MONASH University

The Love Ethic in

International Rural Community Work

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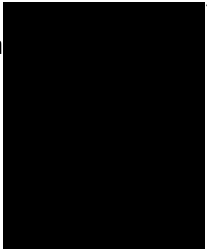
General Declaration

In accordance with Monash University Doctorate Regulation 17.2 Doctor of Philosophy and Research Master's regulations the following declarations are made:

I hereby declare that this thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

This thesis includes zero original papers published in peer reviewed journals and six unpublished publications. The core theme of the thesis is the Love Ethic in International Rural Community Work. The ideas, development and writing up of all the papers in the thesis were the principal responsibility of myself, the candidate, working within the Department of Social Work under the supervision of Professor Margaret Alston, Associate Professor Rosemary Sheehan and Dr. Deborah Western.

I have   tions of submitted papers in order to generate a consistent
presenta   esis.

Signed: **Date:**   11 June 2015

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to activists and community workers around our glorious planet who work in solidarity for an alternative world of equality, peace and universal flourishing of people and nature.

Acknowledgements

The theme of my doctoral research, love and social change, was originally developed as a 16-year old activist inspired to work with others to transform our world of inequality. I devoured bell hooks' text, *All About Love: New Visions,* and embraced love as a guiding ethic. I have since engaged in 15 years of love-based grassroots community work, feminist activism and participatory research in Australia and internationally. My doctoral research is a significant step in my journey of exploring, developing and articulating the love ethic as a theory of practice for structural change, and I acknowledge my co-inquirers, peers, mentors and community for their important contributions.

Obrigada barak, thank you very much and *muchas gracias* to my 21 co-inquirers from Liquica (Timor-Leste), Margaret River (Australia) and Lobitos (Peru) who participated in co-operative inquiries to explore love in our community work. The knowledge we generated belongs to all of us and I am privileged with your trust to share it. I also thank Mana Graciana, Maun Fortunato and Irene for supporting recruitment.

Thank you to my three wonderful supervisors at Monash University Department of Social Work: Prof. Margaret Alston for nurturing me as a radical feminist; A/Prof. Rosemary Sheehan for your methodological and process expertise; and Dr. Deb Western for encouraging me to embrace participatory research with feminist ethics. I also thank my supervisors and Felicity, Melanie, Chrisanta, Miriam and Tom for reading my work.

My doctoral study was conducted alongside personal participation in many transformative activist collectives: Gender, Leadership and Social Sustainability Research Unit, Asha Global, Women's Rights Caucus at the 58th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Margaret River Regional Environment Centre, Save Mowen Forest, Augusta-Margaret River Local Laws for Community and Nature and Margaret River Professional Social Work Collective. I acknowledge my peers for your love of people and planet. I also recognise the many women who nurtured me as an activist, community worker, feminist and researcher: Mum, Joanna, Crissy, Myra, Tarna, Sally, Jani, Jenny and my aunties at Wirraka Maya, Michelle, Irene, Chrisanta, Jayne, Emily, Melanie, Eleanor, Jess, Jaime, Tracy, Giz and Felicity.

Thank you to my close friends and family for your encouragement, enthusiasm and provocative questions. Finally, my deep gratitude to the love of my life, Tom, for your hope, patience, political banter and vision. It is a joy to share life with you and our first child, Sunny Justice, who joined us shortly after my thesis submission! May you always love and be loved.

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Acronyms

AASW	Australian Association of Social Workers
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ARIA	Accessibility/Remoteness Index for Australia
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FONGTIL	Forum Organizasaun Non-Governmental Timor Leste
FPAR	feminist participatory action research
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
IASSW	International Association of Schools of Social Work
ICSW	International Council on Social Welfare
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
INEI	Instituto Nacional de Estadistica e Informacion
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LNG	liquefied natural gas
NSD	National Statistics Directorate
NVDA	nonviolent direct action
OECD	Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation
OWG	Open Working Group
PAR	Participatory Action Research
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

Abstract

Influential 20th Century activists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Thich Nhat Hanh were motivated by *love*, a key feature of the human condition (Maturana & Verden-Zoller 2008). However, the social work profession generally avoids love as an ethic of practice (Banks 2006; Butot 2004; Morley & Ife 2002). Yet feminist bell hooks (2000) claims love can transform dominant structures of inequality, such as capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation. Drawing from Peck (1978), hooks describes love as '[t]he will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth' (2000, p. 4). Ingredients of love are care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust, with honest and open communication, forgiveness and giving.

This *Thesis including Published Works* considers the love ethic in international rural community work. It includes six sole-authored journal articles with an exegesis to analyse my research regarding love in community work and contribute an alternative paradigm to social work and community work theory and practice.

