keeping with these interviewing techniques, the predetermined questions were used as prompts but spontaneous discussion related to the questions was both accommodated and encouraged. In both this and the following chapter, interview prompts are enclosed in text boxes and printed in italics.

### 5.3.1 **Activist interviews: Profiles of respondents**

Most members of QCC's core (day-to-day) campaign team offered to be interviewed. Several expressed real enthusiasm for this opportunity to reflect on and make sense of their activism. Most were curious about how the inquiry might proceed. The seven interviewees are introduced below. Other informal discussions with activists associated with the QCC informed this initial research phase, and influenced both the questions asked and the interpretation of responses.

The first set of interview prompts established interviewees' prior activist experience and relevant education and training. These prompts and those used at each stage of the semi-structured interviews are presented in italics within a text box. The full set of interview prompts is included as Appendix E.

---

*How long have you worked with the QCC?*

*Had you been involved in environmental campaigning or organising for some other social change before joining the QCC? Can you briefly describe this work - how long were you involved? what did you do?*

---

These initial questions were intended to provide a context for the discussion and as a non-threatening introduction. Responses are summarised in the following table.

As this table shows, only two of the seven interviewees spoke of extensive activist experience prior to joining QCC. Julie had undertaken a range of roles with the Wilderness Society (TWS) including fundraising and promotion, where she helped to organise a forest blockade and participated in direct action. Robyn had participated in protests by attending rallies, signing

<b>Interviewee and their activist role with QCC</b>	<b>Prior education and training</b>	<b>Prior activist experience</b>
<b>Robyn</b> Volunteer member of Smogbusters Action Group	Academic qualifications in environmental science; experience as a research assistant in Griffith University's Faculty of Environmental Sciences	Activist experience with student union, environment and women's groups
<b>Matt</b> Project officer promoting public transport and facilitating dialogue between transit users and operators	Active unionist; had received training for his role as a workplace delegate. Primary teacher	Volunteer Smogbusters action group member for six months. Prior participant in peace movement and workers' demonstrations
<b>Shannon</b> Project officer facilitating community sector participation in the development of new state regulations governing the mining industry	Academic qualifications in environmental science	Minimal prior activist experience
<b>Julie</b> Project officer facilitating conservation movement engagement in state regulatory processes to allocate water, determine water storage options and ensure environmental flows	Environmental science degree	Training and prior activist experience with a national ENGO, where her role had involved research and organising direct action
<b>Louise</b> Volunteer working on a range of issues including wetland conservation	Journalism degree	Extensive experience with several state and national ENGOs
<b>Carol</b> Chair of QCC's management committee. Active day to day role in both campaigns and administration	Postgraduate science qualifications	Limited prior activist experience
<b>Anne</b> Volunteer event coordinator and community networker. Active campaigner against sandmining	Tertiary social sciences degree	Limited prior activist experience

Table 5.2 Summary of QCC interviewees' prior activist education and experience

petitions and writing letters, organising a conference, public speaking and media work. She had also received training in facilitation in order to enhance her volunteer work with another activist group. Three of the remaining interviewees responded that while they had not worked as activists with environment groups, they had gained relevant experience through other activities including journalism, academic research, travel, community arts, unionism and counselling work. They considered the skills and abilities learnt in these situations were readily transferable.

### **5.3.2 Dissecting and categorising activist work**

The flexible interview approach helped me to unravel the wide range of skills and activities which were associated in a causal manner with effective advocacy. Interview responses were transcribed in full and an initial attempt was made to organise these into categories consistent with the techniques of grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1990). By checking with respondents (a form of triangulation described by Mathison 1988), I developed a typography of activist work. This was subsequently redrafted several times in collaboration with interviewees to derive the following categories which the interviewees consider an accurate typography of environmental activism.

---

*Describe your work with QCC - what do you do?*

*What are the ultimate goals of your work? What is it you are trying to achieve? How will you know if you've been successful?*

---

Responses to this second set of interview prompts are summarised in the following table. Seven categories have been used to group the wide range of activities respondents listed as routine elements of their advocacy efforts. These categories became apparent during the subsequent analysis of transcribed interview responses. Their validity was established through

<b>Administrative &amp; organisational work</b>	<b>Community work</b>
<p>Communication</p> <p>Negotiating funding, developing proposals and work plans</p> <p>Professionalising organisations, updating organisational image</p> <p>Identifying skills within the organisation, increasing effectiveness</p> <p>Convening executive meetings, organising and attending forums and other meetings</p> <p>Representing the organisation</p> <p>Fundraising, soliciting contributions</p> <p>Recruiting</p> <p>Participating in committee meetings with other stakeholders</p> <p>Supporting campaign group members, working on relationships</p>	<p>Building networks with community groups and NGOs, informing them, encouraging participation in policy processes</p> <p>Organising community events</p> <p>Convening community reference groups and campaign groups</p> <p>Community education</p> <p>Planning and convening public meetings</p> <p>Public speaking</p> <p>Community development: encouraging participation, creating opportunities for lobbying</p> <p>Community displays: talking with people, organising petitions</p>
<b>Research and publishing work</b>	<b>Analytical and strategic work</b>
<p>Research</p> <p>Writing and publishing</p> <p>Preparing submissions, helping other people write submissions</p>	<p>Facilitating campaign planning</p> <p>Developing political strategy</p> <p>Developing strategic plans, implementing plans, evaluating outcomes</p>
<b>Direct action work</b>	
<p>Organising actions - protests, blockades, camps</p>	
<b>Media work</b>	<b>Lobbying work</b>
<p>Drafting and issuing press releases</p> <p>Writing articles for newsletters</p> <p>Interviews</p> <p>Liaising with the media: establishing contacts, providing stories and information</p>	<p>Advocacy: lobbying politicians, letter-writing</p> <p>Close liaison with public servants</p> <p>Representing community and conservation interests in environmental policy development process</p>

Table 5.3 Categories and elements of environmental activism (QCC interviews)

member checks. Respondents received full transcriptions of their comments and a draft of Table 5.3, ensuring ample opportunities to comment concerning the accuracy and validity of this summary.

Respondents considered this range of required skills required ‘multi-skilling’, that effective activism called on the development of a ‘toolbox of skills’ and that the acquisition of this wide range of abilities may mitigate against activists developing expertise in specific aspects of activism, such as becoming expert media spokespeople or policy analysts. One activist commented that activists typically become “Jack of all trades and master of none.”

The broad range of activities considered by this group of activists to be integral to effective advocacy provided a useful insight into potential topics for activist training, but its breadth presented difficulties in identifying priorities. Recognising that activists may be competent in many of these skills, yet fail to effect significant advocacy outcomes (skillful yet ineffective), the interview process also sought to identify particular attributes associated with particularly effective activists.

### **5.3.3 Attributes associated with effective activism**

---

*Do you know (or work with) environmental activists you would consider highly successful?*

*From your observation, how do successful environmental activists work effectively to favour environmental outcomes?*

*What makes these people successful/effective as activists - what sets them apart from less successful activists?*

---

Responses to this third set of interview prompts suggested that advocates’ “effectiveness” tends to be assessed by QCC advocates according to the extent to which they achieve their intended goals. Interviewees considered that effectiveness should be evaluated according to outcomes (noting that outcomes are not always immediately evident) and that effectiveness should not be based on reputation, activists’ busy-ness or profile. Busy and well-known activists were not necessarily considered effective. This corresponds

to the criteria outlined in Chapter One where definitions of “activist” are discussed. Activists were not described by interviewees simply as very active people. Concrete demonstrations of the achievement of goals included the rejection of inappropriate development applications, amendment of unsound environmental policies and the adoption of mitigating measures to diminish environmental impacts associated with developments.

In describing the attributes and abilities of activists they considered effective, some interviewees distinguished between first and second order activist skills or attributes. First order skills included judgement, analysis and strategic thinking. Second order skills were described as “the practical ones” and included media, research and communication skills. A similar observation was cited in Chapter Two. Webb’s (1984a) study of activists involved with an Anti-Nazi League group revealed distinct dimensions of activism. In both that study and the QCC case study, both types of skill are identified as precursors to effective activism. Respondents also suggested that effective campaign work requires a balance of ‘soft’ or diplomatic approaches and ‘hard’ or forceful tactics: “The more diplomatic activists create the opportunities (build the bridges) for the more aggressive activists to put their point across and effect the desired outcomes.”

Most interviewees associated effectiveness with extensive environmental knowledge. Effective activists were described as people with experience and a history of speaking accurately and with authority: individuals who are taken seriously and recognised in the community. However, interviewees described effective activists as opinion leaders, commonly with an academic reputation or profile and an excellent intellectual grasp of the “whole picture” as well as specific environmental issues. Indeed, respondents considered that effective advocacy required both “in-depth” and “up to date” knowledge of a technical nature including environmental law, economics and management principles.

Respondents spoke highly of activists they considered capable of generating “good practical ideas” at the right time by drawing on personal advice and literature.

Effective activists were described as inspirational individuals, able to empower and encourage other activists. This ability was described in terms of appropriate delegation, the projection of a positive persona and the capacity to communicate issues in a way that “inspires, moves and amuses”. Four of the seven respondents identified a particularly prominent activist academic who was well known both regionally and nationally as an activist who embodied these attributes.

Interviewees observed that effective activism demanded a high degree of independence and assertiveness. They considered advocates need liberty to speak without reprisal and noted that the ability to maintain this degree of autonomy was somewhat problematic due to QCC’s dependence on grants from several government agencies.

Another attribute considered crucial for effective activism was the ability to capture both public and media attention. Creating a public profile for an issue, using the media well and choosing statements strategically were all considered significant contributing factors in successful campaigns.

Most interviewees stated that effective activists require excellent communication skills. In advocating environmental interests, they need to be articulate orators. To effectively engage a very wide range of people, including those in positions of power, in government and in grassroots community groups, activists need excellent interpersonal skills. Respondents considered a high level of congeniality preferable to an adversarial approach. It was considered more effective to seek alliances than to view people with

opposing views or values as adversaries. One example cited in this respect was the positive and influential relationship between certain activists and the operators of a particularly controversial and polluting industrial complex. This congenial relationship was considered to have resulted in a significant emission reduction from the complex.

Specific interpersonal skills associated with effective advocacy included diplomacy and the ability to facilitate meetings, build and maintain networks, seek common ground, empathise with and nurture a wide range of people.

These interview prompts encouraged respondents to reflect and remark on the attributes and experiences that influence how activists assume and maintain their roles in the movement. Responses to these prompts suggested this reflected a combination of an inherent strength of character and life experience ('nature and nurture'). Effective activists were described as passionate individuals who had been 'moved' to care deeply for the environment and as individuals with strong value systems. Bob Brown, arguably Australia's most prominent environmental activist was identified by two interviewees as the personification of these attributes. Senator Brown led a very private and reflective life until his passion for the conservation of the Franklin River drew him, against his professed nature, to enter public life (Green 1981).

Resilience and the risk of burnout emerged as recurring themes in the interviews. In order to avoid burnout, effective activists were considered to possess the ability to attend to their mental and physical health and to maintain an active life outside the movement. These attributes ensure effective activists maintain realistic expectations of themselves and "keep going back".

In contrast to the stereotype of unshaven, flamboyant and disorganised

activists, interviewees described effective activists as highly professional in their approach, capable of planning campaigns and administrative work effectively and strategically, fulfilling their commitments) and able to prioritise and evaluate.

Interviewees gave surprisingly little emphasis in their responses to the political dimension of activism. Respondents commented that relatively few activists seem to engage in ‘probing analysis’ of the political landscape and how best to navigate it to achieve desired results. Those interviewees whose responses made reference to political analysis considered that effective campaigners need a high degree of political acumen. Acumen, in this context, involved sophisticated political strategy such as speaking at the right time, addressing statements to the appropriate person, taking a conciliatory approach unless circumstances warrant militancy, and thinking laterally. Respondents also commented that despite the importance of basing strategy on political understanding, they had infrequently experienced strategies of this nature within the movement: “Strategy isn’t talked about. All that I learnt on the run ... I make it up as I go” (Shannon). The apparent tension between the overtly political nature of advocacy and the lack of opportunities for activists to develop or share political frameworks, either through a political induction or appropriate education, is explored in Appendix C which summarises a relevant activist interview.

Finally, respondents considered activists require excellent computer skills in order to campaign effectively. The significant and increasing reliance by ENGOs on strategies that make use of the Internet, World Wide Web and other telecommunications is discussed elsewhere (see Chapter Two).

In summary, the composite picture of an effective activist developed through these interviews appears to be that of a ‘rugged individual’ possessing a wide

range of skills and capable of succeeding with minimal support. Rather than drawing on each of the dimensions of activism discussed in Chapter Three, interviewees emphasised attributes associated with social action skills, scientific ecoliteracy and organisational development. They paid considerably less attention in their comments to political analysis and personal development. This omission may be interpreted to reflect a preoccupation with the ‘task’ dimension of activism rather than the parallel ‘maintenance’ dimension which might have been evident in discussions of the capacity to build groups, to empower or teach others, defuse conflict, build and maintain networks or to support and encourage.

#### **5.3.4 Learning experiences associated with effective activism**

The fourth set of interview prompts was intended to both assess the extent to which respondents considered they had acquired important activist skills and knowledge and to identify learning processes associated with this learning.

---

*To what extent have you developed the skills and strengths you consider essential for successful activism? On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your effectiveness (comparing your present work to your full potential)?*

*How have you learnt these things?*

---

Anne described her stage of development as an activist as intermediate. Prior to joining QCC, Anne had already gained many relevant skills and abilities. Since then, she had learnt primarily through being given responsibility. Her most significant learning experiences included observation, mentoring, asking for and receiving help with specific tasks: “People have been very forthcoming, helpful and generous.” Anne had been inspired by reading about activists including Petra Kelly and Helen Caldicott.

Julie expressed confidence in her ability to succeed in her activism, to work

cooperatively with a wide range of people, extend her networks and expand her knowledge base where necessary. Her tertiary qualifications included a relevant and community-oriented honours thesis, and prior campaign experience with environment groups that had entailed training in non-violent action. Julie had also benefited from mentorship relationships. These antecedents had equipped her reasonably well for her role with QCC. Nonetheless, Julie's modest self-assessment on the 'effectiveness' scale (a rating of one to ten embedded in the question structure) was that she had progressed from a five to a six or seven since commencing work with QCC.

Matt also felt that his tertiary qualifications and professional experience as a teacher in a remote area equipped him reasonably well for his activist role with QCC. Since joining the organisation as an educator and advocate, Matt had enhanced his political skills through practical experience, reflection and discussions with colleagues. He considered his effectiveness developed through interactions with colleagues who responded to his ideas and offered sound advice. Matt spontaneously framed his response to this question around three dimensions of activism. He rated his competence with respect to community work, education and development seven out of ten, his media skills as three out of ten and his political acumen as four out of ten.

Carol's activist experience had been gained in two organisations: the QCC and Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTAR). She described her time with ANTAR as particularly challenging, and as a "very steep learning curve" because of her lack of relevant experience. Through this experience, however, she felt that she had acquired important skills. She also identified a number of areas for further development including improved time management, self-preservation, an improved ability to involve and motivate people and the need to make time to read. Carol expressed confidence in her ability to speak publicly, due in part to professional experience as a journalist.

During her time with ANTAR, she had benefited from mentorship relationships with “good people”. During this period of growth, she had applied herself to various aspects of the work, accepting responsibility and successfully completing many challenging tasks.

Robyn also came to QCC with professional experience and tertiary qualifications she considered to have prepared her reasonably well for the challenges of environmental activism. Since joining QCC, Robyn had enhanced and broadened her skills by participating in a media skills workshop, gaining practical experience with media work, research, leadership roles and lobbying (which she spoke of as “being thrown in at the deep end”), reflecting and talking with friends, deliberately working to improve particular skills such as facilitation and reading, including extensive Internet research. She said that “going through trauma” was also a powerful learning experience. For instance, Robyn had experienced conflict within a campaign group that she had endeavoured to resolve. She considered her media skills had matured most significantly since joining QCC and that, as a result, she could effectively target journalists, write media releases and conduct interviews. Robyn’s self-assessment on the ten-point effectiveness scale focused on social action skills. She rated herself seven out of a possible ten for media skills, five or six for lobbying work and eight for research and writing, a field in which she was currently employed.

Shannon considered his prior learning had prepared him well for a research and advocacy role with QCC. He ascribed this readiness to an Environmental Science degree which had provided many skills he considered important prerequisites, especially those related to research, policy development and impact assessment. Shannon spoke of having acquired a range of relevant skills, familiarity with the scientific method of “induction and deduction” and a “scientific perspective” which proved useful. He described his

environmental knowledge prior to working with QCC as generalised rather than specific. Shannon felt that his personality, life history and work experience incorporating community networking and communicating with a wide range of people prepared him well. Since commencing with QCC, Shannon had benefited by receiving excellent advice from bureaucrats and campaigners, observation and mentoring. His technical knowledge base had improved through the challenges of day to day work. He felt the position had been instrumental in developing his political understanding, a dimension of social change that had not been developed in his academic or professional work.

These interviews confirmed that environmental activists tend, in Queensland at least, to receive very little support or instruction. Interviewees consistently spoke of their work as difficult. The formidable challenge required extensive learning, which was generally acquired through informal and incidental learning.

*All that I've learnt on the run - I make it up as I go... (Shannon)*

*I've had to learn as I go ... what I need to do ... what I need to know... How did I develop media and public speaking skills - oh, that's just practice. (Matt)*

*It's been a monumental challenge ... starting from scratch and lacking resources ... the familiar story. I was always in a sense running and there was never time to sit back and be strategic. (Carol)*

*Trauma prompted me to search for learning - to move forward. (Robyn)*

The most significant point of agreement among interviewees was that learning for activism is facilitated by being given a significant degree of responsibility. Each account described how challenging and achievable work combined with high expectations brought out the activists' individual best and challenged them to exercise skills of which they were previously unsure or build skills through necessity. Most interviewees said their ability to successfully achieve tasks which initially appeared daunting had been strengthened through the advice and leadership offered by more experienced activists and through

working closely with people more familiar with the issues. It was clear that QCC workers benefited from the mentorship and support of colleagues in other environment groups, sympathetic bureaucrats and friends.

### 5.3.5 Strategies to enhance effectiveness

---

*Do you have plans to enhance your effectiveness as an activist? If so, what are they?*

---

This interview prompt was intended to both identify how QCC activists planned to enhance their effectiveness and to explore opportunities for collaboration. Potential and planned strategies were discussed. Respondents identified actions they might take individually to improve their activism and strategies that would require a collective or organisational response.

Four interviewees indicated interest in further formal academic studies to enhance their knowledge base. Two had plans to enrol in postgraduate environmental law, while one person intended to study Philosophy in order to examine her personal commitment to environmental action. One interviewee expressed an interest in learning more about the issues associated with his current campaign, but said this depended on the extension of the grant that funded his project.

Carol planned to complete a training course in negotiation, undertake an appraisal of training needs at QCC and contribute to the management of the State Conservation Conference (the training workshops associated with the conference were being planned by this stage). Although she supported training to enhance several activist skills, Carol considered experiential learning a more appropriate way to develop lobbying skills.

Robyn planned to learn by seeking additional opportunities for responsibility

(being “thrown off the deep end”). She expressed a strong commitment to learning and identified a number of possible strategies including joining or starting an activist support group, keeping an activist journal and finding paid work with an environmental campaign. She also considered that facilitating a campaign-planning workshop with her action group would enhance her effectiveness.

Several respondents believed that their work was impeded through organisational factors such as inefficiency and a lack of systems in their work environment. Suggestions for change included: (1) providing a more thorough induction for new campaign workers and volunteers, that would familiarise them with office equipment and systems; (2) weekend workshops for new volunteers; (3) establishing a volunteer register to improve access to available volunteer support; (4) improved computer systems and provision of computer training; and (5) additional resources, providing support staff for campaigners who had excessive workloads.

A common theme in the seven interviews was the desirability of support and feedback mechanisms. Many people said they they were ‘working in a vacuum’ and would appreciate regular, honest and open feedback from peers concerning their lobbying efforts. They were not confident they could critically assess their tactics and strategies and wanted a ‘fresh pair of eyes’, and feedback especially from experienced and effective advocates.

Interviewees generated creative structural solutions intended to provide a more supportive working and learning environment. On occasion, the QCC convened campaign networks where activists working on particular issues shared information and developed strategies. Respondents considered more regular network meetings would be a useful way to enhance learning and support. Respondents also recommended a structured mentoring or

apprenticeship program consistent with their most powerful learning experiences. They perceived this might be achieved informally by implementing a buddy system whereby activists desiring mentoring would accompany more experienced or skilled campaigners for a defined period. It was suggested by several interviewees that seasoned and effective activists could contribute to others' learning through structured discussion sessions. Carol summarised this idea by suggesting novices would benefit by,

Really tapping into the skills of people who have been in the movement for a long time and actually getting them to share them and talk about them in discussions. I think that's obviously one very effective way to learn.

As chair of the QCC management committee, Carol also considered the organisation needed to routinely identify activist support and training needs. Asked to propose suitable formats for education and training, Carol considered workshops most appropriate.

These interviews served to articulate a shared perspective that provided a basis upon which to move forward with the inquiry. This summary of findings represented an apparent consensus regarding both the elements of effective activism and educational or learning strategies to enhance them. The validity of this synthesis was established by sharing both the initial interview transcripts and a subsequent summary document with respondents.

### **5.3.6 Reflecting on the first cycle of inquiry**

The first action research cycle built on understandings I had derived from personal experience and social movement literature and provided a starting point for this action-oriented inquiry into activist education and training. It effectively bridged the gap between theory and practice, between social movement theory in general and the specific opportunities and problems identified in my immediate activist community. In effect, the semi-structured

interviews and discussions described in this section contributed to an endogenous theory of effective environmental advocacy in the Queensland environment movement. It also enabled me identify several opportunities for collaborative intervention.

A similar attempt to codify environmental activism was made during a recent on-line environment movement debate. One contributor to this dialogue (Robinson 2000) equated attempts to codify activist tools and understandings with approaches adopted in competency-based vocational education, which he rejects as inappropriate and “fraught with danger” when applied to the environment movement. Conversely, the benefits of codifying environmental advocacy are significant. For instance, the interviews conducted during this action research cycle identified several locations for intervention by categorising the key personal and professional attributes associated with effective environmental advocacy. Observation, interviews and member checks conducted during this cycle generated a valid set of categories that describe the skills and attributes environmental activists associated with effective advocacy. These skills and attributes include diplomacy and political acumen, extensive environmental knowledge, the ability to capture media and public attention and excellent interpersonal and communication skills (including computer skills). Effective advocates are also considered to share a range of personal attributes which make them inspirational, independent, assertive, passionate, resilient and highly professional individuals. This categorisation exhibits both face and construct validity and contributes to a grounded theory of environmental advocacy.

The first action research cycle also identified both actual and idealised activist learning strategies. The activists interviewed reported that they had primarily learnt through experience, particularly experience that involved genuine and increasing levels of responsibility. By contrast with the novice Anti-Nazi

League activists in Webb's (1984a) study who were deliberately inducted, trained and mentored, QCC activists considered they were "thrown in the deep end" with minimal preliminary training or direction provided by the organisation. They considered their effectiveness was enhanced through relevant education and professional experience acquired outside the movement, through mentoring relationships both within and outside the environment movement and through reading.

Interviewees identified a range of activist education strategies that they considered desirable. These included formal education such as tertiary studies in both content-defined or discipline-specific areas such as environmental law and process-oriented subjects including conflict resolution and negotiation. Informal learning strategies suggested by activists included the acquisition of further campaign experience, the establishment of support and feedback mechanisms such as support groups, learning journals and structured mentorship and apprenticeship programs.

This first action research cycle confirmed that social action presents rich opportunities for learning, consistent with Foley's (1991) observations. Despite evidence that QCC had provided few structured or intentional activist education activities or programs in recent years, interviewees considered their involvement with the organisation was of itself a valid and valued learning opportunity. In fact, one interviewee commented, "There is no better place to learn." Few interviewees were critical of the organisation's apparent lack of support for professional development and volunteer activists reported that they did not necessarily expect to receive training of any kind due to the voluntary nature of their involvement.

Finally, a significant obstacle to education for environmental advocacy was identified. Informants reported that the 'busy-ness' of many QCC activists

was an important obstacle to novices' learning and development. As several interviewees considered mentoring and reflection were potentially significant learning experiences, the apparent unwillingness of experienced and effective activists to take time out to engage in either of these activities is problematic.

#### **5.4 Cycle Two: Regional activist workshops**

The second cycle of inquiry involved a series of activist training events. As activists in QCC network of regional environment groups became aware of this research project, I received invitations to organise and facilitate workshops. These opportunities for inquiry corresponded to my research objectives, especially the emphasis on change-oriented or catalytic inquiry processes.

Several activist workshops, facilitated by the researcher during the second action research cycle, are described in this section. To collect data in conjunction with the workshops, I made use of qualitative, ethnographic techniques including observation and reflection, maintaining a research journal, conducting informal interviews with participants, structured participant evaluations and follow-up correspondence by email and personal contact.

This second action research cycle comprised planning a series of education and training events, conducting these workshops and reflecting on workshop outcomes as articulated through participant feedback and catalytic outcomes. The topics or themes for these workshops were selected through: (1) reference to priorities reflected in the QCC activist interviews; (2) surveys conducted with QCC member groups and volunteers; and (3) opportunities arising and expressions of interest.

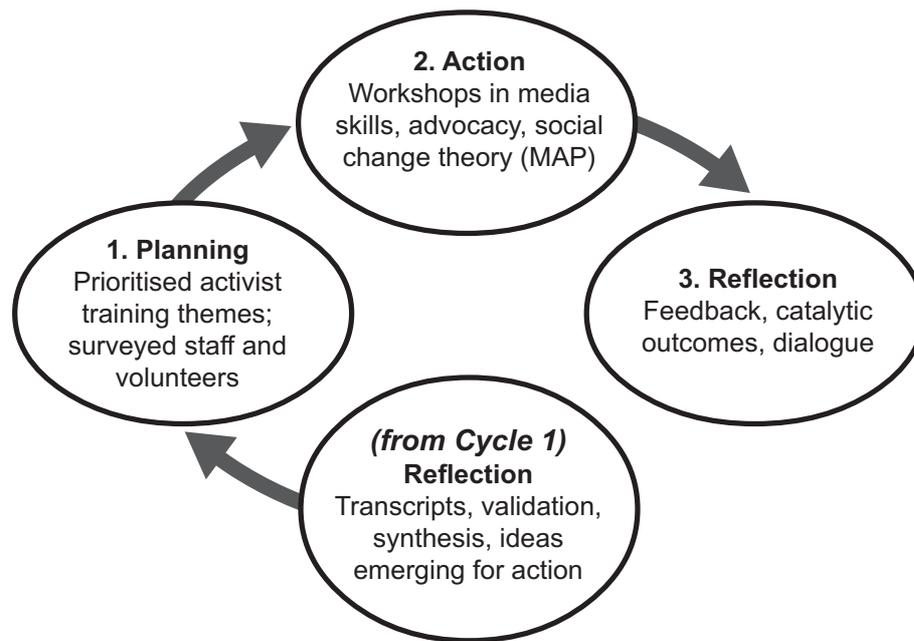


Figure 5.3 Second action research cycle of QCC action research study

#### 5.4.1 Media skills workshops

Initial discussions and interviews with environmental activists identified media skills workshops as the most immediate or agreed upon ENGO training priority. Activists tend to consider public speaking and media interviews as very important strategic opportunities. Media releases represent the culmination of activists' efforts to follow environmental issues, research, engage in correspondence and negotiate with industry and regulatory agencies. The fact that these releases can in no way guarantee corresponding media interest is a source of frustration. When media interest *is* attracted, activists are compelled to summarise their complex issues and arguments in short 'sound bites', while conveying the image of a knowledgeable, concerned citizen. At other times, activists are given generous opportunities to speak on environmental issues but lack adequate background knowledge to make the most of the opportunity. In an interview conducted during this study, Carol summarised this tension by observing,

*To be really effective you have to understand what you're on about ... I*

*hate the circumstances that make you sometimes have to pronounce on something that you don't understand.*

During this research project, I facilitated several media skills workshops which ranged in duration from two hours to a day. The learning objectives and experiential pedagogy of these workshops was based on workshops I had participated in at the National Conservation Conference in 1996 and during my association with The Wilderness Society in the early 1990s. Activists attending the workshops were encouraged to discuss effective environmental communication, to identify attributes of high profile environmental advocates, and share their experiences of liaising with local media organisations. They were also provided with a range of media releases and asked to critique them. Recent releases from ENGOs, environmental agencies and politicians were appraised in order to distinguish effective from ineffective releases and to develop a set of principles. Workshop participants examined several sample media releases, considering how information was ordered, how quotations and facts were integrated and the extent to which the releases adhered to criteria generated during prior workshop activities. Participants then drafted their own releases, utilising real or fictitious environmental issues. Finally, media strategy was considered in a more general sense. For instance, participants were encouraged to consider how the timing of their releases, relationships with reporters and long term media strategies could contribute to the effectiveness of their campaigns.

In longer workshops, participants also conducted mock interviews. Their performance was then subject to constructive critique by the group in order to derive a set of principles relating to interviews. Relevant resource material reinforcing these principles was provided.

The value and significance of these workshops was evident in several ways. Most participants indicated they had not previously engaged in media skills

training and that they considered the success of their campaigns depended on effective media work. Written participant feedback suggested many participants anticipated they would apply the skills, techniques and new understandings acquired during the workshops immediately. Informal subsequent communication (emails and other personal contact) confirmed that this expectation was realised. On several occasions, participants in these workshops subsequently contacted me to discuss draft media releases and seek advice in developing media strategies. For instance, a FoE activist working on food irradiation issues sought comment on several media releases and media strategy. Other FoE anti-nuclear campaigners sought my advice when they occupied a Senator's office in 1998.

#### **5.4.2 Campaign planning and strategy workshops**

Strategic campaign planning also emerged as a popular training topic. When activists discussed the failure of environmental campaigns, they often identified inadequate planning as a key factor. Several activists interviewed in this study described their campaign strategies as unplanned or reactive. To explore the potential for education and training to enhance this aspect of activism, the second cycle of inquiry included the coordination and facilitation of several campaign planning workshops with regional environmental advocacy groups. These workshops drew on Moyer's Movement Action Plan (MAP) theory as described in Section 3.7.4 and Figures 3.8 and 3.9. They were also influenced by campaign planning and evaluation exercises that I had developed during my years convening campaign groups.

On two occasions, Moyer facilitated MAP workshops in South East Queensland.<sup>44</sup> These workshops presented a valuable research opportunity. I attended as a participant observer and compiled field notes which focused

---

<sup>44</sup> I initiated and coordinated both workshops. The flier describing the workshops is included as Appendix F. Organisations including The Wilderness Society, QCC and Friends of the Earth engaged Bill to provide in-house campaign planning advice.

on Moyer's workshop content and pedagogy and on observed learner participation and outcomes. His workshop style was essentially discursive and didactic. As an activist with an astonishing depth and breadth of experience, his approach was to relate the four activist roles and eight social movement stages to his own experience and that of workshop participants, each sharing relevant anecdotes.



Figure 5.4 Bill Moyer explaining Movement Action Plan, Brisbane 1999



Figure 5.5 Friends of the Earth activists during MAP workshop, Brisbane 1999

To illustrate the stage in social movements he refers to as “take off” or “trigger events”, for instance, Moyer described a demonstration he had helped organise which resulted in the arrest of over one thousand protestors (Speeter 1978). The demonstration was peaceful, no property was damaged and arrests had not been anticipated. The authorities quickly discovered that detaining hundreds of peaceful protestors without pressing charges created both practical and political pressures. The media were fascinated, providing captive peace activists opportunities to dominate the news day after day. Ultimately, the protestors negotiated favourable conditions for their release, but not before exploiting opportunities arising from their detainment.

Participants in these workshops completed evaluation sheets (Appendix G) and consented that their comments could be referred to in this study. Workshop participants identified a range of outcomes that they attributed to the workshops and particularly commented on the insights they gained through Moyer’s anecdotes. Whereas these anecdotes emphasised skills associated with social action skills, political analysis and organisational development, his facilitation style placed equal emphasis on personal development. During his workshops, Moyer employed a set of ‘participant agreements’ to encourage democratic procedures, equal opportunity to speak and active listening. His vigilant attention to group dynamics and maintenance of a democratic atmosphere resonates with group processes described in Chapter Six (Heart Politics study). Subsequently, the FoE activists who participated established agreement and adherence to these principles in their organisation’s meetings. The pedagogy of the workshops was inclusive and experiential. MAP workshop participants were encouraged to draw on personal experience to illustrate concepts. Activists with minimal environmental campaign experience drew on campaigns outside the movement such as anti-smoking campaigns. Moyer was a charismatic and entertaining facilitator and speaker.

Feedback was solicited by written participant evaluation and informal communication such as email correspondence following the MAP workshops. Few participating activists reported that they had engaged previously in activist education activities addressing theories of change. By contrast, a subsequent activist workshop with FoE members in 2001 demonstrated that this group had acquired a suite of theoretical frameworks within which to frame their discussions about social change (pers.comm. 12/11/01). This is, in part, a reflection of FoE members' active participation in activist workshops associated with this research project. Unlike many ENGOs, FoE maintains a concerted effort to develop and adhere to an explicit theory of social change.

Most MAP workshop participants reported they had essentially learnt about social change *by doing it*. People valued the opportunity to consider how their experience related to this theoretical framework and to share anecdotes with each other and with Moyer. Workshop participants especially appreciated his affirmation that activism should be considered a valid expression of responsible citizenship rather than evidence of radical and extreme tendencies. This affirmation was provided by Moyer's reference to Dr Martin Luther King's famous declaration, "I come not to bury the American dream but to fulfil it." This message was an integral element of Moyer's political analysis.

Participants commented favourably on the theory that was introduced and explored in MAP workshops. Feedback solicited through a written evaluation form, informal discussions and follow-up email correspondence indicated that participants anticipated opportunities for immediate and beneficial application of the MAP framework in their campaigning. Feedback also suggested participants would incorporate MAP principles in their strategic planning processes, share the four roles and eight stages with other members through their newsletters and intentionally reorient their campaigning to minimise their use of strategies they considered ineffective as a result of the

workshop. A theme emerging from these evaluation processes was that many activists were keen to “go deeper” in learning about frameworks such as MAP. Having appreciated this initial introduction to MAP or other social change frameworks, activists were interested in a more sustained exploration of how strategies and skills might be incorporated in contemporary environmental campaigns.

The second cycle of inquiry included another strategy to explore possible activist education activities pertaining to political analysis (or big picture thinking). As a consequence of interest generated by this inquiry, I was invited to facilitate campaign planning workshops with the National Union of Students, the Jabiluka Action Group, the Queensland Greens, the Gold Coast and Hinterland Conservation Council and other groups. Whereas Moyer’s MAP workshops were somewhat theoretical and removed from participants’ own experience, I developed a workshop structure that emphasised personal reflection and immediate application to participants’ campaigns. Workshop participants were introduced to the MAP framework, related this framework to their own situation and experience through group discussion, then applied MAP and other frameworks to real campaigns. The workshop design (outlined in Appendix H) was influenced by the Smogbusters project team’s approach to their national planning sessions. Participants: (a) discussed campaigns they were involved with; (b) identified key participants, decision-makers and stakeholders; (c) explored relationships between these people; and (d) planned strategies to build alliances and influence decision-makers.

The pedagogy informing these workshops was both participatory and experiential. Participants were presumed to be primarily motivated by their needs and circumstances, an assumption consistent with Knowles’ (1984) andragogical principles. Activists were not presumed to be ‘blank slates’ but to be informed by prior experience. Workshops drew strongly on participants’



Figure 5.6 Campaign planning workshop with Gold Coast activists, 1999



Figure 5.7 Campaign planning workshop with National Union of Students, 2000

pre-existing notions and experiences of social change work and also incorporated relevant theory.

### **5.4.3 Advocacy through representation**

Chapter Two included a discussion of the Queensland environment movement's 'democratic pragmatism': the organisation's pursuit of conservation objectives through institutionalised mechanisms including public consultation, committees, submissions and correspondence. This orientation is evident in the QCC's coordination of up to fifty conservation delegates on government committees at any one time. Considerable organisational energy is directed toward supporting and liaising with these delegates to ensure that they promote informed positions consistent with the QCC's existing policy.

Delegates are sometimes provided with training workshops to equip them to effectively represent environmental interests through these consultative mechanisms. One example is the *Speaking Out* workshop held in August 1999 (see Appendix I) that was tailored to the needs of activists involved in such processes. The participatory and experiential pedagogy of these workshops provided impetus for participants to generate a set of principles to enhance their influence as committee members. These principles included: (1) conservationists should be involved from very early stages in any environmental decision; (2) they should insist on the freedom to speak publicly about committee matters and (3) delegates should insist their expenses be reimbursed. The process of developing these principles appeared to represent a significant learning opportunity for participants. These agreed principles were subsequently incorporated in QCC policy.

A similar workshop was held in 2001 to examine the Cape York 'Heads of Agreement', a landmark non-government agreement brokered by stakeholders including national ENGOs. This agreement was considered by the workshop

facilitator to offer a relevant template or standard to apply elsewhere. The workshop triggered a robust debate concerning the relative merits of consultation as practiced by current state and federal governments. It also led some participants to advocate a major shift in tactical preferences from consultation to direct action and community mobilisation. This shift has yet to occur in any significant way in the groups represented at the workshop.

#### **5.4.4 Reflecting on the second cycle of inquiry**

The second action research cycle revealed a high level of unmet demand for personal and professional activist development. Although the workshops described in this section received minimal promotion they were fully subscribed. Despite indications during the first cycle of inquiry that activist education tends to occur informally and incidentally, the high level of support for these workshops provided evidence that informal education was also a valid and productive approach. Activist organisations, it appeared, need not rely exclusively on learning through experience and adversity ('sink or swim') as activist development strategies.

Another insight to emerge from the conduct and evaluation of these workshops was that in order to maximise beneficial results, the costs of participation need to be minimised. Environmental activists are often intensely busy and overcommitted people ('over-worked and under-paid') and many are volunteers. Few are willing or able to participate in learning activities that require a significant investment in terms of registration fees or time. Although the workshops were only between a few hours and two days in duration and arguably provided a somewhat superficial treatment of topics, very few participants advocated longer workshops.

Workshop evaluations and post-workshop correspondence were conducted for the purpose of this inquiry with the informed consent that findings would

be referenced confidentially. Data collected in this manner confirmed that most participants had adopted and implemented the skills and understandings they had acquired. Activists who had participated in the media skills, Movement Action Planning and campaign planning workshops reported enhanced media strategies, campaign analysis and planning processes respectively. The level of post-workshop adoption appeared to be increased through workshop pedagogy that entailed experiential and participatory learning. For example, media skills workshop participants reported they were more likely to issue media releases and experiment with complex media strategies if their workshops had included opportunities to share experiences and to acquire first-hand experience of the advocacy techniques that were promoted. For reasons discussed in Section 1.6 (Scope of Study), it was not possible to link these reportedly improved advocacy tools directly to an increase in the achievement of participants' campaign objectives. Although workshop participation and enhanced social action skills were evidently correlated, I was not able to establish, nor do I mean to imply, a causal relationship. For the purposes of this inquiry, participants' testimony was considered an adequate form of validation that the workshops were both valued and effective learning experiences.

Finally, the workshops reinforced one of the key conclusions that had emerged from the first action research cycle. A consensus of opinion had emerged from interviews with QCC activists that learning for advocacy is promoted through mentorship and, more generally, dialogue of a reflective and critical nature between environmentalists. They observed that relationships of this kind tended to be uncommon, due to the task-orientation and over-commitment of many experienced advocates. The workshops described in this section effectively resolved this obstacle by creating 'time-out' and structured opportunities for dialogue. In a sense, this pedagogy created temporary mentorship relationships and peer learning.

## 5.5 Cycle Three: 1998 State Conservation Conference

The third action research cycle in this study involved the coordination of a suite of teaching and learning activities as one element of a state-wide gathering of conservationists. This cycle of inquiry built on the previous two cycles as it incorporated educational activities to address learning goals that had been prioritised by QCC activists and validated by workshop participants during the second research cycle. This collaborative intervention provided opportunities to examine the outcomes of a range of activist education approaches from the perspectives of participating individuals, groups and activist educators.

This cycle of inquiry utilised a variety of data collection techniques including observation, participant-observation, surveys, questionnaires and interviews. The five main sources of data are listed in the following table. Techniques of data collection and analysis are summarised in this and following sections.

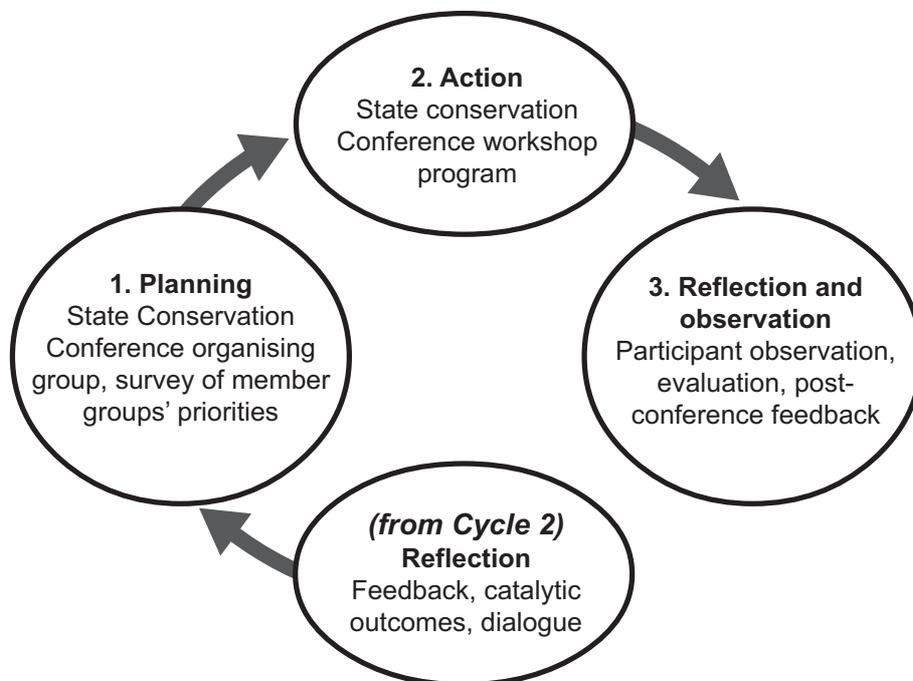


Figure 5.8 Third action research cycle of QCC action research study

Observation, interviews and post-conference participant evaluations were utilised to systematically: (1) identify training experiences that activists considered directly beneficial; (2) assess the extent to which participants’ perceived their educational needs and those of the environmental advocacy sector in general had been met; (3) evaluate their subsequent application of knowledge and skills acquired or enhanced during the training program; and (4) evaluate the effectiveness of workshop pedagogies and strategies.

Participant observation
Workshop participant evaluation immediately post-conference (Appendix K)
Workshop participant evaluation three months after the conference (Appendix M)
Workshop facilitator survey and semi-structured email correspondence (Appendix N)
Photographs
Post-conference evaluation by organising group

Table 5.4 Data sources informing third action research cycle

Observation alone was not considered adequate to address these questions. Three additional sources of insight were utilised in order to ensure a triangulation of sources. A two-stage participant evaluation process captured initial impressions of the value of the workshops then followed up by asking participants three months later whether their learning had lasting value and to what extent the workshops had changed the way they approached their advocacy work.

The most significant gathering of activists associated with the Queensland environment movement is the State Conservation Conference. This is hosted each year by one of QCC’s member groups. The themes of these conferences

generally reflect controversial environmental issues. The conferences tend to emphasise environmental knowledge (scientific eco-literacy) and campaign planning, rather than movement capacity or development. During the 1990s, themes included coastal planning, population, land clearing and environmental economics. Conference programs and reports during this time indicated the gatherings were geared toward raising awareness, facilitating collaborative campaign planning for issues of state or national significance and showcasing specific campaigns.

In 1998, responsibility to host the conference fell to the QCC's central office in Brisbane. Six activists formed an organising collective and began regular lunch meetings. After preliminary preparations, a part-time conference coordinator was employed. During the conference-planning period, close contact was maintained with ENGOs across the state to inform the program and maximise input from the constituency.

From the outset, the organising collective prioritised education and training as key elements of the conference. Two members of the collective had previously participated in interviews during the first research cycle of this inquiry. When they were interviewed, Carol and Anne had articulated their strong commitment to capacity building in the Queensland environment movement. Laura, the QCC administrator, played a nurturing role in the movement by virtue of her position. She identified skills that she felt would enhance coordination and relations amongst and within member groups.

By adopting the conference theme *Powerful Voices*, the organising group signalled their departure from the history of issue-based conferences and communicated their intention that the conference would prioritise the maintenance rather than task aspects of environmental activism. The 1998 gathering would aim to build the movement and enhance participating

Figure 5.9 *Powerful Voices* conference flier

activists' ability to effect change.

The organising collective developed an integrated conference program that incorporated both training workshops and other regular elements of the annual gathering. These routine elements included the 'regional round up' in which regional groups reported on their year's activities and sessions during which conference resolutions that articulated the movement's unanimous pronouncements on contemporary issues were developed and adopted. These resolutions generally called for government action.