The research questions are: What is love in international rural community work? and, How can love transform structural inequality? My methodology was informed by *change-oriented research,* a four-part epistemology of change I developed that involves shared power (McCall 2005; Mikkelsen 2005), participation (Arnstein 1969; Davidson 1998; Heron 1996; Pretty et al. 1995), action (Greenwood & Levin 2007; Stringer 2007) and contextual reflexivity (Delva, Allen-Meares & Momper 2010; Denzin & Giardina 2009; Saukko 2003). *Change-oriented research* is a collaborative process to understand and transform social injustices through cycles of action and reflection, generating multiple and contextualised knowledges that empower participants to collectively take action for sustainable change.

Through the co-operative inquiry method (Heron 1996), I worked with community workers, volunteers, activists and community members as co-inquirers (also referred to as co-researchers) in three case studies in Timor-Leste, Australia and Peru to collaboratively develop knowledge regarding love-based community work. Each co-operative inquiry used creative methods such as visual art, theatre, dialogue and storytelling (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010; Holt 2013; Knowles & Cole 2008; Leavy 2008; Markula 2006; Pauwels 2011).

I combined the inquiry outcomes into a theory of practice entitled *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change. The Love Ethic* is grounded in hooks' love-centred radical

feminism, dialogue (Freire 1989; Westoby & Dowling 2013), nonviolence (Gandhi 2005; Hanh 1993; King Jr. 1967a; Kelly & Sewell 1988) and the interconnectedness of people and nature. *The Love Ethic* has four features:

- It is based on values and universal rights of humans and nature;
- It promotes participatory, democratic and gender transformative community work processes that intertwine people and nature and actively challenge structures of power and inequality;
- It aims for structural change for universal wellbeing of people and nature; and,
- Love-based action is reciprocal and cyclical.

The Love Ethic supports social movements to collectively critique and transform inequitable systems.

This research is a radical contribution to social work theory and practice. I argue love is an ethical philosophy of action for progressive people's movements to bring about a new world order of equality and sustainability.

1 Introduction

Love is the most durable power in the world. This creative force… is the most potent instrument available in [hu]mankind's quest for peace and security (Martin Luther King Jr. 1963, pp. 40-41).

Love has inspired countless works of poetry, literature, art, music and film for thousands of years of human existence. Love is also a key construct of most spiritual philosophies. With multiple definitions, translations, applications and contexts, love is undeniably complex. It is also absent in the discourses of social work, community work, international development and social movements - despite the fact that some of the most influential activists of the last century, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Thich Nhat Hanh, were actively and openly motivated by love. The relevance of love to the human condition cannot be minimised (Maturana & Verden-Zoller 2008), yet the social work profession (which includes the activity of community work) and modern social movements generally do not openly practice love. Butot (2004) suggests that love is marginalised from social work due to the profession's 'colonialist history of missionary 'benevolence'' (p. 9), while Morley and Ife (2002) contend that in the increasingly rationalised space of social work, love is considered a private emotion that contradicts 'professional' practice. It seems that activists and practitioners are discouraged from recognising and embracing love as an ethical foundation, motivation and *modus operandi* of our work (Banks 2006). Instead, we are increasingly influenced by neoliberal ideology (Kenny 2006).

In response, this research explores how love can be an ethic of action for positive structural change in the social work sector of community work. It centres on two research questions: What is love in international rural community work? and, How can love transform structural inequality? In this *Thesis including Published Works*, I seek to answer these questions through six sole-authored articles that have been submitted for publication in relevant journals. The articles include:

- Godden, N (under review(a)), 'Change-oriented research: critical social work inquiry for 'a new world order'', *International Social Work.*
- Godden, N (under review(b)), 'Feminist ethics and co-operative inquiry: Reflections of theory and practice', *Action Research.*

- Godden, N (under review(c)), 'Love in community work in rural Timor-Leste: a co-operative inquiry for a participatory framework of practice', *Community Development Journal.*

- Godden, N (under review(d)), 'A co-operative inquiry about love using narrative, performative and visual methods', *Qualitative Research.*

- Godden, N (under review(e)), 'Love-based community work and the indigenous worldview of *buen vivir* in Peru*', British Journal of Social Work.*

- Godden, N. (under review(f)), 'The Love Ethic for Transformational Change: A radical theory of sustainability', *International Journal of Sustainability in Economic, Social and Cultural Context.*

The text of each article has been inserted into this thesis, and the style and formatting of each article may differ from that of the main thesis, depending on journal preferences.