The program was informed in part by the interviews that had been conducted with QCC activists during the first cycle of this inquiry and particularly the training priorities that respondents had identified. The conference organising collective was also informed by the 1996 National Conference of Conservation Councils and Environment Centres held in Adelaide that had incorporated a similarly integrated training program. This program was funded through a grant from the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training that had allowed for the engagement of trainers. Feedback from participants in the 1996 conference was strongly supportive of further training opportunities.

The trainers and organisers involved with this 1996 conference initiated a working group whose efforts were referred to as the Environment Movement Training Project. This group published resources and curriculum materials from the 1996 conference as *Essential Skills for Environmental Activists*<sup>45</sup> although this publication was not widely distributed due to minimal publicity and a limited print-run.

In addition, the group conducted a post-conference training needs survey of

---

45 On-line available <<http://www.earthshare.org.au/training>>

Figure 5.10 *Essential Skills for Environmental Activists, 1997*

state and national environment groups asking what effective training had been undertaken in recent years, how much money had been spent, how the training was organised, what factors limited training and which training topics the organisations considered most useful. The survey also explored the respondent groups' support for collaborative training programs. The nineteen suggested training topics identified in Table 5.5 received between 56% and 91% of groups' support as being "fairly useful" or "very useful".

<b>Proposed Training Program</b>	<b>Level of support (%)</b>
Developing planning skills	91
Recruiting, coordinating and supporting volunteers	91
Improving community education programs	88
Developing effective campaigns	88
Enhancing fundraising and promotion	88
Building alliances eg coalitions, movement building	88
Managing people	88
Maintaining morale and motivation, dealing with despair	84
Public speaking skills	84
Working with the media	84
Preventing stress and burnout	81
Computer skills	78
Using environmental legislation	78
Resolving conflicts and developing negotiation skills	78
Managing finances and budgeting	75
Building effective teams and group communication	72
Documenting and evaluating programs	72
Managing time effectively	66
Applying nonviolent methods	56

Table 5.5 ENGO support for proposed training programs  
(Shields and Allan 1997)

As a member of the organising group for the 1998 State Conservation Conference, I helped conduct a similar survey of training priorities among Queensland ENGOs in October 1997. The survey was conducted by electronic communication and primarily targeted the seven regional conservation councils affiliated with the QCC. These 'umbrella' groups comprise many smaller local environment groups in areas of regional Queensland surrounding Cairns, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, the Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Ipswich and the Gold Coast. The regional councils in turn are

members of the QCC, providing a framework for coordination, delegation and representation. The training topics prioritised in responses to this survey were adopted as themes for training workshops during the state conference and included: fundraising; campaign planning; media skills; volunteer coordination; conflict resolution; team and alliance building; and legal aspects of campaigning. The strong support for training in research and computer skills suggested these topics should be added to the topics that had been included in the Adelaide conference.

### **5.5.1 Training program and workshops**

In order to systematically investigate aspects of activist education that had been identified as integral factors during early stages of this inquiry, I assumed responsibility for coordinating the training element of the conference. The role involved identifying and liaising with workshop facilitators. The majority of activist educators engaged for the Queensland conference had been involved with the 1996 National Conference of Conservation Councils and Environment Centres. The group included Bob Burton, Bobbi Allan, Katrina Shields and Chris Harris. This section introduces each of the trainers and workshops. Profiles of both the trainers and their workshops, as summarised in the following table, were included in delegates' conference packs and are provided in full in Appendix J.

Bob Burton has been a prominent environmental activist since the 1980s, most notably for his role in regional and national ENGOs including The Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation. His advocacy role has involved research and lobbying, advocacy, management and fundraising. Burton was editor of the quarterly mining industry newsletter *Mining Monitor* and a researcher and writer. His research alerted the Australian environment movement to industry-led campaigns against community environment groups (Burton 1995, 1996). At *Powerful Voices*, he facilitated

workshops on ENGO fundraising strategies and investigative skills. These fundraising workshops were developed to cater to the needs of both novice and experienced fundraisers. This was a response to the comments received through the QCC interviews and other sources that indicated activist training workshops are too often introductory in nature. Participants in Burton's workshops were encouraged to bring fundraising proposals and budgets in order that the workshops could be practical and address real and immediate needs. During the workshops Burton provided relevant anecdotes that illustrated how a range of ENGOs developed and implemented effective fundraising plans and budgets, donations, bequests programs and special events.

Bobbi Allan	Building Effective Teams and Group Communication
Bobbi Allan	Resolving Conflicts and Developing Negotiation Skills
Bob Burton	Fundraising and Promotion
Bob Burton	Investigative Skills
Katrina Shields	Maintaining Morale and Motivation
Katrina Shields	Movement Building and Alliances
Chris Harris	Strategic Campaign Planning
Luke Giribon	Working with the Media
Danielle Nelson	Working with Volunteers
John Wikken	Geographic Information Systems

Table 5.6 *Powerful Voices* workshop facilitators and topics

Burton also facilitated investigative skills workshops, consistent with his long-term interest in industry groups' attacks on the environment movement. His workshop was intended to raise awareness within the environment movement of the need for a vigilant and critical analysis of industry-led anti-environment campaign strategies in order to both withstand and, where appropriate, replicate them. Burton's independent research into industry front-groups and the public relations industry is documented in *Secrets and Lies*, an exposé on

the New Zealand timber industry (Hagar and Burton 1999) and in Beder's *Global Spin* (1997). The investigative skills workshops also introduced participants to Freedom of Information, World-Wide Web research strategies, corporate information sources, defamation legislation and strategies to communicate with target audiences.

Chris Harris became involved in activist training after considerable experience as a campaigner with national and international ENGOs. Harris gained recognition in the environment movement as an innovator through establishing fundraising programs such as Earth Share Australia and the Conservation Alliance. Along with Shields, Allan and Burton, Harris had also facilitated workshops at the 1996 National Conference in Adelaide. His 'Strategic Campaign Planning' workshop provided an overview of approaches to design, implement and evaluate campaign and organisational plans, such as strategic planning. Participants in this workshop analysed campaigns of varying effectiveness, identified myths about social change and discussed different approaches to planning and evaluation.

Harris and Burton were well known in the movement as campaigners rather than as trainers. Together, they had established the Mineral Policy Institute in response to their observation that the Australian environment movement directed minimal campaigning effort to the significant environmental impacts of the mining industry. Burton had a long association with The Wilderness Society and was a key participant in the early campaigns for Lake Pedder and the South-West (see Green 1981). He has worked hard to raise activists' awareness of industry attacks on the environment movement at ENGO gatherings and is a prominent advocate for building the capacity of the environment movement. Burton and Harris were widely regarded within the movement as 'elders'.

Bobbi Allan and Katrina Shields played a significant role in the training program. As active members of the Interhelp group that initiated Heart Politics gatherings discussed in Chapter Six, Shields and Allan had established in 1990 the Social Change Training and Resource Centre in Northern New South Wales. This centre provides resources and support including facilitation of workshops, training, renewal retreats and empowerment counselling for non-profit community groups, environment groups and government agencies. They had also facilitated workshops at the 1996 national conservation conference in Adelaide discussed previously.

Allan's professional background included consultancies with management groups and conducting training for community groups, the business sector and government agencies. She taught Group Processes at Southern Cross University and is trained and experienced in mediation and Playback Theatre. During the 1990s, Allan coordinated the visits to Australia by deep ecologist Joanna Macy's and led 'Despair and Empowerment' and Deep Ecology workshops. She was active in peace and environment groups and Heart Politics activities.

Allan facilitated two workshops at *Powerful Voices*. The first, 'Building Effective Teams and Group Communication', aimed to build participants' understanding of factors that contribute to effective teamwork and processes enhancing communication between co-workers. The second, 'Resolving Conflicts and Developing Negotiation Skills', gave an overview of several skills used to resolve conflict and negotiate successfully. These workshops introduced participants to conflict mapping as a tool to develop strategies to address environmental issues and other conflicts.

Shields' professional background included community development, counselling, women's health promotion and training. She is author of the

popular activist text *In the Tiger's Mouth - An Empowerment Guide for Social Action* (1991), is qualified as an occupational therapist and counsellor, and has a Masters Degree in Social Ecology. She has been involved in community activism and, like Allan, was one of the founding organisers of Heart Politics activities. Shields has also lectured at Southern Cross University in Community Development, Consultation and Participation and Group Processes.

Shields offered two workshops. The first, 'Maintaining Morale and Motivation', explored the burnout phenomena which plagues the environment movement and introduced participants to individual and group strategies to sustain and support activists. This workshop also incorporated strategies to maintain morale despite the apparent failure of many social change campaigns and the sense of despair this may engender. Shields' second workshop, 'Movement Building and Alliances', explored and developed strategies to strengthen the environment movement and encouraged participants to consider the challenges and opportunities associated with building alliances.

Luke Giribon provided media skills workshops. At the time of this conference, Giribon was senior consultant with Media Link, one of Queensland's largest public relations and media consultancies. Previously, he had been a media adviser to senior transport department executives and the Minister for Transport. Giribon's 'Media Skills' workshop introduced media management techniques, focusing on: (1) understanding how the media works and news is created; (2) interview structure and strategies for print and electronic media; (3) the '10 second news grab'; (4) how to write media releases; and (5) media liaison.

Danielle Nelson had worked closely with volunteers for five years with environmental advocacy organisations including The Wilderness Society and Queensland Conservation Council. She had coordinated large teams for

specific campaigns and events, managed small volunteer-based project teams, worked with volunteer management committees, and managed long-term volunteers. As QCC's administrator in 1995, Nelson had secured funding to develop a volunteers manual that provided administrative, policy and procedural frameworks for the QCC's volunteer management committee. Her 'Working With Volunteers' workshop explored effective volunteer management strategies and provided an opportunity for participants to share their volunteering success stories, and to reflect on obstacles faced by volunteer workers and managers.

Finally, a workshop on 'Geographic Information Systems' (GIS) was provided by John Wikken. Wikken and his partner Mayann Lloyd-Smith had pioneered computer mapping and data storage systems in the environment movement. As community advocates, their GIS mapping of abandoned dip-sites in a rural Australian region had been a major element in their successful campaign to initiate a remediation scheme. Wikken advocated and assisted the growing sophistication of the environment movement's information technology systems. His GIS workshop at *Powerful Voices* provided an opportunity for activists to grasp the potential for this tool in advancing their campaign objectives.

In addition to these scheduled and structured workshops, the conference program also incorporated informal learning opportunities. The first was a hypothetical role-play activity staged after dinner on the third evening. This role-play provided an opportunity to identify and critique roles and motivations commonly associated with environmental issues. The characters in the hypothetical environmental conflict exhibited varying degrees of rebelliousness, economic self-interest, conservatism, administrative inertia and NIMBYism. A second opportunity for informal learning was provided by the involvement of guest speakers including eminent scientific

commentator and futurist Peter Ellyard, Brisbane's Lord Mayor Jim Soorley and Queensland Environment Minister Brian Littleproud. A third informal learning opportunity was the "inspirational campaign stories" session that encouraged participants to explore and share the emotional and transformative dimensions of their campaigning.

### **5.5.2 Observation and evaluation**

The four-day gathering attracted almost one hundred activists including representatives of QCC's regional councils, smaller member groups and supporters. Delegates also included activist academics, state and local politicians, and government officials influential in environmental decision-making, including State Opposition environment spokesperson Rod Welford, who subsequently became Environment Minister. The conference was developed as a residential event, and most participants elected to remain on-site in tents and cabins. The program allowed a small amount of free time, allowing participants to swim in the dam, explore the short bushwalks and socialise. Participants were rostered to assist with domestic duties. The training program occupied approximately two-thirds of available time.

As most workshops were scheduled twice during the conference, I was able to systematically observe and document each session's pedagogic attributes and content. To achieve a triangulation of data sources, participant observation was complemented by informal (recorded) discussions with conference delegates, trainers and organisers during the gathering and through the administration of a written participant evaluation form (Appendix K). This feedback form was developed in liaison with the organising collective and completed by most conference delegates. A report synthesising participants' and organisers' assessments of the conference and, specifically, the workshop program, was provided to the host organisation. The report contributed to the subsequent development of a conference organising manual (Appendix

L). With the consent of conference participants and the Queensland Conservation Council Management Committee, participant evaluation was also integrated with researcher observations to inform this inquiry. The following section summarises feedback solicited through these information sources.

Written participant feedback provided evidence that conference delegates were primarily attracted to *Powerful Voices* by the training program. They also sought opportunities to network with other environmentalists. Several delegates hoped to become more familiar with the Queensland environment movement, to build their networks and to gain a perspective of how their efforts related to the collective effort of the state and national environment movement.



Figure 5.11 *Powerful Voices* delegates, Samford 1998

Feedback also indicated that most participants' expectations concerning the conference were either met or exceeded. In fact, almost all elements of the program were identified as a highlight by one or more people. In particular, the inspirational campaign stories session that was not a regular item in state conservation conferences received favourable mention by several people.

The training program received overwhelmingly positive feedback. Most

participants considered the suite of workshops offered an excellent range of topics and highly skilled trainers. The QCC's commitment to training expressed through this conference was seen as an appropriate service function for a peak body to provide to member groups. In fact, there was almost unanimous support for training to become a regular theme in the annual conferences. People also spoke highly of the overall conference program: the diversity of activities, "smooth-flowing agenda" and amenities.

At the same time, participant feedback also identified shortcomings of the conference. In particular, conference delegates were critical of the session during which member groups' resolutions were debated. Invariably this part of the state conference takes longer than scheduled, due in part to the lack of preparation by member groups who often fail to communicate their proposed resolutions to delegates and negotiate amendments before the conference. Some respondents considered the presentation on future societies by keynote speaker Peter Ellyard largely irrelevant to the movement, too long and "disempowering". By contrast, others felt Ellyard offered a thought-provoking challenge. Conversely, feedback affirmed the organising collective's preference for a residential conference which had resulted in a collegial atmosphere, maximised opportunities for interaction and helped to build relationships.

As noted above, campaign-specific presentations and discussions generally dominate the annual State Conservation Conference. The organisers of the *Powerful Voices* training program were conscious that the training workshops would dominate the program and erode time available for collaborative campaign planning. To accommodate the needs and interests of all conference participants, the registration form invited delegates to propose campaign-related sessions. Nonetheless, relatively few delegates exercised this option and their sessions were considered inadequately planned by comparison to training workshops. Most feedback suggested that participants were satisfied

with the time allocated to campaign sessions and noted that adequate campaign-related discussion occurred at an informal level during the conference.

The ‘inspirational stories’ session was a new element for state conferences. This segment was based on the ‘Out of the Hat’ story-telling device integral to Heart Politics gatherings (described in Chapter Six). As the conference agenda filled, the story-telling timeslot was almost displaced. As it turned out, many participants considered this session a highlight and their responses were almost entirely positive. Delegates especially appreciated the opportunity to learn about each other and commented that “We don’t need huge wins all the time to inspire each other” and, “It’s interesting to hear what inspires other people and the history they’ve had in the movement.” As the session’s title anticipated, the stories were indeed considered inspirational. Participant feedback suggested strong support for the incorporation of similar sessions in future state conferences, and for these stories to be interspersed through the program to draw attention to the personal dimension of environmental advocacy.

Participants were asked to suggest how the subsequent state conferences might be enhanced. In this respect, most respondents supported continued emphasis on education and training, making comments such as,

*I see an urgent need to gather as many agents for positive social change together to be united with similar goals and gain necessary skills to impact upon community thinking and government.*

There were also suggestions that the annual gathering should aim to clarify the ‘bigger picture’ within which ENGOs operate and strive for greater depth in discussions and workshops.

The feedback immediately following the conference also served to identify a

number of strategies that participants considered would contribute to an improved (future) training program. In particular, delegates recommended that workshop resources be widely distributed and that mechanisms be developed to enhance networking. These suggestions were acted on immediately. The conference training resources utilised in workshops were promoted through the QCC journal *Spinifex* and distributed to member groups. The QCC also assisted networking between activists by establishing email discussion groups, promoting available training resources through the organisation's website and mailing lists. Further strategies advocated through the participant evaluation form involved QCC promoting and facilitating training through regular workshops and social gatherings, a trainers' tour, a resource centre and the establishment of a liaison officer or support person position. In addition, a number of respondents spoke of individual actions they planned to take.

With just one exception, respondents considered themselves better equipped to succeed in their environmental advocacy as a result of participating in the training program. Participants' detailed comments identified a range of benefits, including enhanced skills and knowledge, networks and relationships. These benefits are also suggested in the following indicative comments:

*I feel more informed about media and investigating skills in particular. (It was) fantastic to have accessed that sort of knowledge.*

*I would say that I have more to consider now, and I will be able to be more critical in my work. Integrating some of the things I've learnt will no doubt be an exciting thing!*

*I've got a clearer campaign strategy view, better ideas on how to manage volunteers, media etc. It's also good to share experiences.*

Most respondents made specific recommendations for further training workshops. Two people recommended 'train the trainer' workshops as a strategy to increase the availability of activist training and education in rural and urban areas. Other participants recommended workshops to enhance

networking skills and training for media liaison.

The majority of respondents considered their work would be impacted upon in significant and positive ways as a result of the training program. In particular, delegates anticipated enhanced planning skills. Several people indicated they were confident they would approach the range of challenges presented in their work in a more strategic and deliberate manner. The focus on strategic planning was considered particularly useful as it was seen to offer relevant skills and understandings to enhance many organisational endeavours encompassing fundraising, administrative and campaign-related work. The following quotations summarise the range of benefits that participants attributed to the workshops:

*I'll be taking some of the resources and my new knowledge to groups I work with and using them for very basic, low key training for some of the areas addressed in workshops.*

*I have clearer ideas now on fundraising, team building, problem solving, the need for proper planning and also on the resources that are out there. Contacts made will prove useful.*

*I feel more empowered both in considering and running all aspects of campaigning. I feel I can offer clearer, more focused energy to the environmental movement.*

*I gained inspiration to keep going, identification of new directions, identification of how to get others to become active and recognise the variety of ways that can be achieved.*

### **5.5.3 Lasting effects: Post-conference participant feedback**

Respondents to the initial conference evaluation (discussed above) were asked to consider providing additional feedback concerning the training program's lasting effects by completing a second questionnaire several weeks later (this is included as Appendix M). Twelve completed questionnaires were received from the fifteen volunteers. These individuals provided a representative cross-section of conference participants and environmental advocacy groups generally. Three were employed on a full-time basis by ENGOs, four on a

part time or casual basis and five were volunteers. Only two had been part of the professional arm of the movement for longer than a few months, whereas most had been voluntarily involved for much longer - up to thirty years.

The post-conference questionnaire asked respondents to reflect on how and why they had initially become involved in environmental advocacy, the skills and knowledge they had brought to the movement and abilities they needed to develop. Whereas Section 2.2.2 provided an exogenous or theoretical discussion of factors motivating environmental advocates, this questionnaire generated a contextual and endogenous explanation.

Respondents described their initial involvement in individual and collective actions, letter writing, demonstrations, individual behavioural change (such as recycling), attending meetings, planting trees and donating to environment groups. Most respondents considered they had learnt to be effective advocates through academic learning (school and university) and by developing writing skills through experiences such as journalism and research. Others considered life experience and environmental values were more significant factors motivating and enhancing their activism. Prior activist experience was also considered important. These findings resonated with the large-scale quantitative study of community-sector volunteering by Baum, Modra, Bush, Cox, Crooke and Potter (1999) that found prior social change experience is a common antecedent for community organisers.

The post-conference questionnaire asked respondents to identify the knowledge and skills they considered important elements of their approach to advocacy. Relatively few respondents identified a lack of scientific or technical knowledge as an impediment to their activism. This aspect of conference delegates' feedback stood in sharp contrast to the emphasis on scientific eco-literacy suggested by QCC activists. By contrast, most people

commented that during their initial advocacy experiences they had considered it more important to acquire activist skills consistent with the toolbox of skills identified during the first set of activist interviews (summarised in Table 5.3). These activist skills included working with the media, data management, volunteer coordination, fundraising, public speaking (“how to speak in public without wetting my pants”), strategic planning, meeting facilitation and direct action planning.

Although knowledge of a technical nature was not considered a significant impediment to advocacy success, political awareness emerged as a strong theme. Respondents considered that in order to become effective advocates, they needed detailed knowledge of government functions and structures and an appreciation of the language of public servants and professionals.

Just as respondents ascribed various degrees of importance to technical and political knowledge and social action skills as antecedant to successful advocacy, they also associated distinct forms of learning with these parallel learnings. Many reported that their technical knowledge had been developed either through formal academic education or (more often) learnt ‘on the go’ during their engagement with ENGOs or other organisations. Whereas lobbying, media and advocacy (representation, submissions) skills had generally been acquired within the movement, scientific environmental knowledge was gained both within and outside the movement. The significance of informal and incidental learning within the movement was underscored in responses. Only three respondents had participated in intentional activist training workshops. These included Heart Politics, a Fran Peavey Strategic Questioning workshop (described in Chapter Six) and an activist training workshop organised by the National Union of Students.

The questionnaire also asked conference participants to explain their choice

of workshops during the *Powerful Voices* program. This was intended to further explore and validate the priorities identified through surveys and observations discussed above. In response, survey respondents indicated that they had chosen to participate in workshops they considered would provide ‘useful’ learning that could be immediately applied in their advocacy. This finding is consistent with the assumptions about adult learning associated with andragogy discussed in Chapter Three. For example, workshop participants commented that the learnings were, “directly relevant to my work”, “I thought it would be practical”, and “the speakers were excellent and imparted useful knowledge... I learnt a lot of useful stuff.” This utilitarian value was emphasised by one respondent who considered the workshop themes “empowering”. This comment affirmed the organising collective’s intention and the conference theme.

The questions in this post-conference questionnaire also assessed participants’ values concerning the relative merits of workshop facilitators’ approaches: their pedagogy and the extent to which their knowledge and experience contributed to the workshops. Although facilitators were consistently considered experts in their fields, conference participants expressed a clear preference for interactive and experiential workshops: “the ones that involved group exercises and interaction between speaker and audience (as this) adds interest, breaks the boredom and anchors ideas in the memory.” The preference expressed by one participant for didactic “factual presentation of facts” was a minority view.

Conference delegates also indicated in their questionnaire responses a preference for workshops which drew on their own experiences and those of other participants. This pedagogy was considered to have “brought out ideas and realisations that otherwise would not have surfaced”. One participant commented further that, “Other people’s experience helped put things into

perspective.” These comments have clear links with Mezirow’s (1991) notion of perspective transformation (Section 3.5.2), as workshop participants were encouraged to examine their assumptions and to critically consider alternatives. Another participant commented favourably on the balance of didactic and interactive workshops. The interplay between these two pedagogic emphases may be compared to Kolb’s (1984) learning cycle (Section 3.6.2) which combines the integration of new information with both reflection and new experiences.

Questionnaire respondents were also asked to describe the manner and extent to which their learning during the conference had been translated into their activist practice. With one exception, the twelve respondents indicated that skills and knowledge acquired through workshops that had been effectively applied in relevant tasks since the conference: “We are already implementing ideas from each workshop.” Several instances of participants’ application of their learnings are summarised in Table 5.7. These seven examples provide evidence of the appropriateness of both content and pedagogy.

The skills, techniques and other learnings promoted through the *Powerful Voices* workshops had been implemented in a practical and apparently beneficial way during the two to three months following the conference. This appeared to have been particularly the case with respect to the strategic campaign planning workshop which had introduced participants to a suite of planning techniques that had subsequently been adopted by several groups represented at the conference. A comparable emphasis on strategic planning as a crucial focus for capacity-building was identified by Parlaine and Flowers (2000) in their consultative environment movement study. Table 5.7 also suggests that participants’ application of learnings was not influenced by their status (voluntary or professional) or the nature of their organisation.

Individual's role & attributes of their organisation	Learning outcomes & opportunities for application	Indicative comments (verbatim)
<b>Professional project officer</b> New South Wales Nature Conservation Council (large peak advocacy ENGO)	Highlighted value of strategic campaign planning workshop. Intended to coordinate a similar activist education program in NSW. Considered workshops topics both important and novel.	<i>[The workshop content was] pretty new to a lot of people. We need to be patient as not many people are putting this into practice. [I need to] acknowledge what I already know and think up ways I can pass this on.</i>
<b>Volunteer</b> Smogbusters Action Group (campaign group)	Highlighted value of strategic campaign planning workshop. Increased social action and analytical thinking skills. Had implemented strategies to enhance group facilitation and interpersonal relationships, conflict mapping and resolution, visioning and movement building. Emphasised the learning benefits derived through both workshop content and pedagogy.	<i>I can be more focussed about my work ... thinking through issues more thoroughly and acting more decisively.</i>  <i>I have been able to think more clearly about possible allies and build alliances with diverse groups of people.</i>
<b>Volunteer</b> Jabiluka Action Group (campaign group)	Had implemented fundraising strategies introduced in workshops, including donation appeal and social events.	<i>Increased professionalism in planning and evaluating.</i>
<b>Professional project officer</b> QCC 'Rivers Alive' project (government funded advocacy and networking project)	Had implemented tools and skills introduced in strategic campaign planning workshop. Reported significantly improved volunteer management skills.	<i>Better forward planning, professionalism, a better understanding of other people working in the Queensland conservation movement.</i>
Volunteer Non-affiliated	Reported enhanced contacts and networks with other environmentalists.	<i>My confidence to organise, motivate and mobilise people and resources has increased 300% ... the conference provided practical skills, inspiration and motivation.</i>
Elected volunteer student representative University of Queensland Student Union (advocacy and services)	Had reviewed recruitment and induction procedures to enhance group building and support mechanisms and facilitated a visioning process. Increased confidence with respect to fundraising and media work.	<i>We have been passing on our learning.</i>

Continued on next page ...

Table 5.7 Participants' post-conference application of workshop learnings

... continued from previous page

<p><b>Professional manager and advocate</b> Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (statewide federation of community groups)</p>	<p>Had implemented strategies introduced during media skills, strategic campaign planning, conflict resolution, team-building, morale and motivation and GIS workshops.</p>	<p><i>New directions which hopefully mean I am coping better and being more useful... I have revamped some of my media releases and how I say things.</i></p> <p><i>I now summarise campaigns on a calendar to organise them better and to get priorities sorted out - and have briefed my committee.</i></p>
<p><b>Semi-voluntary coordinator</b> Bicycle Queensland (advocacy and member services)</p>	<p>Enhanced strategic planning techniques, media skills and ability to recognise and prevent activist burnout.</p>	<p><i>Very good for confidence building and networking. General sense of purpose from other like-minded people in similar positions and difficulties.</i></p>

Table 5.7 Participants’ post-conference application of workshop learnings (Cont.)

Finally, the survey asked for comments concerning the QCC’s role with respect to activist training. Respondents overwhelmingly urged the QCC to prioritise further training activities. There was particular support for service provision to remote and regional activist organisations and for advanced training, building on the foundations laid by the 1998 conference workshops. Several creative mechanisms for activist learning were suggested, including an ‘open university’ (travelling activist workshops) run collaboratively with other NGOs, securing funds for training work through fees or grants, establishing networks for ENGO workers such as fundraisers or campaigners, activist mentorship, activist ‘peer review’ and celebrations:

*Encourage a coming together for rejuvenation of spirit: a festival for insiders and workers (not public) to acknowledge and nurture the enormous sacrifice of activists and reinforce the radical edge, especially for those in danger of being coopted or seduced by fools’ gold of mainstream rewards.*

In summary, the post-conference survey provided further evidence to validate the core elements of an activist education curriculum and illustrate the range of possible and practiced pedagogies or educational practices associated with

these topics. Furthermore, this follow-up data collection demonstrated the high level of utilitarian value of activist education as illustrated by the adoption of new and enhanced activist skills and strategies.

#### **5.5.4 Activist education pedagogy: workshop leaders' educational orientations**

Thus far, the discussion of this third cycle of inquiry has described the training program that was incorporated in the 1998 State Conservation Conference. It has also identified the learning outcomes associated with the program by participants, both immediately afterwards and some two to three months later. The third action research cycle was also planned and conducted so as to examine the pedagogic orientations or educational philosophies adopted and espoused by activist educators. This opportunity was significant to the inquiry as a whole because activist education is an under-theorised and novel field of practice.

The main techniques for collecting data during this stage of the inquiry were participant observation and interviews conducted by email and in person with conference workshop facilitators. These interviews prompted workshop facilitators to articulate their beliefs about education and training for environmental advocacy. Questions asked in these interviews are included as Appendix N. The educational orientations espoused by the trainers provided insights that would not have been gained through observation or participants' comments. This section discusses trainers' approaches, linking workshop pedagogy to the educational orientations and assumptions discussed in Chapter Three.

The approaches taken by the workshop facilitators were as divergent as the training topics. The diversity of workshop structures and elements are summarised in the following table.

	Pedagogic strategies				
	Didactic presentation	Participatory exercises	Reflecting on personal experience	Application to participants' situations	Attention to personal dimension and relationship building
Volunteer management	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded
Strategic campaign planning	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded
Investigative skills	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded
Fundraising	Fully-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded
Building effective teams and group communication	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded
Resolving conflicts and developing negotiation skills	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded
Maintaining morale and motivations	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded
Movement building and alliances	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded
Media skills	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded
GIS	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded
Role-play hypothetical	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded
Guest speakers	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded	Half-shaded
Inspirational campaign stories	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded	Fully-shaded	Half-shaded	Fully-shaded

Table 5.8 Pedagogic elements of *Powerful Voices* workshops<sup>46</sup>

46 Cells that are half-shaded indicate the corresponding pedagogy was incorporated to some degree, whereas fully-shaded cells indicate the pedagogy or emphasis was an integral feature.

A didactic pedagogy based primarily on the transmission of content from expert to novice was evident to some extent in all workshops and other conference sessions. This was, however, the only pedagogic element common to all sessions. Personal development and lifeskills workshops tended to incorporate relationship building and reflection of a more personal or intimate nature (“how this affected me” rather than simply “what happened”). The hypothetical role play was informed by the prior experiences of participants. Although few workshops explicitly provided opportunities for participants to apply new skills or knowledge, post-conference feedback indicated subsequent application.

To some extent, the different approaches to workshop facilitation might have been anticipated due to the trainers’ divergent backgrounds. The brief introductory note on each workshop facilitator provided in Section 5.5.1 highlighted an important divide within the training group. Whereas workshop leaders such as Burton, Harris, Wikken and Nelson were seasoned advocates who had occupied significant roles in the environment movement, others drew their experience and expertise from other sources.

Giribon, for instance, had minimal prior movement contact. His media and training skills had been acquired through the private sector and government departments. Wicken’s technical skills with Geographic Information Systems had been developed through experience with both the environment movement and government agencies.

Shields and Allan, on the other hand, had acquired training and facilitation expertise and experience in a variety of contexts including social change campaigns, tertiary institutions and government agencies. They had also contributed significantly to activist education projects including Heart Politics, the 1996 Adelaide National Conservation Conference and the Social

Change Training and Resource Centre which they established. Significantly, Shields and Allan were the only workshop facilitators who considered their personal and professional background equipped them as educators.



Figure 5.12 Chris Harris' Strategic Campaign Planning workshop

The questions distributed to trainers asked them to reflect on and define their role or roles. The facilitators whose workshops emphasised technical skills (Wikken and Harris) described themselves as *resource people*, *demonstrators* and *experts* whose expertise was based on their ability to assess problems, identify alternative solutions, set priorities and lead by example. Harris also described himself as a *provocateur* as he challenged participants' presumptions. This was affirmed in comments by participants in his strategic campaign planning workshops. By comparison, facilitators whose workshops were oriented towards interpersonal and transformative dimensions of social change (Shields and Allan) described their roles as *facilitator* or *group leader*, descriptors that de-emphasised (while not dismissing) their role as experts. This role was evident in Allan's conflict resolution and alliance building workshop in which she encouraged participants to "draw on what they know... draw their experiences out and help them to frame those things in a way that they can use them as 'learning'." The facilitator role and pedagogy attributed to this



Figure 5.13 John Wikkens' Geographic Information System (GIS) workshop



Figure 5.14 Bob Burton's Fundraising workshop



Figure 5.15 Katrina Shields' Maintaining Morale workshop



Figure 5.16 Bobbi Allan's Conflict Resolution workshop

workshop is consistent with experiential education pedagogy as discussed in Chapter Three.

Compared to other workshop facilitators, Allan and Shields were particularly articulate in describing their workshop pedagogy. Although she was not formally qualified as an educator, Shields planned workshops in detail and generally adhered to these plans. Other trainers spoke in general terms of “showing by example”, “sharing my experience” and “exposing participants to relevant issues and ideas”. These descriptions suggested a didactic approach, transmissive or ‘banking’ pedagogy.

Harris reported that he generally utilised conservative or ‘traditional’ workshop processes that involved the presentation of information and ideas, followed by opportunities for interaction, feedback and questions. During this sequence, Harris retained control and played the role of expert. Shields and Allan, by contrast, articulated a more complex educational philosophy which predisposed them to promote and facilitate experiential and participatory learning experiences. They shared a concern for creating a mutual, non-hierarchical learning environment as evident, for instance, in their preference for seating participants in a circle or arc, rather than the more conventional arrangement of seating in rows.

Although they emphasised the learning potential of personal experience, Shields and Allan also differentiated between their roles as facilitators and participants’ roles. Their contribution to workshops was not simply to share experience as co-participants. Shields’ comments offer an excellent insight into her educational assumptions.

Participants are able to just immerse themselves in their own experience and what they want to get out of it. As trainer, I think you have to consider the whole group and try to balance quite a lot of conflicting needs. And to give the people who’ve asked you to be there what they’ve asked for, as well as to give people what

you sense they might be needing, which is not always the same thing. And to give different sorts of people something they can go away with. And there are some people who are very practical and want something practical and concrete they can go away with. And there are others who are feeling very reflective and in need of a change - to do some inner work. And there are people who really need to hear other people's experience and compare it with theirs. So I'm conscious that in every group there are diverse needs that I have to juggle. As trainer, you're preparing beforehand and thinking about what's coming next and how they fit together rather than getting caught up in a little corner. You've got an overview. And to see who is participating and who is not participating and perhaps try to tone down over-participants and encourage non-participants and to validate different points of view and smooth out ... a lot of process-type things. So there is a considerable difference between trainer and participant roles in reality, but I would probably try to play that down. It's kind of like, under the water you're paddling quite hard, but on the surface you want it to be relaxed. But in reality, I rarely find it is relaxing.

Shields' explanation served to highlight the subtle yet significant distinction between her role as educator or facilitator and the roles occupied by participants. It also illustrated her sophisticated pedagogic assumptions and her emphasis on assessing learners' priorities and expectations. Shields' responses drew attention to the potential value of reflecting on and sharing experience. Whereas didactic sessions were based on experts' experiences, ideas and knowledge, Shields treated participants' experience as a crucial source of knowledge. Rather than simply speak of their experience, Shields encouraged learners to 'integrate' or 'embody' the information introduced in workshops by relating it to their own experience and "trying it out". To facilitate this, her workshops often included a paired talking and listening exercise based on a sequence of questions:

How am I going to change? What do I need to do? What have I realised from this? What is my first step? What resources do I have? What resources do I need to get? What will I do in the next twenty-four hours? The next seventy-two hours?

Shields also suggested that experiential learning helps participants identify insights that are relevant to their personal situation in a way that transcends cognitive or intellectual ways of thinking. This "deeper kind of experiential learning", which she associates with Heart Politics, appears to demand an

appropriate learning context characterised by “safety, welcome, validation, fun, humour ... something is created in which people feel they can open up and let down into their beings ... and they reconnect with their bodies and their souls.” Shields commented that this type of learning demands more time (even living in community) and lasts longer. Based on values, motivation and spirituality, this ‘deep’ or ‘real’ experiential learning” is, for Shields, about “exchanging learning, wisdom, gleaned from doing this incredibly difficult thing that is going against the mainstream.” She considered not all activist education participants would be open to learning in this way and theorised that perhaps eight out of ten may engage as intended: “Even one really resistant and pissed off person” could potentially impede the acceptance of “deep experiential” processes in groups.

Shields’ acute awareness of workshop pedagogy stood in contrast to the pedagogy of other facilitators which appeared to be based on instinct rather than informed or deliberate choice. Their instinctive approach to the design and implementation of educational activities is comparable to notion of ‘craft knowledge’ developed by Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992). Shields’ approach was more deliberate than this, as she made every effort to adopt workshop processes that effectively complemented the content, and acknowledged that interactive processes are not necessarily appropriate for all topics.

This survey of workshop facilitators solicited comments concerning the primary purpose of activist training. Suggestions from workshop leaders included: to provide tools; to empower; to expand participants’ minds and to facilitate personal growth and change. Harris considered ENGOs make unrealistic demands of activists that might be overcome by training to help them acquire “new and innovative ideas” and overcome “the baggage of traditional values and power structures.” Other facilitators commented that education offered useful strategies to minimise activist burnout and sustain

effective advocacy. They suggested that activists with adequate support mechanisms and coping skills are likely to remain in the movement longer, “really building some long-term social change, where an activist becomes a leader and mentor to others and have an overview of how social change comes about.”

Trainers agreed, however, that the ultimate objective of education and training was to generate positive social change, to “facilitate social change, to combat social, political and economic oppression”. They were similarly unanimous in their criticism or rejection of activist education that promotes personal growth *for its own sake* or *as an end in itself*.

With respect to the structure and format of activist education, both trainers and participants agreed that the *Powerful Voices* workshops were generally too short. Two-hour workshops were not considered long enough to allow practical exercises such as the development of campaign plans or adequate exploration of complex topics such as conflict resolution. Wicken and Shields commented that time restraints obliged trainers to “work to the lowest common denominator.” Harris felt longer sessions would have allowed participants better opportunities for interaction, sharing experience and storytelling. Others agreed that more frequent, less hurried and advanced training opportunities would be more effective. Shields suggested that this ideal was unlikely to be achieved unless activist education became a more widespread practice, and that effective activist education programs may require a residential component of a week or more. She commented that,

You’re trying to meet the needs of so many different people at different levels... I’ve played with a model of having week-long training intensives that are residential. And people can nominate taking streams. There might be three or four concurrent workshops and people can nominate to follow a stream that meets their needs. You know, if it’s media skills, or whatever, they get to revisit it each day for five days. And pick and choose the ones they want to specialise in. And that’s integrated with small group reflection time. Small learning groups, pods, are created during

that time and they meet each day and reflect on what they're learning and what they need to learn. That might be a more integrated and in depth approach. And something like that would be designed and created - some work beforehand and follow-up afterwards. Given the range of topics for activist training, it's hard to quite see how that could be achieved. I think a week-long retreat would be a start.

This suggested format which is based on Shields' extensive activist education experience integrates many of the suggestions made by interviewees in both this study and the Heart Politics study described in Chapter Six. The learning groups she advocates are an integral element of Schutt's (2001) proposed twelve-month 'Vernal' activist education program.

### **5.5.5 Reflecting on the third cycle of inquiry**

The third action research cycle of the QCC study generated significant insights and added to the understandings that emerged from the first and second cycles. The state conference was a planned and strategic intervention informed by prior inquiry and enthusiastic collaboration. *Powerful Voices* was an ideal context for this inquiry as it brought together small and large, voluntary and professional environmental advocacy groups with the explicit and novel intention to promote activist learning. This cycle of inquiry utilised a participatory action research method to access opportunities and perspectives which would almost certainly have been unavailable to an outsider. The variety of informants and techniques for data collection contributed to a multi-layered understanding of both the content and pedagogy of activist education as summarised in the following figure.

The third cycle of action research also examined possible explanations for the dearth of activist education activities in the Queensland environment movement. My initial research had suggested activist education was uncommon due to either the prevailing task orientation of many activists that mitigates against their participation, or the lack of resources to support

informal activist education. While *Powerful Voices* served to verify the observation that few Queensland environmental advocacy organisations routinely (or even rarely) provide personal and professional development activities, it also dispelled these causal explanations. In fact, conference organisers discovered that activist education can be integrated into routine activities without being considered a distraction and that the modest requisite resources are readily available. For instance, it is not difficult to find activist educators willing to facilitate workshops for a modest fee.

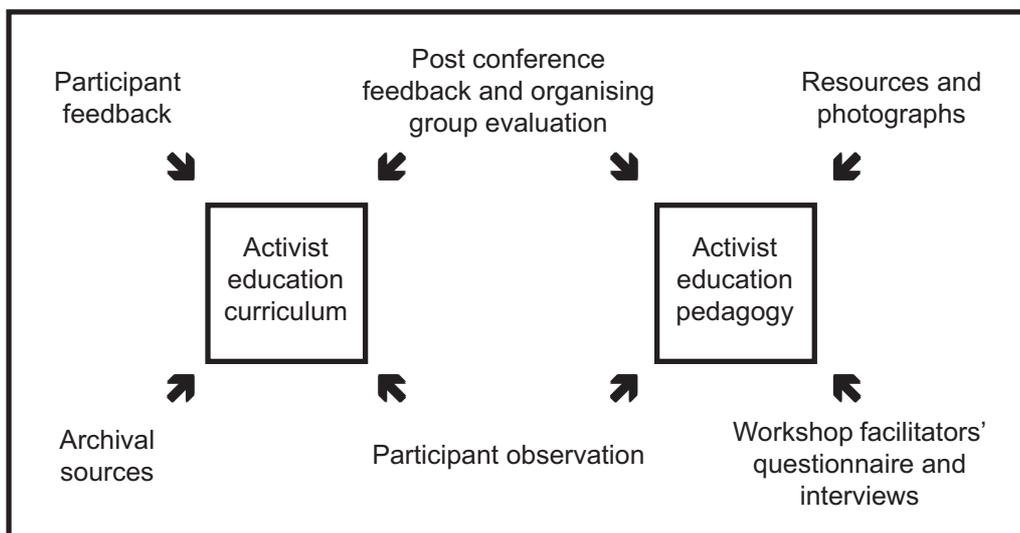


Figure 5.17 Data sources informing Cycle 3 activist education observations

Three key insights emerged from the third action research cycle. The first related to the content of activist education. The conference organisers drew on multiple sources of information to prioritise workshop topics corresponding to the needs of QCC member groups. This process confirmed the conclusion that had emerged from the first action research cycle: activists support education activities that address the wide range of knowledge, skills and experience they associate with effective environmental advocacy. The task of identifying priorities within this range is very difficult and may, at best, be informed by an examination of recent and current educational activities in order to minimise duplication. As it is unlikely that specific activist

education activities can adequately address all five dimensions of activist learning described in Section 3.7, the prioritisation of content seems crucial. Participant observation during *Powerful Voices* led me to conclude that scientific ecoliteracy may perhaps be afforded the lowest priority.

Whereas interviews with QCC activists confirmed that scientific knowledge is rated highly as a prerequisite to effective advocacy, this dimension of activist learning appears conducive to incidental learning and is often an antecedent for environmental advocates, having been acquired through formal education. Although the *Powerful Voices* program intentionally minimised the time allocated to the discussion of specific environmental problems or campaigns, delegates shared knowledge of a scientific or technical nature informally between workshops. Furthermore, it appears unlikely that the other four dimensions of activist learning including social action skills and political analysis would be adequately addressed in this informal way during a gathering that focussed on environmental facts and figures.

A second insight to emerge from the State Conservation Conference concerns the process or pedagogy of activist education. One of the most significant research findings was that most activist educators involved in the conference were expert advocates rather than educators. They essentially structured their sessions around content and expected that their expertise and experience would generate useful learning outcomes for participants. The workshop facilitators' lack of educational expertise appeared to explain the didactic pedagogy evident in most workshops. While this pedagogy is criticised by popular educators and exponents of andragogy and transformative learning (see Chapter Three), it was not criticised by conference participants. One possible explanation for this discrepancy relates to the profiles some activist educators have as environmental advocates. Although participants generally recognised and appreciated the participatory processes facilitated by Shields

and Allan, they were equally receptive to sessions which were didactic, on the condition that workshop leaders were highly accomplished activists.

The ‘inspirational campaign stories’ session provided another important insight. The pedagogy of this session was modelled on an element of Heart Politics gatherings described in the following Chapter as well as strategies for activist learning practiced by the Highlander Centre. This approach promotes reflection, critical thinking, intimacy, peer learning and the creation of a learning community. This conference session integrated cognitive and affective learning dimensions by inviting participants to speak of the factual basis of their campaigns (events and issues), as well as the feelings involved and what they had learnt. As resilience and the avoidance of burnout were identified by QCC activists as important activist attributes, educational strategies that address the emotional dimension of advocacy warrant attention. Although plenary sessions at State Conservation Conferences, such as the session during which resolutions are debated are often characterised by competition and even hostility between delegates, the inspirational campaign stories session created a trusting and cooperative learning environment. Participants considered this activity a particularly significant learning experience.

The third insight relates to the structures or media by which activist education is delivered. *Powerful Voices* participants expressed support for a range of delivery mechanisms that they described in terms of duration, location and target audience. Surveys administered both immediately post-conference and three months hence confirmed that participating activists supported both short and longer courses, in order to provide ‘entry level’ and advanced training or ‘going deeper’. While most participants appreciated the opportunity presented by this annual conference to engage in dialogue with and learn from activists from across the state, many also suggested activist education should be made available in rural areas.

## 5.6 Looking to the future: Catalytic outcomes

The range of activities described in this case study generated considerable interest and influenced, both directly and indirectly, several additional activist education activities. These outcomes affirm the catalytic objectives of the study and are consistent with the educational and political action stage of Comstock's model of emancipatory praxis. This section describes five catalytic outcomes generated by this study.

From an early stage in the inquiry, activists associated with the Queensland Conservation Council demonstrated their keen interest in activist education. Several members of the QCC Smogbusters action group volunteered to be interviewed. Motivated by their interest in activist education, the action group conducted a series of social action skills workshops during 1999 and 2000. Their interest was also reflected in the regular section of their fortnightly meetings, when activists reflected on their learning and articulated how the group could help them become more effective. Over time, Smogbusters evolved as a learning group and spent less time discussing the scientific or factual basis for their campaign and more time examining their strategies and collective skills. For example, the action group developed a range of campaign planning and evaluation tools. Although the group had limited funds, members were often sponsored to participate in workshops and conferences.

When another Griffith University researcher invited local activists to be interviewed on the topic of community environmental education, several Smogbusters members volunteered. They explained their enthusiasm for this project in terms of the opportunity it represented to reflect on their campaign strategies and evaluate the group's achievements: an explanation reminiscent of Shön's (1983, 1987) notion of the 'reflective practitioner'. Perhaps the most striking illustration of the group's catalytic engagement with this study was when a Smogbusters member initiated a discussion evening with other cycling

advocates to consider how Moyer's Movement Action Plan could inform their campaign strategy. This discussion is described in Appendix O. Participants in the workshop appeared to consider the four activist roles and eight campaign stages outlined in MAP theory to constitute a readily accessible and relevant framework within which to analyse their campaign strategies, strengths and weaknesses.

A second indicator of the study's catalytic value was also related to the Movement Action Plan. The Brisbane MAP workshop resulted in several innovations within the Friends of the Earth activist group, several members of which had participated in the workshops. These activists adopted the 'participant agreements' that were utilised during MAP workshops for their weekly meetings. These agreements inform an interesting experiential learning as their adoption requires, at least temporarily, heightened sensitivity and attention to group dynamics such as hierarchy and inclusivity. This sensitivity is consistent with the social changes toward which FoE members aspire. In general, FoE members' commitment to education and training appeared to increase as a result of their collaboration and involvement in this research project.

Whereas the QCC was a mature organisation with sufficient funds and capacity to engage external activist educators to conduct workshops at the 1998 State Conservation Conference, FoE was a relatively small and nascent organisation. Accordingly, their strategies to promote and facilitate activist education relied on cooperation and voluntarism. They displayed the following notice prominently in their office:

Do you want some training? In the absence of a training collective to formally organise sessions for FoE members, check out the skills register in the administration room. Put your name on if it's not already there and list your skills. Contact people who have skills you want to learn. Let others know (if appropriate) so they can join you. Happy learning!

This expression of interest in ongoing learning and development is a significant and persisting characteristic of FoE Brisbane. In fact, mentoring, group reflection and induction processes are more readily observed among the FoE group than any other Queensland ENGO observed during this study.

A third example of the study's catalytic impact related to QCC's activities. Following the 1998 State Conference, staff and volunteers submitted articles promoting the benefits of activist education to QCC's quarterly journal *Spinifex*. In addition, the conference planning manual produced by the organising group served to advise other QCC member groups of appropriate ways to promote activist training (Appendix L). The impact of this study was also evident when the QCC engaged consultants to assist with their strategic planning in 1998. The documentation provided for the consultants included a summary of the activist interviews conducted during the first phase of this study. The operational plan that was developed and adopted by the QCC included several references to training and support and included a commitment to regularly assessing the training needs of staff and member groups. The survey conducted in October 1998 is provided as Appendix P. During the ensuing eighteen months, the organisation initiated workshops on media skills and negotiating and communicating with government departments.

The learning culture integral to action research that was promoted during this study also appeared to be a motivating factor when QCC initiated a series of activist discussion evenings in 1999. The *Earth Raves* events were based in part on my recommendation that QCC convene regular and informal gatherings to provide opportunities for activists to share campaign stories and learn from each other. The structure of these evenings, however, was more formal than I had proposed (this is discussed in Appendix Q). One key difference was that speakers were treated as experts, rather than as equal participants in a learning community as I had advocated. Rather than

engendering an informal atmosphere conducive to dialogue and debate as envisaged, the facilitators allowed minimal time for questions and answers after each speaker. In contrast to the participatory process adopted by Shields and Allan during their workshops, these features of *Earth Raves* appeared to diminish the learning potential of the events.

Notwithstanding these reservations, it appeared that the QCC's latent interest in and demand for activist education had found expression as a result of this inquiry. When I resigned from QCC in October 2000, a member of organisation's Executive Committee commented favourably on the contribution I had made to a "culture of learning and professionalism".

## **5.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has described the three cycles of action research conducted with the Queensland Conservation Council and articulated findings as they relate to the research objectives of this study. The grounded theory generated through this action research project cannot be reliably generalised to explain education for environmental advocacy in other contexts. It does, however, provide an unprecedented explanation of opportunities for and obstacles to education for effective advocacy in the Queensland environment movement.

The collaborative interventions described in this chapter suggest a range of possible and practiced pedagogies. Importantly, the study piloted realistic and achievable strategies to deliver education consistent with the five dimensions of activist learning introduced in Chapter Two.

Although participants rated these activities very highly and reported their practices were enhanced as a result, they frequently spoke of a desire to 'go deeper'. This comment reflected, in part, an interest in programs that were

longer and perhaps residential. The findings of this study suggest, however, that such programs may not generate high levels of participation due to the transient, voluntary and task-oriented activist membership of many ENGOs. The comment also suggested that 'deeper' forms of learning are desirable and important. The following chapter explores this theme by systematically analysing one particular activist education activity. This regular event, known as Heart Politics, prioritises activists' personal development and life-skills and thus provides a useful balance to the emphasis on social action skills and organisational development in the QCC study.

# 6

## **Heart Politics ethnographic case study**

### **6.1 Activist learning through Heart Politics gatherings**

The literature review and initial observations and interviews undertaken during this inquiry suggested two broad schools of thought and practice in activist training and support. The *technical school* primarily promotes the development and refinement of a toolbox of activist skills. Activist educators whose approaches may be categorised in this way tend to prioritise intellect and knowledge, skills and efficiency. The *affective school*, on the other hand, assumes that effective social change is more directly influenced by and dependent upon values and feelings, understanding oneself and understanding society. Activist educators and activities reflecting this orientation promote

the development of relationships and spirituality. Whereas the QCC action research study (Chapter Five) highlighted the skills orientation of the technical school, the Heart Politics approach that is the focus of this chapter prioritises the personal growth, relationships and spiritual orientation of the affective school.

This chapter provides an account of Heart Politics gatherings, discusses the social change curriculum and pedagogy incorporated in the gatherings and explores the underlying educational philosophy. This study is informed by multiple data sources including interviews conducted with organisers and participants, my reflections after leading workshops and facilitating discussions, and informants' responses to draft sections of this chapter. The Heart Politics approach to activist teaching and learning suggests a number of vital elements to complement the skills-oriented training more common in ENGOs.

This study utilised an ethnographic research method. Ethnography is described by Seale (1998: 223) as a funnel. Like a funnel, the stages of ethnographic inquiry are sequentially more defined and purposeful. Consistent with this metaphor, the initial stages of this inquiry primarily utilised participant observation to develop a conceptual understanding of the educational dimension of the gatherings. The understanding of Heart Politics acquired by participating in gatherings before 1998 was complemented by a deeper and more systematic exploration of one gathering in 1998. Theoretical understandings developed through participant observation were complemented and triangulated by conducting semi-structured interviews with organisers and participants. The preliminary stages of the inquiry also drew on archival documents and oral histories as important data sources. Finally, a case study of one Heart Politics gathering was planned and conducted. This case study entailed interviews with members of a conference organising

collective, the subsequent transcription of these interviews, member checks and data analysis.

The insights acquired through this systematic inquiry, it is suggested, are generally characteristic of the Heart Politics movement and gatherings elsewhere. This claim is based on: (i) interviews conducted with organisers who had been involved with Heart Politics at other times and in other places; and (ii) participant observation during other gatherings and semi-structured interviews conducted with participants at a 1994 gathering as part of an earlier inquiry (Whelan, 1994).

Heart Politics gatherings<sup>47</sup> have been held in Australia since 1990. The gatherings were initiated by the residents of communities of intention, or communes, in Northern NSW near Nimbin and The Channon. Since the 1973 Aquarius Festival (described by Wigham, 1976), the region has been recognised internationally for embracing and experimenting with alternative lifestyles and spirituality.

The gatherings were initially held on properties in the Mt Warning area in northern NSW then at a camp north of Lennox Heads. Following several successful gatherings, efforts were made to replicate the gatherings in other parts of Australia, making Heart Politics accessible to more activists. Accordingly, the core network of organisers has supported gatherings in the Blue Mountains, Melbourne, rural Victoria and the Sunshine Coast hinterland. A unifying feature of these regions is the prevalence of alternative lifestyles and enterprises such as communities of intent (communes) and cooperative community ventures. The locations of these gatherings are popular areas for

---

47 The preference for 'gathering' rather than 'conference' suggests the organisers' pedagogic intentions promote informality and social interaction rather than the rigid structures and one-way communication often associated with conferences. This is discussed by Jull Jordan elsewhere in the chapter.

<b>1982-83</b>	Bodhi Farm resident Greta Seed obtained a copy of an article by Macy on 'Despairwork'. Others in the community read and discussed it.
<b>November 1983</b>	Allan obtained a copy of Macy's (1983) <i>Despair and Empowerment in the Nuclear Age</i> and took the book on a Christopher Titmuss (meditation) retreat, reading it at night and crying a lot. She spoke with Titmuss, who knew Macy and encouraged Allan to invite Macy to Australia.
<b>December 1983</b>	Bodhi Farm resident Simon Clough received a legacy which formed the basis of the <i>Magic Pudding Fund</i> . This fund allowed the Bodhi Farm organising committee to sponsor Macy's first visit to Australia. The group also connected with Interhelp UK and USA networks with whom Macy and Fran Peavey were conducting 'despair and empowerment' work. The northern NSW group became known as Interhelp Australia.
<b>1984</b>	Interhelp (UK) member, Pat Fleming, who had trained with Macy and had connections with Bodhi Farm residents, arrived in Australia. In response to an invitation from Interhelp Australia, Fleming moved into Bodhi Farm. The first Interhelp newsletters were published. Interhelp groups were established elsewhere in Australia through Bodhi Farm networks to promote the work and host Macy's visit. Fleming mentored a team of Bodhi Farm residents to facilitate workshops in Northern New South Wales, Sydney and Canberra.
<b>January 1985</b>	Macy arrived in Australia and toured Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra, Northern NSW and Brisbane, hosted by active Interhelp groups. The tour culminated in a four day event at Elanora Heights, Sydney, where Macy, Fleming and John Seed created the first 'Council of All Beings'. <sup>48</sup>
<b>August 1985</b>	First national Interhelp conference held in Albury.
<b>1986</b>	Second national Interhelp conference held in Sydney. Guest speaker Tova Green. Peavey's text <i>Heart Politics</i> published.
<b>1987</b>	Third major Interhelp gathering held in Ballina. Green remained in Australia.
<b>1988</b>	Organising group decided not to hold another national gathering. Energy was declining and 'Interhelp conference' was not considered a meaningful name for those not already 'in the know'.
<b>1989</b>	Interhelp group obtained Peavey's (1986) <i>Heart Politics</i> and heard that the New Zealand group were planning a Heart Politics conference with Peavey as guest speaker. Bodhi Farm members attended to observe. They reported back that the gathering was very similar to Interhelp conferences.

Table 6.1 Brief history of the evolution of Heart Politics  
(Allan, pers.comm. 6/10/01)

48 The Council of All Beings shares some elements with the Heart Politics gatherings. This event is described in detail on the website of the Rainforest Action Group, <<http://forests.org/ric/deep-eco/welcome.htm>>

relocation by people who ‘drop out’ of orthodox metropolitan lifestyles in favour of voluntary simplicity and active community engagement. Contrary to popular stereotypes, many people in these areas are professionals.

The Heart Politics gatherings were initiated by the Interhelp network, an informal group of people residing in the Northern Rivers region of northern New South Wales. Table 6.1 provides a brief history of both Interhelp and Heart Politics, and identifies relevant precursors to the gatherings including the individuals and texts that inspired the gatherings.

The network coordinated workshops and published newsletters during the 1980s and 1990s to promote social and environmental ideals, programs and events associated with Buddhism and Gandhian nonviolence. Interhelp members were also actively involved with social movements including the peace and women’s movements. Several members were activists in the Terania Creek rainforest conservation campaign. The collective also facilitated ‘despair and empowerment’ workshops, inspired by Macy (1983), a North American activist, educator and philosopher. Macy and Peavey were colleagues in Interhelp USA. The focus and pedagogy of these prior educational and social change programs have been significant factors influencing Heart Politics gatherings.

## **6.2 Movement inspiration: Fran Peavey and Interhelp**

People often ask about the term ‘heart politics’ and what it means. It seems such an oxymoron. An oxymoron is a phrase that is self-cancelling, stupidly contradictory like ‘military intelligence.’ Instead ‘heart politics’ might be called an ‘oxysavant’ – brilliantly contradictory. Putting the two words next to each other in our minds creates a spark of a new dream, a collision of old expectations of rigid politics and of the dreams of the heart – and the light of that spark, a vision for a new way of seeing both heart of power and strength, and politics. It is a politics of openness, instead of closedness.

(Peavey, 1989)

The Heart Politics gatherings are named for Fran Peavey's (1986) autobiographical *Heart Politics*. In that text, Peavey describes her international journey that involved spending extended periods sitting in public spaces with a sign which read "American Willing to Listen." Informed by this journey and other experiences and insights, Peavey concluded that, despite cultural differences, people share a universal desire for a peaceful, safe and sustainable world. *Heart Politics* and Peavey's subsequent texts (1989, 1992, 1994, 2001a, 2001b) developed this philosophy both theoretically and through case studies. Her innovative work as a facilitator, educator and comedian contributed to the development of a range of social change tools that may be associated with the affective school of activist learning introduced previously. One of these activist tools or strategies is Peavey's (2001) technique of strategic questioning<sup>49</sup> that she describes as, "a process which invites our ideas to shift and take into account new information and new possibilities. It awakens the suppressed possibilities of change embedded in each person, in each institution and in each society."

The disposition required to effectively utilise strategic questioning to effect change stands in stark contrast to the embedded, self-righteous, 'us and them' approach adopted by many environmental NGOs. Institutionalised, advocacy-oriented ENGOs in particular, often seek to effect short-term policy outcomes in order to protect the natural environment. Interviews conducted during this research project suggest many environmental advocates presume environmental sustainability can be achieved in this manner without concurrent or *a priori* personal or social change. Heart Politics, on the other hand, emphasises relationships and personal growth. Sustainable environmental outcomes are considered by Heart Politics practitioners to depend upon communication, shared visions and social cohesion. Heart Politics promotes a strongly humanist philosophy that emphasises humour,

---

49 On-line available <<http://www.crabgrass.org/strategic.html>>

accountability, support, story-telling and generosity of spirit.

The social change philosophy underpinning Heart Politics is based on the presumption that people generally share many positive values and visions for the future and the conviction that these ideals can be achieved cooperatively. This philosophy is evident in the Swatcha Ganges (or ‘clean up the Ganges River’) project that Peavey helped establish in Varannassi, India. Project workers presume that even those who wittingly pollute their waterways care deeply for the health of their sacred river. The non-adversarial and culturally-sensitive change philosophy informing this conservation project is identified by Peavey and Lennox (2001) as a key success factor.

### **6.3 Heart Politics program and pedagogy**

The description in this section of the evolution and pedagogy of the Heart Politics ‘movement’<sup>50</sup> was informed by research techniques associated with phenomenology and ethnography. In particular, the analysis is based on observation, oral history and semi-structured interviews which comprised open questions. As a regular participant in the gatherings and personal friend of several organisers, I began this study with ‘deep familiarity’ (Babbie, 1998). Although I had interviewed organisers as part of a previous study in order to ascertain their educational objectives (Whelan, 1994), the current study sought a more comprehensive understanding of the content and pedagogy of the gatherings.

Over the course of the fifteen years during which Australian Heart Politics gatherings have been held, a complex pedagogical tradition has evolved. This

---

50 This expression was used by members of the organising groups interviewed during this study to convey the momentum and sense of continuity fostered by the annual gatherings.

is referred to by Fran Peavey as the ‘social technology’ of the gatherings and is also described in a manual for conference organising groups published by a member of the Northern NSW organising group (Clough, 1994). The processes and patterns described in this section were incorporated in each of the five gatherings I attended between 1991 and 1998, each of which had different facilitators and many of which were held prior to the manual’s publication. Nonetheless, the pedagogy and program of the gatherings were very similar. This pedagogic tradition appeared to be communicated informally through mentoring and personal contact. Experienced conference organisers and workshop facilitators including Allan, Peavey and Shields have worked with the organising groups of gatherings held in different states and abroad, communicating innovations between groups, providing mentoring and leadership. The members of these organising groups often gather for informal annual retreats, which provide an excellent opportunity for this mentoring and modelling and help the network develop a common facilitation style.

The program elements described below are arranged and integrated variously from one gathering to the next, consistent with Clough’s (1994: 2) advice to organisers that the gatherings cannot be “run to a formula.” The theme of each gathering is determined by the organising group to reflect their interests and intentions and to communicate the themes developed by keynote speakers and workshops. Heart Politics themes between 1992 and 1999 are listed in Table 6.2.

An analysis of the promotional materials for Heart Politics gatherings reveals that they generally convey relatively little detail concerning the content and process (curriculum and pedagogy) to potential participants. Rather, these publications communicate the intended themes and potential personal outcomes and identify guest speakers and opening and closing times. The registration package asks registrants to prepare a one-page personal profile

<b>1992</b>	Developing skills, visions and relationships for more effective political communication and action
<b>1993</b>	Telling an alternative story: Creating community to build future tools, theory, values
<b>1994</b>	Creating a culture of positive social change
<b>1995</b>	Personal integrity in social change
<b>1996</b>	Tall Poppies: Risking leadership in Australia
<b>1997</b>	Embracing the opposites
<b>1998</b>	Re-painting the dream: Re-inspiring to action
<b>1999</b>	Courage to lift our dreams into the future
<b>2000</b>	Creative collaboration for positive social change
<b>2002</b>	Personal power, leadership and social change

Table 6.2 Heart Politics themes 1992-2002

to communicate their interests, work and community involvement and a photograph. People are also urged to arrive on time, to remain on-site during the gathering and to minimise interruptions to their participation such as telephone calls or visitors. These features combine to create intrigue or suspense, a precursor not uncommon before retreats. Participants are encouraged to approach the gathering focused and attentive, free from distractions and relaxed: an excellent disposition for the learning experiences to follow. Heart Politics veterans generally refrain from briefing newcomers in detail to avoid ‘spoiling the surprise’.

### **6.3.1 Opening night**

The opening night sets the stage for a structured and carefully managed three

and a half days. The group of fifty to one hundred participants gathers in a large comfortable meeting space decorated with cushions, candles, incense or oils, lanterns, wall hangings and rugs. These adornments create an informal setting similar to an ashram or meditation centre. This informality and sense of ritual is also fostered by seating participants on cushions and seats in a circle during plenary sessions, an arrangement that engenders a democratic and participatory learning environment. Materials are provided for participants to decorate name tags which are worn for the duration of the gathering. This contributes to the sense that the program invites artistic expression and individuality.



Figures 6.1, 6.2 Heart Politics 1999

A member of the organising team delivers a statement of welcome. This person generally plays an important facilitation role throughout the gathering. Other organisers identify themselves then participants are invited to introduce themselves, speak briefly of their personal and professional background, and articulate their expectations of the gathering. Already at this early stage, the learning environment is being defined. Facilitators model 'good listening' by ensuring that as each speaker introduces themselves they receive the group's full attention. This attention was commented on by several interviewees during this study who remarked that being listened to in such an attentive way is an infrequent experience in their personal or professional life. The attentive listening generated in this initial session models an important element of the learning environment that is further developed during the following four days.

An initial keynote address by a guest speaker is sometimes provided on the opening night, or alternatively the following morning. Humorous and physical icebreaker games are an integral component of the opening night and throughout the gathering. This creates an informal atmosphere and helps participants develop relationships. Games also defuse tense or emotional moments. There may also be singing. During the gathering, members of the organising group lead participants in song as both an attention-gathering strategy and as an affirmation of their shared interpersonal and transformative experiences. The songs are often familiar to participants who have been involved in social movements: songs of peace, courage, wisdom and interpersonal connection and commitment.

*How can anyone ever tell you you are anything less than beautiful;  
How can anyone ever tell you you are less than whole?  
How can anyone fail to notice that your loving is a miracle;  
How deeply you're connected to my soul.*

Lyrics by Libby Roderick. Sung at Heart Politics gatherings 1992, 1994.

*I'm going up (going up) on the mountain, ain't coming down till the morning.  
Going up (going up) to set my soul free, ain't coming down in chains.  
(Oh) My saviour lives inside of me. All I have to do is to set her/him free.  
(Oh) My saviour lives inside of me. All I have to do is set her/him free.*

Sung at Heart Politics gatherings 1992-1998.

More overtly political songs popular at Heart Politics have their origins in the trade union movement and peace movement. Judy Small's 'I'm going to keep on walking forward' is a typical example.

### **6.3.2 Out of the Hat**

*Out of the Hat* stories are introduced on the opening night or perhaps early on the first day of the gathering. Participants' names are drawn at random from a hat to select three or four people per session to share stories of their interests

and experiences of social change work with the group. Out of the Hat is an important precursor to subsequent processes and encourage self-disclosure and trust. Although fewer than half the group share in this way, the random selection process motivates all participants to consider what they might say and to attend to proceedings.

Commonly, one or more participants of the organisers model this exercise, making it clear that participants are invited to reflect on both personal and political experiences and values. This concurrent attention to both personal and political dimensions of activism is a key feature of Heart Politics that is often lacking in social change organisations. After stories have been shared, participants who feel a sense of empathy with the speaker are invited to stand with them. These people may also be invited to place a hand on the speaker's shoulder and briefly articulate their feelings of solidarity.

### **6.3.3 Support groups**

Participants then spend some time with their *support groups*. These groups comprise a facilitator and between five and ten participants. Support groups are an integral feature of the Heart Politics process. When participants register, they are asked to nominate for one of five to ten support groups. Participants interviewed during this research project explained their choice of support group reflected a preference to be with a specific facilitator, friends or colleagues or with a single-gender group. Others make their choice at random. Support group leaders are generally members of the organising group or veterans of previous gatherings. They have generally received informal training through mentoring and a one-page set of guidelines. Leaders are gently directive rather than controlling and seek to establish and encourage an atmosphere of trust, openness and mutuality. They also facilitate communication between participants and the organising group.

The first support group meeting is an opportunity for participants to learn about each others' interests and situations. Facilitators encourage support group members to exercise autonomy in determining how best to utilise meetings during the gathering. The daily sixty to ninety minute sessions are generally used to share reflections on speakers and workshops. By relating the ideas and information conveyed during the gathering to their personal situations, participants engage in experiential learning. Support groups are not, however, constrained to cognitive or intellectual activities. Alternative activities include walking along nearby beaches or through forests, meditating, singing, art work or massage. During a support group session at Heart Politics in Northern NSW in 1995, members expressed a desire for physical exertion to complement or compensate for the demands of listening to long presentations and sitting still for hours. The group opted to wrestle on the lawns during this session.

Participants are likely to feel challenged by speakers' presentations and by workshop interactions. The topics commonly motivate participants to come to terms with critical social and environmental issues and to consider their current and potential role in promoting positive social change. Invariably, the problems explored are pressing and overwhelming in nature. Speakers and workshops frequently explore the personal implications of working for change by discussing activist 'survival techniques', support and accountability mechanisms and communication tools. Support groups also create a trusting environment where participants can reflect on the challenges presented, articulate tensions, conflicts and opportunities for personal change and seek support. They can also discuss the merits of strategies presented by speakers or trial these techniques. Support group sessions also provide significant experiential learning about group facilitation, self-facilitation and listening strategies.

Support groups are also rostered for domestic responsibilities such as food preparation, cleaning dishes and rearranging rooms, providing another opportunity for informal sharing and team building. They are also encouraged to rehearse and present a short dramatic or musical segment during a concert on the second or third night of the gathering.

Support group meetings serve as a barometer to gauge how the gathering is unfolding. Support group facilitators participate in the breakfast meetings of the organising group to convey the evaluative comments and suggestions made by members of their groups concerning meals and venue, program, and atmosphere. This mechanism serves to identify and address administrative and substantive issues as they arise. Problems identified this way might include, for instance, participants' concern that sexist or discriminatory language has been used, or that specific viewpoints may have been marginalised. Organising group members are quick to respond to suggestions and open to dialogue. The routine 'housekeeping' session at the beginning or closure of each plenary session attends to the corresponding action taken.

#### **6.3.4 Listening group**

Another mechanism established to monitor and evaluate the gathering is the *listening group*. Three or four members of the organising group (or others nominated by the organisers) form a group to hear both constructive and critical comments from participants and to relay these, where appropriate, to the organisers. The listening group is readily accessible during meal times, sitting at a clearly identified table or meeting in a publicised and less public location. This strategy was also utilised during the *Powerful Voices* conference and served to capture ideas for improvement.

### 6.3.5 Guest speakers

The two or three full days between the opening and closing sessions are divided between meal time, support groups, plenary sessions, workshops and free time. Guest speakers and facilitators develop the theme of the gathering by providing concrete examples of community activism, philosophical frameworks and social analyses to illuminate participants' action. A representative sample of these people is provided in Table 6.3.

<b>Social movement authors</b>	Fran Peavey ( <i>Heart Politics</i> , 1984); Tova Green ( <i>Insight and Action</i> , 1994); Katrina Shields ( <i>In the Tiger's Mouth</i> , 1991); John Andrews ( <i>Living Better With Less</i> , 1981)
<b>Elected representatives</b>	Jo Vallentine (Nuclear Disarmament Party Senator); Lyn Carson (Lismore City Council Community Independent); Christabel Chamarette (W.A. Green Senator); Richard Jones (NSW Democrat Senator)
<b>Community activists, innovators and opinion leaders</b>	John Corkhill (North East Forest Alliance, NSW); Gavan McFadzean (Cairns and Far North Queensland Environment Council); Tim Costello (prominent Baptist Minister and community activist); Jill Jordan (founder, Maleny and District Community Credit Union); Sister Patricia Pak Poy (coordinator, international campaign against landmines); Patrick Anderson (Greenpeace International); Annie Bolitho (story teller and facilitator); Liz Clay (forest campaigner)
<b>Aboriginal elders and activists</b>	Mary Graham (Kombbumerri people, ATSIC executive member); Sharon Parsons (Ipswich City Council Community Development Officer for Indigenous Australians)
<b>Scientists and other academics</b>	Clive Hamilton ( <i>The Mystic Economist</i> , 1994); Dr Sohail Inayatullah (futurist and political scientist)

Table 6.3 Heart Politics keynote speakers and workshop facilitators 1992-2002

### 6.3.6 Workshops

Workshops conducted during Heart Politics gatherings stimulate and challenge participants to develop ideas and insights through discussions which assist comprehension and synthesis of guest speakers' perspectives and through reflecting on their own experiences. Facilitators are often highly skilled and

accomplished and bring to the gathering a wealth of strategies to enhance participatory and experiential learning outcomes. Their workshop pedagogies are diverse and provide opportunities for both intellectual and creative expression. It is uncommon for any two workshops to follow the same process. Participants work in groups, quads, trios, pairs, individually, indoors and outside, by talking, touch, art and music. By stimulating the intellectual and affective domains, these activities inspire and promote connectedness, celebration, disclosure and powerful emotional experiences. Having noted that each workshop is unique, certain processes appear to have been adopted as core elements of Heart Politics workshops. For instance, it is common for workshops to conclude with participants sharing as a larger group their experiences and assessments, both in terms of process and outcome.

Two workshops are described in detail below to illustrate the typically participatory nature and pedagogic orientation of Heart Politics.

---

**Workshop 1:****Patrick Anderson and Fran Peavey, Sunshine Coast 1998**

Fran Peavey and Patrick Anderson were guest speakers during the 1998 Sunshine Coast Heart Politics gathering. During the gathering, they facilitated a workshop to explore notions of sustainability in activism. Three questions were written prominently on the whiteboard behind which Fran and Patrick sat, squarely facing each other. The workshop sequence was explained: the two facilitators would take turns asking each other these three questions and listen attentively to responses without interrupting, ensuring the respondent was at ease to speak freely for as long as they wanted. Questions of clarification could be asked once the respondent had completed their answers to each question. The four questions were:

- What is your work?
- How do you decide what to do?
- How do you decide what you don't have to do?
- How do you organise your work to support your spiritual and emotional life?



Figure 6.3 *How do you sustain your social change work?* (Heart Politics 1998)

Once Fran and Patrick had modelled this process, workshop participants paired off to follow the same process. Time-keepers ensured pairs swapped in time for each person to complete all four questions. Once the exercise was complete, the plenary reconvened to debrief. Fran prompted this with questions such as, “How was that for you? What did you learn? What ideas did you discover?”

---

---

**Workshop 2:****Bobbi Allan, Lennox Heads 1998**

Bobbi Allan has been a member of the organising collective at most Heart Politics gatherings held in Northern NSW. She is an accomplished and sought-after facilitator. During the 1998 Lennox Heads Heart Politics, Bobbi facilitated a workshop focusing on the gathering's theme: "Creative collaboration for positive social change". After a brief introduction to flesh out possible responses to this theme, Bobbi divided participants into workshop groups of approximately five people. Each group was provided with craft materials including clay, pipe cleaners, straws, paper and string. Groups were then instructed to cooperatively construct a 'response' to the conference theme. Participants were also encouraged to discuss their contributions to the group sculpture during construction. After the allocated time, Bobbi circulated from group to group, inviting participants to explain their three-dimensional sculptures to the plenary. Plenary discussion of the structures created during this session followed. Participants were also invited to critically discuss the workshop process.

---

Both workshops described above incorporate experiential pedagogy (Section 3.6.2). Having reflected on their experience and engaged in exercises, participants were prompted to consider the relationship between the workshop theme and their specific context, to relate workshop discussions and insights to their existential challenges. This was a distinct and clearly planned stage of each workshop.

The program of Heart Politics gatherings generally includes time for *special interest sessions*. Participants with skills or interest in a topic, transcendental

meditation, communities of intent, women's health or parenting for instance, are encouraged to convene a workshop session with others sharing this interest. A recurring interest is the question of sustainable activism. Workshops are frequently organised to provide opportunities for teaching and learning about support groups and 'clearness' groups (Green and Woodrow, 1994), activist networks, personal and organisational activist sustainability audits (Shields, 1991) and other strategies to counter burnout.

### 6.3.7 Heart Circle

The highlight or climax of the Heart Politics is the *Heart Circle*. The trusting atmosphere created through support groups and workshop exercises and the consistent, gentle leadership of the organising group sets the tone for an evening of intimate sharing and learning. This gradually increasing level of trust, disclosure and engagement is illustrated in the following figure.

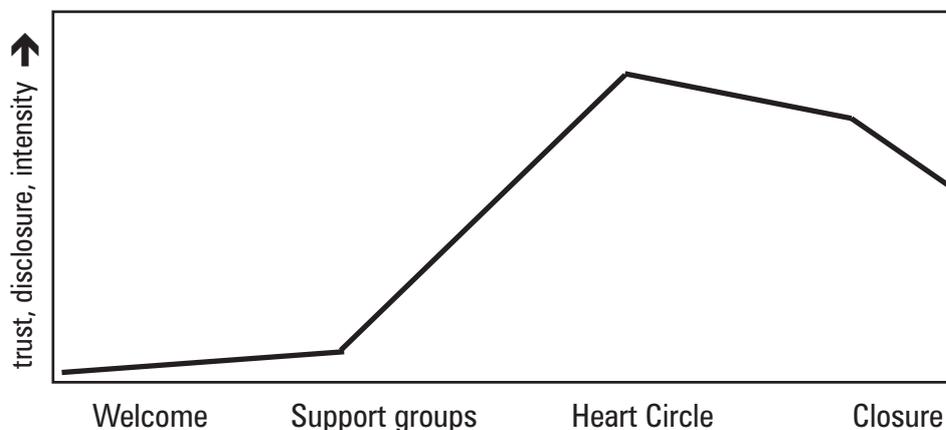


Figure 6.4 Trust building during Heart Politics

The Heart Circle is influenced by ceremonies that are attributed to the indigenous peoples of North America and New Zealand. Vivien Hutchinson's "What are Heart Circle Sharings?" (1992) establishes a link between the Circle and the Maori *whaikorero* ritual. Accordingly, he uses the Maori expression *kawa* to describe the protocols of Heart Circles. The circle provides a time

and place for sharing experience, passion, pain and hope. For this part of the Heart Politics gathering, a special effort is made to create a peaceful and comfortable space. Candles, soft music, wall hangings, plants and other decorations are added to the meeting room. Once participants have gathered and fallen silent, one or more facilitators open by explaining the process and establishing expectations. These facilitators are sometimes referred to as the *keepers* of the circle. Participants are invited to step into the circle if and when they feel moved, to share a brief story, then to offer a song or poem. People are free to come and go from the room so long as they do not disrupt the gathering. Participants are urged not to interrupt each other. The speaker in the circle requests everyone's full attention. There is no predetermined closing time. Instead, the Heart Circle ends when it seems right to do so. Silence is valued and people are under no obligation to step into the circle.

The Heart Circle protocols or *karwa* suggested by Hutchinson (1992) suggest participants should: only speak once; stand to speak; not interrupt others; finish their sharings with a song or poem; take time while respecting others' right to an opportunity to speak; feel free to leave, return or sleep; and trust that "what needs to be said, will be said, and it may not be you that has to say it."

The sharing facilitated by this process is remarkable. For example, participants speak of their hopes and fears, families, communities, jobs and campaigns. The evening prompts intense emotional responses by those speaking from the circle and those listening: laughing and crying, elation and despair, celebration and anger. Late in the evening when people are tired and there are long silences between speakers, the keepers of the circle draw the ceremony to a close.

The Heart Circle, more than other elements discussed here, demonstrates

the fertile blend of therapeutic traditions that inform the gatherings. Interviews conducted by this researcher at several Heart Politics gatherings suggest organising group members and participants typically have experience or training in a variety of counselling and other therapeutic methods. Allan's workshop described above reflects aspects of art therapy. Gatherings regularly make use of drama to explore difficult issues, drawing on techniques associated with drama therapy. Several members of the Northern NSW organising group trained in Playback Theatre which they incorporated into the gatherings. This innovative dramatic genre calls on audience members to describe emotional incidents or difficult situations. Troupe members then improvise alternative responses to explore emotions and perspectives that emerge from the situation.

The frequent use of symbolism is resonant of Gestalt or Jungian therapy. The influence of Deep Ecology is also apparent. Participants are sometimes encouraged to identify with plants and animals and with the earth to reflect on the interdependence of nature, and consider evolutionary processes and timeframes. Members of the organising collectives in Northern NSW and the Sunshine Coast Hinterland are familiar with the Council of All Beings and other deep ecology ceremonies, described by Naess (1988: 29) as form of "community therapy" to "heal our relations with the widest community, that of all living beings." Like these therapeutic traditions, Heart Politics gatherings incorporate reflection, disclosure, trust and intimacy. An atmosphere of contemplation and reverence is generated through singing and meditation. As well as engendering a state of openness and disclosure that facilitators consider conducive to growth, the learning atmosphere appears to result in strong identification with the group and increased commitment to social and environmental causes.

The atmosphere engendered by these processes affects participants in many

different ways. Some people become very open with each other, disclosing their concerns and passions. Others become emotional, occasionally needing to take time out. In these instances, support group leaders and others with listening skills or counselling expertise are quick to offer support. Participants rarely leave.

As the gathering proceeds there is a growing realisation that the end is approaching and that participants will need to leave the supportive and trusting environment and return to their homes, communities, families and jobs. People exchange contact details and make plans to meet or collaborate on projects. Support groups spend their last session together. Participants thank each other and reflect on what they have gained from the gathering. The final plenary session provides an opportunity to say goodbye. This might be achieved by arranging people in two circles rotating in opposite direction to maximise interaction.

### **6.3.8 Closing rituals and going forth**

The final session is often highly ritualised. Facilitators encourage people to look into each other's eyes, wish each other well and so on: "Looking into the other person's eyes, see the challenges they will face as they go out into their world." There is some discussion concerning the potential for disappointment or other reactions when re-entering the outside world. Participants are encouraged during this and other sessions to relate concepts that have been introduced during the gathering to their everyday life challenges, effectively closing the experiential learning cycle. The final session provides an ideal opportunity to make plans and commitments. Facilitators sometimes encourage participants to share these ideas and plans in pairs or to write a journal note to themselves.

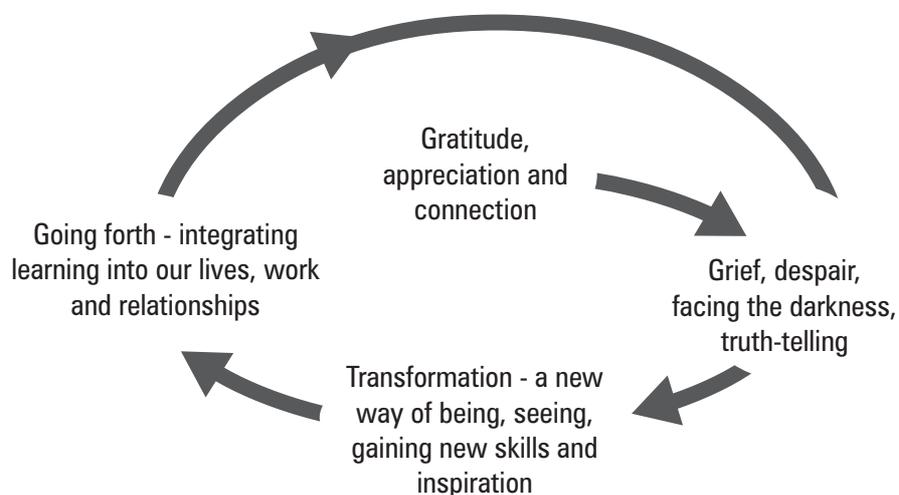
	Learning objectives					
	Building relationships	Conveying and reinforcing learning intentions	Communicating leadership and democratic structures	Acknowledging and articulating deeply held commitments	Continual and participatory evaluation	Making links with 'real life'
Promotional material						
Participant profiles, name tags						
Icebreaker games						
Welcome statement						
Organising group introductions						
Attentive facilitation						
Support groups participation						
Support group facilitation						
Support group leaders' meetings						
Listening group						
Concert						
Singing						
Out of the Hat stories						
Speaking in turn around a circle						
'Keeper of the circle' role						
Heart Circle						
Experiential learning processes						
Written participant evaluation						
Personal inventory of skills, interests						
Speakers						
Planning a project						

Table 6.4 Heart Politics elements associated with identified learning objectives

### 6.3.9 Structure and pedagogy

This summary of the Heart Politics gatherings has identified a complex structure that incorporates at least twenty-one different elements. These elements are integrated in a purposeful and sequential manner to build a sense of immersion, trust, intimacy and focus. Table 6.4 relates each element to the learning objectives that have been identified during this study through observation, interviews with organisers and archival sources.

The sequential nature of the program is also influenced by the ‘spiral’ that is utilised in Macy’s despair and empowerment workshops (Allan, pers.comm. 6/10/01). This spiral, depicted below, leads participants through cathartic and trust-building phases, to disclosure and transformation, before finally looking outward to examine how participants might apply their new insights to their lives and social change work.



**Figure 6.5** ‘Spiral’ structure informing Heart Politics gatherings  
(Allan, pers.comm. 6/10/01)

This cycle bears similarities to the experiential learning cycle developed by Kolb (Section 3.6.2) in that the learnings that emerge from reflection are tested in new situations. It also resembles the Doris Marshall Institute’s ‘spiral model’

(also discussed in Section 3.6.2) in both this respect and in the integration of new information and perspectives to enhance experiential learning. The spiral structure of Macy's workshops and Heart Politics gatherings is distinct from these models, however, in that it emphasises to a much greater extent the affective, psycho-social and transformative dimensions of learning.

#### **6.4 Profile of Heart Politics participants**

Heart Politics gatherings are promoted among social and geographical networks, primarily through personal contact, postal and email lists maintained by organising collectives and the Social Change Training and Resource Centre. Observation and interviews suggest the following profile of participants.

The average age of participants is approximately forty years. Many have several decades of social change experience. The gatherings also attract a significant number of young people, reflecting the considerable efforts of the organising collectives in attracting and involving youth. The 1999 gathering in particular attracted a strong youth cohort, possibly in response to a high profile environmental campaigner being a key speaker. Children attending gatherings with their parents often move on from the children's parallel program to join the adult group. A high proportion (perhaps 70%) of participants are female.

Relatively few participants are engaged as full-time professional advocates in environmental advocacy organisations. A higher proportion work in a professional or voluntary basis in human and welfare services and community development and possess tertiary qualifications, mostly in social sciences. Many participants live in communes and exhibit counter-culture lifestyle choices that entail, for instance, voluntary simplicity, self-sufficiency and participation in alternative (non-cash) economies.

Most participants have experience in community organising or campaigning with one or more social change movements including the women's, peace, environment and gay and lesbian movements. Although participants' espoused interests emphasise personal health, growth and transformation, most are also active participants in social change work. These interests complement rather than compete with or exclude each other.

This profile of the Heart Politics audience has implications for both the learning needs and preferred learning styles of participants.

## **6.5 Heart Politics 1998: Systematic inquiry**

The third Queensland Heart Politics gathering was held in Currimundi on the Sunshine Coast from March 27<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>, 1998. This gathering was selected as an opportunity for a more systematic inquiry than had been previously undertaken by the researcher through *ad hoc* interviews and observations at gatherings. Three measures of validity were adopted in order to ensure that the insights developed through this inquiry related accurately to Heart Politics more generally. First, the interview questions used in this study related to the gatherings in general rather than focusing on the unique aspects of the Currimundi Heart Politics gathering. Second, interviewees were selected who had a long history of involvement with Heart Politics and its social action precedents summarised in Table 6.1. Third, drafts of this analysis were subjected to feedback from others who have participated in the development of the Heart Politics movement.

The theme of the 1998 gathering was "Repainting the Dream: Re-inspiring to Action". The leaflet used to promote the gathering communicated this theme and suggested that the organisers intended the gathering to inspire, invigorate

and refresh social change workers who felt burnt out or discouraged. The aim of the conference was to “open participants’ hearts and provide a climate of re-inspiration in a common vision.” Organisers also aimed to give participants tools to help sustain, support and empower themselves and each other.

The organising collective used promotional material to articulate their hope that participants would leave the event with “vision refocussed and energy renewed (as well as having a feeling of having made deep connections with others).” The promotional flier explained the gathering would focus on:

the transformation which can occur when social and political change happens alongside personal change. It is a politics of connection and inclusion rather than of conflict and domination (the form of politics we know as ‘power politics’). It is a ‘no-blame’ politics, where we deal with what it is to live in a difficult world rather than whose fault it is!

Two research objectives underpinned my attendance at the gathering. My first objective was to observe, participate in and document Heart Politics as an intentional activist learning activity. My second objective was to interview speakers, organisers and workshop leaders in order to explore their intentions and assumptions concerning the pedagogy and desired outcomes of the gathering.

## **6.6 Research design: Method and techniques**

A set of trigger questions (or interview prompts) was drafted to guide semi-structured interviews. These were further developed following comments from colleagues who had participated in Heart Politics gatherings. They were then refined through trials in order to arrive at the six prompts included as Appendix R. An interview schedule was given to intended interviewees a day before

conducting interviews to allow people time to seek clarification and reflect on the questions.

The primary purpose for the interviews conducted in 1998 was to define and explore the educational philosophy inherent in Heart Politics gatherings in general and this gathering in particular. Five interviewees were selected, including members of the organising collective and guest speakers. All but one of the five respondents had participated in several previous Heart Politics gatherings.

Few interviewees differentiated between their perspective as organiser and their experience as participant. As a result, interview responses can be considered to reflect both participant and facilitator perspectives. Respondents tended to describe their own learning experiences at the same time as identifying the actual or intended experience of participants. This blurred boundary between organisers' and participants' learning outcomes may be a 'natural' result of the intensely participatory nature of the gatherings. Alternatively, facilitators may have been too immersed in the proceedings to consider their appraisal of participants' experiences reliable.

Interviews were conducted privately by appointment during the gathering and tape recorded. As the interviews were completed and analysed, key themes quickly became evident. I discussed these apparent themes or categories with respondents during the gathering in order to enhance the face validity of subsequent analysis. Following the gathering, the interviews were transcribed in full before being analysed. Interview questions are printed in italics and enclosed in text boxes in the discussion that follows, before the synthesis of responses and selected verbatim quotations.

The analysis of interview responses involved five stages. First, all interviews

were transcribed in full. Second, the transcribed interviews were compared and contrasted systematically to identify themes emerging in each separate interview and in the interviews collectively. This entailed summarising, to a word or phrase, the key messages in each response. Third, direct quotations that captured the essence of each theme or provided significant contradictions to the apparent themes were identified. Fourth, themes were organised in a logical sequence. This was influenced by both the sequence of interview questions and the significance to the discussion. Finally, a discussion and synthesis of each theme was developed.