This research is built on the hypothesis that love is a biological foundation of humanness (Maturana & Verden-Zoller 2008), and when learned, nurtured and practised, love can transform structures of inequality. I chose to study 'love' rather than terms such as 'compassion', 'care' and 'altruism' as a deliberate and provocative challenge to the pervasiveness of neoliberalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation in social and community work movements – ideologies that are uncomfortable with love as a progressive, collectivist and other-centred construct. I am particularly inspired by radical feminist bell hooks, whose seminal works on love provide grassroots feminist activists like me the knowledge, skills and courage to practice love (hooks 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003; 2004). In this thesis, hooks' name is spelt in lower case as per her stylistic preference.

In this research, I initiated feminist participatory action research with community workers in the rural communities of Liquica (Timor-Leste), Margaret River (Australia) and Lobitos (Peru). This study received written ethics approval from Monash University Human Ethics Research Committee. In each site, I worked intimately and systematically with a group of community workers, activists, volunteers and community members as co-inquirers (also referred to as co-researchers) to co-operatively inquire into the love ethic in community work. Based on the unique findings of this participatory research, I developed *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* (also described as *The Love Ethic*)*,* a framework of practice for radical changemakers. This framework, depicted in the image of a tree, suggests that love can be the values (roots), process (trunk and branches), outcomes (fruit) and reciprocal cycle of community work. *The Love Ethic* is an ethical framework that considers the values,

process and outcomes of action, challenging the philosophical division of theories of ethics. In this regard, *The Love Ethic* is a holistic ethical paradigm to transform structures of inequality. It is intended to spark discussion, strengthen social movements, provide comfort and stimulate individual and communal reflection.

In this introductory chapter, I discuss the research context and problem and the theoretical framework that guides my work. I then outline the research project, including the research aims and methodology. I also provide an outline of the thesis.

1.1   Context and research problem

As mentioned, I am not the first person to inquire about love. I recognise that many before me have undertaken a similar journey and they produced thought-provoking works and actions that significantly influenced our planet. Whether it is African-American civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr.'s powerful essay *Strength to Love* (1963), Vietnamese Buddhist activist Thich Nhat Hanh's evocative collection entitled *Love in Action* (1993), Russian writer Leo Tolstoy's text *The Law of Love and the Law of Violence* (1970)*,* or African-American radical feminist bell hooks' bestselling book *All About Love* (2000), I acknowledge that I write in esteemed company. This is both exhilarating and overwhelming. However, as a feminist activist committed to a personal ethic of love, I embrace the challenge to authentically research this aspect of social work and work with colleagues to develop an alternative ethical paradigm to our increasingly rationalised professional discourse.

I argue that love has remarkable potential in the social work profession and activist movements. It can be a force for transformational change, as demonstrated in nonviolent[1] activist movements across the globe (Chenoweth & Stephen 2011). However, in order to integrate love into modern social work discourse, we must overcome historical associations of love with charity models that perpetuate neo-colonialism and classism (Dickey 1980; Mendes 2008; Wenocur & Reisch 1989). As such, this research challenges narrow interpretations of love and explores love as progressive and humanist action to achieve a sustainable world of equality. To situate this study, I analyse the context and research problem; namely, dominant structures of global inequality and injustice that require

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[1] In this thesis I use the term 'nonviolence' (without a hyphen) for the activist philosophy promoted by Gandhi, King Jr. and others, and 'non-violence' (with a hyphen) to describe the act of literally refraining from violence. Although this spelling is consistent with most literature, some authors (such as Fernandes (2003)) label the activist philosophy as the hyphenated 'non-violence'.

transformation, the human biological capacity to love and the opportunity for activists to engage love as an ethical framework for structural change.

1.1.1   Dominant structures of inequality and injustice requiring transformation

This thesis explores the transformative potential of love to enable universal flourishing of people and planet. Human flourishing is 'a process of social participation in which there is a mutually enabling balance, within and between people, of autonomy, co-operation and hierarchy' (Heron 1996, p. 11). Nussbaum (2011) argues that human flourishing is dependent on the Capabilities Approach, a plural set of substantial freedoms that are 'so central that their removal makes a life not worthy of human dignity' (p. 31). In this thesis, I use Nussbaum's (2011, p. 33-34) list of ten Central Capabilities as a threshold for what constitutes a dignified and minimally flourishing life (summarised as follows):

1. Life.
2. Bodily health.
3. Bodily integrity.
4. Senses, imagination, and thought.
5. Emotions.
6. Practical reason.
7. Affiliation (including being able to live with others; and equality and non-discrimination).
8. Other species (Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature).
9. Play.
10. Control over one's environment (political and material).