As noted in Chapter Four, this approach to data analysis is descriptive and emphasises the portrayal of experience and narrative to present and contextualise stories (Smith et al., 1990:142).

### **6.6.1 Interviewee profiles: A purposeful sample**

Five interviews were conducted in order to gain a representative sample of views concerning the pedagogy of the gathering and intended outcomes. This purposeful sample included three of the nine-member organising group and two guest speakers. I had hoped to interview Allan who, in addition to being a member of the organising group had an extensive association with the gatherings. Allan's role in the development of Interhelp and Heart Politics is described above. Her perspective was crucial in order to extrapolate the insights I gained during this Heart Politics gathering to the movement more generally. Although this was not possible during the gathering, she subsequently agreed to read a draft of this chapter and provide detailed responses.

Patrick Anderson, a key speaker at the gathering, was a member of the Interhelp collective while residing at Bodhi Farm commune in northern New

South Wales during the 1980s. Anderson had been active in the Men's Movement, facilitating workshops and programs. An experienced rainforest and community activist, he joined Greenpeace in the early 1990s and worked in the organisation's Amsterdam office for several years where he coordinated their international rainforest campaign.

Fran Peavey was another guest speaker and facilitator at the gathering. Her extensive social change work in several countries brings together the theory and practice of the social change philosophy and strategies encapsulated in Heart Politics. Peavey is an exceptionally articulate person. Her autobiographical *Heart Politics* (1986) inspired and helped develop the Heart Politics methodology. Fran has been a member of the organising collectives of many Australian Heart Politics gatherings.

Jill Jordan, one of the Sunshine Coast organising collective, is a prominent community organiser in Maleny and the Sunshine Coast Hinterland community sector. Jordan established Australia's first Local Employment Trading System in the early 1980s and played a key role in many aspects of the region's grassroots community life, contributing to the development of several cooperative enterprises. She is considered an elder or mentor in the community sector nationally.

Tracey Adams and Terry Ryder, the two remaining interviewees, were active members of their local community in the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. Ryder had trained in journalism and worked as a freelance writer. He became an activist reluctantly when local planning decisions threatened his lifestyle and surrounding environment. Successful campaigns and an active community life contributed to Terry's practical philosophy of social change. Adams was an organiser with a strong interest in sustainable communities and non-violence and an experienced social activist with a history of environmental

campaigning. Adams played a coordinating role in the *Reworking Tomorrow* community networking activities inspired by futurist Robert Theobald's<sup>51</sup> visit to Brisbane and other Australian cities in September 1998.

## 6.7 What is learnt?

---

*What do people learn at Heart Politics that directly enhances their activism? Can you suggest groupings for these things that are learnt?*

---

The first interview prompts correspond to the objectives of this study that include analysing the forms and outcomes of activist education. Responses to this first pair of questions suggested seven groups of learnings: (1) sustainability through connectedness; (2) non-adversarial change strategies; (3) 'deep' listening; (4) a spacious worldview; (5) management skills; (6) spiritual or transformative learning; and (7) Heart Politics disposition. Each of these seven learning outcomes is described below, along with representative citations.

### 6.7.1 Sustainability through connectedness

Analysis of interview transcripts suggested organisers had a strong sense that the gatherings promoted learning for *personal and community sustainability*. Interviews conducted with activists during this inquiry consistently highlighted the significance of burnout in the activist community and the value of developing survival strategies. Threats to activist sustainability identified by interviewees included isolation, self-righteousness and anger, a lack of support and 'busy-ness'. Respondents strongly linked sustainability

---

51 On-line available <<http://www.reworkingtomorrow.org>>, <<http://www.conversations.com.au/c21c/>>

with support, which they defined as a deep, intimate and almost therapeutic buttress to social change activists' lives. Heart Politics exposes participants to strategies to enhance both individual and collective support, outlined above in Section 6.3.7.

Respondents spoke of a perceived dichotomy in activism: the Heart Politics model and the unattractive prevailing alternative. Activists whose social change work reflects Heart Politics philosophy are more likely to develop habits to combat isolation. Fran described this as “learning about support in personal and work life”. Heart Politics activists recognise and nurture a sense of connectedness with others in their communities, including those with different values. This connectedness entails overcoming the ‘busy-ness’ that is ubiquitous in activist organisations, and valuing non-adversarial approaches to advocacy. Peavey captured the tension between this disposition and the nature of many activist groups by encouraging participants to learn “how to be gentle in their tough lives”. Peavey considered that sustaining oneself in activist work is an important measure of effectiveness. Peavey and Anderson both considered that activists need to learn they are not alone and unappreciated to foster sustainability. Ryder also remarked that activists tend to feel alone “in their pain and difficulty”. Respondents conveyed a sense that people working for change benefit through building and recognising connections within their immediate community networks, nationally and globally.

Adams commented that the sense of solidarity or support encouraged through Heart Politics gives her an “injection of strength, energy and inspiration” and contributes to a sense of being supported. In particular, she suggested, a sense of community is engendered when people understand her and her “depth of feeling”. Processes that invite personal testimony such as the Heart Circle and Out of the Hat clearly foster this open expression of passion and

heightened empathy.

This analysis of the interviews also drew on observations of this and other gatherings to ensure triangulation of data sources. The dimension of Heart Politics learning identified in these responses was consistent with themes reflected in one of Peavey's workshop sessions during which she spoke of international alliances between corporations. Stimulated by Peavey's presentation, participants concluded that strategic partnerships between corporations build resilience and success and that activists may benefit through similar alliances. They identified immediate and tangible campaign benefits that may result from such networking. Participants also considered cooperative partnerships or movements help activists sustain a sense of connectedness. These responses concurred with my own experience as described in Chapter One, that the gatherings imparted a strong sense of community and a sense of connectedness instrumental in overcoming the isolation experienced by many activists. The notion of connectedness appeared relevant to the differentiation made between social change movements and other types of networks: the former appear to entail a stronger sense of connection.

### **6.7.2 Non-adversarial change strategies**

A second apparent learning outcome associated with the gathering was an enhanced awareness of and inclination to pursue non-adversarial change strategies. Most respondents suggested that strategic questioning and other processes modelled through Heart Politics reorient participants away from the adversarial attitudes, strategies and sentiment common in environmental advocacy. Anderson suggested Heart Politics encouraged social change workers to "move away from self-righteousness, fierceness, alienating others (and) trying to force change." He considered the gatherings promote a state of "openness and connectedness" linked to an appreciation of "diversity,

difference and nonviolence.” Adams reflected, “I don’t think we can change the world through polarisation and hatred and anger.” Jordan argued the gatherings,

*break down that ‘them and us’ phenomena that’s so dangerous in activism ... that polarisation that can really destroy any campaigning you do. Not only between say loggers and conservationists, but between and within groups.*

Despite the Heart Politics emphasis on non-adversarial advocacy and listening, one interviewee considered the gathering could do more to promote strategies to achieve change by “embracing the other viewpoint and working with it rather than opposing it.” This respondent cited a local case study in which a positive outcome appeared to emerge from environmentalists’ willingness to be receptive and sympathetic to the motivation of local developers and politicians.

### **6.7.3 Deep listening**

The importance of listening was a third learning outcome identified in these interviews. Organisers considered the gatherings taught a unique and significant approach to listening that was described by Anderson as “a rich sharing without defensiveness.” By *learning how to listen*, and “hearing people’s achievements against great odds”, participants come to appreciate diversity and be inspired. Ryder planned to collate a book of stories and commented, “Christ, people are amazing! What they do and what they’ve experienced.” He commented that, “listening to other people speaking from the heart makes you want to do things.”

This unique type of listening is promoted during Heart Politics through experiential processes. Support groups, workshops, Out of the Hat and the Heart Circle inevitably create situations in which members are expected to

listen deeply to fellow participants expressing values and opinions very different to their own: and to share their values and opinions with equal generosity and sincerity. Jordan reported that an Aboriginal Elder speaking at the gathering commented that she had “never had such good listening”. She considered this a remarkable compliment given the individual’s position in her community. Anderson considered listening integral to effective social change work: “being brave, articulate and open are great skills ... being able to stand up and share deep feelings.”

#### **6.7.4 A spacious worldview**

A fourth learning outcome identified through this analysis was a worldview or approach to life referred to by Anderson in both his presentation and interview as a “sense of spaciousness”. Both Anderson and Peavey considered the Heart Politics philosophy and practice engendered a worldview at odds with the ‘crisis-response’ framework ubiquitous in environmental advocacy organisations. Anderson advocated the development of “a perspective of our work fitting in in a number of ways” in order to understand “what social change is, what the environment movement is, where humanity could be moving in terms of commitment to non-violence, and a deeper understanding of how we get there.” This perspective encompasses the spatial, temporal and metaphysical context within which activists operate:, “a bigger sense of time ... of change happening over time ... enough time for people to actually *do* stuff.”

Anderson’s activism was sustained, he reflected, by remaining conscious of the Earth’s history of mass extinctions, of planetary evolution, of cultural diversity and the relatively short timeframe of human society. During the gathering, Anderson and others captured this sense of spaciousness in this song which is often heard at Heart Politics gatherings:

*Just remember that you're standing on a planet that's evolving;  
And revolving at nine hundred miles an hour.  
It's orbiting at ninety miles a second, so it's reckoned;  
The sun that is the source of all our power.*

*The sun and you and me and all the stars that we can see;  
Are moving at a million miles a day;  
In an outer spiral arm at forty thousand miles an hour;  
Of the galaxy we call the Milky Way.*

*So remember when you're feeling very small and insecure  
How amazingly unlikely is your birth.  
And dig your roots deep into the galaxy  
Dance your life for Planet Earth.  
Yes, dig your roots deep into reality,  
Dance your life for Planet Earth!<sup>52</sup>*

### **6.7.5 Management skills**

In her comments concerning learning outcomes, Peavey differentiated between attitudes and *specific learnings*. One specific learning (or skill) she identified was “responsible and transparent ways of handling money”. Although this may be an incidental outcome not overtly incorporated in the program, she considered it significant. Heart Politics organising groups use the balance between conference expenses and registration income as a Magic Pudding Fund to sponsor the participation of activists who might not otherwise attend. Project or event management skills were another incidental learning outcome for organisers. Simply organising a residential program bringing more than sixty people together for several days requires sophisticated administrative ability and provides an excellent learning opportunity for the organising collective and volunteers.

### **6.7.6 Spiritual or transformative learning**

A recurring theme in interviewees' responses was that personal change of a profound nature occurs concurrently with other levels of learning during the gathering. The powerful transformative dimension of the gathering was

---

52 Monty Python (1986) “Life of Brian”. Final verse adapted by John Seed, reflecting the influence of deep ecology.

particularly emphasised by Adams, who considered Heart Politics offered “rich experiential learning” about how activists can “engage their hearts in their work.” Anderson described this as learning “ways to have depth coming into our lives.” Adams suggested activists have “little experience of being in that open-hearted state where they get some deep connection for their motivation to care for the earth and for other people” which she considered a valuable dimension to social change work. She expanded on this theme:

They connected to some deeper knowing in themselves which is ... that they’re using their rational sense, but they’re also connected to their heart and their feeling... It’s really hard to put into words ...reminding you that at your deep core, the reason you do this work is a deep love ... that you really love people ... and it’s good to be in touch with that because we lose sight of that in the bitterness and anguish of our struggles.

The transformative aspect of the gathering was emphasised in both *what* respondents said and *how* they spoke in these interviews, suggesting that the gathering was a unique and powerful learning experience at the deepest level.

### **6.7.7 Heart Politics disposition**

The cumulative impression created through the interviews was that Heart Politics promotes a disposition or ‘way of being’ that comprises each of the elements outlined above: good listening, a sense of connectedness, heart-felt empathy and an orientation toward non-adversarial change strategies. This was summarised by Jordan, who spoke of participants in Heart Politics gatherings sharing a “deep experience of each other” and Anderson who suggested that the resulting disposition was “developed, modelled and valued during the gathering” as an appropriate and effective approach to social change work.

## 6.8 What is not learnt?

---

*Are there important things that aren't learnt? Are there any groups missing?*

*How should these things be prioritised? Did Heart Politics reflect your priorities?*

---

This second set of interview prompts helped differentiate the learning outcomes of Heart Politics from those of other activist education activities. Heart Politics was chosen as a case study for this inquiry in order to explore the apparent dichotomy between activist education that emphasises skills and learning opportunities that are more oriented toward personal and interpersonal development. Responses to this cluster of questions suggested that Heart Politics does not prioritise providing participants with opportunities to develop and enhance *practical, tool-like* or *substantive* activist skills such as working with the media and strategic campaign planning. This orientation was explained by Anderson as a consequence of time constraints which resulted in skills-oriented training provided by Heart Politics being “somewhat superficial.” It was noted, however, that other Heart Politics gatherings have incorporated skills-building workshops such as conflict resolution and strategic questioning. In addition, speakers often address social action skills in their presentations. Jordan suggested that the skills and processes imparted in each gathering reflected the organising group’s choice of guest speakers and facilitators. As workshops were often suggested spontaneously in response to the identification of shared interests, Jordan considered the lack of emphasis on skills also reflected participants’ priorities.

Peavey observed there are “other institutions offering the skills-oriented, analytical, intellectual training,” an observation affirmed by Jordan. Peavey also suggested the gatherings did not focus on social or political history and analysis. This was an interesting comment as one of her presentations was in

fact a detailed analysis of contemporary international political trends, including the perceived rise of Fascism in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Certainly this session stood in sharp contrast to the remainder of the four day program during which there was minimal discussion of international affairs or ‘party’ politics, with the focus strongly on local communities and the individual.

## 6.9 Heart Politics pedagogy

---

*How does a gathering or experience like Heart Politics help people become more effective agents for social change? (and why?)*

*People say Heart Politics is as much about process as it is about content.*

*How do you think the Heart Politics approach enhances teaching and learning?*

*How do you like to learn?*

*What works and what doesn't? Why?*

---

These interview questions were intended to elicit responses concerning the processes or pedagogy of Heart Politics. Although organising collective members were not necessarily qualified educators, they held clear beliefs concerning how people learn and had developed sophisticated teaching and learning mechanisms to achieve desired results. As discussed above, the ‘social technology’ of Heart Politics as practiced by organising groups around Australia has evolved through collaborative action-oriented learning over two decades. Analysis of responses to this cluster of questions suggested five key pedagogic elements: (1) attention to process; (2) democratic learning processes and atmosphere; (3) primacy of relationships; (4) valuing different learning domains; and (5) a trusting learning atmosphere. These are discussed in turn below.

### 6.9.1 Attention to process

Anderson considered an important element of the Heart Politics pedagogy was the “attention to process” and observed that the gatherings were less “goal-oriented” than other activist gatherings and organisations. This resonates with Shields’ (pers.comm.14/5/98) observation that ‘process people’ concerned with relationships, decision-making processes and the quality of listening in group interactions are scarce in social movements. Peavey agreed the gatherings were “more about process than about content.”

Jordan, Peavey and Adams spoke at length about the pedagogy of Heart Politics. The complex pedagogy described previously in this Chapter and the assumptions informing the combination of elements was referred to by Peavey as the ‘social technology’ of Heart Politics. Adams considered the organising group’s deliberations concerning the program were indicative of a high level of attention to the timing, sequence and objectives of each session. In fact, the planning and management of the gathering had taken nine months.

Jordan compared Heart Politics gatherings to other conferences that activists may attend and concluded that Heart Politics processes strive for and achieve qualitatively different learning outcomes.

*I'm glad you brought me back to the comparison with the regular scientific and other conferences we go to ... because I don't even see them in the same light ... and that's why we're thinking of changing this to a 'gathering' because it's so un-conference-like. At regular conferences you receive an overload of information. Whereas, here, people are overloaded conceptually, probably... emotionally probably...but not with layer and layer of information, which I find happens heaps at conferences. The participative thing is so important here.*

Jordan acknowledged that the organising group did not draw extensively on formal educational theory and commented that few organisers would be able to articulate their educational philosophy. Accordingly, she saw a possible

contribution this research project may make:

*If you could actually summarise what a mob of people think it's about, and get it succinctly, that would actually help the movement. Because it's very hard to articulate, especially for people who aren't, in inverted commas, 'teachers'.*

Despite her observation that Heart Politics organisers tend to lack educational training and a language to articulate educational philosophy, Jordan commented that the gathering incorporated a strategic blend of participatory and experiential learning.

*Heart Politics is both participatory and experiential. That for me is the closing session. It actually does that. 'What are you taking - what are you going to use?' That's the grounding process. So I guess it combines the two. And that's a powerful teaching.*

Other respondents and participant observation during this and other gatherings confirmed Jordan's observation. Participatory learning during Heart Politics results from workshop exercises that are often undertaken in small groups. Experience gained through these sessions, and related experiences from participants' real-life situations, form the basis of subsequent reflection to identify insights and lessons.

Both Anderson and Peavey considered it important that participants reflect on and articulate what they have learnt during participatory workshops. Anderson noted that failure to reflect critically after hearing speakers and engaging in workshops may result in missed opportunities for learning.

*The connection ... critical questioning ... is not always made between what we experience or do at Heart Politics and how that might impact on or be brought into our work. 'Those were some beautiful moments there, but my life goes on and my activism is not so much effected.'*

Informal sharing and networking amongst participants is another important learning process. In response to a draft of this manuscript, Heart Politics

organiser Allan (pers.comm. 6/10/01) commented,

*I usually come away with a lot of 'content' about what's going on in the world, what people are doing about it and what's working. This is from the speakers and from being in individual and group conversations throughout the conference. Don't underestimate the importance of 'break' times.*

Other significant forms of learning that respondents associated with Heart Politics included modelling and mentoring. Anderson considered modelling one of the gathering's most significant and integral educational processes. During the four-day program, support groups, listening groups, workshop process and facilitation styles model processes that are considered by the organisers to be important activist strategies. The gathering also provides opportunities for guided practice: for participants to practice new forms of facilitation and group processes. Modelling and practice increase participants' confidence to adopt such strategies in their social change organisations. Anderson commented "the most powerful processes involve doing it: trying things, sometimes for the first time, in a non-threatening, supportive environment."

### **6.9.2 Democratic learning processes and atmosphere**

Interview responses revealed a consensus that Heart Politics maintains a democratic, inclusive and responsive program and process. The organising collective for this and other Heart Politics gatherings very deliberately created opportunities for participants to guide the learning focus and process. Mechanisms for participant input included support groups and the listening group.

Adams suggested the basic program, incorporating several routine elements, creates a structure within which innovation is possible and welcome.

*I don't believe you should have this formula agenda that you rigidly stick to but a structured, planned program is a good way of facilitating and seeding things. Within that agenda, you need some flexibility. Because once you get a big group of people together, it takes on a life of its own compared to how you'd planned.*

Jordan asserted that an important element of the Heart Politics pedagogy is the sequence of activities or emphases suggested in the Table 6.4: “The conscious structure actually enhances learning. Bringing out the despair and having people really open to experiencing pain and then experiencing absolute joy.” The conscious structure referred to by Jordan is attributed to Macy’s workshop structure, depicted graphically in Figure 6.5.

Peavey agreed that Heart Politics is a “*participatory*” conference rather than a predetermined, top-down kind of thing” and commented, “I trust processes where we’re not sure how it will turn out, where you trust the outcome.” The theme of spontaneity was also explored in Anderson’s response when he reflected that:

*In some situations ideas suggest new processes and the thing really goes live. In these situations I've seen workshop leaders being incredibly creative and respond to issues that are coming up for people ... having spaciousness toward possibility.*

Peavey also conveyed her belief that the participatory nature of Heart Politics gatherings mitigates against the juxtaposed (and more common) ‘star’ model whereby participants might be ‘spoken at’ by high profile activists to the detriment of their learning. Peavey was dubious of the benefits of such didactic teaching. This view is at odds with her own skills in expository or didactic teaching. Indeed, she is held in such high regard by many activists that they are quite content to sit and listen. She is well-known for her story-telling and can entertain and mesmerise an audience for hours.

### 6.9.3 Primacy of relationships

Both Peavey and Jordan emphasised the significant learning potential created by modelling interpersonal or relationship skills such as conflict resolution and ‘good’ or deep listening. Peavey suggested these interpersonal strengths were “probably more important” in social change work “because you’re dealing with people all the time.”

Jordan agreed that although activist skills like working with the media are important, even activist organisations with high skill levels face obstacles in achieving their objectives since,

*They can't work together. If you work in a group, you will always have stuff come up. And if you're not aware of what's going on, if you're not prepared, and you haven't developed the listening skills and the respect and all of that, if you're just ego-driven ... like I see many activists are, because of the importance of the task, you've got to be like a battering ram in lots of ways. And if you don't have an understanding of team building, you're done. Skills are nothing without those interpersonal qualities.*

### 6.9.4 Valuing different learning domains

Another crucial aspect of the teaching and learning orientation described in these interviews was the intentional balance between different domains of learning. Various categories were suggested by respondents. Learning described as cognitive, rational or intellectual was considered dominant in activist circles. This hegemonic orientation was considered problematic and Heart Politics portrayed as offering an effective counterbalance. Adams commented,

*I think much of our work as activists is really rational: a really intellectual-rational mode. And that's an important mode to be able to use well. But when the rational mode isn't regularly informed by your heart and feelings, then something's missing. Heart Politics process is about connecting our hearts and spirits and minds so that the three are operating.*

She emphasised a balanced blend of head, heart and hands. Peavey commented

that the Heart Politics orientation was “not predominantly intellectual ... somewhat anti-intellectual.” Commenting on a draft of this manuscript, Allan (pers.comm. 6/10/01) noted that the invited speakers at gatherings are frequently authors, academics and social theorists whose qualifications imply intellectual leadership. Anderson expanded on the ‘head, heart and hands’ metaphor used by other interviewees, identifying three learning domains he considered require attention: analytical skills, communication or ‘heart’ skills and technical knowledge.

#### **6.9.5 Trust as an important element of the learning atmosphere**

Finally, respondents agreed the *learning atmosphere* was an influential feature of the gathering that influenced learning outcomes. Aspects of the atmosphere considered especially noteworthy were captured by expressions such as “honesty and sharing”, “intimacy and empathy”, “being deeply touched by hearing people’s stories”, and “sincerity, trust and support”. Organisers also agreed that the relaxed feeling engendered through workshop informality, the program’s inclusion of ample free time and the overall tone of the gathering was integral to the intended learning outcomes. Jill remarked “idleness is one of the basic needs of people” while Fran spoke of people having a “hooty good time”, time to “slow down, waddle around in shorts and bare feet, talk about relationships and learn about preservation: how to campaign a long time.” Participants are urged to celebrate their activism and achievements, to ‘lighten up’ and take time out.

## 6.10 The relationship between Heart Politics and skills-oriented learning

---

*Two recent environment movement conferences have attempted to enhance activist skills by running workshops on media skills, campaign planning and other topics. Heart Politics focuses much more on feelings and relationships than on skills.*

*How do you think these two different approaches contribute to effective activism?*

*Which training needs are best met through a Heart Politics approach?*

*Can you suggest other ways to develop activist skills? How would you go about training activists?*

---

This final set of questions focused on the apparent dichotomy between the skills-oriented approach to training of the environment movement and the social technology of Heart Politics which prioritises interpersonal communication, personal growth and a sense of community.

Interviewees were particularly articulate and considered in their responses to these questions, confirming that this issue was an important aspect of their definition of Heart Politics as an activist education program. Respondents identified four themes, revealing a complex relationship between learning for social action skills and learning through Heart Politics. First, social action skills were described as an inadequate basis for effective activism. By contrast, Heart Politics was considered to promote an holistic activist disposition. Third, the learning promoted through Heart Politics gatherings was considered more important than social action skills. This theme was expanded upon by respondents who ascribed value to social action skills but suggested the personal and interpersonal capacities promoted through Heart Politics deserve primacy. Finally, interviewees suggested Heart Politics gatherings promote a positive disposition toward ongoing learning that enhances social change work, suggesting the gatherings value learning as a process rather than as a means to an end.

### 6.10.1 Social action skills an important but insufficient basis for activism

First, respondents suggested skills such as working with the media, managing community organisations and coordinating volunteers are insufficient precursors to effective social change work. Heart Politics gatherings, they suggested, address dimensions of activist life and learning that are more important than social action skills.

The exception to this pattern was Anderson, who placed more emphasis on activist skills than other interviewees. He received minimal in-service training while employed with Greenpeace, despite making regular requests, and became a proficient advocate mostly through experience and observation. Anderson commented that he was “even more supportive of people learning particular skills” than interpersonal and philosophical frameworks. This comment was predicated, however, on the assumption that “good skills training” would provide concurrent opportunities for discussions of a philosophical nature, such as those engendered at Heart Politics. Allan similarly endorsed an holistic approach to activist learning, incorporating both social action skills and learning for personal and interpersonal growth. She expressed her belief, however, that such opportunities for activist learning are very rare.

The dichotomy or tension between activist education activities that emphasised social action skills and those that focused on personal development, lifeskills and the affective dimension of activism was a recurring theme in these interviews. It was depicted eloquently by Jordan in her reflection that as an activist educator,

*I realised there's really two types of - I'm not going to say "people" - but there's two types of things going on. There are those people who've got their fingers in the dyke, stopping the tide. That's the conservationists and they're focused. They've got to be focused on what they're doing. And there's the others who are building the alternative structures ... the levy banks ... behind. I think they have very little to do with each other actually. Which seems a real pity. Because I think there's an incredible potential for cross-*

*fertilisation of skills there but the people who are building are so busy building their structures. And the people who are plugging certainly can't take their fingers out. This is interesting ... I've never thought of this before ... I suppose this is about building the movement, isn't it. I think people who've got their fingers in the dyke need to have a support gang who can hold the fort while they can move away from it. So they can actually take their fingers out.*

Jordan suggested that activists motivated by social and environmental concerns perceive and respond in fundamentally different ways. She suggested that activists can be categorised according to their motivations, such as 'crisis response' or 'long term structural change' activists. An alternative codification was suggested by Heart Politics veteran Allan (pers.comm. 6/10/01) who drew on Macy's (1983, 1991) observation of three activist traditions: (1) holding actions (like Jordan's activists holding fingers in leaking dykes); (2) structural change and the creation of new structures; and (3) changing hearts and minds. Conservationists including the QCC activists interviewed in the previous chapter generally fall into the first of these three categories. Activists attracted to Heart Politics gatherings appear more concerned with the second and, perhaps even more strongly, the third category. Jordan suggests teaching and learning approaches appropriate for each type of activism differ considerably.

### **6.10.2 Skills and Heart Politics learning intertwined and inseparable**

Second, respondents argued that the two approaches were *both* crucial to effective social activism. Peavey, for instance, suggested that active participation in civic life required an identifiable set of skills. Ryder considered the passion and inspiration fuelled by Heart Politics gatherings could potentially back-fire without complementary skills.

*There are people who are coming from the heart and fuck things up because they don't have skills. And don't perhaps have media skills to get their message out. Don't know how to facilitate a meeting. You need that skill. I think to be successful at anything ... a politician ... a businessman ... you need a mixture of both. You need the skills, but you also need the human qualities. If you're really strong on one and weak on the other, you're not going to be effective.*

Jordan considered Heart Politics organisers need to ensure participants do not leave with unrealistic expectations or leap into activism without skills to support their enthusiasm.

*This (Heart Politics) actually gives them hope and energy to go out into the world and do their stuff. But if they're not equipped with skills, they can get disillusioned and not have the success they might if they had a bucket of tools as well. So I think it's incumbent on us that we build in some of those skills into this, but not put the emphasis on it, because you can get that other places.*

Adams argued that both approaches are “absolutely essential.” She described the synergy between skill development and interpersonal relationships through the metaphor of parenting:

*Bringing up a child, the child needs lots of love and attention and lots of learning. You teach them lots of skills. How to use the toilet, how to tie up their shoes, how to eat. Then there's bonding - this kind of stuff. But we're humans, fundamentally. We can't just act in the world as if we're just brains.*

Both Adams and Jordan referred to Macy whose ideas concerning despair and empowerment (1983, 1991) influenced the development of the Heart Politics movement. Jordan, for instance, observed that Heart Politics workshops often provide opportunities for participants to identify and express their fears for the planet, their children and their future:

*If you don't face your fear, your despair associated with our task, then you're using energy to hold that down. So that energy is then not available to put into your work. So you're really only running on two or three valves. Certainly not on four.*

A range of views were expressed concerning the possibility and desirability of addressing both skill development and the deeper forms of learning associated with Heart Politics through a single forum or event. Some respondents endorsed an increased emphasis on skills workshops in Heart Politics while others considered separation appropriate.

### 6.10.3 Heart Politics learning is more important than skills

Third respondents generally concurred that the philosophical framework for action promoted through Heart Politics represents a more significant contribution to enhance social activism than the alternative emphasis on social action skills. This theme was strongly linked to the prior discussion of non-adversarial strategies and problems associated with the ‘environmental crusader’ approach. Jordan’s evocative metaphor contrasting people building levy banks to those putting their fingers in a leaking dyke resonated with others’ responses. Adams, for instance, considered that the Heart Politics approach entails structural and transformative change by contrast to traditional activist strategies that she described as “front-line holding actions.” She argued that social movements exclusively adopting the latter approach, “especially where that real ‘us and them’ attitude, will never change the world on its own. And more importantly, it doesn’t empower activists in short term.”

As noted in the previous chapters, communication skills are an integral element of activist education activities and programs geared toward social action skills. Social movements rely on raising awareness, highlighting problems and exerting pressure on decision-makers. Adams considered communication approaches that lack a Heart Politics orientation are inadequate since:

*All the facts in the world are not going to touch people... even when we could develop really good policies and strategies, it wasn't enough. Because we didn't have that heart connection with each other.*

Peavey’s comments resonated with the critique of the trend toward competency-based education in Chapter Three and the conclusion in that chapter that the technical orientation in adult education provides an inadequate framework within which to comprehend activist education. She argued that approaching activist training in a formulaic way, by categorising

skills and competencies as has been attempted in the Australian trade union sector, results in a failure to grasp the nature of process of social change.

*There is a real illusion in social change work that those skills workshops are based on and that is that social change workers control the outcome. And they don't... Social change is not about control.... Skills-based work assumes that the things that can be trusted are types of boxes ... where you can get everything exactly the strategy and the goals down. And I don't trust that. I think that's what totalitarianism is based on: processes that you know the result of. And social change is not that way. And people who have that need don't work well in social change.*

This explanation also summarised the apparent consensus among respondents in this study that skills-oriented (cognitive and behavioural) activist training is complemented by learning oriented toward affective engagement and development, personal growth and transformation.

#### **6.10.4 Heart Politics is about learning**

Finally, respondents explored the significance of the pedagogy of Heart Politics and suggested that the gatherings promoted the development of activist learning skills that are both valuable and transferable. Adams considered the skills involved in creating the learning atmosphere of the gathering, “people skills, group maintenance skills”, to be of generic value in activism. She argued that Heart Politics provides a valuable opportunity to “practice learning” and to practice “*being* the way we would like to be in an ideal world.” The ideal world Adams described featured an increased emphasis on reflection, comparable to the notions of critical thinking and perspective transformation introduced in Section 3.5.2. Anderson’s comments also drew attention to the possibility of participants becoming more aware of their own learning:

*It's taking time out from what we're doing ... or what we think we're doing, how we think we're changing the world. To reflect on that ... to learn from each other.*

Allan confirmed the organising collective’s confidence in reflective learning

as a powerful and empowering educational strategy. Jordan agreed that the learning dimension of the gathering signified an important and unique contribution that Heart Politics can make to many domains of social action.

*I think there are many people who are skilled in teaching skills. In teaching the media, and the planning ... but this is just a new field. People are only starting to realise that they need this other work as well. In all fields - in local government.*

This final quotation resonates with Shields' depiction of activist learning dimensions (Figure 3.5) which depicts 'learning to learn' as the epicentre of ten other learning priorities.

#### **6.10.5 Summarising the Heart Politics Pedagogy**

The educational orientation of many Heart Politics sessions, and the pedagogy modelled by the organising groups, emphasises experiential learning. Heart Politics gatherings are essentially an organised opportunity for social change activists to learn from each other. In Chapter Three, the discussion of the Highlander Centre linked their pedagogy to founder Miles Horton's conviction that, "People already know from their experience both the problems and the answers". A similar philosophy is apparent in Heart Politics gatherings. The knowledge shared in this way is complemented by presentations of experienced, accomplished and inspiring activists, whose perspectives are discussed and related to participants' own experiences.

The content of Heart Politics is more often oriented toward questions concerning how to sustain social change work than questions concerning how or why social change should be brought about. The pedagogy of the gatherings is sophisticated and eclectic, and incorporates modelling, mentoring, guided practice and ritual. The learning processes are experiential in both senses introduced in Section 3.6.2. Participants draw on their prior experience as

well as acquiring and reflecting on new experiences during the program. In contrast to the detached and intellectual learning environment associated with didactic pedagogies, Heart Politics facilitators promote a deep engagement of ‘head, heart and hands’, create trusting relationships and intimacy, a state of contemplation and a cathartic openness to, and expression of, deeply felt emotions. This orientation appears to reflect the influence of therapeutic traditions. These pedagogic features are especially prominent in the Out of the Hat, Heart Circle and support group sessions.

## **6.11 Digging deeper: 1998 Heart Politics focus group with activist educators**

These interviews served to identify and describe in rich, ethnographic detail the many activist education elements of Heart Politics gatherings. The group of organisers and participants interviewed during the March 1998 gathering clearly communicated the rationale and methodology of the gatherings and articulated their philosophy of activist education. Their cooperation and openness convinced me that different data collection strategies might yield further insights. I was especially interested in gaining access to the knowledge of activist educators that is acquired by both facilitating and participating in other activist education and training activities. These experiences were certain to have contributed to the development of insights and understandings pertinent to this inquiry. I resolved to attend additional gatherings in order to explore activist education in a broader sense and to engage participants and organisers in discussions to inform this inquiry.

During the Heart Politics retreat at Lennox Heads in September 1998, I collaborated with Katrina Shields to lead a focus group that explored activist education. I drafted a series of questions with Katrina’s input (included as Appendix S) which was displayed on the notice board where workshops were

scheduled and described. The session was titled “Teaching and learning for environmental activism”. I also gave this set of discussion prompts to several activist educators and encouraged them to participate in the discussion. Prior to the session I recorded four interviews with people who were unable to attend the session but were willing to share their thoughts. These interviews were subsequently transcribed and served to inform this study. The ninety minute focus group was loosely structured around the nine questions. It was also recorded and transcribed. Copies of the transcript were forwarded to participants in order to ensure accuracy and solicit additional comments.

The focus group affirmed many of the observations and conclusions described elsewhere in this and other chapters. For instance, participants agreed that activists rarely receive adequate personal and professional development and that advocacy organisations often have very high expectations of their staff and volunteers despite the enormity of the problems they seek to address and the evident power imbalance (“odds stacked against them”). They concluded that many environmental advocates experience ‘burnout’ and despair as a result. Environmentalists are often “thrown into the front line and they burn out” (Kath 8/98). Other professional sectors related to activism, including welfare organisations, were considered to have recognised and responded to this need for education and training. In part, this was considered a result of increasing professionalisation within the sector, which also entailed less encouraging developments.

Focus group participants agreed that activist education and support entails several domains including knowledge, skills for social action, political analysis and organisational development and personal development. They agreed that advocates are most likely to organise and participate in education and training appropriate to their immediate circumstances. One participant commented that, “Training needs to have a purpose. There’s training for a particular

campaign - that has a purpose. A beginning or an end.” Others identified Heart politics gatherings as a particularly effective strategy to address the personal development dimension of activist learning. While the gatherings were also considered conducive to other activist learning dimensions, alternative settings were considered to offer useful and complementary learning opportunities.

During this focus group session, participants concurred that social change theories (such as Moyer 1992), activist learning models (such as Webb 1984a) and campaign analyses (such as Runciman et al. 1986) offer rare and potent insights that may significantly enhance activist education activities. Unfortunately, these publications invariably have limited distribution. Participants also expressed strong support for the establishment of a permanent activist education centre such as the Highlander Centre. The proposed Terania Centre<sup>53</sup>, in particular, was supported as it would potentially serve to create a culture and history of activist education and provide access to activist education publications and resources. This important function could be extended to include a travelling ‘roadshow’ of activist workshops, courses and resource collections. Participants considered the obstacles to the creation of such an institution or program to be considerable.

One participant commented on the apparent lack of educational activities in contemporary social change organisations to help activists develop political analysis skills. By contrast, she described the activist education provided for members of the Communist Party of England during the 1950s.

*They had political history, how to get information, how to organise groups of people - and ideology - and that might have been right or wrong ideology.*

---

53 A detailed proposal to establish the Terania Centre, an activist education, training and resource centre in northern New South Wales, was developed by the National Environment Movement Training Project team in 2000. This Centre has not proceeded due to lack of funding.

*But I know people who were trained ... You don't go in the barricades if you're one of those people. You stay in the back - you're needed. You need to be there as part of the organisation after those people have got arrested and so on. You're more important than them. People who can keep the show running (Dorin, 8/98).*

This quotation also reinforces the distinction between *activists* and *organisers* that was suggested in Chapter One (definitions) and Chapter Three (where the MidWest Academy training is described). Dorin, like Fran Peavey, considers effective advocacy requires resilience, patience and longevity. A similar belief was expressed by another participant in this focus group who asked the rhetorical question, “If your timeframe is twenty years, are you going to use yourself up in your first three months?” (Liz 8/98). Other participants in this discussion considered effective advocates are often those who adopt support roles rather than always being in the front line. Just as activist education is seen as a “long term investment rather than the short term achievement of campaign victories” (Kath 8/98), organising is a long term approach to activism.

The focus group provided an important validation of the Sunshine Coast Heart Politics observations and generated additional insights relevant to this inquiry. As such, it provided a form of triangulation adding to the veracity of this chapter and the study as a whole.

## **6.12 Conclusion and implications**

This second case study was motivated by my observation that existing approaches to activist education within the environment movement were somewhat biased toward the development of social action skills and that a more holistic curriculum and pedagogy was important.

The study confirmed that activist educators associated with the Heart Politics

gatherings have developed, over the past decade, considerable experience and wisdom that has significant implications for activist education within the environment movement. These gatherings exhibit a complex and purposeful structure, a diversity of teaching and learning strategies and a breadth of curriculum unparalleled in the Australian environment movement.

The ethnographic research method employed in this study drew effectively on the ‘practitioner wisdom’ of Heart Politics facilitators that would otherwise have been inaccessible. The educational assumptions revealed in this way exhibited significant differences to those articulated by activist educators associated with the environment movement training described in the QCC study. Whereas several workshop facilitators involved with the *Powerful Voices* conference primarily focused on delivering content, Heart Politics practitioners sought to promote very specific learning environments, relationships and outcomes.

The following chapter compares and contrasts the distinct approaches to activist education that have been examined in Chapters Six and Seven in order to draw conclusions and articulate a set of recommendations informed by both environment movement and Heart Politics traditions.

# 7

## **Revisiting the research objectives and questions**

### **7.1 Overview**

The review of relevant literature (Chapters Two and Three) and the conduct of two substantive studies (Chapters Five and Six) during this inquiry, provide the basis for this final chapter which addresses the articulated research objectives. In this chapter, I return to these objectives and questions in order to: (1) identify factors that influence the provision of education and training in environmental advocacy groups; (2) analyse the forms this education takes (and might take); (3) assess the outcomes of such education; and (4) contribute to the practice of activist education in the Australian environment movement.

This study was motivated by interpretive and critical interests. The

interpretive interest prompted the emphasis on developing an ethnographic understanding of how environmental activists can enhance their advocacy efforts through education and training. The critical interest was expressed in the attempt to articulate factors that either limit or create opportunities for activist education, and to contribute to the Australian environment movement's approach to education and training. In this discussion, the focus questions corresponding to the four research objectives are provided in italics distinct from the discussion.

This chapter provides an opportunity to briefly reflect on four features of this study that suggest its significance. First, this interdisciplinary study has explored the intersection of two otherwise distinct bodies of literature and communities of practice. This intersection between adult education and environmental activism is infrequently examined but has provided insights that offer potentially significant benefits for the environment movement. Second, the conduct of the study drew on a range of research methods and techniques in an adaptive manner. The resulting hybrid design was based on features of emerging qualitative research methods including interventionist and change-oriented inquiry techniques. Third, the study achieved its practical and transformative interest which seemed, at the outset, overly ambitious. This chapter describes several catalytic outcomes achieved during the conduct of the study, in keeping with its catalytic intention. Finally, the study has generated a set of findings that are grounded, exhibit validity and have the potential to considerably enhance the practice and outcomes of environmental advocacy.

The inquiry has also generated a set of propositions and organising principles that collectively constitute a theory of activist education and training. As these propositions have emerged from an inquiry that was confined in terms of both duration and geography, they have limited generalisability. Accordingly,

they are not considered to have universal relevance to environmental advocacy organisations. This qualification aside, the propositions have already contributed to the development and delivery of activist education programs within ENGOs in Queensland and other Australian states.

These aspects and outcomes of the study emerge during the following discussion which is framed around the four research objectives reiterated above and the corresponding clusters of research questions. This chapter also incorporates reflections on the research experience and the extent to which the experience of conducting this project has achieved my personal and professional objectives.

## **7.2 Factors that influence the provision of education in environmental advocacy groups**

---

*How and where is activist training being attempted?*

*What are the attributes of these places?*

---

This study confirmed that very few Australian environmental advocacy organisations provide regular intentional education or training for activists. This organisational behaviour is significant, as environment groups are potentially excellent locations for learning through social action. However their potential for learning is rarely enhanced or realised through structured or informal education activities to complement activists' incidental learning. This generalisation appears equally true of environment groups in the United States. A national study of the U.S. environment movement (Lorenz, 1992) found few groups with policies or procedures for training volunteers, that staff training was similarly sporadic and lacked follow-up, and that these features contributed to the movement being "largely unprepared to tackle

the increasingly complex problems facing us” (Lorenz, 1992: 212). The activist author of this 1992 study concluded that it would be feasible to systematically develop activists’ skills in order to reduce ‘clumsiness’ and better equip conservation advocates for success. Her optimistic perspective concurs with mine to the extent that Lorenz considers training policies and procedures offer activists immediate benefits.

In general, the environmental advocacy organisations with training programs, or even sporadic training activities, appear to be larger, better funded, longer established, professionalised and hierarchical. Greenpeace Australia, for instance, exhibits each of these criteria and has in the past employed a full time activist educator (S.McKinnon, pers.comm. 12/00). The trend toward institutionalisation discussed in Chapter two appears to increasingly predispose organisations toward concerns such as efficiency and effectiveness. As nascent organisations which rely primarily on volunteers grow, evolve and employ activists, they tend to become more likely to commit resources to the assessment and fulfilment of training needs.

A notable attribute of environmental advocacy organisations with training programs is that their leaders appear to recognise and prioritise personal and professional development. The QCC activists described the ‘ideal’ activist as an independent, resilient, solitary and (already) highly skilled person. However, this ideal may be difficult to realise. This may help to explain why so many activists experience burnout. Leaders of ENGOs that attend to education and training are less likely to have such unrealistic and, arguably, unhealthy expectations of their campaigners. Rather, these leaders recognise that even the most apparently effective advocate may appreciate and benefit from training.

Organisations with training programs tend to exhibit a concurrent focus on

organisational maintenance as well as campaigning. The leaders of these organisations are described by Shields (1998) as 'process people' as they are inclined to attend to the interpersonal dimension of organisational life and to the personal toll associated with environmental advocacy. They have also been compared to 'levy-builders': activists who recognise that social change campaigns require long-term commitment and sustenance and cannot be won by front-line activists alone. This disposition provides an important counterbalance to the risk of activist burnout which is considered ubiquitous in advocacy groups and contributes to a very high rate of transience among both paid and unpaid activists.

A final attribute associated with environment groups with organised activist education activities is that their activist teams include individuals who are interested in activist education and possess appropriate skills and experience. In summary, the 'hot spots' of activist education appear to correspond to the location of individuals with a personal commitment to the practice. The relative paucity of activist education can be attributed both to unfavourable organisational attributes of advocacy groups, which are discussed in detail in Chapters One and Five, and to the prevalence of environmental leaders who are primarily oriented toward the achievement of short-term campaign objectives rather than long-term organisational maintenance of the movement, its organisation and people.

This study has also identified several factors that appear related to these organisational attributes and influence the prioritisation and provision of activist education. These factors include activists' motivations and sense of identity, as discussed in Chapter Two. Organisational and personal development, and the cultivation of a learning community, may receive less attention in ENGOs whose counterculture positioning involves remaining 'different' from organisations whose environmental decisions are considered

problematic.

### 7.3 **Forms that environmental activist education takes**

---

*How do environmentalists consider they become effective agents for social change?*

*What aspects of activism do current educational activities aim to enhance?*

---

In order to address the fourth research objective and corresponding questions, this study has examined activist learning from the perspectives of activists, both novice and experienced, and of activist educators. Environmentalists who were the subject of this study articulate clear learning goals that illuminate both *what* and *how* they want to learn.

This discussion must be prefaced by noting that the overwhelming majority of activist education is incidental and unstructured. Most activist learning occurs through serendipitous mentorship relationships and peer support, observation, trial and error. Activists interviewed in this study describe this type of learning as ‘sinking or swimming’. Intentional and structured activist education, on the other hand, mostly occurs through workshops which vary from a few hours to a few days. These workshops exhibit a range of educational pedagogies including didactic teaching, experiential and participatory approaches, structured reflection and critique, and action research. Intentional learning is also promoted by environmental advocacy organisations that strive to become learning organisations through deliberate and collaborative planning and evaluation processes.

Social movement literature and interviewees informing this study concur that environmental activism involves a very wide range of skills and abilities, each

requiring a high degree of proficiency. The first QCC action research cycle generated a seven-part typography of activist work and skills that includes: (1) administrative and organisational work; (2) community work; (3) research and publishing work; (4) analytical and strategic work; (5) direct action work; (6) media work; and (7) lobbying work. The QCC activists considered that in order to succeed in their advocacy efforts, they needed to become proficient in all these areas.

Chase's (2000) five dimensions of activist learning provide a framework within which to categorise activist education and training activities and programs. The dimensions which appear to receive the most consistent attention in the environment movement are social action skills and organisational development. Queensland ENGOs seek opportunities for activists to learn how to write media releases, speak publicly, organise rallies, communicate with a variety of audiences, organise fundraising programs and attend to the administration required to establish and maintain organisations. The interviews conducted during this study also found that activists prioritised scientific eco-literacy as a key prerequisite to effective advocacy. Environmental activists argued that expert knowledge of environmental issues is an absolute prerequisite for advocates who seek to influence policies, regulations and management decisions. Advocates reported they were expected to possess a high level of technical knowledge (or be 'up to speed') before issuing public statements. In some cases, this entailed months or even years reading, researching, networking and observing. As a result of this emphasis on scientific knowledge, prominent activists often specialise for years in specific environmental issues such as forest conservation, agriculture, toxic pollution or river health rather than campaigning on multiple issues.

Despite the importance ascribed to scientific knowledge, this dimension of activist learning appears to be either presumed or pursued elsewhere. Skills

for political analysis and personal development and life skills, Chase's fourth and fifth dimensions of activist learning, receive minimal attention in programs organised by the environment movement. Although the categories of activist work generated by QCC activists (above) included analytical and strategic work, this was not fleshed out in detail or strongly emphasised in their interviews. These two dimensions of activist learning, particularly personal development and life skills, are the focus of the annual Heart Politics gatherings.

The forms of activist education supported by environmental advocacy groups tend to correspond to other organisational attributes including their reliance on volunteers and their social change objectives. This relationship is illustrated by comparing grassroots, voluntary groups with professional opposition organisations (referred to by Moyer, 1990, as POOs). In Queensland, POOs favour reformist strategies such as lobbying, submissions and committee representation. Accordingly, they appear to prioritise the acquisition of scientific knowledge, social action, political analysis and interpersonal skills. Many of the environment movement's key activists pursue conservation outcomes primarily through lobbying. As members of technical advisory groups, steering groups and other committees, their influence depends on a combination of diplomacy and knowledge. Activists interviewed in this study considered both attributes essential. These activists' lobbying roles also appear to influence their preferred learning styles. Due to the nature of lobbying and especially the very high degree of autonomy and resilience required, reformist groups are unlikely to favour pedagogies such as didactic teaching that cast learners as passive. As a result, the forms of activist education that meet these organisations' needs tend to be participatory and draw extensively on the experience of participants.

Activists interested in enhancing their lobbying skills often seek experiential

learning opportunities such as mentoring and guided practice. These opportunities are uncommon as lobbyists tend to work alone and novice activists are not able to observe and learn from their successes. Activist workshops, however, provide the opportunity for peers to learn from each other and to reflect on their efforts. By contrast, volunteer-based groups appear to favour training activities for organisational administrative and management skills. Unlike larger and more professional groups, these ENGOs are unable to employ skilled administrators so rely on volunteers for organisational development.

Environment groups' educational priorities are also influenced by their social change objectives. Activist groups interested in long-term, structural and political social change, such as those campaigning against globalisation and consumerism, seem more likely than reformist groups to seek training in Chase's fourth and fifth dimensions of activist learning: political analysis and personal development.

The contrast between education for social action skills and a more holistic educational approach that promotes the concurrent development of other dimensions of activist learning was also evident in the Heart Politics study. This ethnographic case study identified an interesting tension between two expressions of activist education. I have referred in this study to a dominant orientation toward 'skills-based' activist education that is evident in activities that seek to develop activists' technical capacity. By contrast, the more 'holistic' school of activist education is expressed in efforts to enhance activists' emotional and social capacity.

The Heart Politics movement's overtly humanist orientation emphasises personal growth and development above other aspects of activist development. This emphasis involves relinquishing opportunities to promote the

development of participants' social action skills. To some extent, the Heart Politics facilitators explained this preference by noting that other dimensions of activist learning may be promoted through other activities (Fran Peavey) or addressed concurrently if learning activities are carefully planned and orchestrated (Patrick Anderson). One example of this multi-layered learning is the Out of the Hat format developed by Heart Politics organisers and adapted for the 1998 Queensland State Conservation Conference. This format combines a personal growth emphasis, as participants openly express and share deeply-felt emotions, with a concurrent emphasis on political analysis which can be implicit in these detailed anecdotes. This multi-layered pedagogy also helps develop a sense of community among activists and gives expression to a narrative about how activists understand and achieve social change, and the movement's history.

Notwithstanding the observations synthesised in this section, the movement's approach to activists' personal and professional development remains largely disorganised and poorly resourced. As a result, activists are often compelled to rely on their own resources in order to intentionally enhance their effectiveness. The experienced advocates interviewed during this study reported two key sources of activist learning. First, they had learnt primarily through assuming responsibility for very difficult tasks with minimal support. Second, they tended to inform their strategies through observation of more experienced advocates, although opportunities for close or continuous observation are rare and only a small proportion of activists receive support in the form of intentional or negotiated mentorship. More commonly, mentorship is a coincidental relationship and may not be consciously or mutually negotiated or constructed.

In conclusion, this study suggests the forms of current activist education are as diverse as the groups and individuals referred to collectively as the

environment movement. The focus of intentional and informal activist education activities correspond to the very wide range of activist strategies and tactics and to all five of Chase's (2000) dimensions of activist learning. These activities also reflect forms that range from incidental and self-directed learning through to intentional, structured and didactic pedagogies.

## 7.4 Outcomes of activist education

---

*How is this learning best organised?*

*What do environmental advocates and activist educators believe about learning for activism? What educational philosophies do they espouse and practice?*

*What success stories are available?*

---

On the basis of this study, it appears activist education should ideally address all five dimensions of activist learning and engage activists in personal and professional development activities addressing the practical, cognitive and affective aspects of their work. The environment movement training workshops which typically emphasise social action skills and the converse Heart Politics approach which appears preoccupied with personal development each have strengths to offer activist educators.

The second question associated with this research objective was intended to prompt the identification of effective ways to organise or deliver activist education. As noted briefly above, there are several organisational characteristics of activist groups that can enhance or constrain the organisation of activist education and training. The case studies and literature search conducted during this study identified at least four organisational characteristics that are common among advocacy groups and require attention.

First, advocacy groups are often ephemeral. They tend to exhibit very high rates of both volunteer and staff turnover and burnout. Second, ENGOs generally depend on volunteers to a great extent and have minimal financial resources. Third, environment groups are often in a crisis-response state, reacting to daily external imperatives rather than pursuing an independent agenda. Few develop and adhere to long-term organisational development plans. Fourth, environment groups tend to be ecocentric in orientation rather than anthropocentric. They are preoccupied with the promotion and preservation of non-human species. These organisational constraints are offset to a considerable extent, however, by the very high level of commitment of staff and volunteers attracted to ENGOs.

In order to accommodate these organisational attributes, appropriate activist education delivery mechanisms are most likely to rely primarily on informal and incidental learning strategies that promote learning in the context of social action. Mentorship, in particular, seems a particularly promising strategy as it is embedded in social action. Short courses and workshops also represent a utilitarian activist education strategy, although they are limited in terms of both depth and breadth and arguably cater primarily to entry-level or novice activists. Access to workshops is problematic as few activists can “pull up stakes and attend workshops halfway across the continent” (J.Fletcher, Comm-Org contribution, 28/8/00). Accordingly, activist workshops should ideally be provided in regional centres. As metropolitan advocacy groups are invariably better resourced to organise training, these groups might be encouraged to offer activist workshop ‘road-shows’. Similarly, the affordability of workshops is a potential obstacle – especially for volunteer and unwaged activists.

In general, formal or institutionalised approaches are likely to be considered a distraction from the key short-term objectives of advocacy organisations. This is more likely to be the case for small and volunteer-oriented groups

than for larger and institutionalised advocacy organisations with full-time staff. Groups in the latter category are more likely to support the establishment of formal courses for experienced and highly committed advocates.

Another approach to organising activist education considered in this study is the development and distribution of print resources in hard-copy or electronic format. This study found minimal evidence that print media comprise an effective or adequate activist education strategy unless such texts form the basis of interactive and participatory activities that ‘reach people where they are’. The readily available and comprehensive activist texts developed by both activists and others appear to receive minimal distribution, attention or practical application in the Australian environment movement. It seems the significance of these texts rests in their utilisation, by activist educators, as the basis of workshops and other activities.

These observations concerning the content and organisation of activist learning were prominent features of the activist education success stories that were examined in this study and are described below. Perhaps the most promising and significant environmental activist education success stories to emerge from the inquiry were the 1996 national and 1998 state conservation conferences, held in Adelaide and Brisbane respectively. The National Conference of Conservation Councils and Environment Centres in 1996 established education and training as key movement priorities. The conference agenda provided an activist education template by charting out a range of possible topics and pedagogies and convening an informal network of activist educators. The conference proceedings were an important contribution to the movement’s activist education resources. Consistent with the conclusion drawn above, this de facto training manual remains obscure and under-utilised.

The environment movement’s increased attention to education and capacity

building since the 1996 national conference is evident in three significant ways. First, the training facilitators involved with this conference published *Essential Skills for Environmental Activism* (National Environment Movement Training Support Group 1997). Second, the same group established an on-line database that lists activist educators' skills and contact details. This website, now hosted by Earthshare Australia, has recently been expanded to include a range of public-access activist training resources in electronic format<sup>54</sup>. Third, the state and national environmental advocacy groups comprising the Mittagong Forum engaged a team of educators and activists to conduct a consultative 'Capacity Building' study and prepare a report to identify a set of activist education strategies. This project generated approximately 120 postings on four topics from forty contributors<sup>55</sup>. Following this on-line dialogue and extensive deliberations, the consultants recommended seven projects to the Mittagong Forum groups for consideration in December 2000 (Table 7.1).

These proposed projects are consistent with the activist education principles suggested in this study. They provide learning strategies situated in social action, utilise peer learning and informal mentorship and particularly target entry-level activists. The one exception is Project 8, which recommends that leading campaigners take time out from action to analyse and document successful and unsuccessful campaigns in order to assist both their own learning and that of others in the movement. It will be very interesting to see if this Project is implemented by Mittagong Forum groups. While minimal progress has been made to implement the eight projects since the consultants' report was submitted in December 2000, capacity building through activist training remains a priority at Forum meetings.

---

54 On-line available <<http://www.earthshare.org.au/training/>>

55 This discussion is archived on-line at <<http://www.ala.asn.au/environment/>>

<b>Project 1</b>	Organisational learning consultants in two pilot regions to assess and strengthen the sustainability and effectiveness of community environment organisations
<b>Project 2</b>	Learning fundraising through action - including train-the-trainer and other peer learning strategies
<b>Project 3</b>	Learning for leadership: Forums and support groups for environmentalists, including committees and boards, who have management and leadership roles and responsibilities
<b>Project 4</b>	Welcoming new staff and volunteers to the environment movement: Introductory programs for new staff and volunteers of environmental advocacy groups
<b>Project 5</b>	Building the capacity of the movement to share and exchange skills and knowledge: State and national conferences, a second National Environment Movement Training Conference, a website for campaign coalitions and a clearinghouse for information on training courses
<b>Project 6</b>	Activist learning and training: Engaging and training environmental action learning consultants
<b>Project 7</b>	Environmental advocacy internships <sup>56</sup>
<b>Project 8</b>	Fellowships for leading campaigners to support analysis and documentation of environmental campaigns

Table 7.1 Capacity building projects recommended to the environment movement (Parlane and Flowers, 2000)

The second success story considered in this study, the 1998 Queensland State Conservation Conference *Powerful Voices*, was inspired by the 1996 national Conservation Conference. It confirmed the applicability of the approach to activist education adopted by the organisers of that event. The rigorous participant evaluation strategies exercised during and after this conference confirmed the high utility value of the training that was provided and the very high level of unmet demand for similar activities in the state-based

---

<sup>56</sup> The internship scheme proposed in Project 7 was recommended by this researcher.

environment movement. A key legacy of *Powerful Voices*, in addition to the catalytic outcomes discussed briefly in this study, is the conference organising manual (Appendix L) that provides guidance for future host organisations to coordinate training programs.

In addition to the two conferences described above, the third success story identified in this study is the annual Heart Politics gatherings. The four-day program of these gatherings provides learning opportunities that are both explicit such as sessions on specific topics, and other experiential learning approaches that are embedded in the form and structure of each day's activities. Compared with the skills workshops common in the environment movement, Heart Politics aims to promote learning outcomes that are complex and subtle. Skills for social action and organisational development that address activists' immediate needs are not comprehensively provided. However, the long-term outcomes of Heart Politics include activist resilience, hope and strategies to resolve despair, relationship building, the creation of a sense of community and lifelong learning.

In concluding Chapter Six, I suggested that Heart Politics and activist skills workshops may be considered distinct schools or trends within activist education practice. Activities that 'skills-based' promote the acquisition of activist skills and competencies engage learners intellectually and practically ('head and hands'). These activities tend to rely on conventional pedagogies such as didactic teaching ('chalk and talk') by experts who are recognised and experienced practitioners rather than people with educational or facilitation expertise. The Heart Politics approach, by contrast, promotes a 'deeper' form of learning which engages activists emotionally and spiritually ('heart and soul'). The facilitators of these learning experiences are likely to be 'process people' rather than content people. Instead of being experts or seasoned advocatess, they tend to occupy the facilitator role by virtue of their expertise

in facilitating processes such as story-telling, 'deep' listening, reflection and in developing trust and intimacy in the learning group.

Heart Politics gatherings can also be differentiated from the sporadic, isolated and unrelated educational activities initiated by the environment movement as they represent an established and coherent school or tradition of activist education. Chapter Six documented how this tradition has been created through the resilience and commitment of key individuals, through mentorship and the development of a learning philosophy within the organising collective. Unlike environment movement activist workshops, Heart Politics gatherings reflect a coherent pedagogy (including the 'spiral' model) that has been deliberately and iteratively developed throughout the twelve years since their inception.

Although these examples of activist education can be considered successful, the precise outcomes of activist education remain elusive and difficult to measure. At times, environmental advocates who exhibit a sound grasp of the skills and strategies promoted through training manuals and workshops nonetheless fail to achieve their desired results. This study has trialed a range of evaluation strategies to isolate learning outcomes as elements of both the QCC and Heart Politics studies. These strategies demonstrate that activists who participate in education and training adapt their strategies and report they are more effective as a result. Informants in both studies provided evidence of activists adopting skills and strategies learnt during activist education activities and gaining confidence in their capacity to effect change and avoid burnout. On the other hand, however, it is not feasible to measure increments in the achievement of campaign objectives and attribute these directly to training activities.

## 7.5 **Contributing to the practice and development of education in the Australian environment movement**

---

*What conclusions can be drawn from apparently effective programs in terms of content and pedagogy?*

*What opportunities exist to enhance the environment movement's provision of appropriate education and training?*

---

The final research objective and corresponding research questions build on the foundation of the previous discussion to draw conclusions from activist education experience and to identify opportunities for further research and collaboration. This section outlines three conclusions which summarise the insights into effective activist education programs and activities provided by this study: (1) activist training informed by coherent educational philosophies is more effective than ad hoc activities; (2) activist education may be enhanced through purposeful collaboration between the environment movement and educational institutions; and (3) environmental campaigns provide rich opportunities for activist education.

### 7.5.1 **Promoting coherent educational philosophies**

The first conclusion relates to the pedagogy of activist education. There appears to be a significant discrepancy between educational activities and programs that are informed by coherent and shared understandings or theories about activist education and those that are not. Effective programs such as Heart Politics and the state and national conservation conferences were informed by shared and grounded theories about what and how activists should learn. In the case of Heart Politics, the complex pedagogy or 'social technology' has evolved over several years through the deliberations of the organising groups. The Heart Politics model emphasises experiential and participatory workshop design. That activist training activities are rarely informed in this

way is unremarkable, as there are few opportunities for professional development as an activist educator and activist education activities are generally isolated geographically and temporally.

On the basis of this conclusion, it appears there is merit in developing appropriate strategies for the professional development for activist educators: for the trainers, volunteers and activists who facilitate activist workshops and courses. These people tend to be experienced practitioners who are expert in the practices and skills they are imparting, rather than experienced or qualified educators or facilitators. As a result, the pedagogies of their workshops are infrequently informed by theories of adult and popular education and may, at times, be based primarily on didactic and other conventional pedagogies that are appropriated either consciously or unconsciously from formal and institutional educational settings. These approaches are not considered by popular educators to be particularly effective or appropriate in informal community settings or with adults. Didactic teaching is unlikely to provide an adequate basis for a program of education and training seeking to address all five identified dimensions of activist learning.

This proposal to develop an appropriate model of professional development for activist educators faces several obstacles. Unlike other communities of practice such as teachers and community educators who are engaged full-time, remunerated adequately, remain in the profession for several years and work in teams, activist educators generally enjoy few of these circumstances. As a result, they are a particularly difficult target audience for professional development. It seems likely, however, that the availability of professional development may, in fact, serve to keep activist educators involved for longer.

One option for the professional development of activist educators adapted

to their circumstances would be to publish a training manual suited to the contemporary Australian environment movement. Texts of this nature developed in the United States (Coover et al., 1978; Speeter, 1978; Kahn, 1982; Arnold et al., 1991; Moyer, 2001; Schutt, 2001; Bobo et al., 2001) offer a template for an Australian activist training manual. A local training manual could be based on available literature from both Australia and abroad. Relevant Australian journals, books and archival materials are held by the library of the Social Change Training and Resource Centre (Terania Centre) in northern New South Wales. Despite its American origins, the *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* (Coover et al., 1978) was utilised extensively by trainers during the Franklin River campaign. A manual adapted to contemporary Australian society is justified as the electoral systems of Australia and the United States differ markedly. This was emphasised by Steve Max, one of the Midwest Academy trainers, who suggested direct action organising has evolved within the particular U.S. political structures and culture (pers.comm. 8/01). Shields' (1991) *In the Tiger's Mouth* has become a defacto activist training manual for Australian activist groups, although this text focuses overwhelmingly on personal growth and life-skills. Before embarking on the project of developing a local manual that addresses each of the five dimensions of activist learning, however, it is important to consider whether it would serve its intended purpose and, indeed, whether it would be used by its intended audience.

An appropriately responsive and informal strategy for activist educator professional development would be to create training networks. The facilitators and coordinators of education and training for environmental activists presently have few opportunities to exchange ideas, observations and resources. As a consequence of their isolation from each other and the sporadic pattern of activist training in the environment movement, training programs are unlikely to evolve in terms of breadth and depth in the way that Heart Politics has (C.Harris, pers.comm.11/98). This problem may be addressed

by informal networks, on-line discussions and occasional gatherings to foster peer support and learning. These informal arrangements are appropriate given the largely volunteer nature of activist education. Network meetings could also become a regular element of environment movement gatherings.

### **7.5.2 Purposeful collaboration between the environment movement and educational institutions**

A second conclusion based on apparently effective programs is that the practice of activist education may be strengthened through closer and more purposeful relationships between activists and higher education institutions. Chapter Two explored the relationship between adult education and other progressive social movements and suggested that cooperation between educators and activists offered a range of mutual benefits. These benefits include the enhancement of activist education. In order to develop synergistic relationships of this kind, it may be necessary to overcome the gulf between academia and the environment movement that is maintained by entrenched positions on both sides.

### **7.5.3 Harnessing the learning potential of campaigns**

A third conclusion is that some of the most exciting opportunities to enhance environmental activists' education and training involve experiential learning that is embedded in social action. This conclusion is based in part on my observation that established activist education programs utilise pedagogies that rely on activists' experience. Two programs meeting this criterion are the Heart Politics gatherings and programs offered by the Doris Marshall Institute (Figure 3.3, Arnold et al., 1991). The facilitators of both programs consider activists' experience the starting point for learning and also the preferred location for applying and testing new knowledge. A very similar approach to activist workshop design was described by Kahn (1982: 211) some twenty years ago:

The best training is based on a cycle that combines training and experience. We train to prepare for experience. We then go through the experience, which provides specific benefit to the organization. We use that experience as a base for more training to improve people's skills and build their self-confidence. By doing this we make sure our training is not just theoretical but is closely tied to what the organization and its leaders are actually doing. We also take advantage of this experience by using it to tie our training to the reality that we have to deal with every day.

An appropriate strategy for activist education consistent with this conclusion is to embed, in environmental campaigns, routines that promote peer learning and both value and explicate the learning dimension of social action. During this research project, I was involved in a three-year campaign to oppose construction of an inner-city freeway. My reflections on this campaign (Whelan, 2001a) included the suggestion that activists' campaign plans could include learning objectives and actions just as they incorporate media, volunteer-recruitment and coalition-building strategies. Since campaigns are arguably the best context for novice activists to acquire skills and understandings, campaign groups could be encouraged to recognise this important opportunity and consciously cultivate a learning culture. During the anti-freeway campaign, this entailed meeting processes that encouraged reflection and informal mentoring by movement veterans, 'buddy' arrangements to couple novices with seasoned campaigners, regular participatory evaluation and a post-mortem of the campaign once the freeway was approved. In response to a Perth-based activist group's request for advice on activist training, I provided a copy of the article described above. The group implemented several of the learning strategies that are proposed in the paper. They noted, however, that "It's hard to create space for people to consider and discuss activist learning when most people just want to look at the nuts and bolts of issues and are too busy to think about why we do what we do" (D.Wake, pers.comm. 5/12/01).

The potential for learning through social action may also be realised and enhanced through strategies that encourage effective activists to reflect on

their campaign experience and to evaluate and document both successful and unsuccessful campaigns. The QCC activists who expressed frustration that their mentors were ‘too busy to teach’ would be able to access seasoned campaigners’ experience via these documents. The capacity building consultation process described above (Parlane and Flowers 2000) found strong movement support for a clearinghouse of activist literature including campaign histories. One participant in this on-line discussion remarked that activists’ reflections would address this need, while describing academics’ contributions as “political theorists which have occasionally appeared in obscure journals giving largely useless analyses of conflicts” (B.Traill, Capacity Building and Training dialogue, 22/12/99). Another contributor noted that documentation of environment group’s electoral strategies had previously been leaked to the mainstream media in the past and had resulted in negative publicity for the movement (K.Alexander, Capacity Building and Training dialogue, 22/1/00). Despite this contributor’s concerns about security, she strongly supported regular campaign documentation and the promotion of both written and oral campaign history. The consultants recommended that state and national environment groups fund fellowships to encourage prominent activists to analyse and document campaigns (Project 8, Table 7.1). Recent reports suggest this will be the first of the eight projects to be implemented.

## **7.6 Opportunities and recommendations**

The five key opportunities for enhanced activist education to emerge from this study are: (1) formalised courses; (2) regular informal workshops; (3) building on annual conservation conferences; (4) the establishment of activist education centres and (5) mentorship programs. These five potential developments and initial steps toward their achievement are described below.

### 7.6.1 Formalised courses

Obstacles to activists' participation in formal education have been noted elsewhere. Notwithstanding these obstacles, the potential benefits of a structured course are significant. A twelve month program auspiced by a supportive tertiary institution would provide an opportunity to introduce novice activists to the extensive yet obscure environmental advocacy literature incorporating political theory, to 'go deeper' consistent with the reflections of participants in the activist workshops described in this study and to systematically address each of the five activist learning dimensions considered here. Postgraduate degrees that concentrate on aspects of community advocacy have been initiated in recent years by several universities. The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology offers undergraduate 'Advocacy and social action' and postgraduate 'Advanced Advocacy and Social Action' elective units within the School of Social Science. The University of Technology Sydney offers a program in community leadership. Similar developments are reported in other countries. Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh, in partnership with Friends of the Earth, has commenced a one year program in environmental justice which is attracting activist enrolments. A Masters program in Environmental Advocacy and Organising is offered by the Department of Environmental Studies, Antioch New England Graduate School. In the past, the University of Michigan offered a comparable program. Graduates were highly employable and came to be known in the NGO sector as the 'Michigan Mafia' for their recognisable and effective campaign strategies.

Inspired by these antecedents, I have developed a one-semester course in Environmental Advocacy for postgraduate students enrolled in the Griffith University Masters of Environmental Studies program. The course objectives, topics and list of readings is included as Appendix T. The course will commence in 2003. The course curriculum draws heavily on the conceptual frameworks and literature that inform this study. The establishment of the course will

create opportunities for other forms of purposeful collaboration.

### **7.6.2 Informal workshops**

The second opportunity identified in this study is the demand for and interest in regular and accessible activist workshops that address each of the dimensions of activist learning suggested by Chase (2000). The study affirmed the importance of workshops as arguably the most efficient and popular mode of activist education. Despite their inevitably limited and superficial treatment of complex activist skills and understandings, half-day to two-day workshops remain the most accessible, affordable and convenient delivery mechanism. Even so, many activist groups are simply too small, under-resourced or preoccupied to offer workshops for their paid and unpaid activists. A key weakness of the activist workshops observed and conducted during this study is that they are provided on a sporadic basis with no apparent logic or sequence and are only accessible to activists in relatively few groups.

An ongoing action research project to emerge from this study involves a seven-month workshop series which attempts to overcome these shortcomings. Between June and December 2002, the Queensland Conservation Council and Friends of the Earth (Brisbane) will conduct monthly workshops which address all five activist education dimensions. These workshops, which are described in brief in the poster included as Appendix U, will be widely promoted and inexpensive. The organising collective also hope to offer elements of the series to regional groups through a 'roadshow' in early 2003.

The third opportunity is to develop environmental activist training programs as a standing or routine element of annual state and national environment movement conferences. Since the 1996 conference in Adelaide, there has been a discernible progress toward this objective. Environment movement gatherings almost inevitably include a discussion of 'capacity building' – an

expression which appears to encompass both organisational infrastructure and activist training and development.

Consistent with the objectives of this study, I facilitated two workshops on political analysis during the 2001 National Environment Movement Conference. The workshops confirmed the observation discussed elsewhere in this thesis that few activists receive education or training to help them understand and develop political theories to explain and inform social change. I developed a participatory workshop structure that encouraged reflection and dialogue. This pedagogy was informed by my understanding of principles of popular education and of the activist education practices of the Highlander Centre. The workshop started with a brief presentation of several social change theories including those referred to in this study. Participants then broke into groups of three or four to discuss the extent to which their environmental activism was informed by theories of change, the consequences of varying degrees of theorising about change and opportunities to develop and test change theories. Several weeks after the conference, I received the organisers' evaluation report which included the following testimony by one of the workshop participants:

It was about twenty minutes into the workshop. James had already shared with us a number of theories of how social change happens and we had broken into pairs or threes to discuss how any theory or theories had applied to campaigns we had worked on. We were all very excited to be able to reflect on past efforts with so much greater perspective than we had ever done before. Just then a woman opened the door, looked at the thirty or more of us crammed into the small tutorial room, heard us all deep in discussion with each other and creating a rather loud din ... and she had to give up. Alas she had come to our workshop too late to know what the heck we were all so excited about! But for the rest of us it was a very rewarding experience.

This feedback affirms the value of activist training workshops as an additional element of activist gatherings. Although these gatherings offer intrinsic learning opportunities and novice activists often come away inspired and

motivated, activist workshops that are not issue-specific represent an explicit learning dimension of the program. Their inclusion in gatherings such as the annual conferences is likely to depend on conference organisers who fit with Shields' notion of 'process people' – a disposition that is apparently uncommon in the environment movement.

### **7.6.3 Activist education centres**

The fourth emerging opportunity for developing activist education is the establishment of one or more centres where training activities and programs would be offered and activist training resources developed and made available. Two centres in the United States offer precedents to inform this possible development. The Highlander Centre is described in some detail in Chapter Two and elsewhere in this study. The Lindeman Centre was established by Aimee Horton (daughter of Miles Horton who founded Highlander) in Chicago in the 1990s as a “resource sharing place, a gathering place for educator/activists to combine their skills, knowledge and experience in search of solutions, a center for problem-posing and strategy-building with organisations and groups in Chicago committed to collective and democratically-determined action” (Lindeman Centre pamphlet). Both the Highlander and Lindeman centres play an active role in building networks for resource-sharing with popular education organisations. Both centres identify the influence of early popular educators Horton, Lindeman and Freire.

Closer to home, the Kotare Trust Centre for Research and Education for Social Change in Aotearoa (New Zealand) runs residential and outreach training and education programs, provides one-off workshops, carries out participatory research programs and maintains a resource base and library to support the centre's teaching and research work. The education centre provides resources to other organisations for meetings, training and education programs and retreats.

Efforts to establish an activist education centre like Highlander in Australia have made minimal progress, due primarily to lack of funding. A detailed proposal to set up a centre in northern New South Wales was developed in recent years by the informal environment movement training network. This proposal described the range of services to be offered by the 'Terania Centre' including activist retreats and workshops and an activist archive collection and clearinghouse. The success of Highlander and the training programs of established NGOs in the United States is largely due to that nation's tradition of philanthropy. By contrast, there is no such tradition in Australia.

#### **7.6.4 Mentoring**

Finally, this study returns to the significant opportunity for activist development offered through mentorship. The interviews conducted during this and other studies and my personal experience suggest mentorship represents a highly effective, action-oriented and contextual strategy for learning through social action. In part, the potency of mentorship and peer support relationships can be attributed to the fact that they overcome the isolation experienced by many environment activists, both novices and experienced advocates.

Internship and 'service learning' are established and integral education strategies adopted by activist organisations in the United States. Interns in American activist groups typically receive a stipend or living allowance. Due to the comparative poverty of Australian environment groups, this may not be a realistic option here. Nonetheless, I plan to trial voluntary environment movement internships as part of the new Environmental Advocacy course in 2003.

## **7.7 Looking forward: Ideas for future research**

This study has, by no means, exhausted the opportunities for ‘really useful’ activist education research. In fact, like most researchers exploring a topic of personal interest, I come to the end of the study with many more questions than answers. I am particularly interested in four possible research projects that appear to warrant further investigation.

### **7.7.1 Multiple comparative activist education case studies**

First, the field of activist education would be enriched by case studies that examine current programs and activities. Ideally, these would identify programs’ defining characteristics in terms of pedagogy, curriculum and learning outcomes. This research may achieve a more effective cross-referencing of pedagogy and curriculum than achieved in this study, in order to suggest pedagogies that are appropriate to specific content areas or dimensions of activist learning. This inquiry has generated evidence that experiential, participatory and democratic pedagogies are highly appropriate to many activist education contexts. Experiential pedagogies have long been associated with activist education, at least since Miles Horton initiated the Highlander Centre, where programs are based in the philosophy that, “people already know from their experience both the problems and the answers” (in Hamilton 1992: 16).

The advantages of experiential pedagogy cannot necessarily be generalised, however, to situations in which highly regarded activists share their experience and insights. Participants in these learning activities rarely express frustration or dissatisfaction with their somewhat passive role. Contrary to Fran Peavey’s criticisms of the ‘expert’ or ‘star’ model of activist education, her lecturing style is apparently appreciated by audiences who are content to listen and take notes. Nor can it be presumed that identical pedagogies are appropriate

to training for skills acquisition and education to impart environmental knowledge (Webb 1984a: 1).

Multiple comparative case studies may enable a more systematic appraisal of the merits of the ‘deep learning’ observed during Heart Politics gatherings and the prevailing skills acquisition focus of environmental advocacy groups.

In this respect, the Heart Politics case study identified several themes that warrant further investigation. The complex pedagogy of these gatherings provides opportunities to address multiple dimensions of activist learning and, more importantly, to develop a learning culture or community that stands in sharp contrast to the more commonly encountered ‘cult of the individual’. In portraying environmental advocacy in terms of “David versus Goliath” struggles, environmentalists are denying the movement its history of collective action and collective learning. This more empowering discourse is made available through Heart Politics through story-telling and the deliberate creation of an intimate learning community and through the recognition that social change is a long, challenging path. And one that can be made less lonely and tortuous through education, training and support.

### **7.7.2 Intensive and residential courses**

The activist education activities and programs examined during this study ranged in duration from one hour to one week. Several longer courses for environmental advocates are available in the United States, including the twelve-month *Greencorp* and eighteen-month Greenpeace activist courses. Activists enrolled in the Audubon Expedition Institute spend several months ‘on the road’, camping and participating in local campaigns. A residential component is integral to the programs proposed by Shields (in Chapter Six) and Schutt (2001). Intentional activist learning communities and longer programs such as *Greencorp*, may offer additional insights into activist

education curriculum and pedagogy. These insights may be gleaned through an action research project to develop, trial and evaluate an activist college in Australia. This may also be compared to international ‘sister’ programs.

### **7.7.3 Activist education outside the institutionalised ‘environment movement’**

This study has primarily examined education and training activities within the professional arm of the environment movement. It has been noted, however, that the state and national environmental advocacy groups that comprise the Mittagong Forum in fact constitute just one part of the movement. In most Australian cities and towns, there are small ENGOs that are not formally affiliated with the Mittagong Forum and non-aligned individuals whose advocacy efforts contribute in a significant to pro-environmental outcomes. The tendency for volunteer and community-based structures to evolve into relatively larger, more stable and professional organisations is of concern to observers such as Robinson (2000), who considers the distinction between “professional/corporate action” and voluntary citizen action “vital in a healthy democracy”. In part, this distinction is important as the government grants that support many ENGOs effectively constrain their political autonomy. Most ENGOs have experienced a decrease in their annual Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations (GVEHO) income. Commentators suggest the scheme may be abandoned by the conservative Commonwealth Government. This may compel the movement to reinvent itself and reconnect with its volunteer and community constituency. Such a change would be consistent with the re-invigoration associated with ‘fourth wave’ environmentalism described by Hutton and Connor (1999) and Thiele (1999). The process would present many opportunities for reinventing and piloting appropriate forms of education and training.

#### **7.7.4 Long-term learning outcomes of activist education**

A fourth topic for further inquiry would be the long term learning outcomes of activist education. In the QCC study, participants in the Powerful Voices conference were surveyed to identify how they had applied new skills and understandings in their advocacy. The respondents to this survey reported a high level of application. It was not possible, however, to discern a causal relationship between education and training and advocacy success. The ultimate test of validity for activist education, inevitably, is “does it help activists win their campaigns?” This question was not considered to fall within the scope of this study, but could, perhaps, serve as the starting point for a future project. A study of this nature would most likely be longitudinal and involve observation of, and dialogue with, activists over a period of years. It may perhaps provide an opportunity to examine the long-term outcomes of divergent forms of activist education including, for instance, Heart Politics participants and activists exposed to skills-oriented training or education for political analysis.

There are opportunities to pursue some of these ideas for future research through the projects that have been described above. I hope, however, to find others exploring these questions beside me.

### **7.8 Looking back: Drawing closure**

At the time I initiated the project, I had modest expectations concerning the prospect of defining or articulating an activist curriculum and pedagogy for environmental advocates. Activist education appeared an uncommon and under-theorised practice. On the basis of my previous studies, and my experience as an environmental advocate, I half-expected that activist education would remain a mirage: an idealised yet impossible objective. My

doubts were compounded when I read that Saul Alinsky, whose 1960s activist education projects have inspired subsequent practitioners, felt activists may be ‘born’ rather than ‘bred’:

The qualities we were trying to develop in the organizers in the years of attempting to train them included some qualities that in all probability cannot be taught. They either had them, or could get them only through a miracle from above or below (Alinsky 1970: 71).

I was also uncertain whether it would be possible to achieve the ‘useful’ contribution foreshadowed in Chapter One. Both these doubts have been largely resolved. Through the literature review and conduct of this study I have connected with a small but significant community of practice, and a heritage of activist education. This heritage has been portrayed through this study in the form of current, historical and proposed Australian and international examples of activist education. The two case studies described in this thesis demonstrate the potential for activist education to be both practiced and theorised as a legitimate and important form of adult education. I am now connected to an international activist education network that will continue to inspire, strengthen and affirm my efforts.

Second, I feel reconciled to the merits of research as an expression of environmental commitment. Elsewhere in this study, I have referred to the dichotomy that may be perceived between activists and academics, whereby academics’ motivations may be considered abstract, detached or irrelevant and activists seen as passionate or irrational. This dichotomy is described as an insider-outsider tension by Egan (2001: 8) who asks, “how then can an activist navigate through the treacherous waters of university-based research without betraying the principles (particularly empowerment) shaped in their community-based practice?”

The conduct of this study involved reorienting my action and identity from that of activist to that of activist researcher. Although I initially experienced this as a betrayal of my prior commitment, I discovered that participatory action research provides opportunities to remain aligned to the values that motivate my activism. Stoecker (1997: 9), another activist turned researcher, describes activists' 'functional' roles in action research as animator, community organiser, popular educator and participatory researcher. Researchers, on the other hand, occupy the distinct roles of initiator, consultant and collaborator researcher. I have found, during this study, that while these roles are distinct, there is ample scope for mutually beneficial collaboration and processes of inquiry that contribute constructively to the achievement of movement objectives.

I embrace the role of activist-researcher and look forward to working collaboratively with both activists and environmentalists to advance conservation outcomes.

# Bibliography

Adelman, C. (ed.) (1981) *Uttering, Muttering: Collecting, Using and Reporting Talk for Social and Educational Research*, Grant McIntyres, London.

Adelman, C. & Young, M.D. (1985) The assumptions of educational research: The last twenty years in Great Britain, in M.Shipman (ed.) *Educational Research: Principles, Policies and Practices*, Falmer Press, London.

Ali Kahn, S. (1994) *Taking Responsibility: Promoting Sustainable Practice Through Higher Education Curriculum*, Environmental Responsibility Centre, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield.

Alinsky, S. (1971) *Rules for Radicals*, Vintage Books, New York.

Alinsky, S. (1972) *Reveille for Radicals*, Vintage Books, New York.

Anderson, G.L. (1987) *Toward a Critical Ethnography of Educational Administration*, Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington DC.

Anderson, G.L. (1989) Critical ethnography in education: Origins, current status and

- new directions, *Review of Educational Research*, 59(3), pp.249-270.
- Anderson, L.B. (1986) Developments in ethnographic research in education: from Interpretive to critical ethnography, *Education*, 20(1).
- Andresen, L., Boud, D. & Cohen, R. (2000) Experience-based learning, in G.Foley (ed.) *Understanding Adult Education and Training*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney, pp.225-239.
- Angus, L. (1986a) Research Traditions and Critical Ethnography, *Discourse*, 17(1).
- Angus, L. (1986b) *Schooling for Social Order: Democracy, Equality and Social Mobility in Education*, Deakin University Press, Victoria.
- Apple, M. (1979) *Ideology and Curriculum*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Boston.
- Apple, M. & Beyer, L. (eds.) (1988) *The Curriculum: Problems, Politics and Possibilities*, University of New York Press, Albany.
- Argyris, C. & Schön, D. (1978) *Organisational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
- Arnold, R. & Burke, B. (c.1990) *A Popular Education Handbook: An Educational Experience Taken From Central America and Adapted to the Canadian Context*, CUSO Development Education, OISE Adult Education Department, Ontario.
- Arnold, R., Burke, B., James, C., Marton, D. & Thomas, B. (1991) *Educating for a Change*, Doris Marshall Institute for Education and Action, Toronto.
- Atkinson, P. & Delamont, S. (1985) Bread and dreams or bread and circuses? A critique of case study research in education, in M.Shipman (ed.) *Educational Research: Principles, Policies and Practices*, Falmer Press, London.
- Australian Education Council (1992) *Putting General Education to Work: The Key Competencies Report*, Australian Education Council and Ministers for Vocational Education, Employment and Training, Canberra.
- Australian Conservation Foundation (1998) *Green Pages: The Directory of Environment Groups in Australia*, Fitzroy, Victoria.
- Australian Government Printing Service (1989) *Education for Active Citizenship in Australia*
- Babbie, E. (1998) *The Practice of Social Research*, Wadsworth, Belmont, CA.
- Bagnall, D. (2000) NGO Power: The Influence Epidemic, *The Bulletin*, 9/5/2000, pp.26-30.

- Bahro, R. (1986) *Building the Green Movement*, New Society, Philadelphia.
- Banister, P., Burman, E., Taylor, M. & Tindall, C. (1996) *Qualitative Methods in Psychology: A Research Guide*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Baum, F., Modra, C., Bush, R., Cox, E., Crooke, R. & Potter, R. (1999) Volunteering and social capital: An Adelaide study, *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, February, pp.13-22.
- Beck, U. (1998) Politics and Risk Society, in J. Franklin, ed. *The Politics of Risk Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp.9-22.
- Beckwith, D. & Lopez, C. (1997) *Community Organizing: People Power from the Grassroots*, Comm-Org Discussion Paper On-line, available <<http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers97/pr.htm>> accessed 16/5/01.
- Beder, S. (1997) *Global Spin: The Corporate Assault On Environmentalism*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne.
- Bell, J. (1987) *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education and Social Science*, Open University Press, Philadelphia.
- Benton, T. (1997) Beyond Left and Right? Ecological politics, capitalism and modernity, in M. Jacobs (ed.) *Greening the Millenium? The New Politics of the Environment*, Blackwell, Oxford, pp.34-46.
- Berman, M. (1981) *The Reenchantment of the World*, Cornell University Print, Ithaca, NY.
- Bobo, K., Kendall, J. & Max, S. (2001) *Organising for Social Change in the 1990s*, Seven Locks, Washington DC.
- Bocking, S. (2002) The Moraine is about politics, not science, *Alternatives* 28(2), pp.11-12.
- Bookchin, M. (1982) An open letter to the ecological movement, *Social Alternatives*, 2(3), pp.13-16.
- Bordessa, R. (1993) Geography, postmodernity and environmental concern, *The Canadian Geographer*, 37(2), pp.147-156.
- Boucouvalis, M. & Krupp, J. (1989) Adult education and learning, in S. Merriam & P. Cunningham (eds.) *Handbook of Adult and Continuing Education*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, Ch.14.
- Boughton, B. (1993) (unpub.) Models for Facilitating Adult Learning: Highlander, Horton and Radical Adult Education, Masters Degree Dissertation, School of Adult and Popular Education, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney.

- Boughton, B. (1997) Does popular education have a past: Radical adult education and the Communist Party of Australia, in B. Boughton, T. Brown & G. Foley (eds.) *New Directions for Australian Adult Education*, Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney.
- Bowers, C.A. (1991) The anthropocentric foundations for educational liberalism: some critical concerns, *Trumpeter*, 8(3), pp.102-107.
- Bredo, E. & Feinberg, W. (1982) *Knowledge and Values in Social and Educational Research*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia.
- Brookfield, S. (1985) A critical definition of adult education, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 3(1), pp.44-49.
- Brookfield, S. (1987) *Developing Critical Thinkers: Challenging Adults to Explore Alternative Ways of Thinking and Acting*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
- Brower, K. (1990) *One Earth*, Collins, San Francisco.
- Brown, L., (1989) *State of the World: A Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Towards a Sustainable Society*, Earthscan Publications, London.
- Brown, S. (2001) How Green was the minister? *Panorama Supplement*, 17/11/2001, pp.2-3.
- Brulle, R.J. (2000) *Agency, Democracy and Nature: The U.S. Environmental Movement from a Critical Theory Perspective*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Brundage, D. & Mackeracher, D. (1980) *Adult Learning Principles and Their Application to Program Planning*, Ministry of Education, Ontario.
- Bullard, R.D. (2000) *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality*, 3rd edition, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Bulmer, M. (ed.) (1984) *Sociological Research Methods: An Introduction*, MacMillan Education, Houndmills, Hampshire.
- Burrowes, R.J. (1996) *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: A Gandhian Approach*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY.
- Burton, B. (1995) *A Tale of Two BUGS: Defeating the attack on the environment movement*, Paper presented to Environment and Conservation Organisations, "Greenwash be Dammed! Organising for a Green Future" Conference, Auckland New Zealand 25<sup>th</sup> August 1995.
- Burton, B. (1996) (self-published) *Stealth Attack: Boral Timber's Undercover Attack on the Wilderness Society*.