Furthermore, I also consider the achievement of human rights, as outlined by various global declarations including the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, as pre-conditions for human flourishing. Importantly, human flourishing is interdependent with the flourishing of the planetary ecosystem (Heron 1996). Nussbaum suggests that her ten Central Capabilities provide a reasonable basis for the flourishing of non-human animals, but admits that the Capabilities Approach insufficiently explores environmental quality.

However, other authors provide insight into the notion of planetary flourishing / flourishing of nature. The *Earth Charter*, originally a United Nations initiative, was launched in 2000, and is an 'ethical framework for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century' (The Earth Charter Initiative 2012). It is endorsed by over 6,000 organisations

globally. The Charter explains planetary flourishing in the statement, 'The resilience of the community of life and the well-being of humanity depend upon preserving a healthy biosphere with all its ecological systems, a rich variety of plants and animals, fertile soils, pure waters, and clean air' (The Earth Charter Initiative 2012). Flourishing of nature is incumbent on the protection and restoration of the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life. Jorgensen and colleagues (2015) use ecosystem theory to explain that flourishing of nature relies upon 14 propositions of ecosystems, such as 'ecosystems conserve matter and energy and use growth regulations', 'ecosystems resist destructive changes' and 'ecosystems work together in networks to improve the resource use efficiency' (pp. 27-39). The authors argue that society must adopt nature's properties regarding limits to growth to generate sustainable development for the universal flourishing of people and planet. We must 'think like an ecosystem' (Jorgensen et al. 2015, p. 115), with a new paradigm that integrates people and planet as a 'single holistic, co-supporting life-environment system' (p. 118). However, in order to achieve this, and thus achieve the goal of universal flourishing of people and nature, inequitable societal structures require radical transformation.

In her discussion of love, bell hooks (2000) argues that the current world order is rooted in an ethic of domination, exemplified in inequitable systems of patriarchy, capitalism and racism, and these structures can only be transformed through love. It is clear that the mainstream human experience involves growing inequality, exclusion, injustice and environmental exploitation. The 2012 *Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development* by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), the International Association of Schools of Social Work (IASSW) and the International Council on Social Welfare (ICSW) identifies the following key issues in the current world order:

- 'the full range of human rights are available to only a minority of the world's population;
- unjust and poorly regulated economic systems, driven by unaccountable market forces, together with noncompliance with international standards for labour conditions and a lack of corporate social responsibility, have damaged the health and wellbeing of peoples and communities, causing poverty and growing inequality;
- cultural diversity and the right to self-expression facilitate a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence, but these rights are in danger due to aspects of globalisation which standardise and marginalize peoples, with especially damaging consequences for indigenous and first nation peoples;

- people live in communities and thrive in the context of supportive relationships, which are being eroded by dominant economic, political and social forces;
- people's health and wellbeing suffer as a result of inequalities and unsustainable environments related to climate change, pollutants, war, natural disasters and violence to which there are inadequate international responses' (p. 1).

These issues are widely evidenced in literature from across the globe that highlights four dominant structures that perpetuate stark and growing intersectional inequality: the structures of neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation. Transformation of these systems is necessary for a 'new world order' of peace, sustainability and equality - that is, equality of human rights (Thompson 1997), capabilities (Nussbaum 2011) and power. In this thesis, I argue that love is a key tool to transform structures of inequality.

The first global structure of inequality is neoliberal capitalism, a pervasive system that has entrenched wealth inequality. A recent report from Oxfam International (2015) states that in 2014, global wealth was concentrated in the hands of a wealthy elite: only 1% of the world's population owned 48% of the world's wealth. Furthermore, the richest 20% of the remaining 99% of the world's population owned most of the remaining 52% of wealth, leaving only 5.5% of the world's wealth being shared by 80% of the world's population. Additionally, the richest 80 people in the world owned the same amount of wealth as 50% of the world's population (3.5 billion people). Such findings are reiterated in Thomas Pikkety's text *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014), which shows that wealth inequality is the key result of unregulated capitalism. Shameless relationships between 'democratically-elected' governments and corporate powers have resulted in the corporatisation and commodification of basic human rights such as water, food, education and health (Oakley 2002).