- Caldicott, H. (1992) *If You Love this Planet: A Plan to Heal the Earth*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York.
- Caldicott, H. (1996) *A Passionate Life*, Random House, Sydney.
- Caldicott, H. (1999) Public Lecture, November 16, 1999, Griffith University, Brisbane.
- Cameron, A. (1989) First Mother and the Rainbow Children, in J. Plant (ed.) *Healing the Wounds: The Promise of EcoFeminism*, The Women's Press, London.
- Cantrell, D. (1993) *Alternative Paradigms in Environmental Education Research: The Interpretive Perspective*, in R. Mrezek (ed.) *Alternative Paradigms in Environmental Education Research*, NAAEE, Cleveland OH.
- Cantrill, J. (1992) Understanding environmental advocacy: Interdisciplinary research and the role of cognition, *Journal of Environmental Education*, 24(1), pp.35-42.
- Capra, F. (1997) *The Web of Life: A New Synthesis of Mind and Matter*, Flamingo, London.
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S (1990) *Becoming Critical - Education, Knowledge and Action Research*, Deakin University, Melbourne.
- Carson, R. (1968) *Silent Spring*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, UK.
- Carspecken, P. (1991) Critical ethnography in educational research, *Critical Pedagogy Networker*, 4(3).
- Chappell, C., Gonczi, A. & Hager, P. (2000) Competency-based education, in G. Foley (ed.) *Understanding Adult Education and Training*, 2nd edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney.
- Chartier, D. & Deléage, J.P. (1998) The international NGOs: From the revolutionary alternative to the pragmatism of reform, *Environmental Politics*, 7(3), pp.26-41.
- Chase, S. (2000) (unpub) *The Education and Training Needs of Environmental Advocates and Organizers*, University of New England, New York.
- Christie, J. (1988) *RAFI Impacts: The Terminator File: Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the Third System*, Rural Advancement Foundation International Occasional Paper Series, 5(3).
- Clandinin, J.D. & Connelly, M.F. (1994) Personal experience methods, in N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (eds.) (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Clough, S. (1994) (self-published) *Heart Politics Conference Handbook*.

- Clover, D. (1996) Developing international environmental adult education, in W. Leal Filho, Z. Murphy & K. O'Loan (eds.) *A Sourcebook for Environmental Education: A Practical Review Based on the Belgrade Charter*, Parthenon, New York, pp.92-101.
- Clover, D., Follen, S. & Hall, B. (1998) *The Nature of Transformation: Environmental Adult and Popular Education*, Transformative Learning Centre, Toronto.
- Coggins, G.C. (1998) Of Californicators, Quislings and Crazies: Some perils of devolved collaboration, *Chronicle of Community*, No.2.
- Collins, C. (ed.) (1993) *Competencies: the competencies debate in Australian education and training*, Australian College of Education, Canberra.
- Cohen, I. (1997) *Green Fire*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney.
- Comstock, D. (1982) A method for critical research, in E. Bredo & W. Feinberg (eds.) *Knowledge and Values in Social and Educational Research*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, Ch.18.
- Coover, V., Deacon, E., Esser, C. & Moore, C. (1978) *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.
- Cox, E. (1995) The Boyer Lectures, in F. Baum, C. Modra, R. Bush, E. Cox, R. Crooke & R. Potter (February 1999) Volunteering and Social Capital: an Adelaide Study, *Australian Journal on Volunteering*, pp.13-22.
- Crick, B. & Lister, I. (1974) (unpub.) *A Programme for Political Education: An Explanatory Paper*.
- Crick, B. & Porter, A. (1978) *Political education and political literacy the report and papers of and the evidence submitted to the Hansard Society's 'Programme for Political Education'*, Longman, London.
- Crossweller, A. (2001) Greens deal harms ALP chances, *The Australian*, 9/7/01, p.4.
- Crowther, J., Martin, I. & Shaw, M. (eds.) (1999) *Popular Education and Social Movements in Scotland Today*, NIACE, Leicester.
- Davies, B. (1989) *Frogs and Snails and Feminist Tails: Preschool Children and Gender*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney.
- Davies, B. (1993) *Shards of Glass: Children Reading and Writing Beyond Gendered Identities*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney.
- Day, M. ed. (1998) *Environmental Action: a Citizen's Guide*, Pluto Press, London.

- Della Porta, D. & Rucht, D. (eds.) (2002) The dynamics of environmental campaigns, *Mobilization*, 7(1), pp.1-14.
- Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln Y. S. (1994) *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Dewey, (1916) *Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, Free Press, New York.
- Dobson, A. (1995) *Green Political Thought: An Introduction*, 2nd edition. Routledge, London.
- Dobson, A. (1999) Strategies for Green Change, in J. Dryzek & D. Schlosberg (eds.) *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Doherty, B. (1999) Paving the way: The rise of direct action against road-building and the changing character of British environmentalism, *Political Studies*, 47(2), pp.275-291.
- Douglas, J.D. (1985) *Creative Interviews*, Vol.159, Sage Publications London.
- Downtown, J. Jr & Wehr, P. (1997) *The Persistent Activist: How Peace Commitment Develops and Persists*, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Doyle, T.J. (1986) The 'structure' of the conservation movement in Queensland, *Social Alternatives*, 5(2), pp.27-32.
- Doyle, T.J. (2000) *Green Power: The Environment Movement in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney.
- Doyle, T. & McEachern, D. (1998) *Environment and Politics*, Routledge, London.
- Drengson, A. & Inoue, Y. (1995) *The Deep Ecology Movement*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley.
- Dryzek J. (1997) *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Dryzek, J.S. & Schlosberg, D. (eds.) (1999) *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Easthope, G. (1975) *Community, Hierarchy and Open Education*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.
- Edwards, B. (1995) With liberty and environmental justice for all: The emergence and challenge of grassroots environmentalism in the United States, in B.R. Taylor (ed.) *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular*

- Environmentalism*, State University of New York Press, Albany, NY.
- Egan, J. (2002) From grassroots activist to researcher: Inside and out, *Convergence*, 34(4), pp.7-15.
- Ellis, C & Flaherty, M.G. (eds.) (1992) *Investigating Subjectivity*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA.
- Fetterman, D. (1988) Qualitative approaches to evaluating education, *Educational Researcher*, 17(8), pp.17-23.
- Field, L. (2000) Organisational learning: Basic concepts, in G. Foley (ed.) *Understanding Adult Education and Training*, 2nd edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney.
- Fien, J. (ed.) (1993a) *Environmental Education: A Pathway to Sustainability*, Deakin University, Melbourne.
- Fien, J. (1993b) *Education for the Environment: Critical Curriculum Theorising and Environmental Education*, Deakin University, Melbourne.
- Fien, J. (1998) Environmental Education For a New Century, in D. Hicks & R. Slaughter (eds.) *World Yearbook of Education: Futures Education*, Kogan Page, London, pp.245-258.
- Fien, J. (1999) Reorienting formal education for sustainable development, in *Sustainable Development: Education, The Force of Change*, UNESCO Transdisciplinary Project Education for a Sustainable Future.
- Fien, J. (2000a) Education for a sustainable consumption: Towards a framework for curriculum and pedagogy, in B.B. Jensen, K. Schnack & V. Simovska (eds.) *Critical Environmental and Health Education: Research Issues and Challenges*, Research Centre for Environmental Health and Health Education, The Danish University of Education, Copenhagen.
- Fien, J. (2000b) 'Education for the environment: A critique' - an analysis, *Environmental Education Research*, 6(2) pp.179-192.
- Fien, J. & Gerber, R. (eds.) (1986) *Teaching Geography for a Better World*, Australian Geography Teachers Association & Jacaranda, Brisbane.
- Fien, J., Scott, W. & Tilbury, D. (2001) Education and conservation: Lessons from an evaluation, *Environmental Education Research*, 7(4), pp.379-395.
- Fien, J. & Whelan, J. (2001) *Environmental Education and Communication: Social Learning for Sustainability*, Keynote presentation, Education for Sustainability Forum, 17/3/01, Centre for Environmental Information and Science, Tokyo.
- Finger, M. (n.d.) *Adult education and society today: Towards a theory of social learning*,

submitted to *Harvard Educational Review*.

- Finger, M. (1989) Environmental education: From the perspective of the adult learner, *Convergence*, 22(4), pp.25-31.
- Finger, M. (1992) *Environmental Adult Learning in Switzerland*, Final report to the Swiss National Science Foundation.
- Finger, M. & Asún, J.M. (2001) *Adult Education at the Crossroads - Learning our way out*, NIACE, London.
- Foddy, W. (1993) *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires: Theory and Practice in Social Research*, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Foley, G. (1991) *Terania Creek: Learning in a Green Campaign*, University of Technology Sydney, Sydney.
- Foley, G. (1998) Clearing the theoretical ground: Elements in a theory of popular education, *International Review of Education*, 44(2-3), pp.139-153.
- Foley, G. (1999) *Learning in Social Action: A Contribution to Understanding Informal Education*, NIACE, London.
- Foley, G. (ed.) (2000) *Understanding Adult Education and Training*, 2nd edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney.
- Foley, G. (2001) *Strategic Learning: Understanding and Facilitating Organisational Change*, Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology, Sydney.
- Fortino, C. (1997) Leaders in environmental education: The cascade of influence, *Environmental Education Research*, 3(2), pp.203-223.
- Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin, Harmondsworth.
- Freire, P. (1973) *Education for Critical Consciousness*, Seabury Press, New York.
- Freire, P. (1978) *Pedagogy in Process: The Letters to Guinea-Bissau*, Seabury Press, New York.
- Freire, P. & Shor, I. (1987) *A Pedagogy for Liberation: Dialogues on Transforming Education*, Bergin & Gavey Publishers, South Hadley, MA.
- Gagne, R.M. (1965) *The Conditions of Learning*, Holt, Reinhart & Winston, New York.
- Gamson, W.A (1975) *The Strategy of Social Protest*, Dorsey Press, Illinois.
- Germaine, C. (1986) Ethnography: The method, in P. Munhall & C. Oiler (eds.) *Nursing*

*Research: a Qualitative Perspective*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Norwalk, CT, Ch.8.

Ghanem, E. (1998) Social movements in Brazil and their educational work, *International Review of Education*, 44(1-3), pp.177-189.

Gilbert, R. (1995) Citizen entitlement and everyday experience: An approach to education for citizenship, democracy and global concern, in K. Jensen, O.B. Larsen & S. Walker (eds.) *Democracy in Schools, Citizenship and Global Concern: Studies in Educational Theory and Curriculum*, Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, Copenhagen, pp.91-118.

Giroux, H.A. (1983) *Theory and Resistance in Education: A Pedagogy for the Opposition*, Bergin & Harvey, New York.

Gladwin, T.N., Newbury, W.E. & Reiskin, E.D. (1997) Why is the northern elite mind biased against community, the environment and a sustainable future? in M. Bazerman, D. Messick, A. Tenbrunsel & K. Wade-Benzoni (eds.) *Environment, Ethics and Behaviour: The Psychology of Environmental Valuation and Degradation*, New Lexington Press, San Francisco, pp.234-274.

Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, Aldine de Gruyter, New York.

Golblatt, D. (1996) *Social Theory and the Environment*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Golley, F. (1998) *A Primer for Environmental Literacy*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

Forgacs, D. & Nowell-Smith, G. (eds.) (1985) *Selections from Cultural Writings*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.

Green, R. (1981) *Battle for the Franklin: Conversations With the Combatants in the Struggle for South West Tasmania*, Fontana & Australian Conservation Foundation, Melbourne.

Green, T. & Woodrow, P. (1994) *Insight and Action*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, PA.

Gronemeyer, M. (1987) Ecological education: A failing practice? Or Is the ecological movement an educational movement? in W. Leirman & J. Kulich (eds.) *Adult Education and Challenges of the 1990s*, Croom Helm, London. Ch.5.

Gough, A. (1997) Education and the environment: Policy trends and the problem of marginalisation, *Australian Education Review*, 39, Australian Council for Educational Research, Melbourne.

Grimmet, P. & MacKinnon, A. (1992) Craft knowledge, in G. Grant (ed.) *Review of Research in Education*, American Educational Research Association,

- Washington, 8, pp.385-456.
- Grove-White, R. (1997) Environment, risk and democracy, in M. Jacobs (ed.) *Greening the Millennium? The New Politics of the Environment*, The Political Quarterly Oxford.
- Grundy, S. (1987) *Curriculum: Product or Praxis?*, Falmer Press, Philadelphia.
- Guba, E. (ed.) (1990) *The Paradigm Dialog*, Sage Publication, Newbury Park, CA.
- Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1981) *Effective Evaluation*, Jossey Bass, San Fransisco.
- Habermas, J. (1972) *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Heinemann, London.
- Hagar, N. & Burton, B. (1999) *Secrets and Lies: The Anatomy of an Anti-Environmental PR Campaign*, Craig Potton Publishing, New Zealand.
- Hamilton, C. (1994) *The Mystic Economist*, Willow Park Press, Fyshwick, ACT.
- Hamilton, E. (1992) *Adult Education for Community Development*, Greenwood Press, New York.
- Hammersly, M. (ed.) (1993) *Social Research: Philosophy, Politics and Practice*, Sage Publications, London.
- Harré, R. & Secord, M. (1972) *The Explanation of Social Behaviour*, Blackwell, Oxford.
- Harris, J. (1997) Consumption and the environment, in N.R. Goodwin, F. Ackerman & D. Kiron, *The Consumer Society*, Island Press, Washington, pp.269-276.
- Hart, E. & Bond, M. (1995) *Action Research for Health and Social Care - A Guide to Practice*, Open University Press, Buckingham, Philadelphia.
- Healey, M. (10/5/2000) It's still not easy (or a sophisticated lifestyle choice) being green, *Sydney Morning Herald*.
- Heaney, H. (2000) *Adult education for social change: From center stage to the wings and back again*, ERIC Monograph, available <<http://nlu.nl.edu/ace/Resources/Docment/ERIC1.html>> accessed 12/1/01.
- Hess, D. (1999) *Community Organizing, Building and Developing: Their Relationship to Comprehensive Community Initiatives*, Comm-Org Working Papers Series, On-line available <<http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers.htm>> accessed 9/8/99.
- Hoepper, B. (1995) Consuming for sustainability, in J. Fien (ed.) *Teaching for a Sustainable World*, UNESCO-UNEP International Environmental Education Program, Griffith University, Brisbane.

- Holt, J. (1972) *Freedom and Beyond*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth.
- hooks, bell (1994) *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, Routledge, New York.
- Hsu, S. & Roth, R.E. (1999) Predicting Taiwanese secondary teachers' responsible environmental behaviour through environmental literacy variables, *Journal of Environmental Education*, 30(4), pp.11-18.
- Huckle, J. (1998) *What We Consume: Teacher's Handbook*, WWF (UK), Godalming.
- Hunter, R. (1979) *The Greenpeace Chronicle*, Picador, London.
- Hutchinson, V. (1992) (unpub.) *What are Heart Politics Sharings?*
- Hutton, D. (2001) OzGreens resurgent in 2001: Out of the media gaze, *Ecopolitics*, 1(2), pp.2-4.
- Hutton, D. & Connors, L. (1999) *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Hyman, H. (1959) *Political Socialisation: A Study in the Psychology of Political Behaviour*, Free Press, Illinois.
- Ibikunle-Johnson, V. (1989) Managing the community's environment: Grassroots participation and environmental education, *Convergence*, 22(4), 13-23.
- ICAE (2001) *Adult Learning: A Key to Democratic Citizenship and Global Action: The Ocho Rios Declaration*, On-line available <<http://www.web.net/icae>> accessed 11/12/01.
- Illich, I. (1971) *Deschooling Society*, Harper & Row, New York.
- Innes, J. (1999) Evaluating consensus building, in *The Consensus Building Handbook: A Comprehensive Guide to Reaching Agreement*, Sage, Thousand Oaks.
- Jabiluka Action Group (1998) (unpub.) *Stop Jabiluka Activist Handbook*.
- Jacobs, M. (ed.) (1997) *Greening the Millennium? The New Politics of the Environment*, The Political Quarterly, Oxford.
- Jensen, B.B. (1995) *Research in Environmental and Health Education*, Research Centre for Environmental and Health Education, Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, Copenhagen.
- Jensen, B.B. & Schnack, K. (eds.) (1994) *Action and Action Competence as Key Concepts in Critical Pedagogy*, Studies in Educational Theory and Curriculum, Vol.12., Royal

Danish School of Educational Studies, Copenhagen.

Jensen, B.B. & Schnack, K. (1997) The action competence approach in environmental education, *Environmental Education Research*, 3(2), pp.163-178.

Jensen, K, Larsen, O.B. & Walker S. (eds.) (1995) *Democracy in Schools, Citizenship and Global Concern: Studies in Educational Theory and Curriculum*, Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, Copenhagen.

Jickling, B. (1992) Why I don't want my children to be educated for sustainable development, *Journal of Environmental Education*, 23(4), pp.5-8.

Johnson, R. (1988) "Really useful knowledge" 1790-1850: Memories for education in the 1980s', in T. Lovett (ed.) *Radical Approaches to Adult Education*, Routledge, London.

Jordan, G. & Maloney W. (1997) *The Protest Business: Mobilising Campaign Groups*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.

Kahn, S. (1982) *A Guide for Grassroots Organising*, McGraw-Hill, New York.

Karas, S. (1999) *Components of an Effective Program of Empowerment for Potential World Changers*, Masters Degree Dissertation on Transpersonal Psychology. On-line available <<http://www2.cruzio.com/~sheryl/change.html>> accessed 14/9/01.

Kemmis, S & McTaggart, R (1990) *The Action Research Planner*, Deakin University, Melbourne.

Kemmis, S., Cole, P. & Suggett, D. (1983) *Towards the Socially Critical School*, Victorian Institute of Secondary Education, Melbourne.

Kennedy, D. (2000) *Arguing About Consensus: Examining the Case Against Western Watershed Initiatives and Other Collaborative Groups Active in Natural Resource Management*, Natural Resources Law Center, University of Colorado.

Kirby, S.L. & McKenna, K. (1993) *Experience Research, Social Change: Methods from the Margins*, Garamond Press, Toronto.

Knapp, D. (2000). The Thessaloniki Declaration: A wake-up call for environmental education, *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 31(3), pp.32-39.

Knowles, M. (1984) *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*, Gulf, Texas.

Kolb, D. (1984) *Experiential Learning*, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

Kosmidou, C. & Usher, R. (1992) Experiential learning and the autonomous subject, in D. Wildemeersch & T. Jansen (eds.) *Adult Education, Experiential Learning and Social Change: The Postmodern Challenge*, Vuga Uitgererij, BV. pp.77-91.

- Kriho, L. (1993) (unpub.) *Organising for Social Change*. Distributed electronically among environmental advocacy groups in the mid 1990s.
- Kuhn, T.S. (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Kulich, J. (1987) The university and adult education: the newest role and responsibility of the university, in W. Leirman & J. Kulich (eds.) *Adult Education and the Challenge of the 1990s*, Croom Helm, London, Ch.12.
- Lai, O. (1998) The perplexity of sponsored environment education: A critical view on Hong Kong and its future, *Environmental Education Research*, 4(3) pp.269-284.
- Lamonski, G. (1983) Ways of knowing and ways of evaluating: Or how democratic is 'democratic evaluation'? *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 5(3), pp.265-276.
- Lather, P. (1986) Issues of validity in openly ideological research: Between a rock and a soft place, *Interchange*, 17(4), pp.63-84.
- Lather, P. (1992) Critical frames in educational research: Feminist and post-structural perspectives, *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), pp.87-96.
- Lattimer, M (1994) *The Campaigning Handbook*, Directory of Social Change, London.
- Lawson, K.H. (1989) Some problems in the conceptualisation of adult education for the purposes of research and practice, *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 8(4), pp.301-313.
- LeCompte, M. (1993) A framework for hearing silence, in D. McLaughlin & W. Tierney (eds.) *Naming Silenced Lives*, Routledge, New York.
- Le Compte. M. D., Millroy, W.L. & Preissle, J. (eds.) (1992) *The Handbook of Qualitative Research in Education*, Academic Press, San Diego.
- Lee, B. (1986) *Pragmatics of Community Organization*, Common Act Press, Missisgauga, Ontario.
- Lee. K. (1994). *The Compass and the Gyroscope*, Island Press, Washington DC.
- Leirman, W. (1987) Peace Education: Learning how to transform a life-world threatened by violence, in W. Leirman & J. Kulich (eds.) *Adult Education and Challenges of the 1990s*, Croom Helm, London.
- Leirman, W. & Kulich, J. (eds.) (1987) *Adult Education and Challenges of the 1990s*, Croom Helm, London.
- Leo, J. (1999) Public = Art?, *Queensland Community Arts Network Network News*, 3, pp.60-61.

- Lennox, G. (1998) *In Search of Heroes: Stories of Seven Remarkable Men*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Lennox, S. (2001) Community Involvement Workshop, Cooperative Research Centre for Catchment Hydrology, Barooga, Victoria, April 2001.
- Lindeman Center (n.d.) *Lindeman Center: Chicago popular educators working for democratic social change*, Chicago.
- Lincoln, Y.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA.
- Lister, I. (1985) *Political education in England 1974-1984*, Briefing paper presented to the Global Education Centre of the University of Minnesota.
- Livingstone, D.W. & contributors (1987) *Critical Pedagogy and Cultural Power*, Bergin & Garvey Publishers, MA.
- Loeb, P. (2000) Contribution to Comm-Org on-line discussion group. On-line available <<http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/mailman/listinfo/colist>> accessed 14/12/01.
- Lomborg, B. (2001) *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Measuring the Real State of the World*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Long, H. (1983) *Adult Learning: Research and Practice*, The Adult Education Company, New York.
- Lorenz, J. (1992) Developing the complete volunteer, in D.Snow (ed.) *Inside the Environmental Movement*, pp.206-213, Island Press, CA.
- Low, T. (2001) *Feral Future: The Untold Story of Australia's Exotic Invaders*, Penguin, Ringwood Victoria.
- McIntyre, J. (2000) Research in adult education and training, in G. Foley (ed.) *Understanding Adult Education and Training*, 2nd edition, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney.
- Macy, J. (1983) *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.
- Macy, J. (1991) *World As Lover, World As Self*, Parallax Press, Berkeley, California.
- Malone, K. (1999) Environmental education researchers as environmental activists, *Journal of Environmental Education*, 5(2), pp.163-177.
- Mann, C. & Stewart, F. (2000) *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: A Handbook for Researching Online*, Sage Publications, London.

- Martin, B. (1982) Disruption vs. Organisation, *Social Alternatives*, 2(4), pp.42-43.
- Masemann, V.L. (1982) Critical ethnography in the study of comparative education, *Comparative Education Review*, 26(1), pp.1-15.
- Mathison, S. (1988) Why triangulate?, *Educational Researcher*, 17(2), pp.13-17.
- Mayer, E. (1992) *Employment-related key competencies (The Mayer Report)*, Mayer Committee, Melbourne.
- Mayo, P. (1999) *Gramsci, Freire and Adult Education: Possibilities for Transformative Education*, Zed Books, London.
- McLellan, L., Bauman, A., Rissel, C. & Mayne, D. (1999) Environmental consciousness among New South Wales adolescents: Opportunities for Health Promoting Schools, *Health Promotion Journal of Australia*, 9(1), pp.4-10.
- Meadows, D.H., Meadows, D.L., Randers, J. & Behrens, W.W. III (1972) *The Limits to Growth: A Report for the Club of Rome's Project on the Predicament of Mankind*, Potomac Associates, London.
- Megalli, M. & Friedman, A. (1991) (self-published) *Masks of Deception: Corporate Front Groups in America*.
- Mellor, M. (1992) *Breaking the Boundaries: Towards a Feminist Green Socialism*, Virago, London.
- Melucci, A. (1996) *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, Cambridge University Press, London.
- Mezirow, J. (1983) A critical theory of adult learning and education, in M. Tight (ed.) *Adult Learning and Education*, Croom Helm, Canberra.
- Mezirow, J. (1991) *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Milbrath, L. (1989) *Envisioning a Sustainable Society: Learning Our Way Out*, State University of New York, Albany, NY.
- Miles, M. & Huberman, A. (1984) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods*, Sage Publications, Beverly Hills, CA.
- Moyer, B. (1987) *The Movement Action Plan: A strategic framework describing the eight stages of successful social movements*, Social Movement Empowerment Project, San Francisco. [summary available on-line at <http://www.users.omcs.com.au/change/council/map.htm#top>] accessed 8/11/01.
- Moyer, B. (1993) *The MAP Trainer's Manual: A Guide For Organising and Leading Map*

- Workshops and Using MAP to Evaluate, Analyze and Set Strategies and Tactics for a Campaign or Social Movement*, Social Movement Empowerment Project, San Francisco.
- Moyer, B. (1990) *The Practical Strategist: Movement Action Plan (MAP) Strategic Theories for Evaluating, Planning and Conducting Social Movements*, Social Movement Empowerment Project, San Francisco.
- Moyer, B., McAllister, J., Finley, M. & Soifer, S. (2001) *Doing Democracy: The MAP Model For Organising Social Movements*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC.
- Muir, K. (1990) *How to Mount a Campaign*, Total Environment Centre, Sydney.
- Murphy, B. (1999) *Transforming Ourselves, Transforming the World: An Open Conspiracy for Social Change*, Zed Books, London.
- Naess, A. (1988) Self realisation: An ecological approach to being in the world, in J. Seed, J. Macy, P. Fleming & A. Naess (eds.) *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC.
- National Environment Movement Training Support Group (1997) *Essential Skills for Environmental Activism: Papers from the first National Environment Movement Training Programme Adelaide 1996*. On-line available <<http://www.earthshare.org.au/training/manual/manual.htm>> accessed 10/10/01.
- New South Wales Environmental Protection Authority (1994) *Who Cares About the Environment*, Government Printers, Sydney.
- Newman, M. (1999) *Maeler's Regard: Images of Adult Learning*, Stewart Victor Publishing, Paddington, Sydney.
- Newman, M. (2000) Adult Education and Social Action, in Foley, G. ed. *Understanding Adult Education and Training*, 2nd edn, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney.
- Newman, M. (1994) *Defining the Enemy: Adult Education in Social Action*, Stewart Victor Publishing, Paddington, Sydney.
- O'Connor, J. (1986) Capitalism, nature, socialism: A theoretical introduction, in J. Dryzek & D. Schlosberg (eds) (1999) *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Ogbu, J.U. (1981) School ethnography: A multilevel approach, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 12(1).
- Oppenheimer, M. & Lakey, G. (1982) *A Manual for Direct Action: Strategy and Tactics for Civil Rights and All Other Nonviolent Protest Movements*, Quadrangle, Chicago.

- O'Regan, M. (2000) Indigenous media: social change via internet, The Media Report, Radio National, 20/07/00.
- Orr, D.W. (1992) *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World*, State University of New York Press, New York.
- Osborne, K.W. (1984) *Working Papers in Political Education*, Monographs in Education XII, University of Manitoba.
- Osborne, K. (1991) *Teaching for Democratic Citizenship*, Our School/Our Selves Education Foundation, Toronto.
- O'Sullivan, E. (1999) *Transformative Learning: Educational Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Zed Books, London.
- Palmer, J. (1988) *Environmental Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Routledge, London.
- Parlane, L. & Flowers, R. (2000) *Building the Strength and Sustainability of the Australian Environment Movement: A Set of Proposed Capacity Building, Training and Learning Strategies to Assist Small, Medium and Large Conservation and Environment Groups*. Report to the Mittagong Forum of Environment and Conservation Groups. [The on-line forum resulting in this report is available at <http://www.ala.asn.au/environment/>]
- Pausaucker, I. & Andrews J. (1981) *Living Better With Less*, Penguin Books, Ringwood, Victoria.
- Peavey, F., Levy, M. & Varon, C. (1986) *Heart Politics*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.
- Peavey, F. (1989) (unpub.) *The Practice of Heart Politics*, Excerpts from a talk at the Heart Politics Conference, November 1989, Mt Warning, Australia.
- Peavey, F. (1992) Strategic Questioning for Personal and Social Change, Paper presented to Heart Politics Gathering, Lennox Heads. Also published in *In Context: a Quarterly of Humane Sustainable Culture*, Spring 1995. On-line available <<http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC40/Peavey.htm>> accessed 1/2/01.
- Peavey, F. (1994) *By Life's Grace: Musings on the Essence of Social Change*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.
- Peavey, F. (2001a) *Strategic Questioning*, workshop promotion flier, Brisbane.
- Peavey, F. (2001b) *Heart Politics Revisited*, Pluto Press, Annandale, Australia.
- Pike, G. & Selby, D. (1990) *Greening the Staffroom: Staff Development in Environmental Education*, Centre for Global Education, WWF, United Kingdom.

- Pitman, A. (1990) *Educational Enquiry: An Introduction*, EED302 Study Notes, Deakin University
- Plant, M. (1998) *Education for the Environment: Stimulating Practice*, Dercham, Norfolk (UK).
- Popkewitz, T.S. (1984) *Paradigm and Ideology in Educational Research: The Social Functions of the Intellectual*, Falmer Press, London.
- Popular Education Network (1999) *Popular Education: The Role of Universities*, First Conference of the Popular Education Network, University of Barcelona, 8-10 October 1999.
- Porritt, J. (1990) *Friends of the Earth Handbook*, McDonald & Co., London.
- Porritt, J. (ed.) (1991) *Save the Earth*, Harper Collins, London.
- Porritt, J. (1997) Environmental politics: The old and the new, in M. Jacobs (ed.) *Greening the Millennium? The New Politics of the Environment*, The Political Quarterly, Oxford.
- Princen, T. & Finger, M. (1994) *Environmental NGOs in World Politics: Linking the Local and the Global*, Routledge, New York.
- Print, M. (ed.) (1995) *Civics and Citizenship Education: Issues from Practice and Research*, Australian Curriculum Studies Association Inc.
- Putnam, R.D. (2000) *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Touchstone, New York.
- Queensland Conservation Council (2000) Strategic Plan 2000-2002.
- Reason, P. (1994) *Participation in Human Inquiry*, Sage Publications, London.
- Reason, P. & Rowan, J. (eds.) (1981) *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester.
- Road Alert! (1997) *Road Raging: Top Tips for Wrecking Roadbuilding*, Newbury, England.
- Roberts, R.E. & Kloss, R.M. (1979) *Social Movements: Between the Balcony and the Barricades*, C.V.Masby Company, St Louis.
- Robin, P. (1990) *Saving the Neighbourhood*, Woodbine House, Rockville, MD.
- Robinson, L. (2000) *The government says I can be an environmentalist!* contribution to the on-line Capacity-Building and Training in the Environment Movement dialogue.

- Robottom I & Hart, P. (1993) *Research in Environmental Education: Engaging the Debate*, Deakin University, Melbourne.
- Rootes, C. (2000) *The Transformation of Environmental Activism: Activists, Organisations and Policy-making*, On-line available <<http://www.ukc.ac.uk/sociology/polsoc/TEAInnov.htm>> accessed 16/5/01.
- Rose, C. (2000) Campaignstrategy.org, On-line available <<http://www.campaignstrategy.org/>> accessed 5/11/01.
- Roth, C.E. (1992) *Environmental Literacy: Its Roots, Evolution, and Directions in the 1990s*, ERIC/CSM Environmental Education, Columbus, OH.
- Roy, C. (2000) Raging grannies and environmental issues: Humour and creativity in educative protests, *Convergence*, 33(4), pp.6-18.
- Rubensen, K. (1982) Adult education: In quest of a map of the territory, *Adult Education*, 32(2), pp.57-74.
- Runciman, C., Barber, H., Parlane, L., Shaw, G. & Stone J. (1986) *Effective Action for Social Change: The Campaign to Save the Franklin River*, Victorian Environment Centre.
- Rylatt, A. (1994) *Learning Unlimited*, Business & Professional Publishing, Sydney, NSW.
- Scandrett, E. (1999) Cultivating knowledge: Education, the environment and conflict, in J. Crowther, I. Martin, & M. Shaw (eds.) *Popular Education and Social Movements in Scotland Today*, NIACE, Leicester.
- Schutt, R. (2001) *Inciting Democracy: a practical proposal for creating a good society*, Spring Forward Press, Cleveland, Ohio.
- Seale, C. (ed.) (1998) *Researching Society and Culture*, Sage Publications, London.
- Seed, J., Macy, J., Fleming P. & Naess, A. (1988) *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC.
- Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (1989) *Education for Active Citizenship in Australian Schools and Youth Organisations*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.
- Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (1991) *Active Citizenship Revisited*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.
- Senge, P. (1992) *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*, Century, London.
- Sharpe, G. (1985) *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, Porter Sargent, Boston, MA.

- Sharp, R. (1982) Self-centred ethnography or a science of phenomenal forms and inner relations, *Journal of Education*, 164(1), pp.48-63.
- Shields, K. (1991) *In the Tiger's Mouth: An Empowerment Guide for Social Action*, Millennium Books, Newtown, Sydney.
- Shields, K. (1995) *Some Research into Rounded 'Rules for Radicals'*, Masters Degree in Social Ecology Dissertation, University of Western Sydney.
- Shields, K. (1998) Transcript from Teaching and Learning for Environmental Activism Workshop, Presented at Heart Politics September 1998, Lennox Heads.
- Shields, K. (2001) Dimensions of activist learning, Pers.comm.
- Shields, K. & Allan, B. (1997) Training and Support for Workers in the Environment Movement: an overview and case for taking a coordinated approach, in *Essential Skills for Environmental Activism: Papers from the first National Environment Movement Training Programme Adelaide 1996*, National Environment Movement Training Support Group. On-line available <[http://www.earthshare.org.au/training/training\\_background.htm](http://www.earthshare.org.au/training/training_background.htm)> accessed 16/10/01.
- Schön, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*, Temple Smith, London.
- Schön, D. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.
- Shor, I. (1980) *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*, South End Press, Boston.
- Shor, I. (1992) *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Shorter, C. (2000) *Understanding Activism*, On-line available <<http://www.cameron.shorter.net/writings/activism.html>> accessed 17/3/2000.
- Simon, R. & Dippo, D. (1986) On critical ethnographic work, *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 17, pp.195-202.
- Smith, R. (1984) *The Adult as Learner: Learning How to Learn. An Applied Theory For Adults*, Open University Press, Milton Keynes.
- Smith, B., Connole, H., Speedy, S. & Wiseman, R. (1990) *Issues and Methods in Research*, Study Guide, South Australia College of Advanced Education.
- Smyth, J.C. (2002) (unpub) *Are Educators Ready for the Next Earth Summit?*
- Snow, D. (ed.) (1992a) *Voices from the Environmental Movement: Perspectives for a New Era*, Island Press, California.
- Snow, D. (1992b) *Inside the Environmental Movement*, Island Press, California.

- Speeter, G. (1978) *Power: A Repossession Manual. Organizing Strategies for Citizens*, Citizen Involvement Training Project, University of Massachusetts, MA.
- Sterling, S. (1993) Environmental education and sustainability: A view from holistic ethics, in J. Fien (ed.) *Environmental Education: A Pathway to Sustainability*, Deakin University Press, Melbourne, Ch.4.
- Sterling, S. (1996) Education In change, in J. Huckle & S. Sterling (eds.) *Education for Sustainability*, Earthscan, London.
- Sterling, S. (2001) *Sustainable Education: Revisioning Learning and Change*, Green Books, Foxhole, Devon.
- Stoecker, R. (1997) Are academics irrelevant? Roles for scholars in participatory research, Presented at the *American Sociological Society Annual Meeting 1997*. Comm-Org Working Papers Series, On-line available <<http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/papers98/pr.htm>> accessed 1/2/01.
- Stowell, R. & Stowell, E. (1990) *Investigating Society*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane.
- Strauss, A. (1987) *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques*, Sage Publications, Newbury Park.
- Sutton, P. (1989) Environmental education: What can we teach? *Convergence*, 22(4), pp.5-12.
- Suzuki, D. (1987) *Metamorphosis*, Allen & Unwin, London.
- Szerszynski, B. (1977) Voluntary Associations and the Sustainable Society, in M. Jacobs (ed.) *Greening the Millennium? The New Politics of the Environment*, The Political Quarterly, Oxford.
- Tierney, W. (1994) On method and hope, in A. Gitlin (ed.) *Power and Method*, Routledge, New York.
- Tight, M. (1983) *Adult Learning and Education*, Groom Helm, Canberra.
- The Wilderness Society (c.1992) *The Tyranny of Structurelessness*, internal discussion paper.
- The Wilderness Society (2001) *Vote Environment: Federal Election 2001. Your guide to the election and the environment*.
- Thiele, L.P. (1999) *Environmentalism for a new Millenium: The Challenge of Coevolution*, Oxford University Press, New York.

- Thomas, J. (1983) Toward a critical ethnography: A re-examination of the Chicago legacy, *Urban Life*, 11(4), pp.470-490.
- Thomashow, M. (1996) *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist*, MIT Press, Cambridge.
- Thompson, J. (1983) Learning, liberation and maturity: An open letter to whoever's left, *Adults Learning*, 4(9).
- Touraine, A. (1981) *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*, Cambridge University Press, London.
- Toyne, P. (1999) The company they keep, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16/4/99 p.18.
- Trainer, T. (1990) Towards an ecological philosophy of education, *Discourse*, 10(2), pp.92-117.
- Union of Concerned Scientists (UCSUSA) (1992) *Scientists Warning to Humanity*, On-line available <<http://www.ucsusa.org/resources/warning.html>> accessed 18/12/01.
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) & Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) (1991) *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, IUCN, Gland, Switzerland.
- UNCED (1992) *Agenda 21*, Regency Press, London. On-line available <<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21.htm>> accessed 10/11/01.
- UNESCO Institute for Education (1997) *Adult Learning: A Key for the Twenty-First Century*. Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning, Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg, July 14-18, 1997, On-line available <<http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/documents.html>> accessed 8/10/01.
- UNESCO (1997) Declaration of Thessaloniki, International Conference Environment and Society: Education and Public Awareness for Sustainability, Thessaloniki, 8-12 December 1997, On-line available <<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001177/117772eo.pdf>> accessed 4/3/01.
- UNESCO-UNEP (1978) The Tbilisi Declaration, *Connect*, 3(1), pp.1-7.
- Usher, R., Bryant, I. & Johnston, R. (1997) *Adult Education and the Postmodern Challenge: Learning Beyond the Limits*, Routledge, New York.
- Van Manen, M. (1990) *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy*, State University of New York, London, Ontario.
- Van Rossen, J. (1995) Why I want my children to be educated for sustainable

- development, *Australian Journal of Environmental Education*, 11, pp.73-81.
- Villiers-Brown, R. (1995) *Anyone Can: A Guide to Starting an Environment Group and Running an Environmental Campaign*, Queensland Conservation Council, Brisbane. On-line available <<http://www.rag.org.au/anyonecan.htm>> accessed 6/7/99.
- Walkerline, V. (1984) Some day my prince will come, in A. McRobbie & M. Nava (eds.) *Gender and Generation*, Basingstoke, MacMillan, pp.162-184.
- Wals, A. (1994) Action taking and environmental problem solving in environmental education, in B.B. Jensen & K. Schnack (eds.) *Action and Action Competence as Key Concepts in Critical Pedagogy*, Studies in Educational Theory and Curriculum, Vol.12, Royal Danish School of Educational Studies, Copenhagen, pp.135-187.
- Warden, J. (1999) Book review: A History of the Australian Environment Movement, *The Australian's Review of Books*, 12/5/99, pp.21-23.
- Washington Post* (2000) The Freedom Rider a Nation Nearly Forgot, 31/7/2000, On-line available <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A3740-2000Jul29.htm>> accessed 6/9/00.
- Watts, D. (2000) Revolution by e-mail: Mobilised, globalised, *The Age*, 22/4/2000.
- Webb, K. (1984a) (unpub.) Political Skills and Their Development: A Study of the Nature and Development of Skilled Performance Amongst Political Activists and its Implications for Political Education.
- Webb, K. (1984b) (unpub.) Some implications of Political Skill Development for Broader Programmes of Social Education: A Study of Skills Development Amongst Young Political Activists and of Means of Promoting this Process in Formal Educational Contexts.
- Wehr, P. (1987) Peacemaking in the community, the nation and the world, in W. Leirman & J. Kulich (eds.) *Adult Education and the Challenge of the 1990s*, Croom Helm, London, pp.84-97.
- Welton, M. (1993) Social revolutionary learning: The new social movements as learning sites, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 43(3), pp.152-164.
- West, G.W. (1984) Phenomenon and form in interpretivist and neo-marxist qualitative educational research, in L. Barton & S. Walker (eds.) *Social Crisis and Educational Research*, Croom Helm, London.
- Wigham, F. (1976) Learning by living: The implications of Nimbin for the adult educator, *Convergence*, 16 (2).
- Whelan, J. (1994) Activist Learning, Master of Education Dissertation, University of

New England, Armidale.

- Whelan, J. (2000) Learning to save the world: Observations of training for effective advocacy in the Australian environment movement, *Convergence*, 33(3), pp.62-73.
- Whelan, J. (2001a) (pending) A hard road to learn: Dissecting a 'failed' community campaign to discover and value activist learning through social action, submitted to J. Crowther, V. Galloway & I. Martin (eds.) *Popular Education: Engaging the Academy*, Department of Community Education, University of Edinburgh.
- Whelan, J. (2001b) (unpub.) *Bringing About Change: Six ways of Thinking About Achieving Environmental Advocacy Outcomes*, Workshop resource, 2001 National Environment Movement Conference.
- Whelan, J. (2002a) Community organising by the book: A critical appraisal of Midwest Academy organiser training as a possible model for the Australian Environment movement, *Applied Environmental Education and Communication*, 1(2). pp.115-122.
- Whelan, J. (2002b) Smogbusters in Queensland, in K. McPhillips (ed.) *Local Heroes: Australian Crusades from the Environmental Frontline*, Pluto Press, Sydney, Chapter 3.
- White, C. (2000) *Environmental Activism and the Internet*, Masters of Arts Thesis, Massey University, Albany, New Zealand. On-line available <<http://www.arachna.co.nz/thesis/>> accessed 18/11/00.
- Wildman, P. (1995) *Research By Looking Backwards: Reflective Praxis as an Action Research Methodology*, Conference Proceedings, ALARPM, Griffith University, August 1995.
- Woolman, D. (1996) *Curriculum Development for Activism in Environmental Education*, presented at the WEF International Conference on Education and the Environment, Kuching, Malaysia.
- World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) *Our Common Future*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Worldwatch Institute (2002) *State of the World 2002: Special World Summit Edition*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York.
- Yates, L. (2001) Contribution to Comm-Org Discussion Group, On-line available <<http://www.comm-org.utoledo.edu>> accessed 5/5/01.
- Zuber-Sceritt, O. (1991) *Action Research for Change and Development*, Avebury, Aldershot, England.

# **Appendices**

## Research Proposal

Submitted pending enrolment in Ph.D., Griffith University  
James M Whelan October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1997

### Background

In 1991 I decided to commit myself to full time environmental activism. During the ten years since, I have campaigned on issues including urban air pollution and the conservation of tropical rainforests and wilderness areas.

As an activist and educator, I have had a growing interest in what makes activists tick - how we develop our skills, avoid burnout and teach each other. How does the environment movement approach educational work? I completed a Masters Degree in Education through the University of New England in 1994 including a twelve-month inquiry based on interviews with environmental activists. In these interviews, I explored their motivation and instrumental learning experiences. The inquiry drew on educational philosophy and community education literature in interpreting the sense these activists made of their history and beliefs.

Through completing this proposed inquiry, I seek to define a grounded theory of activist learning based on systematic observation and critical analysis. It is generally agreed within the environment movement that professional development is crucial yet there have been few sustained efforts to develop an educational model or theory tailored to our unique needs. Available energy and resources are invariably exhausted meeting day to day demands, at the expense of reflection, planning and strategic development in the area of learning. The research program I propose will be oriented toward praxis - working from the daily reality of the movement and informing practical and achievable developments.

The research problem and justification: Why do I want to find these things out? Whose interests will be served through this knowledge?

Within the environment movement there are incredible pressures to be as effective as possible. Failing in our efforts may result in poisoned air and water, species loss and global environmental catastrophe. I want to better understand how activists learn in order to contribute to a more successful environment movement, to a safer world. A researcher within the movement may be well situated for the purpose of an investigation such as this.

I see learning and teaching operating in the environment movement in several ways, each worthy of structured inquiry:

#### Intentional self-motivated learning

I found during my Masters degree that most environmental activists describe intentional learning they have pursued in order to hone their skills and enhance their effectiveness. Can patterns be identified in these accounts? From the diverse experiences of successful activists, is it possible to identify and describe

shared learning experiences contributing to effective activism? Would this study prove beneficial in order to develop structured activist training programs?

### Training and mentoring

New workers entering the environment movement are generally given training, support and direction in order to become effective activists. Approaches to ‘teaching’ activists are informal, unplanned and non-institutional. A range of responses is evident in environment groups. Many organisations provide skill-based workshops in media work, campaign planning and submission writing. Some branches of the Wilderness Society routinely provide training in Nonviolent Action. The emotional and spiritual dimension of activism is the subject of Heart Politics gatherings where activists teach and learn through sharing stories and experiencing a sense of connection with each other. The Social Change Training and Resource Centre based in Lismore provides structured activist training programs on demand and shows signs of evolving into a residential learning centre. The Highlander Centre in Tennessee runs activist training programs.

### Community development

A common objective of environmental campaigns is the generation of ongoing community-based organisation around specific environmental problems. The Smogbusters Project for instance aimed to establish community groups in each state capital then provide training and leadership for six to nine months in the hope these groups would continue to work on local transport and air quality issues indefinitely. How do non-activist community members attracted to these groups develop sufficient activist skills to effect desired social and political outcomes?

### **Theory underlying study**

It seems the environment movement in Australia neither draws on an identified body of literature in developing education work nor generates structured reflection on activist teaching and learning. The word “education” is commonly used to describe fact sheets and other publications rather than the powerful processes involved in generating and sustaining effective environmental campaigning. The movement is unlikely to provide the required theoretical framework for my inquiry.