Global injustice and exclusion caused by capitalism reflect the state of *liquid modernity* – a concept coined by Zygmunt Bauman (2000) that captures the fluidity and 'universal flexibility' (p. 135) of modern society. In his critique of modernity, Bauman recognises a melting of order through capitalist processes such as deregulation, individualization and liberalization, within which people can disengage from the system. In the state of liquid modernity, neoliberalism flourishes and the capitalist project of consumer choice is a value in its own right, whereby life is but a protracted shopping spree. Further, the neoliberal paradigm has enabled unprecedented levels of planetary exploitation that have resulted in a dangerously changing climate and fragile economy, with precarious economic and social

conditions that train women and men 'to perceive the world as a container full of disposable objects, objects for one-off use; the whole world – including other human beings' (Bauman 2000, p. 162). Bauman suggests that through the liquidity of society, humans are increasingly disconnected, with less collective responsibility and humanity. This is a serious concern for a species that has always relied upon mutual interdependence and co-operation (Maturana & Verden-Zoller 2008). Transformation of the dominant structure of neoliberal capitalism is thus necessary for the universal flourishing of all species. We must pursue just economic systems of shared resources, sustainable development, universal social protection floors and decentralisation of wealth and power from multinational corporations to communities.

The second global system of inequality is patriarchy. hooks (2004) defines patriarchy as 'a political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence' (p. 18). Patriarchy and capitalism are linked through violent domination and objectification of all living things (people *and* nature) (Oakley 2002). One of the worst symptoms of patriarchy is men's violence against women. World Health Organisation research found, on average, one in three women globally have experienced either physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner in their lifetime (Devries et al. 2014). Men's violence against women and girls manifests in numerous forms, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, psychological abuse, economic abuse, spiritual abuse, sexual exploitation, sexual trafficking, female genital mutilation, dowry-related violence, acid throwing and forced and child marriage (UN Women 2012a).

The system of patriarchy also generates numerous other global human rights issues for women and girls regarding access to quality and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights; access to quality education and training; access to land, productive resources and food sovereignty; sustainable livelihoods, decent work and a living wage; the gendered impacts of climate change and environmental exploitation; HIV and AIDS; holistic health and wellbeing; safety of women's human rights defenders; feminisation of poverty; unpaid and unequal domestic and care work; participation in governance, leadership and decision-making; the rights of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities; participation, access and representation in information, communication and sustainable technologies and media; women and armed conflict; harmful or customary traditional practices; and human rights and intersectional discrimination (Alston & Whittenbury 2013; *Beijing Declaration and*

Platform for Action 1995; *International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action* 1994; Murray 2008; United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development 2012; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2010; *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples 2007*; UN Women 2012b; 2015; Women's Major Group 2013). The antithesis of patriarchy is a system of intersectional equality, co-operation, interconnectedness, nonviolence and mutuality.

Racism is a third pervasive structure of global inequality. A system of domination and exclusion based on ethnicity, racism manifests in colonisation, slavery, apartheid, violence, abrogation of human rights and oppression of people of colour (hooks 1995; 2003). It is the denial of a common humanity (Gaita 1999). Racism is most evident in the global distribution of power and resources. For example, the influential Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) comprises 34 member countries, the majority of which are European. It supports interdependence between wealthy global economic actors to generate economic growth (OECD 2015). OECD member countries thus experience very high levels of wealth and prosperity (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2014), often due to historical and continued exploitation of people of colour and ethnic minorities.

Australia is a wealthy OECD member country where racism towards people of colour is particularly evident in the systematic oppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples. Since British invasion of ATSI homelands in 1788 based on the legal fiction of *terra nullius* (Mabo v Queensland 1992), ATSI peoples have been subjected to state-sanctioned racism such as expulsion from country, massacres, forced labour, denial of citizenship, harmful nuclear testing, high rates of incarceration and deaths in custody, the forcible removal of mixed-race children, racial vilification and inadequate resourcing for culturally appropriate social justice services (Australian Human Rights Commission 2014; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission 1997; Keating 1992; McClelland 1985; Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991). These processes have resulted in ATSI peoples experiencing worse human development outcomes than non-ATSI peoples, including physical and mental health, life expectancy, education, employment, housing, violence and political participation (Australian Human Rights Commission 2014; Commonwealth of Australia 2015; Telethon Institute for Child Health Research 2004). Simultaneously, the oppression of ATSI peoples has enabled elite non-ATSI peoples to economically flourish (see Forbes 2015). A preferred anti-racist system would celebrate indigenous knowledges and spiritual worldviews, actualise nonviolence, diversity, inclusion

and authentic participation, and ensure universal rights, opportunities and outcomes for all peoples (including land rights and rights of community) regardless of race. This includes upholding the *United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

The final global structure of inequality that requires transformation is environmental exploitation. A key process of injustice is climate change, a phenomenon caused disproportionately by wealthy people with unprecedented human and non-human impacts. The *Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 2014a) reports key risks from global warming, including high risks to unique and threatened systems (ecosystems and cultures); extreme weather events; inequitable distribution of impacts particularly affecting disadvantaged and vulnerable people and communities; biodiversity loss; and, large singular climate events with irreversible environmental impacts. The report shares that these factors can lead to numerous risks for humans (particularly people of colour, people who are poor and women), such as mortality, injury, ill health and disrupted livelihoods, breakdown of infrastructure networks, food insecurity and breakdown of food systems and loss of livelihoods and income, along with increased conflict, violence and poverty.

The relationship between climate change and capitalism is undeniable. All living beings, including humans (and especially marginalised women and men living in poverty), experience catastrophic uncertainty due to climate change (Alston & Whittenbury 2013; Oakley 2002), caused by economic and population growth through rapid and unfettered industrialisation and over-consumerism (IPCC 2014b). Neoliberal capitalism is directly linked to recent increases in greenhouse gas emissions caused by the deliberate, state-sanctioned exploitation of our environment (Klein 2014). A systematic paradigm shift from the ideology of human dominance of nature (Hawthorne 2002; Oakley 2002) could enshrine the universal rights of people *and* nature, celebrate interconnectedness between people and nature and protect planetary resources for current and future generations.

The international movements for sustainability and sustainable development are an attempt to transform the inequitable systems of capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation (*Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* 1992). However, Oakley (2002) highlights that the power to transform the inequitable misuse and exploitation of our finite planetary resources into a sustainable, just system is largely in the hands of the elite who profit from such exploitation; namely, white, wealthy, able-bodied, cis-gendered heterosexual men. As a result, despite global consciousness and efforts to address structural issues of inequality, greed and power tend to dominate decision-making at individual,

household, community, national and international levels (Hawthorne 2002). This is exemplified in the recent collaborative process of developing the Sustainable Development Goals, the international post-2015 development framework following the Millennium Development Goals, which is under threat as countries (particularly wealthy countries) move from an ambitious, hopeful international agenda to one of neoliberal ideological protectionism (Women's Major Group 2014) that separates development from rights (Sen & Mukherjee 2014).

The planetary crisis caused by neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation requires a values-based movement to generate systemic transformation. Such change involves a dramatic shift of power from the minority elite to the marginalised masses. In this thesis, I consider power as human agency, manifested in the process of active citizenship and authentic participation. Oxfam researcher Duncan Green (2008) defines active citizenship as follows:

> 'At an individual level, active citizenship means developing self-confidence and overcoming the insidious way in which the condition of being relatively powerless can become internalised. In relation to other people, it means developing the ability to negotiate and influence decisions…Ultimately, active citizenship means engaging with the political system to build an effective state, and assuming some degree of responsibility for the public domain, leaving behind simple notions of 'them' and 'us'' (p.19).

While powerlessness can result in dehumanization (Thompson 1998), gaining power through active citizenship and authentic participation can enable marginalised peoples to demand and actualise their rights as decision-makers. This view of power is an antidote to the way political and economic power is generally perceived and expressed internationally, as 'power over' (in the Foucauldian sense of what is done to us and what we do to ourselves and others (Orlie 1997)). This thesis considers the desired forms of power as 'power to' (the capability to decide and carry out actions), 'power with' (collective solidarity) and 'power within' (personal self-confidence) (Green 2008). Such power is gained through participation in the form of citizen control and egalitarian partnership (Arnstein 1969). Similarly, 'shared power', a necessary aspect of a social system of equality, involves the elite relinquishing their power. Reflecting the work of past revolutionary activists such as Gandhi, King Jr. and Hanh, I argue that love is a paradigm that can transform current unequal distributions of power and create structural change. Love challenges the Hobbesian construct of human nature as a 'perpetual and restless desire of power after power' (Hobbes 2014, Chapter XI).

1.1.2   Love as the biological origin of human co-operation

It is suggested that love is marginalised in social work discourse due to its incongruence with rational, quasi-scientific professionalism (Morley & Ife 2002). However, biologists Maturana and Verden-Zoller (2008) argue that love as a theoretical framework for human co-operation is scientifically reasonable, because the biological origin of humanness is in love:

> 'Daily life shows us that even though we live in war and hurt each other, we are loving animals that become bodily and psychically ill when deprived of love, and that love is both the first medicine and the fundament for the recovery of somatic and psychic health. We are love-dependent animals at all ages' (p. 13).

They attest that the fundament of human living is not in aggression, mistrust and competition but in love, and that human co-operation arises through the pleasure of doing things together in mutual trust (p. 51). Their root argument is that we could not be taught to love if we did not have the biology for it. Love is defined as 'the domain of those relational behaviours through which another arises as a legitimate other in coexistence with us' (p. 78). Fredrickson (2013) also highlights that humans were made for love, and the biology of love exists within connections between people, while Odent (2001) argues that love is a vital strategy for the survival of the human species.