Education theory of immediate practical application to my study includes:

- literature describing educational programs for active citizenship and social change eg. Paulo Freire’s work in adult literacy projects in South America;
- literature produced by and for New Social Movements (environment, women’s and peace movements) in the United States, Europe and Australia;
- essays by educators involved with community development agencies working in rural areas and developing nations exploring how learning about environmental problems can generate local action to protect and restore the environment; and

- Malcolm Knowles' theory of adult education (Andragogy)

Ideas for research design: What to look for and how? How to interpret and structure what is found?

My research question is one activists ask themselves. Listening to activists describe their teaching and learning provides a rich and reliable source of information. My years as a voyeur within the environment movement have allowed me close observation of and access to excellent (and dreadful) learning and teaching experiences, providing personal insights to add to other activists' accounts.

I would be interested in conducting a pilot study investigating how campaigners within the Queensland Conservation Council describe their day to day learning. Mentoring might be a focus of this action research study. Another manageable pilot study could examine how the Smogbusters Project inspires, supports and enhances the social action of other organisations and individuals in South East Queensland.

These structured observations, together with extensive reading over the next twelve months, should provide enable a focused and practical research proposal for the following three years.

**Environment movement and activist education websites****Activist education websites**

Active Earth Skills	<a href="http://www.academy.umd.edu/training/cas/index.htm">http://www.academy.umd.edu/training/cas/index.htm</a>
Alternatives	<a href="http://www.fes.unwaterloo.ca.alternatives/">http://www.fes.unwaterloo.ca.alternatives/</a>
Campaignstrategy.org	<a href="http://www.campaignstrategy.org">http://www.campaignstrategy.org</a>
Center for Campus Organizing	<a href="http://www.enviroweb.org/enviroissues/system/activism/index.html">http://www.enviroweb.org/enviroissues/system/activism/index.html</a>
Centre for Community Change	<a href="http://www.communitychange.org/CO4CD.htm">http://www.communitychange.org/CO4CD.htm</a>
Comm-Org	<a href="http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/mailman/linstinfo/colist">http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/mailman/linstinfo/colist</a>
Community Organising for Community Developers	<a href="http://www.communitychange.org/CO4CD.htm">http://www.communitychange.org/CO4CD.htm</a>
Earthshare Australia environment movement training resources	<a href="http://www.earthshare.org.au/training/index.htm">http://www.earthshare.org.au/training/index.htm</a>
Echo Bay Centre	<a href="http://www3.sympaico.ca/echobay/">http://www3.sympaico.ca/echobay/</a>
Greenet	<a href="http://www.gn.apc.org/index.html">http://www.gn.apc.org/index.html</a>
Independent Media Centre	<a href="http://www.indymedia.org">http://www.indymedia.org</a>
Institute of Deep Ecology	<a href="http://www.deep-ecology.org/">http://www.deep-ecology.org/</a>
International Council for Adult Education	<a href="http://www.web.net/icae">http://www.web.net/icae</a>
Joanna Macy's "Welcome to all Beings"	<a href="http://www.joannamacy.net/">http://www.joannamacy.net/</a>
Midwest Academy	<a href="http://www.midwestacademy.com">http://www.midwestacademy.com</a>
Movement Action Plan (Bill Moyer)	<a href="http://www.users.omcs.com.au/change/council/map.htm">http://www.users.omcs.com.au/change/council/map.htm</a>
National Organisers Alliance	<a href="http://www.noacentral.org">http://www.noacentral.org</a>
Protest Net Activists handbook	<a href="http://www.protest.net/activists_handbook/">http://www.protest.net/activists_handbook/</a>
Sierra Club Training Academy	<a href="http://maine.sierraclub.org/training.htm">http://maine.sierraclub.org/training.htm</a>
The Virtual Activist training course	<a href="http://www.netaction.org/training/">http://www.netaction.org/training/</a>
The Vernal Education Project	<a href="http://www.vernalproject.org">http://www.vernalproject.org</a>
Understanding Activism	<a href="http://www.cameron.shorter.net/writings/activism.html">http://www.cameron.shorter.net/writings/activism.html</a>

**Activist and environment movement websites**

A20 (hactivist network)	<a href="http://www.thehactivist.com/a20/texts.html">http://www.thehactivist.com/a20/texts.html</a>
Active	<a href="http://www.active.org.au">http://www.active.org.au</a>
Australian Conservation Foundation	<a href="http://www.acfonline.org.au/index.htm">http://www.acfonline.org.au/index.htm</a>
Australian Marine and Coastal Society	<a href="http://www.amcs.org.au/">http://www.amcs.org.au/</a>
Australian Greens	<a href="http://www.altnews.com.au/Greens/">http://www.altnews.com.au/Greens/</a>
Buy Nothing Day	<a href="http://www.buynothingday.co.uk/">http://www.buynothingday.co.uk/</a> <a href="http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd/">http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/bnd/</a>
Car Free Day	<a href="http://www.ecoplan.org/carfreeday/">http://www.ecoplan.org/carfreeday/</a>
Conservation Council of South Australia	<a href="http://www.ccsa.asn.au/">http://www.ccsa.asn.au/</a>
Conservation Council of Western Australia	<a href="http://www.iinet.net.au/~conswa">http://www.iinet.net.au/~conswa</a>
Critical Mass	<a href="http://michaelbluejay.com/cm/">http://michaelbluejay.com/cm/</a> <a href="http://www.nccnsw.org.au/member/cmss/index.shtml">http://www.nccnsw.org.au/member/cmss/index.shtml</a>
Earth First!	<a href="http://www.earthfirstjournal.org/frontcover.cfm">http://www.earthfirstjournal.org/frontcover.cfm</a> <a href="http://www.enviroweb.org/ef/primer/WhyEF!.html">http://www.enviroweb.org/ef/primer/WhyEF!.html</a>
Electrohippies	<a href="http://www.fraw.org.uk/ehippies/index.shtml">http://www.fraw.org.uk/ehippies/index.shtml</a>
Electronic Civil Disobedience	<a href="http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ece/ece.html">http://www.thing.net/~rdom/ece/ece.html</a>
Environment Victoria	<a href="http://www.envict.org.au/">http://www.envict.org.au/</a>
Friends of the Earth	<a href="http://www.foe.org.au/">http://www.foe.org.au/</a> <a href="http://www.brisbane.foe.org.au">http://www.brisbane.foe.org.au</a>
Greenpeace Australia	<a href="http://www.greenpeace.org.au">http://www.greenpeace.org.au</a> <a href="http://www.greenpeace.org/active.org.au">http://www.greenpeace.org/active.org.au</a>
National Toxics Network	<a href="http://www.oztoxics.org/">http://www.oztoxics.org/</a>
Nature Conservation Council, NSW	<a href="http://www.nccnsw.org.au/">http://www.nccnsw.org.au/</a>
Queensland Conservation Council	<a href="http://www.qccqld.org.au/">http://www.qccqld.org.au/</a>
Rainforest Action Network	<a href="http://www.ran.org/ran/">http://www.ran.org/ran/</a>
Reclaim the Streets	<a href="http://www.reclaimthestreets.net/">http://www.reclaimthestreets.net/</a> <a href="http://www.urban75.com/rtsfilm/index2.html">http://www.urban75.com/rtsfilm/index2.html</a>
Smogbusters	<a href="http://www.qccqld.org.au/smogbusters">http://www.qccqld.org.au/smogbusters</a>
The Wilderness Society	<a href="http://www.wilderness.org.au/">http://www.wilderness.org.au/</a>

## Acquiring political acumen (anecdote)

### Interview February 2000

*How do people learn how to campaign? What is political acumen?*

Leane Makey is Chair of the management committee for the Cairns and Far North Conservation Council (CAFNEC). She graduated from her Bachelor of Science degree five years ago and became involved with CAFNEC as a volunteer one year ago before joining the management committee and being nominated to chair the organisation.

Leane was applying for a position with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA). One of the selection criteria was 'political acumen'. She asked me what the expression meant, leading to a discussion of the necessity for political acumen for environmental campaigning: concluding that it's a big part of campaigning.

Leane commented that there doesn't seem to be any way to learn how to campaign - or none that was available to her.

CAFNEC has a history of vigorous political campaigning and employing experienced coordinators. When Leanne joined the organisation, the coordinator was Gavan McFadzean, a highly-profile campaigner with several years' experience with Friends of the Earth and the Wilderness Society. More recently, Nicky Hungerford replaced Gav as coordinator. Nicky was previously coordinator of the Queensland Conservation Council - another skilled and accomplished advocate.

When I joined CAFNEC and started representing the organisation, I asked Gav, "How do you campaign? Do you just put your case across ... argue strongly for the right policy outcome?" He said, "Yes. Just go for it."

That was the extent of Leane's training with CAFNEC. By contrast, Leane described training and support she received when working for both GBRMPA and the Queensland Department of Primary Industry, "So I could achieve the desired outcomes in three months instead of the six months it might have taken without such advice."

As a science graduate, Leanne spoke of relying on scientific knowledge to identify the desired outcome in policy debates (committee discussions, submission processes). "But how do you get that outcome? It's not enough to know the science."

Leanne represents CAFNEC on a state government (EPA) consultative committee developing a coastal management plan for North Queensland. Ted Loveday, president of the Commercial Fishermen's Association, is also on the Committee. Ted is an experienced and formidable advocate. During recent years, Ted has vigorously attacked QCC and other conservation organisations in order to advance policy outcomes favouring ongoing access

by commercial fishermen to areas of high conservation value. “Industry representatives tend to use the argument about lack of science to stop outcomes or make changes. The committee is highly politicised. ‘Science’ is only one of a set of determining factors.

I described to Leanne the interviews I conducted with QCC staff and volunteer campaigners. Many respondents had argued that scientific knowledge was perhaps the most important prerequisite for effective campaigning and that access to scientists who can offer technical advice can make an enormous contribution to campaigns. We talked about the necessity to combine knowledge about issues and strategic analysis.

I reflected on how infrequently I have seen ‘political acumen’ included in selection criteria for environment group campaigning positions.

## Memo to QCC Executive and Staff October 1998

### Teaching and learning for environmental activism.

*How is QCC involved in my research?*

Since late 1997, I have been enrolled at Griffith University pursuing a Ph.D. with the tentative topic of “teaching and learning for environmental activism.” My interest comes from a history of working as an activist, facilitating training workshops in various activist groups and tertiary training in adult and community education.

When I first started, I wanted to understand how people define what we do as activists/ advocates and what we each think makes for effective activism. I drafted some questions and circulated them around at work to see what people thought. People made suggestions so the questions were more likely to trigger useful answers. Several QCC campaigners seemed interested enough in the questions that they agreed to be interviewed. These sessions were taped, transcribed and summarised. People who had given interviews were given a chance to correct/change their words and to comment on any patterns I identified.

This initial inquiry helped me get started, confirming there was scope for inquiry into activist teaching and learning, helping me develop some definitions and helping my thinking about methodology. I decided that if I was going to research in this field, I wanted to go about it in a way that meant something to the environment movement and fed back in a useful and constructive way. Rather than just trying to understand what is going on (or what is needed), I figured I could help enhance teaching and learning opportunities. This approach is described as catalytic in literature about research methods.

When training was chosen as the theme for the Queensland State Conservation Conference, I volunteered to coordinate the training theme. Since the 1996 national conference of environment centres and conservation councils, I’ve been part of the national environment movement training program and network regularly with trainers and researchers around the country. This network provided expert and affordable trainers for our conference (seven trainers for less than \$2000). The evaluation of the conference provided an excellent opportunity to ask how useful the training we provided was, whether people felt they could apply it in their work and what other learning they felt might be useful. I facilitated the evaluation, asking on questionnaires whether people were willing for their responses to be drawn on for my research. No-one objected to this. Several people volunteered to complete post-conference evaluations as well to report on how useful the training was over time – how it influenced their work in the months following our conference.

During the year, I’ve also looked into a range of other activist training opportunities, especially the Heart Politics gatherings in Queensland and New

South Wales which seem to offer something quite different to the kind of skills-oriented training we are more familiar with. I interviewed participants and organisers as well as running skills workshops at gatherings in March and October. I also organised a campaign planning workshop with Bill Moyer – a famous U.S. activist and trainer. QCC endorsed this workshop.

I don't have an iron-clad plan of how my research will proceed. I need to write up the set of interviews I did here (making sure people are comfortable with what I write – that anonymity is preserved if desired). I also need to write up what I've seen, heard and done at Heart Politics. I'm keen to participate in more things organised by the environment movement raining network. We're setting up a webpage and have a trainers' register. Then there's next year's national environment movement conference in Melbourne. I'd love to go there, ask people questions about teaching and learning – get ideas, network, maybe help facilitate sessions, maybe help out with the evaluation.

I want QCC staff and executive to know what I'm doing, to feel comfortable about it and *ideally* to see me as a resource. I am strongly committed to respecting people's confidence, to portraying QCC in a favourable light, to gearing my research toward innovation. While it is true to say many activists here and elsewhere do not feel sufficiently trained or supported for their work and speak of *sinking or swimming*, I am much less interested in dwelling on this than on assisting and documenting intentional responses to these demands of the movement.

A draft of my first chapter is available if you are interested. Also, I have a set of overheads outlining my research intention, methodology, references and current plans. My initial observations are printed on the reverse of this page. If you have any ideas, concerns or suggestions, please let me know.

James Whelan  
Queensland Conservation Council  
October 28<sup>th</sup>, 1998.

## Queensland Conservation Council interview questions

### Learning to be an activist at the Queensland Conservation Council

#### *Pilot Study Questions*

*November-December 1997*

Some of these questions use the expression “activist”. This is not intended as an exclusive term. If your work for environmental protection involves lobbying, research, community education, advocacy or organising, consider yourself included.

1. How long have you worked with QCC?
2. Had you been involved in environmental campaigning or organising for some other social change before joining QCC? Can you briefly describe this work - how long were you involved? what did you do?
3. Describe your work with QCC - what do you do?
4. What are the ultimate goals of your work - what is it you are trying to achieve? How will you know if you've been successful?
5. Do you know (or work with) environmental activists you would consider highly successful?
6. From your observation, how do successful environmental activists work effectively to favour environmental outcomes?
7. What makes these people successful/effective as activists - what sets them apart from less successful activists?
  - skills/abilities
  - attitudes / personal attributes
  - experience
  - networks
  - training
  - other .....
8. To what extent have you developed the skills and strengths you consider essential for successful activism? On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your effectiveness (comparing your present work to your full potential)?
9. How have you learnt these things?
  - formal study?
  - mentor/supervisor relationship?
  - reading?
  - observation?
  - experience?
  - other .....

10. Since joining QCC, has your effectiveness changed (improved)? Has the organisation helped you learn to be (more) effective?
11. Are there skills and abilities you feel you need to further develop in order to enhance your activism?
12. Do you have plans to enhance your effectiveness as an activist?
13. How could QCC help you become more effective?

Your responses are confidential.

Are you happy for this information to be used in my research into teaching and learning for environmental activism?

YES  NO

## Bill Moyer Workshop Flier

Queensland Conservation Council and Griffith University's Centre for Innovation in Environmental Education and Research bring you

### Understanding and Building Successful Social Change Movements

a one day workshop for activists and environmental students with Bill Moyer featuring the Movement Action Plan - a tool for analysing social and environmental campaigns.



Bill Moyer has been an organiser, writer and trainer in social movements for almost forty years in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia. He has worked in movements including civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, anti-nuclear energy and weapons, and others. Over 20,000 people have attended his workshops in 15 countries. Bill Moyer's books and pamphlets include *Moving Toward A New Society*, *A Nonviolent Action Manual* and *The Macro-Analysis Handbook*.

A workshop to help you:

- understand and believe in the power and success of citizen activism in achieving social change
- be an empowered and effective social movement leader
- learn MAP methods and theories for analysing, strategising and conducting effective social movements, including (a) activist roles, (b) stages of social movements, (c) charting and evaluating social movements, and (d) "socio-drama" action-campaign method.
- apply the MAP theories and methods to yourself and your own social movements

---

<b>Date/Time</b>	Saturday August 29 <sup>th</sup> 1998, 10am to 5pm
<b>Venue</b>	Griffith University, Nathan Campus
<b>Registration</b>	\$40 -\$60 self-assessed on a sliding scale (including lunch & refreshments)
<b>Bookings</b>	James Whelan (QCC) ph 07 3221 0188 <James.Whelan@mailbox.gu.edu.au>

**Numbers are limited – book now!**

## Bill Moyer Workshop Evaluation

### Bill Moyer Workshop

#### Feedback Form

Griffith University Saturday 24th August 1998

This evaluation will provide Bill and the organisers with feedback on the workshop's usefulness. Thank you for your time and openness.

1. Describe your involvement in environmental or social change work.
2. What did you hope to get out of today's workshop?
3. To what extent did the workshop meet your expectations?
4. What were the best aspects of the workshop for you?
5. What suggestions for improvement would you make?
6. How do you feel you might be able to incorporate aspects of today's workshop in your work?
7. Besides today's workshop, how have you learnt about planning and analysing social change movements and campaigns?
8. What other ideas do you have for activist training or support? Are there other workshops you feel might be useful?

Your responses are confidential.

Are you happy for this information to be used in my research into teaching and learning for environmental activism?

YES  NO

Leave completed forms in the box at the door or fax to James on 3229 7992

## Networking Workshop

### Notes provided to participants:

#### WHY NETWORK

- Educate, agitate, organise
- Build alliances, strengthen your case
- Educate and inform others in the community
- Attract members – build your contacts list
- Mobilise people (eg the networking concerning east timor in early september resulted in thousands of faxes and letters being sent to the prime minister and minister for foreign affairs)
- Influence and change decisions and policies

#### WITH WHOM?

- Existing and natural allies
- Potential allies
- Existing or natural adversaries
- Potential adversaries
- Decision makers
- Be opportunistic – you never know who will help

#### HOW?

- List building
- Email/web networking
- Phone trees

#### LIST BUILDING

A mailing list is one of the most potent campaign resources available. Mailing lists built and maintained on a database that integrates with other software is most useful – Microsoft Access, for instance, integrates with Word, Excel and other MS software. This lets you do mail merging, sorting for variables such as postcode or whether people are interested in volunteering, whether they have donated to your campaign, etc. Maintaining your mailing list for accuracy is crucial and takes time. Consider every possible way to build your list.

#### SOME IDEAS

- Have a clipboard displayed at stalls or displays inviting people to join your mailing list

- Keep adding to your email address book
- Collect business cards
- Phone your local council and/or state parliament for contact details of relevant politicians – send them your newsletter whether or not they are members
- Ensure all your campaign publications has a tear-off coupon for people to send to you (consider making it reply paid). Encourage people to send them in by asking for their opinions and ideas. Also include accurate contact details.
- Try to have your material included in other people's mailouts. (local or state government, other community groups, subscriber radio stations)
- Circulate a sheet for contact details at all forums and events you organise

### **GROUP MAINTENANCE**

- Don't neglect your network. People stay involved when they receive regular contact, when they know what's going on and when they feel they are making a useful contribution.
- Send minutes of every meeting to all active members – whether or not they attended the meetings.
- Make sure to promote all coming meetings and events well in advance.
- If possible, distribute minutes and meeting notification by email (save time and paper).
- Consider holding social events from time to time.
- Acknowledge all contributions people make – say thanks in your next newsletter.

### **VIRTUAL NETWORKING**

Community networkers rely increasingly on discussion lists and other electronic communications to keep in touch. Some of the most common forms are:

- Communicating with other campaigners and groups directly by email
- Creating tailor-made lists in your email program's address book
- Setting up discussion groups
- Establishing reciprocal links between your website and other websites
- Setting up a guest book on your website
- Starting or joining email discussion groups

Reading and responding to emails can be very time-consuming. When contributing to email discussions, remember that active networkers value their time – be brief. Don't spam people (irrelevant, repetitive or lengthy messages). I have found the following contact useful:

1. South East Qld Environment Campaigners [www.hahaha.com.au/seqenv](http://www.hahaha.com.au/seqenv). Sign up at the website. Contribute by sending emails to [seqenv@listbot.com](mailto:seqenv@listbot.com)
2. University of Queensland Student Union Environment Collective [environment@lists.uq.edu.au](mailto:environment@lists.uq.edu.au) or email Jason at [j.john@mailbox.uq.edu.au](mailto:j.john@mailbox.uq.edu.au)
3. Friends of the Earth (Sydney – anti nuclear campaign) [nonukes@foesydney.org.au](mailto:nonukes@foesydney.org.au)
4. Greenpeace Gazette [Bill.Peisley@au.greenpeace.org](mailto:Bill.Peisley@au.greenpeace.org)
5. GST & the Community Sector [gst@mail.labrynth.net.au](mailto:gst@mail.labrynth.net.au)
6. COMM-ORG – community organising - <http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/mailman/listinfo/colist>
7. Australia Connects (building on Reworking Tomorrow, Robert Theobald's work) [www.australiainconnects.net](http://www.australiainconnects.net) or contact Ken McLeod & Penny Watson at [workspace@co-op.com](mailto:workspace@co-op.com) or PO Box 1652, Byron Bay NSW 2481
8. Australian Greens - [www.altnews.com.au/Greens/](http://www.altnews.com.au/Greens/) (including an option to receive Senator Bob Brown's media releases automatically). Queensland Greens: [www.greens.org.au/qld/](http://www.greens.org.au/qld/)
9. Australian Conservation Foundation - National Liaison Officer (Anna Reynolds) [canberra@qcfonline.org.au](mailto:canberra@qcfonline.org.au)
10. Enviro-list (Trudy Bray) covers a wide range of environmental issues [ozbrays@zip.com.au](mailto:ozbrays@zip.com.au)
11. Kitty Carra - Community Campaigns Coordinator Community Aid Abroad/ [kittyc@caa.org.au](mailto:kittyc@caa.org.au)
12. Climate Action Network (Cate Buchanan) [cate@apex.net.au](mailto:cate@apex.net.au)
13. Rivermouth Action Group (Barry Wilson) [www.rag.org.au/](http://www.rag.org.au/) - Barry hosts community/environment group newsletters and websites, posts links to hundreds of useful sites and posts excellent activist training resources –email Barry [activist@rag.org.au](mailto:activist@rag.org.au) or visit [www.rag.org.au](http://www.rag.org.au)
14. Tracey Adams (Maleny-based networker on peace, environment issues) [wildweaver@iname.com](mailto:wildweaver@iname.com)
15. To receive state government media releases, register at the State Government website
16. Bicycle Queensland - [www.uq.net.au/~zzdmcdon/](http://www.uq.net.au/~zzdmcdon/) To join the Bikeqld list, send email to: [majordomo@dstc.edu.au](mailto:majordomo@dstc.edu.au) with the message body: *subscribe "bikeqld"*. To send a message to the group that everyone who has subscribed can read, email to [bikeqld@dstc.edu.au](mailto:bikeqld@dstc.edu.au) To unsubscribe, send mail to: [majordomo@dstc.edu.au](mailto:majordomo@dstc.edu.au) with message text *"unsubscribe bikeqld"*
17. Oz-EnviroLink - messages sent to the main address([Oz-EnviroLink@austrop.org.au](mailto:Oz-EnviroLink@austrop.org.au)) are automatically distributed to all subscribers. Visit: [www.austrop.org.au/](http://www.austrop.org.au/)

18. ONE/Northwest's Activist Toolkit! [www.onenw.org/toolkit/](http://www.onenw.org/toolkit/)
19. Econet - [www.igc.org/igc/econet/](http://www.igc.org/igc/econet/)
20. [www.catchword.co.uk](http://www.catchword.co.uk) - environmental policy, public participation
21. For tips on email networking, visit "An Activists' Strategy for Using E-Mail and the World Wide Web" at <http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/cboweb.htm> <http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/cboweb.htm>
22. Every Australian politician's email address: [www.edo.org.au/aeap.htm](http://www.edo.org.au/aeap.htm)

For contact details of environment groups, consult the Australian Conservation Council's Green Pages which is published each year. The Conservation Council in your state will also have current details for active groups.

QCC 07 3221 0188 [qccqld@powerup.com.au](mailto:qccqld@powerup.com.au)  
NCC NSW 02 9279 2466

## NETWORKING EXERCISE

Complete individually or in small groups

1. Think of an issue you feel strongly about - perhaps an issue you are already involved with
2. Using the cards provided, list as many people or organisations as you can think of who are likely to also have a stake in this issue. Include a card for yourself or your organisation.
3. Place the cards one by one on the piece of butcher's paper provided.
4. Start with the card representing you - place this in the centre. Position the others cards in a way that says something about their relationship with you and with each other. For example, you could put all parties holding the same view as you on one side of the sheet and those opposing your view on the other side. Cards closest to you might be those people with whom you have a working relationship. The most powerful people might be at the top of the sheet and those with least power at the bottom.
5. Draw lines between yourself and the people or groups with whom you presently have a relationship. Beside these lines, make notes describing these relationships. For example, you might have "regular positive communication" with other community groups and "infrequent, strained relationships" with the Mayor.
6. Draw lines between the other people or organisations indicating what you know of their relationships. For example, they might be "allies", "politically alligned" or "friends".
7. Draw an asterisk next to those people or groups with whom you might forge stronger links in order to pursue the issue you are interested in. For example, stronger links with the relevant Minister, her advisers or with the head of the local chamber of commerce and industry. CONSIDER - how can you initiate or improve this relationship?
8. Present your network to the group.
9. Detail three concrete actions you plan to take to build your networks.
10. How might these new links assist your campaign?

## QCC 'Speaking Out' training workshop flier

### Queensland Conservation Council / Smogbusters present

a free one day training workshop for effective advocacy

Saturday, August 21<sup>st</sup> 1999

### Speaking out for the environment

Free Training in Media Skills & Community Consultation

#### Audience

- QCC/Smogbusters members and QCC member groups.
- Environmentalists living in SE Qld.
- Active citizens (and those who want to be more active).
- Environmentalists on committees.

#### Venue

Brisbane City Council Library Theatrette (opposite the Star Café)

#### **Workshop 1** - *Working with the Media*

10am – 1pm

Gain confidence and skill in preparing media releases, writing letters to the editor and planning a media strategy.

Guest Journalist: Phil Dickie

Guest advocate: Imogen Zethoven (QCC Coordinator)

#### **Workshop 2** - *Representing the Environment*

2pm - 5pm

Learn how to effectively represent community and environmental interests on committees and through consultation processes. What expectations should you have? What traps are there for community representatives? How to make your input count.

Guest Advocates: Imogen Zethoven (QCC coordinator) and Shannon Burns (QCC's representative on the Mining and Petroleum EPP – a committee veteran)

### **BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL**

For information and bookings

phone Laura or James at QCC on 3221 0188

or email [qccqld@powerup.com.au](mailto:qccqld@powerup.com.au)

Join us for morning tea 9am at the Star Café, 1pm for lunch

## State Conservation Conference trainers and workshops

### Training Workshops

#### Building Effective Teams and Group Communication (Bobbi Allan)

This workshop will look at what factors contribute to effective teamwork and touch on some of the processes which enhance communication between co-workers. If you think this issue is too 'soft' and you have got more important things to deal with, you may be just the person who needs to come to this workshop.

#### Fundraising and Promotion (Bob Burton)

Energy efficient fund raising is essential for successful organisations. For those starting a fundraising program, learning some basic principles of developing a fundraising plan and budget will help avoid painful mistakes. For those with some fundraising experience there remain great opportunities for learning about increasing donations, bequests programs, special events. Identify your needs, bring samples and examples and we'll work on how to improve your fundraising success.

#### Investigative Skills (Bob Burton)

Winning campaigns often require accessing high quality information with low budgets. Issues covered will include using Freedom of Information, web researching, corporate information, verification, defamation and communicating your information to target audiences.

#### Maintaining Morale and Motivation (Katrina Shields)

This workshop is an opportunity to understand the burnout phenomena which plagues the environment movement and look at individual and group action that can help prevent it. We will also look at what groups can do to maintain morale in the face of continuing bad news and apparent losses.

#### Movement Building and Alliances (Katrina Shields)

This workshop will be an opportunity to consider the big picture of what it will take to make the environment movement stronger. We will also explore the challenges and opportunities of building alliances that could enhance the success of the issue you are committed to.

#### Resolving Conflicts and Developing Negotiation Skills (Bobbi Allan)

This workshop will give an overview of a kit bag of skills used to resolve conflict and negotiate successfully. We will focus on one tool of conflict mapping which has wide applicability for environmental issues and other conflicts.

#### Strategic Campaign Planning (Chris Harris)

This workshop will address the design, implementation and evaluation of planning including Strategic Planning, examining the need for, and benefits of such plans. Participants will be involved in developing plans, looking at aspects of successful and failed campaigns, identified myths and discussing what is meant by planning and their various aspects such as objectives, goals,

actions, resources and evaluation. [max 20 participants]

#### Working with the Media (Luke Giribon)

This workshop will cover media management techniques with a focus on (1) understanding how the media works and news is created, (2) interview structure and strategy (print media and electronic media), (3) the '10 second news grab', (4) how to write media releases, and (5) media liaison.

#### Working with Volunteers (Danielle Nelson)

This workshop will discuss attributes of effective volunteer management, including administrative, policy and procedural frameworks. The workshop will also provide an opportunity for participants to share volunteering success stories and reflect on the key obstacles faced by volunteer workers and managers.

#### Geographical Information Systems (John Wikken)

### **About the trainers**

Bobbi Allan has ten years experience as a management consultant and trainer with community groups and business, and within the Department of Community Services (NSW). She taught Group Processes at Southern Cross University, and is trained and experienced in mediator and Playback Theatre. She brought Joanna Macey to Australia and has led 'Despair and Empowerment' and Deep Ecology workshops. Bobbi has been active in peace and environment groups and Heart Politics activities.

Bob Burton has been active over the last twenty years with groups ranging from local groups to The Wilderness Society and Australian Conservation Foundation working on everything from campaigning, management and fundraising. He is currently editor of the quarterly mining industry newsletter Mining Monitor and a researcher and writer on campaigns by and against community groups.

Luke Giribon is a senior consultant for Media Link, one of Queensland's largest public relation and media consultancies. Previously, Luke spent four years with Queensland Transport, working mainly as a media adviser to senior executives and the Minister.

Chris Harris has been involved with environmental and other social issues for more than fifteen years. During the last three years he has been involved with a variety of new environmental initiatives, including the development of the Mineral Policy Institute which works on the human rights and environmental impacts of mining projects, training programmes such as the 1996 Adelaide National Environment Training Conference and fundraising programmes such as Earth Share Australia and the Conservation Alliance.

Danielle Nelson has worked closely with volunteers for the past five years

with organisations including The Wilderness Society and Queensland Conservation Council. She has coordinated large teams for specific campaigns and events, managed small volunteer-based project teams, worked with volunteer management committees, liaised with specialist consultants working on a voluntary basis, and managed long term volunteers. During her time with QCC she applied and received funding to develop a Volunteers Manual for the organisation. The manual, developed in consultation with Volunteering Queensland, lays out administrative, policy and procedural frameworks for the organisation's management of volunteer staff.

Katrina Shields has worked in community development, counselling, women's health promotion and training. She trained as an Occupational Therapist and as a Counsellor and has a Masters in Social Ecology. She has been involved in community activism and organising Heart Politics activities. As part of a Consultancy Team, Katrina leads workshops, provides training, renewal retreats and empowerment counselling for non-profit community groups, environment groups under stress and government agencies throughout Australia. She taught Community Development, Consultation and Participation and Group Processes at Southern Cross University until the recent arrival of daughter Thea. Katrina is author of the book "*In the Tiger's Mouth - An Empowerment Guide for Social Action*".

Katrina and Bobbi established the Social Change Training and Resource Centre in northern NSW.

## ***Powerful Voices Evaluation Form***

The 1998 State Conservation Conference was built around ideas contributed after previous conferences. Twenty minutes of your time now will help the organisers of future state conferences develop useful and relevant programs. Please be honest and thoughtful. Your comments are confidential. Contact details provided here will not form part of the evaluation report.

This evaluation first asks for comments on the conference in general, then on each training workshop.

1. Please comment on the various elements of the conference program. Were these parts of the conference managed well? Do you have suggestions for future conferences?
  - a. conference resolutions
  - b. campaign topic sessions
  - c. conference accommodation
  - d. conference catering
  - e. hypothetical
2. What are your suggestions for the 1999 State Conservation Conference? (theme, format, guest speakers, key issues, etc)

3. Post conference interviews:

The conference organisers are interested in evaluating the extent to which these training workshops help you in your work. Would you be willing to be interviewed in August?

Yes

No

4. 1999 State Conservation Conference

Would your group be interested in hosting the 1999 state conference?

Yes

No

5. Contact Details

It is not necessary to provide your contact details unless you have indicated an interest in hosting next year's state conference or in being interviewed after the conference.

Training Program

6. Do you think the training program will change the way you work?
7. Do you feel better equipped for your work as a result of the training program?
8. Did the training program miss training topics that you consider important?
9. Do you think further training is desirable? How do you think this should be provided?
10. Should activist training be incorporated into future State Conservation Conferences?

Your responses are confidential.

Are you happy for this information to be used in my research into teaching and learning for environmental activism?

YES  NO

**Workshop Evaluation** (feedback form used in each workshop)

Please provide your assessment of the workshop, using the following scale.

<b>Excellent</b>	very stimulating and challenging, presented new ideas, empowering
<b>Very good</b>	comprehensive information, good facilitation, affirming
<b>Satisfactory</b>	covered basic concepts, provided helpful information
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	content and/or facilitation disappointing, inadequate

Space is also provided for descriptive comments.

	Excellent	Very good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
i. Information and ideas				
Comments				
ii. Workshop format				
Comments				
iii. Handouts and audiovisual materials				
Comments				
iv. Trainer expertise				
Comments				

## State Conservation Conference Organising Manual

### Introduction

QCC hosted the 1998 Queensland State Conservation Conference, *Powerful Voices*. We have produced this booklet in the hope that future organisers of the conference will benefit from our experience.

The state conference is held annually, traditionally on the May long weekend over three days. Each year it is hosted by a different member group of QCC or QCC itself. Hosting the conference is a major undertaking with the host organisation responsible for financing it, setting the theme and program, organising all logistics, promoting it etc. While it is a huge amount of work, a successful conference can provide tangible rewards for the host group – in terms of raising the profile of the group, raising money and contributing to the Queensland environment movement.

We, the organisers for the QCC 1998 conference, were a group of five people – two staff members, one executive member, one volunteer and one paid (poorly) coordinator. Only one of us had previously organised conferences and nothing that major. We met at least once a week for about four months and contributed probably a combined total of more than 600 hours, not counting the conference itself. If we had to do it again, I'm sure we could do it in about two-thirds of that time and with far less stress. We learnt a heap about the importance of planning, of being cautious in predictions, of being very conservative in budgeting, of continually checking that tasks have been completed. But most of all we learnt or were reminded of the importance of maintaining the human relationships during the process.

We hope QCC and its member groups will focus on how to raise the profile of the conference in general over the next few years. We would like to see it develop into a must event for anyone involved with environment groups whether as staff, volunteers, members or supporters. We see it as a wonderful opportunity to engender a feeling of community and encourage effective and passionate environmental activism in Queensland. Please see page 3 for some thoughts about how to raise the conference's profile

Good luck with your conference organising. We hope it's one to remember for its smoothness, camaraderie, learning, and fun.

The *Powerful Voices* organising group.

## **Raising the profile of the State Conservation Conference**

Some people have commented that their perception of the state conservation conference was that it was for established campaigners and focused on the needs of conservation councils. We would like to change this perception and develop the conference as an event that any person interested in environmental causes, whether a paid staff member, a volunteer, a member, or supporter, would like to come to. We will need to focus on both promoting it in this way and ensuring the conference caters for the needs of people involved in the environment movement in different ways.

Clearly, a three-day conference cannot be all things to all people, so each organising group will have to know what sort of conference it is trying to organise and who its target market is. Primarily it must be clear about what it aims to achieve through the conference. Following are some general themes to guide you in thinking about your specific conference aims:

- inspiration
- networking & alliance building within the environment movement
- networking and alliance building beyond the environment movement
- campaign planning
- motivating people from the general community to be more active
- training & skills building
- information sharing within the environment movement
- information sharing between groups eg between academics and activists

After canvassing the opinions of some of our conference attendees, we came up with the following comments about how to raise the profile of the conference.

- Minimise costs – most people said that financial and time costs were the biggest barrier to attending our conference.
- Use the conference as an opportunity for alliance building with other non-profit groups – you could even include representatives from other groups in the organising committee and share resources.
- Maintain a non-campaigning theme – concentrate on long-term structure and vision issues
- Target elderly and young participants – maybe have special sessions for them
- Have different components of the conference specifically catering for seasoned campaigners, and new campaigners
- Use previous conference participants to network and enthuse people about coming
- Involve industry people – perhaps by including them in the program
- Outline the process for regional and other environment groups to

promote the event - don't just send them conference fliers but gain a commitment from them to personally talk to people about the conference and promote it in every way possible

- Try to have a residential conference to facilitate the informal networking that is always so important
- Maybe change the name of the conference from State Conservation Conference to something more indicative of general involvement

We hope there will be ongoing discussion about how to make the conference a really important event for all people in the environment movement.

### **Planning the Conference**

Begin planning for your conference as early as possible as many of the essential steps depend on decisions made in the very early stages. The QCC organising group began their planning 9 months prior to the *Powerful Voices* conference. We suggest you use the following subject areas to discuss in your initial planning meetings:

- Conference theme
- Budget
- Venue
- Promotion
- Sponsorship
- Resolutions

From the initial planning meetings a project timeline can be drawn up for the conference organising team to work towards. It's a good idea to create a generous timeframe to allow for difficulties with printers and publications.

### **Conference Organising Group**

The QCC conference organising group up set the theme of the conference, developed the publicity material, sought out and booked an appropriate venue, developed the budget and identified the trainers and guest speakers to be approached.

This group worked out the job description of the desktop publishers, caterers and the coordinators. They were responsible for the job selection process: issuing the advertisements for the positions, selecting the candidates and awarding the contracts.

Ideally each person in the COG adopts responsibility for overseeing a particular area of organising: eg: publicity and promotion, organising all aspects of the trainers' needs, the registration system, developing conference kits and materials etc, sponsorship.

Any significant problems that need resolving by the larger group are discussed at COG meetings. Minor decisions are left up to those responsible to liaise with others outside the meetings if necessary. Each person reports back on their progress in each area of responsibility at each meeting.

*During the Conference:*

During the *Powerful Voices* conference the group members took responsibility for particular areas eg: registration, trainers, etc. The group met each day during breakfast to run through the day ahead and clarify that everything was running to plan.

Each person in the conference organising group had a running sheet for each day of the conference. This outlined the tasks to be done, by whom and included the set up and clean up.

We also had a running sheet for each evening, and made this available to the MC's and performers. The caterers also need a copy of the overall conference running sheet. They need to know when all the meals are to be served and what is happening.

## **Budget**

A budget simply reflects what your work plans are for the conference using dollar signs instead of words. It is best that one person handle the finances from planning to review stages of the conference. The person handling the finances is one of the core people in your conference organising team. The person will have a complete picture of what is happening and can monitor income and expenditure according to the budget and give financial advice when it is required.

The budget needs to include all the expected income and expenses. It's best to be generous with the expenses and conservative in your estimates for the income. There are always little expenses that mount up at the end in the form of reimbursements. They are usually things that conference organisers, in the madness of the day, decide are needed so allow some room in the budget for this. If you do want to control this sort of spending but not make it financially difficult for organisers, a petty cash system could be the answer.

Up until 1997-98 financial year, QCC has applied for and received a \$5 000 grant from the Queensland Department of Environment from the NGCO grant scheme as a subsidy for running the conference. The money, less a administration fee, then gets passed to the regional group that is running the conference. We hope that the support from the Queensland Government will continue in future financial years.

Things to allow for in your budget include:

Expenses	Income
Administration Fees Postage Telephone Facsimile Photocopying Printing Stationery Bank Charges Venue Hire Consultants Catering	Grant Registration Fees Sponsorship Donations

### **Trainers, Presenters/Theme**

Recent conservation conferences have incorporated training workshops to enhance our work as environmentalists. Many of us are thrown in the deep end when we start with environmental organisations and can benefit from structured training and support.

The 1996 National Conservation Conference training program gave birth to the Environment Movement Training Program. This loose network of trainers is spread across Australia with its heart in Northern New South Wales. Contact can be made through the Social Change Training and Resource Centre (SCTRC) coordinated by Katrina Shields and Bobbi Allan. A training manual was produced following the 1996 conference and is available through the SCTRC. A register of trainers has been compiled and a website will soon be posted, providing a range of training resources. QCC campaigner James Whelan is a member of the network and is available for assistance in coordinating environmental training.

#### *Organising a training program*

The first step should ideally entail assessing the training needs of environmentalists likely to attend. This might be done informally or by surveying. The availability of trainers will also be an important consideration. A wide range of training areas are considered useful, including: working with the media; working with volunteers; campaign planning; evaluation and documentation; conflict resolution / mediation; movement building / team building; avoiding despair and burnout; time management; information technology / information systems; fundraising; managing volunteer organisations; financial management; research skills; strategic questioning.

In shaping your agenda, decide how much time in total can be given to training and how long each training workshop will be. Sessions should be at least three hours long to be useful - people generally prefer longer workshops as they allow greater depth. Consider how much experience people already have and the merits of advanced level workshops for people with some prior training and experience.

If the conference has to cover other agenda items as well, consider alternating workshops with campaign-oriented and decision making sessions. Try not to schedule demanding workshops during the afternoon when energy levels are at their lowest.

#### *Contacting and recruiting trainers*

Often you will have people in your community able to lead workshops. Training (and process) skills will be just as important as technical knowledge and experience, so don't just find someone who writes a great media release to run your media skills workshop. If you do, consider recruiting a facilitator to work alongside the expert.

Your choice of trainers will be constrained by available funds. Do not expect trainers to work for free. You will need to meet their costs at a minimum, including travel, meals, accommodation and photocopying. A standard daily training fee is \$125. This encompasses preparation and travel time. Offer to copy handouts (it will be cheaper that way) and tell trainers the deadline for getting print materials to you. Participants will appreciate informative handouts.

Make regular contact with the trainers during the lead-up. Ask each to write a brief passage about themselves and their workshop for inclusion in your conference package. Give conference participants as much information as possible about the workshops and time to decide which to attend.

#### *At the conference*

Ensure the trainers have clear directions for finding your venue. Nominate someone to greet them on arrival. Provide comfortable and quiet accommodation. Offer to arrange childcare where necessary. Plan to introduce the trainers and allow them to briefly outline their workshops well before workshops begin. Consider methods of evaluating the workshops. This might be through feedback forms completed after each workshop or as part of an overall conference evaluation process. Ask the trainers for their ideas for workshop evaluation.

#### *Training Spaces*

Prepare training spaces with attention to detail. Ask trainers to specify their audiovisual requirements and arrange these in advance. Nominate someone to refresh training spaces between workshops. Plan a timeslot near the end of the conference to thank the trainers with a small gift.

### **The Conference Venue**

The planning group must have a clear idea of what its needs are before it starts contacting possible venues. A few members of the group should visit a variety of conference venues to ascertain which ones will best fit the needs of the conference, within the budget.

Consider the following points when seeking out a venue:

*Accommodation*

Are people able to bring their own tents if they wish? This can lower the cost of attending the conference.

*Transport*

Is the conference easily accessible by public transport? If not, is the organising group willing to organise transport for those choosing not to drive cars?

*Catering*

You may have the choice of using caterers provided by the venue or, finding your own.

When hiring the caterer, you will need to know on what basis they are being paid: either per person per meal or by a lump sum catering for an estimated amount.

We chose to pay a lump sum for the caterers on an estimated number of people attending as our numbers were so uncertain. In retrospect we could have saved money if we paid per person per meal. However, we didn't have a clear idea of numbers, even during the last week leading up to the conference.

We decided to provide a full vegetarian menu with a vegan option. You may also consider finding a caterer who will provide as much locally grown organic food as possible. This way you can supporting your local organic farmers.

*Training Areas*

Prior planning will allow you to know how many training/ workshop areas you need and whether some workshops can be held outdoors. Find out if the conference venue can provide whiteboards, overhead projectors, video and slide equipment for training sessions. If not, the COG will have to provide them.

**Scholarships**

Each year a scholarship for free registration to attend the conference is awarded. We judged the applications for scholarship on the following criteria:

- Financial need
- Ability to utilise skills and experience learned at the conference
- Level of commitment

Fortunately we were able to award two scholarships to deserving applicants due to our successful efforts at obtaining sponsorship.

**Registration***Design*

The registration should be available several months before the conference. It must also be easy to understand and fill out. Try to have it checked by several

people before it is made available. Some minor printing errors are easily missed but can cause huge problems later.

Some things to consider:

- Are the pricing schemes easily understandable?
- Is all the necessary information included and accurate?
- Is a return address included?
- Have you included a closing date?
- Have you included information about scholarships?

We included a closing date for registrations, but didn't receive the bulk of registrations until the week prior to the conference.

### *In the Office*

Ensure people answering the phone are able to answer general inquiries about the conference. Ensure conference registration forms and information is available in the office to send out to phone inquiries.

Keep other people in the office informed about the progress of the conference and planning etc. It will be particularly busy in the week leading up to the conference, and they may be disrupted by your activities (if they're not already involved).