Maturana and Verden-Zoller (2008) suggest that love as the biology of humanness is evidenced in the long-practiced care that parents show for children in pleasure, our tendency for sensual and tender affection, our desire for friendship, sexual pleasure, human co-operation and our ethical concerns. Therefore, competition and greed perpetuated through political alliances are not our fundamental form of co-existence. Indeed, Bill Gammage in *The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia* (2011) details 50,000 years of co-operative human relations amongst Australian Aboriginal peoples and between Aboriginal peoples and the natural environment. Maturana and Verden-Zoller (2008) argue that the dominance of Western patriarchy, with competitive and aggressive characteristics, emerged with pastoralism 7,000 years ago, when European humans shifted from a co-existent relationship with animals and nature to one of control through 'herding', alongside human migration and territorial invasion / occupation. This resulted in a political and cultural system of patriarchy in the 'emotioning' of mistrust, appropriation and control.

If the origin of humanness is in fact love, then it can be reasoned that humans have an innate capacity to strengthen that aspect of our biology to nurture an alternative world to

that which we currently construct. We have the natural ability to work through love to transform the aforementioned structures of inequality.

1.1.3   Progressive activism – an opportunity for love?

The inequitable systems of capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation must be transformed if we have any hope of staving off catastrophic global warming, ending poverty, ending men's violence against women and ensuring universal human rights and long-lasting peace in our interconnected and interdependent world. I argue that a peaceful, love-based people's revolution is vital to challenge current systems of inequality and power for a sustainable world. This requires a radical shift from dominant ideological paradigms.

Recent history illustrates that humans are capable of progressive social action based on an ideology of love. In the mid-20th century liberation period, various communalist activist movements readily and intentionally propagated love in the quest for human rights and social change – evident in the Gandhian nonviolent independence movement in India, the African-American civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, and gay rights and feminist movements. However, dominant human-created structures of patriarchy, capitalism and racism overpowered the radical potential of love in these movements (hooks 2001). The response to this era of generational change was conservative economic rationalism with market-based policy and practice, particularly in the West (Hawthorne 2002; hooks 2000; Oakley 2002). Love was pushed aside for wealth and power. Yet, as outlined previously in this chapter, the world has not improved under the neoliberal regime. Conservative agendas dominate national and global decision-making, supported by corporatised media and business lobbyists with unchecked power. A love-inspired people's movement is as important now as it has ever been. The mere survival of our species, indeed all species, depends on it.

Evidence from across the globe suggests that the incidence, scale and reach of progressive social movements have increased exponentially in the past few decades, in part due to technological developments. Although we may not yet witness a 1960s-esque social revolution, humans are using new technologies to engage in alternative, participatory forms of citizenship (van de Donk et al. 2004). In contemporary social movements, activists are claiming our people power, demanding (and demonstrating) a world of equality, justice and environmental certainty. However, few movements openly claim and promote an ethic of love, despite the prominence of love in influential nonviolence theories of past activists (Gandhi 2005; Hanh 1993; King Jr. 1963).

Nevertheless, the following list of recent social movements highlights the global diversity and reach of progressive radicalism, and the potential for love-based activism to bring about a new world order of equality:

- The 2011-2012 Occupy movement was a peaceful, collectivist-based global movement whereby activists occupied public spaces to challenge social and economic inequality and, in particular, the influence and unjust wealth of corporate entities (see Occupy Wall St 2015).

- Ongoing anti-austerity protests in Europe began in 2008 in response to the Global Financial Crisis, with the rapid rise of radical leftist anti-austerity political parties such as Syriza (Greece) and Podemos (Spain).

- The Arab Spring, beginning in 2010, included mass demonstrations and protests that saw the toppling of ruling leaders in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen.

- Food and fuel riots in the Middle East and South Asia responded to the 2011 food and fuel price hikes.

- The international climate justice movement is exemplified in the 2014 People's Climate March, in which approximately 570,000 people marched in 2,646 events in 162 countries, demanding urgent action on climate change (People's Climate March 2014). In particular, indigenous peoples have a pivotal leadership role in climate activism.

- The international fossil fuel divestment movement encourages citizens, organisations, companies and governments to divest from companies that financially support fossil fuel extraction (Fossil Free 2015).

- Avaaz, a global online activist movement, has experienced unprecedented and rapid expansion with 41 million members from 194 countries (Avaaz 2015).

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual and other minorities (LGBTQIA+) engage in far-reaching rights movements (see All Out 2015), in recent years evident strongly in the movement for marriage equality (see Australian Marriage Equality 2015).