## **Administration of registrations**

### *Registration Database*

We used a simple database designed on Access (Microsoft Office) which covered information on all the options available to conference registrants. It included:

- general information (name, address, contact number, e-mail, fax)
- conference registration (3 days/1day: Fri/Sat/Sun/Mon)
- payment (deposit/full amount paid or pay on arrival)
- if they were holding an information stall
- meals (for 3 days/per day/no meals) and conference dinner
- accommodation options (number of nights, tent/cabin)
- receipt number
- notes.

### *Receiving registrations and payments*

It is best if all mail and fax payments go through the same person - ie your finance administrator. Once the payment has been receipted, and the bankcard details (if applicable) processed, enter the registration details, receipt number and amount paid into the conference database. Pin the receipt to the registration details and file. Keep the receipts handy as they should then

be sent out to registrants with the further conference details.

### *Authorisation for Credit Cards*

Consider ringing for an authorisation for all credit card payments regardless of the amount – we found that quite a number of people had written the incorrect credit card number or expiry date. If these mistakes go unchecked it means the bank won't process the payment!

### **Pre-conference package**

Approximately two weeks before the conference, send out the conference package containing the site map, receipt, what to bring list, timetable, brief workshop and trainer information). We did not include the main conference guide with detailed information on the trainers, sponsors, the site etc to save on postage costs. We thought that giving people the main conference guide when they arrived would save us from making extra copies for those who would forget to bring it!

### **At the conference**

It is best to have a core person overseeing registration throughout the conference. They can keep tabs on any payments that will be arriving after the conference (some people post them the day before the conference starts).

We had three people working at the registration area, one to take payments and write receipts and another to distribute name tags and conference information packs. The third person oversaw the accommodation sign up sheets. Within the broad registration area a space was set aside for workshop sign up sheets, groups' information sheets and petitions.

A checklist of things to bring for the registration area helps, for example:

- The latest copy of the registration database to note who have paid in full, have paid a deposit or who will pay on arrival
- Registration pricelists. We eventually decided to let participants pay a half-day rate if they could only attend one workshop, although we did not publicise that fact.
- Equipment for processing payments : credit card slips and 'clicker'; receipt books, \$50 in change for cash payments, receipt book for tax deductible donations.
- Workshop sign up sheets and accommodation option sheets,(we divided huts into categories of mixed, men, women and snorers)
- Sign up sheets for volunteer jobs, eg. people to help with setting up on a particular day, working on the bar etc. It is important to have someone to sell/con/persuade people to help out or this sheet will just be ignored!
- Membership forms, newsletters and other promotional material for your group. Depending on how the conference has been promoted,

quite a few registrants who are not already involved with community environment groups can be potential members/donors.

## **Promotion and Advertising**

Develop your promotional strategy in the initial stages of conference planning. The promotion for the conference can be intensified over time, but it's important to get the information out to people. Promotion and advertising costs need to be included in the conference budget.

Steps for developing a promotional strategy

1. Define the target audience: other environment groups, students, industry and government etc.
2. Define the forms of promotion you will use: eg postering, leafleting, community service announcements on local radio, advertisements in relevant magazines and newspapers, distributing the conference leaflets and posters to the target market.
3. Research publication and mailout dates you will utilise
4. Research upcoming events where leaflets can be distributed and announcements made- approach the organisers of the event for permission to do this
5. Develop a timeline/strategy for promotion - make this detailed - insert when each particular form of promotion will be launched and how you will follow up and add to it
6. Develop a promotion budget
7. Designate the responsibility to a person/s - it's a huge job to do properly and could be one person's responsibility rather than the whole group taking on little bits here and there.
8. Begin the promotion as soon as possible - build it up to a complete blitz of other events in the month of the conference.
9. Think of promotional gimmicks like running competitions for free registration in the local student newspaper or on the local community radio station.
10. Try to get the support of the local print and electronic media for the buildup of conference
11. Consider getting the support of the local businesses - you're bringing new people into the area and can support their businesses in some way - this can lead into areas for promotion and sponsorship in the local community.

## **Sponsorship**

The conference organising group should develop the guidelines for pursuing sponsorship in it's initial planning phase. These guidelines should be in keeping

with the organisations' guidelines on accepting sponsorship. The guidelines must be clearly understood by the group and the person seeking sponsorship for the conference.

*The sponsorship package:*

Work out what the sponsors will receive in return for giving money to support the conference. Develop a package prior to seeking out sponsors. Be clear about what you are offering to them initially in return for their sponsorship. Once you have established this, you can then be flexible and come to an agreement that suits both parties if necessary.

Suggested steps to obtaining sponsorship:

1. Develop guidelines regarding which groups, businesses and organisations you will seek sponsorship from.
2. Nominate a person/s responsible for obtaining conference sponsorship. It is best if this person has time to make personal visits to the potential sponsors. A personal visit asking directly for sponsorship will be more productive than a phone call or a letter.
3. This person is then responsible for ensuring all aspects of sponsorship are covered – particularly that the group maintains it's end of the deal after receiving the sponsorship money.
4. Collect names and addresses of potential sponsors to approach - develop a database. This can be used for developing a rapport with supporting businesses for further fundraising ventures for the organisation.
5. Create the sponsorship package, outlining what sponsors will receive in return for their support (see Appendix).
6. Develop the timeline for approaching sponsors, following up, incorporating their details and or logo into the conference promotional material
7. Thank the conference sponsors after the conference with a letter and possibly a certificate of recognition they can display in their office.

### **Contracts/Agreements**

At all stages during the conference organising, agreements with outside parties should be recorded and clarified. It is important that contracts are clearly understood by the group prior to signing an agreement with a venue or any other service provider. A record of the conditions of use and the contract should be kept by the group.

Clear, straight-forward clarification of any issues in hiring the venue or other services should occur at all times. It is important that everything is clearly understood prior to the actual conference.

## Resolutions

The resolutions session provides an opportunity for member groups to get the support of conservation groups state-wide for statements concerning local issues or issues they are working on. The formal backing of the whole of the QCC membership for a resolution can give weight to a position.

However, the resolutions session of conferences has traditionally been one of the most trying of conference sessions. Problems include:

- sessions are too long and often boring, particularly for those who are not representing member groups
- there is often prolonged discussion/debate about minor wording
- people haven't had a chance to read and consider the resolutions before the session
- presentation of resolutions is often poor – they are not in a standard format, and sometimes not typed
- the resolutions may not be used in the most effective way

To try to avoid these problems for QCC's conference we set a deadline for resolutions and deemed that none would be taken from the floor. However, no one abided by the deadline and resolutions were being scribbled out at the last minute. So, we suggest that you:

- set a strict deadline for resolutions – at least one day ahead of the resolutions session – and send out reminders to groups in the two or three months before the conference that their executives should be considering and approving any proposed resolutions
- type out all resolutions double-spaced in a standard format (suggested format below), correct errors, clarify ambiguities, and pass to all session participants long enough before the session so they have time to read and consider the resolutions
- encourage participants to discuss prior to the session any qualms, suggestions etc about specific resolutions with the proposer and, if necessary, the proposer can make amendments to the resolutions prior to the session
- use OHT or some other means during the session to display the resolutions so all can see
- depending on how much time is allocated to the session (we suggest no more than 2 hours) work out how much time can be spent on each resolution and allocate accordingly
- let the proposer introduce the resolution and speak to it
- if there is not already a seconder, ask for a seconder
- adhere to formal procedure
- consider putting the resolutions session towards the beginning of the conference so that energy is still high and the resolutions can be used in some way during the conference

- ASAP after the conference, put the resolutions together in a document and send out to all member groups with suggestions for how they might be used: (a) as a media release for an issue relevant to that local group (b) in letters to politicians and others (c) in documents focusing on relevant issues (d) in newsletters

### **Suggested format for resolutions**

[Note: resolutions should propose a specific action eg. support, call on, adopt, etc.]

Date: 1 May 2000

Proposed by Longreach Environment Centre

Seconded by Charters Towers Environment Council

#### *Background information*

The Queensland Government has reduced funding to environment groups by 50% in the past two years citing uncooperative attitudes and constant criticism as the main reasons. We believe government has a duty to use taxpayers money to fund groups who perform the vital community services performed by Queensland environment groups.

#### Resolution:

That QCC and its member groups refuse to sit on any government committees until the government commits to restoring funding to environmental groups to 1998 levels.

### **Conference Volunteers**

Asking people to volunteer at the conference is a great way of getting people involved in your organisation, or getting already existing members more active.

A number of conference volunteers were appointed for the duration of the QCC conference. They helped in the set up, clean up, and each day. They were given free registration to the conference in return for their work.

The volunteers were essential and we could have used more people during the conference, particularly on the last two days.

Before you ask people to volunteer, work out what you offer in return for their work during the conference.

### **Conference Evaluation**

The conference organising group should have an evaluation session a few days after the conference is over. Further tasks will remain and lots of loose ends need to be tidied up.

## **Feedback from participants**

Make sure there are conference feedback forms readily available at the registration desk and collect the forms before people start leaving. Make a point of reminding people throughout the conference of the importance of the feedback in improving future conferences. Its also useful for the trainers to get feedback from their sessions.

## **Conference Papers**

Training notes make very useful resources for any environment group. We had several copies of trainers' handouts left over after the conference and decided to make them available to people at the cost of photocopying and postage.

When contacting speakers and trainers, ask them to provide papers or handouts they are using at the conference to you on disc. They can then be easily compiled and emailed or posted to people after the conference.

## **Appendix**

Feedback Forms  
Participants Kit  
Conference registration form

## ***Powerful Voices Follow-Up Questionnaire***

Hi Folks.

Thanks for agreeing to help us evaluate the long-term usefulness of the State Conference training program.

The questions we're asking follow. There are two ways you can answer them. Either write your answers on this message and return it to me OR give me a call and we can organise to do it face to face (or by phone).

I'm keen to complete this by early July and encourage you to complete the questions by the end of June. I'll call around late in the month.

If there are other comments you'd like to make, please feel free.

Yours sincerely,

James Whelan  
for the Conference Organising Group

### **1998 Queensland State Conservation Conference Post-Conference Interviews**

This questionnaire used the expression "Environmental work" to describe the wide range of things we do to protect, preserve and promote the environment. If you are not working fulltime for an environmental group, please don't think it doesn't apply to you. Your attendance at the state conservation conference suggests you are working for the environment.

These questions are designed to help QCC support environmentalists. The information is also of interest to my research into training within the environment movement. Your answers will be treated confidentially. Are you happy for your answers to be used for both purposes?

YES  NO

1. Please describe the nature of your environmental work (tick the applicable description)
  - paid employment of direct relevance to environmental issues
  - full time work
  - voluntary work
  - work primarily within environment or community groups
  - work primarily within government
  - independent from organisations
  - research orientation

- direct action orientation
- advocacy orientation
- media representative / spokesperson

Briefly describe your work:

2. How long have you been engaged in environmental work?
3. What got you started in environmental work?
4. What sort of work did you do in your early stages?
5. What knowledge and skills did you have that you could draw on?
6. What knowledge and skills did you need to develop? How did you do this?
7. What training have you received that has been of practical value to your environmental work? (please indicate whether you received this training within or outside the environment movement).
8. Which of the ten training workshops did you participate in? Why did you choose these workshops?
  - working with the media (Luke)
  - working with volunteers (Danielle)
  - fundraising - for beginners (Bob)
  - fundraising - advanced (Bob)
  - investigative skills (Bob)
  - strategic campaign planning (Chris)
  - conflict resolution (Bobbi)
  - movement building / alliances (Katrina)
  - team building and communication (Bobbi)
  - morale and motivation / avoiding burnout (Katrina)
  - Geographic Information Systems (John)

Reason I chose these workshops:

9. Which workshop/s do you feel were of greatest benefit to you? Why?
10. The seven trainers used a range of workshop styles and formats: factual presentation of facts and ideas, small group exercises, personal reflection, practical tasks, etc. Which workshop approaches worked best for you and why?
11. What did you learn most from?
  - the workshop leader's experience
  - the workshop leader's knowledge
  - other participants' experience
  - other participants' knowledge

- my own experience
- my own knowledge
- personal reflection
- ideas generated through discussion
- practical ideas
- thought provoking exercises

Describe:

12. How do you think the conference training might change your work?
13. What opportunities have you had to apply the training since the conference?
14. How has the training influenced your environmental work?
15. What aspects of your environmental work would benefit from further training?
16. What plans or ideas do you have for enhancing your environmental work?
17. Can you suggest how QCC might help train and support environmentalists?

Thankyou for your time. Please return this by the end of June 1998

## Environment Movement Trainers' Questionnaire

### ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT TRAINERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Objective: to explore educational philosophy/ies espoused by environment movement trainers

I am researching activist training as a way of contributing to the environment movement training project. These questions have been developed to help me understand the assumptions held by environmental trainers. Why are we doing it? What do we hope to achieve? How can trainers best enhance activism? Feel free to comment beyond the scope of the questions. Your input is greatly appreciated.

Please return by the end of July 1998 to:

James Whelan  
c/- QCC  
PO Box 12046  
Elizabeth St  
Brisbane 4002  
fax 07 3229 7992  
<qccqld@powerup.com.au>

1. What three or four words best describe your role as a trainer?
  - expert
  - facilitator
  - provocateur
  - group leader
  - co-participant
  - evaluator
  - resource person
  - other -

Why?
2. What are the differences between your roles as trainer and the participants' roles?
3. Which sorts of things do you think workshop participants learn most from?
  - your experience
  - your knowledge
  - information you present
  - other participants' experience
  - other participants' knowledge
  - their own experience

- their own knowledge
- personal reflection
- ideas generated through discussion
- practical ideas
- thought provoking / participatory exercises
- the learning atmosphere
- other -

Why?

4. What are the three or four primary purposes of environmental activist training?
  - to facilitate personal change and growth
  - to facilitate social change, to combat social/political/economic oppression
  - to help people participate in civic society
  - to expand people's minds
  - to engage people in experiential learning - helping develop problem solving skills
  - to help people learn particular behaviour/s
  - other -

Why?

5. Define the ideal learning space for the sorts of training/workshops you like to run
  - what does it look like? (the physical environment)
  - what does it feel like? (atmosphere amongst participants, between them and you)
  - what resources are required?
  - describe the ideal seating arrangements.

Why?

6. Should training ideally happen where people work or somewhere else? What are the pros and cons of training conferences like Samford and Adelaide which take people from their work environment for several days?
7. What is the ideal length for a workshop (or training program)? How did you find running two to three hour workshops at the Samford conference? Is this long enough/too long?
8. Several participants expressed a desire to go into greater depth in training than allowed at Samford. Do you have suggestions for how this might be

achieved? How would this help?

9. Which group or groups stand to benefit most from activist training?

- full time (professional) environmentalists
- part time volunteers
- any active citizen
- everyone - society
- the environment
- trainers
- other -

Why?

10. What do you see as the ideal outcomes of activist training?

- increased knowledge
- increased understanding
- increased skill/s
- attitudinal change
- behavioural change
- values change
- changed power relations
- social change
- other –

Why are these important?

11. How are your workshops generally structured? What elements are generally included? Do you have a preferred structure or set of activities?

- presentation of information and ideas
- describing experience (yours/others)
- story telling
- group discussion
- small group exercises
- individual exercises
- practical tasks
- writing tasks
- other

Why?

12. How do you decide what activities to include in workshops? What influences your decisions?
13. How do you decide which learning methods to include in workshops? What influences your decisions?
14. Briefly describe your educational philosophy as it relates to training environmental workers. What do activists most need to learn and how can they most effectively learn these things?
15. How important is follow-up to training workshops? Why? How can follow-up be best integrated into a training program?
16. My reading suggests action research networks are an excellent approach to professional development. What do you think about this approach? What opportunities might there be for collaborative learning within the environment movement?

## Catalytic outcomes: Cycle advocates' and MAP (anecdote)

Eric joined Smogbusters in late 1997, attending meetings regularly and contributing actively to the group's campaign activities. As a keen cyclist, he was peripherally involved in Critical Mass and the Bicycle Institute of Queensland. He had minimal prior activist experience. During the course of the year, Eric became increasingly involved with the group, representing QCC and Smogbusters in consultative processes, researching and writing submissions and attending meetings. Eric also chaired the group's meetings occasionally.

In July, Eric was nearly struck from his bicycle by a Brisbane bus on the Victoria Bridge. He caught up with the bus then physically obstructed it by placing his bike on the road, refusing to allow the bus to pass until the driver acknowledged he should have given right of way: that cyclists had the right to use the buslane. Eric's one-man direct action was highly successful. Following this protest, Eric negotiated with Queensland Police, Brisbane Transport, Queensland Transport and BIQ concerning policies for these lanes. Bus drivers received training in cyclist awareness. Eric's letter to the *Courier Mail* sparked a feature article and focused attention on the issue. A photograph of Eric followed by a bus was used in the press on several occasions.

Eric came to the Bill Moyer workshop on campaign planning in August. In workshops, he spoke of learning a lot about activism through involvement with Smogbusters and his freelance cyclist advocacy work.

In October, Eric became frustrated with the lack of planning and strategising for Critical Mass events and convened a casual workshop on campaign planning (drawing on Bill Moyer's MAP theory) at the Jazzy Cat café one Friday evening. About twenty-five people turned up. Eric distributed copies of *The Practical Strategist* and talked through the basics: the eight stage model and four roles of activism. Throughout his talk, Eric invited comments and personal observations. The workshop was very participatory.

Toward the end of the session, attention turned to Critical Mass and how the MAP model might be utilised to enhance effective outcomes in terms of community support, motorists' attitudes, changed policies and practices and the culture of cyclist advocacy networks.

When I met with Eric in November he said he was learning *so much* through his work with Smogbusters and critical mass he had decided to leave his research work with the University of Queensland Faculty of Business Management in order to seek a role in an ENGO. Eric eventually became coordinator of the Smogbusters project in Brisbane when I left.

Eric spoke of his learning as "reflecting on the fireworks". In the midst of a heated campaign, activists tend not to think much about the 'fireworks'. Eric could see that he actively created theory through reflection and had developed a cohesive theory of social change.

Text from Eric's (email) workshop invitation:

A lot of changes have been happening with Critical Mass in recent months, including a move towards better organisation and less confrontational attitudes. All cyclists are invited to a Pre-Mass meeting at the Jazzy Cat this Friday evening, which is one week before the next CM. Anyone who has ever had a bad experience with Critical Mass is especially encouraged to come along and give your input as to why Critical Mass does not appeal to you.

For this meeting, I thought I would bring some info from Bill Moyer's "Successful Social Movements" workshop that I attended in August. Bill Moyer has been an activist in the States for about 40 years, and in that time he has developed models to show how social movements can be successful, how to identify the different stages of any movement, and the different roles played by activists.

The workshop really changed the way I look at activism, and the way I look at the world. Every movement I've been involved with, and every movement anyone else at the workshop happened to bring up, fit perfectly into Bill's models. I came away feeling wise and patient, instead of frustrated and disempowered.

We'll be looking at Bill's knowledge in a Critical Mass context, but this is relevant to any more general cycling advocate since Critical Mass is merely a sub-movement of the larger movement of increased cycling, as well as any number of other larger social movements.

## QCC Training Needs Survey March 1999

### MEMO

**To** QCC Staff, Volunteers and Executive  
**From** James  
**Date** 09/03/99  
**Re** Training

At the February meeting, QCC's Executive Committee resolved to support the development of a training program for staff, members and member groups. Rob McArthur and I offered to get the ball rolling. We have briefly discussed training at two staff meetings since then and staff have circulated a list of topics offered by a training company and a database of environment movement trainers (mostly based in NSW).

The question is – who wants what training when where why with whom for how much?

Some common training topics are readily arranged at minimal cost. Basic or introductory workshops in media skills, volunteer management, meeting facilitation, decision making processes, campaign planning and nonviolence fall into this category. In Brisbane there are people who could be asked to facilitate this sort of program. Phil Dickie, for instance, has previously co-facilitated a successful workshop on media skills.

Other topics require skill/experience and expert facilitators would probably be more appropriate. Conflict resolution and negotiation, organisational learning, avoiding burnout and team building fall into this category. The Social Change Training and Resource Centre in northern NSW (Katrina Shields and Bobbi Allan) facilitate this sort of work, generally as an in-house program with as many as possible of the staff/exec/volunteer team participating.

Then there are other fields of training – administrative/management skills, research skills, computer skills, lobbying skills .... You name it.

In the early 90's, the Commonwealth introduced the training levy whereby all employers with more than a few staff were expected to direct 6% of their human resources budget toward training. In the environment movement we generally spend very little (not enough, but some).

To help the Exec know what training you are interested in, please spend just a few moments thinking about it and put pen to paper on the attached sheet. Be as specific as possible – if you know an excellent trainer or a course you've had your eye on for a while, let us know.

## QCC Staff, Executive and Volunteer Training Needs Survey March 1999

Name

1. Some topics for training are suggested below. Indicate those you consider most important in helping you become more effective in your work. Number the squares from 1 (your highest priority) to 10 (lowest priority)
  - working with the media
  - working with volunteers
  - meeting facilitation
  - decision making processes
  - campaign planning
  - lobbying/negotiation skills
  - nonviolence (theory/practice/campaigns)
  - computer skills
  - database (eg Access, m'ship dbase)
  - spreadsheet (eg Excel, MYOB)
  - word processing
  - internet, world wide web
  - team building (eg QCC staff team)
  - conflict resolution
  - other
  
2. What other training topics or areas do you feel would benefit your work with QCC? (indicate priority as above)
  
3. Are there particular training courses you are aware of and would like to undertake? If so, please provide details.
  
4. What is the most convenient time for you to participate in training sessions?
  - weekends
  - weekdays
  - during work hours
  - outside work hours
  
5. Where would you prefer to do training?
  - at QCC
  - training centre
  - retreat / camp
  - at home

6. Do you have provision for training in your budget?
7. Are there training workshops you could facilitate or co-facilitate? Provide details.
8. Would you be willing to help organise training workshops – liaising with trainers, arranging venues, etc.
  - no
  - yes I could help by:
9. What training have you received since commencing work with QCC?
10. Any other comments

Your responses are confidential.

Are you happy for this information to be used in my research into teaching and learning for environmental activism?

YES       NO

## Catalytic outcomes: Earth Raves (anecdote)

Late in 1997, QCC executive and staff met at Carol's (QCC Chair) house to discuss progress with our strategic planning and ideas for organisational restructuring. For the first hour, a former QCC activist gave us a lecture on everything that was wrong with our organisation. She had been QCC's coordinator or project officer some years ago. At that time, QCC was more community-based with a stronger emphasis on demonstrations and grassroots activity. Since that time, we have become progressively more reformist in our strategies, directing the majority of our time and effort toward government committees, consultation, etc. Her approach was very negative.

I had just started work on this research project and had some ideas for activist learning and support that I was keen to try out at work. When the QCC veteran finished, I said I'd been talking with QCC staff (as part of my action research study of QCC activist skills) and thinking about how I could contribute to a sharing of ideas and experience. I proposed starting a regular session when activists from QCC and other environment groups could come together and share stories of their work through informal story telling. I modelled this idea partly on the Heart Politics methods and partly on ideas emerging from my interviews with QCC staff.

The other idea I shared was to develop an environmental apprenticeship or internship whereby people interested in developing activist skills could work closely with experienced QCC staff. This was another idea emerging from my interviews at QCC and from my reading (Mitchell Thomashow's *Ecological Identity*).

The group at Carol's house that night seemed generally interested in both ideas but we didn't formalise any recommendations for action.

I didn't start on either idea immediately. Christmas holidays and the early New Year rush intervened. Early the following year, all QCC staff received a bundle of fliers to promote QCC's new *Earth Raves* program. Carol had developed this program of regular guests speaking about their environmental work at a local café. The program was promoted as "debates, tales and discussions about human impacts upon the earth" intended to "inspire, entertain, stimulate and educate". The speakers included celebrities, journalists and scientists.

This program had clearly been inspired by my proposal. If active environmentalists in the region attended these evenings, would they also be interested in what I had in mind? Would the two things clash?

I thought about how the two approaches differed. The story telling I had in mind was intimate rather than public. I imagined the speaker describing their work in some detail – perhaps beginning with a short account of the environmental issue they were working on, but then focusing on campaign strategies. I imagined some honesty about the shortcomings and failures of the campaigns along with celebration of success. I anticipated people engaging

with each other to brainstorm the strategies adopted by the person telling the story, generating alternative approaches that may circumvent obstacles faced in that person's campaign.

Earth Raves seemed to be have been influenced by my idea. For a time, I didn't attend. I couldn't stay away when Professor Ian Lowe spoke at the fourth monthly session. The café was crowded. Ian spoke well - passionately and with great humour. Ian's experience of academic advocacy at the highest levels (he had recently chaired the first Australian *State of the Environment* Report) meant I could hardly look to him as a potential role model. I could admire his grasp of the science around global warming and appreciate his interpretation of contemporary political developments, but I could not consider his strategic approach directly relevant to my activist work.

I reflected on comments Fran Peavey made at Heart Politics in April.

It's not following the 'star' model, even if they bring someone in, like me... we struggle not to have 'star' model social change, but levelling aspects. I think that those are *unusual* in social change conferences.

I saw Carol had adopted the 'star' approach. Carol had a strong academic background. In my interview with her about learning to be an activist at QCC, Carol has identified scientists as her mentors.

**Interview questions: Heart Politics March 1998**

1. What do people learn at Heart Politics that directly enhances their activism? [Can you suggest groupings for these things that are learnt? Are there important things that aren't learnt? Are there any groups missing? How should these things be prioritised? Did Heart Politics reflect your priorities?]
2. How does a gathering or experience like Heart Politics help people become more effective agents for social change? (and why?)
3. People say Heart Politics is as much about process as it is about content. How do you think the Heart Politics approach enhances teaching and learning?
4. How do you like to learn? What works and what doesn't? Why?
5. Two recent environment movement conferences have attempted to enhance activist skills by running workshops on media skills, campaign planning and other topics. Heart Politics focuses much more on feelings and relationships than on skills. How do you think these two different approaches contribute to effective activism?
6. Which training needs are best met through a Heart Politics approach? Can you suggest other ways to develop activist skills? How would you go about training activists?

Your responses are confidential.

Are you happy for this information to be used in my research into teaching and learning for environmental activism?

YES  NO

## Heart Politics Workshop Prompts, September 1998

### Teaching and learning for activism

#### Heart Politics workshop - September 1998

**Katrina Shields and James Whelan**

### QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

If you are happy to share your thoughts about these questions, James would love to interview you during this Heart Politics or share thoughts via email.

1. What is effective activism? What is ineffective activism?
2. To what extent have you acquired the skills and abilities you need to effect desired social changes?
3. How has it happened?
  - primarily through experience
  - through formal training
  - learning from others / mentoring
  - reading (if so, what?)
  - workshops and conferences
4. How can we intentionally enhance our effectiveness as activists?

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION DURING WORKSHOP

5. Have you organised teaching and learning for activism? (for yourself / for others)
6. What activist training resources are you aware of (in your community / further afield)?
  - people / organisations
  - print / audiovisual materials
  - workshops / conferences / gatherings
7. What training and support needs are you aware of in your group / community / organisation?
 

Environmental activists and organisations are contributing to a national environment movement training project by:

  - organising conferences
  - sharing resources
  - developing a directory of trainers

- establishing activist web sites
  - How can we build on that networking, reaching out across social movements and contributing constructively to positive social change?
8. Where and how can we share our experiences in training for activism (publications, networking, gatherings ...)

## Proposed Curriculum “Environmental Advocacy”

### **COURSE OUTLINE: 7777AES ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY AUSTRALIAN SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES**

Faculty:	<b>Faculty of Environmental Sciences</b>
School:	<b>Australian School of Environmental Studies</b>
Course/s:	<b>Master of Environmental Education</b> Master of Environmental Management Master of Environmental Science
Status:	<b>Elective</b>
Modes:	<b>Flexible Delivery and Internal</b>
Credit Point Value:	<b>10</b>
Prerequisites:	<b>Nil</b>

### **Brief Description**

The environment movement contributes to environmental action at a local, national and international level. This course presents an opportunity to become familiar with the skills, methods and achievements of environmental advocacy through both academic and experiential learning.

### **Objectives**

- Explore the contribution by advocates and advocacy organisations to social change for sustainability
- Develop a critical understanding of the strategies, structures and history of the environment movement
- Learn skills and strategies contributing to effective advocacy through participatory and experiential learning processes.

### **Organisation and Learning Experiences**

The course is offered in both flexible delivery and internal modes. This course outline contains advice for students enrolled in both modes.

There will be a weekend workshop held on the GU Nathan Campus (\*\*date to be determined – mid-semester). Attendance at this workshop is highly recommended for both internal and flexible mode students.

## 1. On-line Study

External / flexible students are expected to complete a series of integrated activities which are presented in a Study Guide located on a WWW Flexible Learning Site (the GU Student Portal). On the student portal you will find Study Guide material, a class Noticeboard and a discussion forum.

The **Study Guide** provides a summary of each of the topics in the unit and guides to the readings that will prepare you for the assessment tasks.

The **Noticeboard** is where the course convenor posts important notices. It should be accessed every Monday morning.

The **Discussion Forum** is the place for students to discuss issues in the on-line Study Guide and your Readings, to ask questions - primarily for other students to answer - and debate points of concern. The **Discussion Forum** is compulsory for all students.

If you do not have Internet access, please contact the course convenor urgently  
Tel 07 3875 7457 Fax 07 3875 7459 Email James.Whelan@mailbox.gu.edu.au

## 2. Lectures

*2 hours per week during weeks 2-14*

## 3. Seminars

*Presented in two formats depending upon where students live.*

Students are expected to keep up to date with the reading schedule. Experiential and interactive group activities during weekly sessions are intended to assist students to explore, form and articulate theories of change, drawing on both theory and practice.

**Students who live INSIDE the Brisbane metropolitan area** are expected to attend weekly seminars. These will involve discussion and debate on the Study Guide materials and readings for the week and seminars presented by students.

**Students who live OUTSIDE the Brisbane metropolitan area** will complete activities each week on the interactive Discussion Forum. These activities will involve the same types of activities as the Brisbane seminars except for student tutorials.

**4. A weekend workshop** will be held at the Griffith University EcoCentre. This workshop will focus on developing students' familiarity and critical understanding of conceptual material covered during the Semester. It also provides an opportunity to complete and discuss activities. The workshop is primarily intended for flexible delivery (off campus) students. Internal students are also encouraged to attend. Registration is required early in the Semester to facilitate workshop planning.

## 5. Placement

Students are encouraged to undertake one or more volunteer placements totalling 40 - 60 hours in an environmental or other community-based advocacy organisation. Hours may be accrued steadily throughout the semester. Placement provides unique opportunities to acquire a rich insider view of the approach to social change adopted by environment groups, particularly by working as a member of a campaign group. Placements are coordinated and monitored by the course convenor. Students are expected to post weekly progress reports on the Discussion Forum.

### Assessment Guide

#### Assessment Item 1: Discussion starter and synthesis

Due Date      Designated week during Semester

Length:        2000 words

Weighting     20%

This item consists of three parts:

- 1) By week 2 of the Semester students must nominate one week of the Semester during which to post to the on-line discussion forum a *discussion starter* corresponding to the week's topic. This short (~1000 words) paper must critically discuss the week's recommended readings, draw on relevant literature and contemporary environmental advocacy efforts. Additional references including web links are encouraged.
- 2) Students are required to respond to a minimum of three discussion starters. These responses (approximately 500 words) should demonstrate your comprehension of the main ideas in the readings, and engage with the ideas in the discussion starter. This might involve, for instance, agreeing or disagreeing with the author, and providing examples from contemporary issues and campaigns.
- 3) Synthesise your initial paper and the responses generated to develop a succinct and well-referenced paper (up to 1500 words) on the topic for submission.

#### Assessment Criteria

- Evidence of wide and relevant reading
- Relevant contemporary references and examples
- Critical and analytical thinking
- Fluent expression and clear structure
- Correct punctuation, referencing and grammar

**Assessment Item 2: Major project/ case study**

Due Date: Week 14 (External students to post by Friday)  
 Length: 3000 words  
 Weighting: 80%

By week 4, develop and negotiate a project entailing a case study of an environmental advocacy group, organisation or campaign of personal interest. Ideally, this should include participant-observation including up to eighty hours volunteering in order to gain an inside perspective of a group or campaign’s objectives, change theory, strategies, tactics and roles. This project also requires students to consider how contemporary environmental advocacy efforts support or refute movement theory explored during the semester.

Assessment criteria

- Innovative and appropriate research design
- Evidence of wide and relevant reading
- Relevant contemporary references and examples
- Critical and analytical thinking
- Fluent expression and clear structure
- Correct punctuation, referencing and grammar

**Generic Skills Developed in this Subject**

	On-line discussion starter and synthesis	Major project / case study	Weekly classes & on-line discussion	Weekend workshop	Environmental NGO Placement
Written communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Oral communication	✓			✓	✓
Problem solving	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quantitative skills		✓		✓	✓
Qualitative skills	✓	✓		✓	✓
Deductive logic skills	✓	✓	✓		✓
Team work		✓		✓	✓

## Texts and Supporting Materials

### Prescribed Textbooks

Bobo, K., Kendall, J. & Max, S. (2001) *Organising for Social Change in the 1990s*, Seven Locks, Washington.

7777AES Subject Reader

The Subject Reader is a compulsory purchase for all students. Much of the theoretical work of this subject is covered in these readings. In order to make classes and Internet forums as practical as possible, students are urged to complete all set readings for each week well ahead of class.

### Additional Recommended Reading (Included in Course Reader)

Alinsky, S. (1970) *Rules for Radicals* Chapter 2 “Of Means and Ends” pp.24-47

Brulle, R.J. (2000) *Agency, Democracy and Nature: The U.S. Environmental Movement from a Critical Theory Perspective*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. pp.173-235.

Bullard, R. (2000) *Dumping in Dixie: race, class and environmental quality*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado. pp.37-74.

Bullard, R. (1999) Anatomy of Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement, in J.Dryzek, & D.Schlosberg, eds. *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York. pp.471-492

Burrowes, R.J. (1996) *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: a Gandhian Approach*, State University of New York Press, Albany. pp.207-245.

Cohen, I. (1997) *Green Fire*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney. pp.59-80.

Doyle, T.J. (2000) *Green Power: The Environment Movement in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney. pp.74-87.

Doyle, T. & McEachern, D. (1998) *Environment and Politics*, Routledge, London. pp.81-105., pp.140-159.

Dryzek, J. & Schlosberg, D., eds. *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York. pp.162-186. pp.491-503.

Edwards, M. & Gaventa, J. (2001) eds. *Global Citizen Action*, Earthscan, London. pp.43-58.

Hutton, D. & Connors, L. (1999) *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Pp.92-124.

Macy, J. (1991) *World As Lover, World As Self*, Parallax Press, Berkeley, California. Ch. 17 “The Greening of Self” pp.183-192.

Macy, J.R. (1983) *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia. pp.1-19

Moyer, B. (1987) “The Movement Action Plan: a strategic framework describing the eight stages of successful social movements”, Social Movement Empowerment Project, San Francisco.

Moyer, B., Finley, M & Soifer, S. (2001) *Doing Democracy: The Map model for organising social movements*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC. Pp.137-151, 176-185

*Non Violence Today* (journal)

Peavey, F., Levy, M. & Varon, C. (1986) *Heart Politics*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia PA. Pp.73-91

Peavey, F. (1995) "Strategic Questioning for Personal and Social Change" *In Context: a Quarterly of Humane Sustainable Culture* Spring 1995. On-line available at <http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC40/Peavey.htm>

Road Alert (1997) *Road Raging: Top Tips for Wrecking Roadbuilding* Road Alert! Newbury, England. Pp.1-3, 85-102

Seed, J., Macy, J., Fleming P. & Naess, A. (1988) *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC.

Sharp, G. (1968) Types of Principled Non Violence in Hare, A.P. & Blumberg, H.H. (1968) *Nonviolent Direct Action. American Cases: Psychological Analyses*, Corpus Publications, Washington D.C. pp.273-313

Seed, J., Macy, J., Fleming, P. & Naess, A. *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC

Shields, K. (1991) *In the Tiger's Mouth - an empowerment guide for social action*, Millennium Books, Newtown, Sydney. pp.54-68

Thiele, L.P. (1999) *Environmentalism for a new Millenium: the Challenge of Coevolution*, Oxford University Press, New York. pp.3-29.

Wehr, P.E. (1968) A Southern Sit-In, in A.P.Hare & Blumberg, H.H. (1968) *Nonviolent Direct Action. American Cases: Psychological Analyses*, Corpus Publications, Washington D.C. pp.100-106.

Whelan, J. (2002 pending) A Hard Road to Learn, in J.Crowther and I.Martin ed. *Popular Education: Stretching the Academy*, Network for Popular Education, Scotland.

On-line directory of environmental advocacy groups

## Proposed Study Schedule

Week	Unit / Topic	Readings
1	<b>Unit 1: The environment movement</b> Topic 1.1 Movement Structure and history	1.1a-b Optional: 1.1c-d
2	Topic 1.2 Case Studies	1.2a-b
3	Topic 1.3 'Big picture' political analysis	1.3.a-b
4	<b>Unit 2: Environmental philosophy – Shades of green</b> Topic 2.1 Deep ecology	2.1a – c
5	Topic 2.2 Environmental Justice	2.2a-d
6	<b>Unit 3: Approaches to collective action</b> Topic 3.1 Movement Action Plan: The eight stages and four roles associated with effective social movements	3.1a
7	Topic 3.2 The Rebel Role - Non violent action and direct action	3.2a-d
8	Topic 3.3 The Reformer Role - Committees, submissions, lobbying and legislation	3.3a-d Optional: 3.3e-f
9	Topic 3.4 The Citizen Role – Electoral politics	To be determined
10	Topic 3.4 The Change Agent Role & Personal Growth	3.5a
11	<b>Unit 4: Innovative advocacy strategies</b> Topic 4.1 Strategic Questioning	4.1a-b
12	Topic 4.2 Electronic activism	4.2a
13	Case studies	
14	Case studies	

### Draft Content

We have found that a very effective way to help students understand the present social order is to throw them into conflict situations where the real nature of our society is reflected in all its ugliness.

(Miles Horton , Founder of the Highlander Centre, 1933)

#### **Unit 1: The environment movement**

The first unit provides an introduction to non-government environmental advocacy organisations, from volunteer grassroots groups to established 'insider' groups. Contemporary advocacy efforts including the Anti-Globalisation movement and the campaign to legislate land-clearing in

Queensland will be explored in order to (1) provide an overview and structure to aspects of advocacy covered throughout the semester and (2) model the approach expected in students' final projects.

### **Topic 1.1 Movement Structure and history**

#### Readings:

1.1a Hutton, D. & Connors, L. (1999) *A History of the Australian Environment Movement*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. pp.92-124.

1.1b Thiele, L.P. (1999) *Environmentalism for a new Millenium: the Challenge of Coevolution*, Oxford University Press, New York. pp.3-29.

#### Further reading

Doyle, T.J. (2000) *Green Power: The Environment Movement in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney. Ch.5.

Doyle, T. & McEachern, D. (1998) *Environment and Politics*, Routledge, London. pp.81-105.

### **Topic 1.2 Case Studies**

Examples to include Anti-Globalisation movement, anti-nuclear movement, Inner City Bypass,

#### Readings:

1.2a Moyer, B., Finley, M & Soifer, S. (2001) *Doing Democracy: The Map model for organising social movements*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC. pp.137-151, 176-185

1.2b Whelan, J. (2002 pending) A Hard Road to Learn, in J.Crowther and I.Martin ed. *Popular Education: Stretching the Academy*, Network for Popular Education, Scotland.

#### Websites

Highlander Center <http://www.highlandercenter.org/>

Earthforce (Youth for a Change program) <http://www.earthforce.org/>

### **Topic 1.3 Making change happen: political analysis and theories of change**

#### Readings:

1.3a Bobo, K., Kendall, J. & Max, S. (2001) *Organising for Social Change in the 1990s*, Seven Locks, Washington. Chapters 19 & 26

1.3b Campaignstrategy.org On-line at <http://www.campaignstrategy.org/>

## **Unit 2: Environmental philosophy - shades of green**

Council of All Beings, Naess (“community therapy”), Moyer

### **Topic 2.1 Deep ecology**

#### Readings:

2.1a Macy, J. (1991) *World As Lover, World As Self* Parallax Press, Berkeley, California. Ch. 17 “The Greening of Self” pp.183-192.

2.1b Macy, J.R. (1983) *Despair and Personal Power in the Nuclear Age*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia. \*\*pp

2.1c Seed, J., Macy, J., Fleming P. & Naess, A. (1988) *Thinking Like a Mountain: Towards a Council of All Beings*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC. pp.35-39, 79-95.

### **Topic 2.2 Environmental Justice: Race, Gender, Spirituality and Class**

#### Readings:

2.2a Brulle, R.J. (2000) *Agency, Democracy and Nature: The U.S. Environmental Movement from a Critical Theory Perspective*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. pp.195-235.

2.2b Bullard, R. (2000) *Dumping in Dixie: race, class and environmental quality*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado. pp.37-74.

2.2c Bullard, R. (1999) *Anatomy of Environmental Racism and the Environmental Justice Movement*, in J.Dryzek, & D.Schlosberg, eds. *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York. pp.471-492.

2.2d Dryzek, J. & Schlosberg, D., eds. *Debating the Earth: The Environmental Politics Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York. pp.162-186. pp.491-503.

## **Unit 3: Approaches to collective action**

### **Topic 3.1 Movement Action Plan: The eight stages and four roles associated with effective social movements**

#### Readings:

3.1a Moyer, B. (1987) “The Movement Action Plan: a strategic framework describing the eight stages of successful social movements”, Social Movement Empowerment Project, San Francisco.

### **Topic 3.2 The Rebel Role - Non violent action and direct action**

#### Readings:

3.2a Road Alert (1997) *Road Raging: Top Tips for Wrecking Roadbuilding* Road

Alert! Newbury, England. Pp.1-3, 85-102

3.2b Alinsky, S. (1970) *Rules for Radicals* Chapter 2 “Of Means and Ends” pp.24-47

3.2c Gene, S. (1968) Types of Principled NonViolence in Hare, A.P. & Blumberg, H.H. (1968) *Nonviolent Direct Action*. American Cases: Psychological Analyses, Corpus Publications, Washington D.C. pp.273-313

3.2d Wehr, P.E. (1968) A Southern Sit-In in A.P. & Blumberg, H.H. (1968) *Nonviolent Direct Action*. American Cases: Psychological Analyses, Corpus Publications, Washington D.C. pp.100-106.

#### Further reading

3.2e Non Violence Today (journal)

3.2f Burrowes, R.J. (1996) *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: a Gandhian Approach*, State University of New York Press, Albany. pp.207-245.

3.2g Cohen, I. (1997) *Green Fire*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney. pp.59-80.

#### Activities

Identify a contemporary campaign that has utilised direct action or nonviolent direct action as a key strategy or tactic. Explore the apparent rationale for this tactical choice. Comment on its effectiveness. What other strategies and tactics might have been effective in achieving the intended outcome.

### **Topic 3.3 The Reformer Role - committees, submissions, lobbying and legislation**

#### Readings:

3.3a Bobo, K., Kendall, J. & Max, S. (2001) *Organising for Social Change in the 1990s*, Seven Locks, Washington. Chapter\*\* pp.\*\*

3.3b Dryzek J. (1997) *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses* Oxford University Press, Oxford. pp.84-101.

3.3c Princen, T. & Finger, M. (1994) *Environmental NGOs in World Politics: linking the local and the global* Routledge, New York. Ch.1.

3.3d Doyle, T.J. (2000) *Green Power: The Environment Movement in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney. pp.140-159.

3.3e Brulle, R.J. (2000) *Agency, Democracy and Nature: The U.S. Environmental Movement from a Critical Theory Perspective*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. pp.173-193.

### **Topic 3.4 The Citizen Role – electoral politics**

#### Readings:

3.4a Doyle, T. & McEachern, D. (1998) *Environment and Politics*, Routledge, London. pp.106-129.

3.4b Dryzek, J. & Schlosberg, D., eds. *Debating the Earth: The Environmental*

*Politics Reader*, Oxford University Press, New York. pp.162-186. pp.162-186.

### **Topic 3.5 The Change Agent Role & Personal Growth**

Financial autonomy, community enterprises, collectives and cooperatives, Bicycle Revolution, Reverse Garbage

#### Readings:

3.5a Shields, K. (1991) *In the Tiger's Mouth - an empowerment guide for social action*, Millennium Books, Newtown, Sydney. pp.54-68.

## **Unit 4: Innovative advocacy strategies**

### **Topic 4.1 Strategic Questioning**

#### Readings:

4.1a Peavey, F., Levy, M. & Varon, C. (1986) *Heart Politics*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia PA.

4.1b Peavey, F. (1995) "Strategic Questioning for Personal and Social Change" *In Context: a Quarterly of Humane Sustainable Culture* Spring 1995. On-line available at <http://www.context.org/ICLIB/IC40/Peavey.htm>

### **Topic 4.2 Electronic activism**

#### Readings:

4.2a On-line directory of environmental advocacy groups

#### Activity:

Preview the website of an environmental advocacy organisation, identifying the group's social action and mobilisation strategies, tactics and environmental philosophy. Comment on how the site might be enhanced to promote achievement of the organisation's objectives. A list of urls is available from the student portal.

Appendix U

**QCC/FoE Activist training program 2002**