- Beginning in 2012, One Billion Rising is an international mass action campaign to end violence against women (One Billion Rising 2015).

- Provocative street art, such as the works of Banksy and other anonymous social commentators, expose inequality and injustice in public spaces.

- Ongoing protests across the world advocate for workers' rights through trade unions.

The sudden rise in influence of active citizenship in recent years resulted in TIME Magazine naming 'The Protestor' as the 2011 Person of the Year (Anderson 2011), suggesting the current world order of inequality is under scrutiny. Importantly, each of the above-mentioned movements involves grassroots, national, regional and global organising. In particular, online tools such as Facebook, change.org, YouTube, Google, Twitter and blogs support activists to usurp powerful traditional media platforms and gain unprecedented reach through democratised, decentralised and participatory platforms. This occurs in three progressive stages: reaching out to people, keeping the flame alive and stepping up to action (Guo & Saxton 2014). Accusations of modern activists as 'clicktivists' and 'slacktivists' (Morozov 2010; White 2010) are both tired and short-sighted, as research suggests that people who engage in online promotion of social causes are more likely to engage in offline activism (Center for Social Impact Communication 2011). Kristofferson, White and Peloza (2014) argue that people who privately display token support for a social cause are more likely to further engage in a more meaningful way. The sophisticated organisation of social movements through the Internet, particularly nonviolent direct activists, is both testament to the need and commitment of contemporary activists to transform dominant structures of inequality.

Unfortunately, organised activists are not protected from pervasive ideologies of inequality, which signifies the need for a values-based ethic such as love to inform social movements. Not-for-profit community organisations are consciously and unconsciously influenced by neoliberal constructs such as intense managerialism, corporatisation, competitive funding models, contracting, bureaucratisation, marketization and branding and the myth of 'growth' (INCITE! Women of Colour Against Violence 2007; Kenny 2006; Wallace 2003). Additionally, people's organisations are not immune to patriarchy and racism. For example, an Australian survey regarding gender diversity in the leadership of the community sector found that although women comprise up to 85% of the community sector workforce, women make up 51.4% of board directors and 60% of senior managers among organisations who responded to the survey, and the gender pay gap is 32.6% (YWCA Australia, the Australian Council of Social Service & Women on Boards 2012). Furthermore, men were more likely than women to be on the boards of organisations with financial turnover of

more than $30 million, while women were more likely than men to be on the boards of organisations with a financial turnover of less than $1 million. United Nations research (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2010) reiterates Australia's experience as a global trend. Complexity, diversity and inequality within 'the Left' has resulted in intense critique within and against organised activists, particularly regarding a lack of unifying vision and values (McKnight 2010). As a result, activist groups and organisations without solid ethical foundation and ethical reflexivity are easily disempowered by neoliberalism, patriarchy and racism (INCITE! Women of Colour Against Violence 2007). With the exponential rise of inequality and, subsequently, active citizenship, there is a glaring need for an ethical framework to inform social movements at grassroots and macro levels. I believe the love ethic can provide that framework.

As a professional component of progressive social movements, social work is an important space for theorising and implementing a radical framework for structural change such as the love ethic. Social work is a social justice-oriented profession that prides itself in its commitment to ethics (IFSW 2012). Social workers are trained to integrate ethical reflexivity into all aspects of our work, an approach that is both transformative and just, given the vulnerable peoples with whom we work. As such, social workers are concerned with theories of ethics (Banks 2006; Banks & Gallagher 2009). Ethical knowledge is particularly useful for activist movements that aim to challenge invasive neoliberalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation, ideologies that appear void of values.

But interestingly, despite the relevance of love to social movements, demonstrated by Gandhi, King Jr. and other influential activists, social work ethics rarely consider love (Banks 2006). Now, this would be acceptable if scholars and researchers had undertaken comprehensive analysis regarding love in social work ethics and social workers collectively chose to marginalise love from our ethical viewpoints. However, my review of relevant literature (discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4) suggests that the global social work profession has not applied a critical lens to the notion of love in our practice. Only a few peer-reviewed texts exist (Butot 2007; Morley & Ife 2002), which have been marginalised or disregarded within mainstream social work. In this regard, and given the small but growing discussion of love in social movements (see hooks 2000; Kahane 2010; Ripper dir. 2012; Somerville 2011; Transformation 2015) and the undeniable need for structural transformation (IFSW, IASSW & ICSW 2012), the time is nigh for a critical exploration of love in social work. The radical potential of love for social work and activism should not be discredited without fair consideration, dialogue and critique.

With this context and research problem in mind, this research enquires into the relevance and process of love in social work, focussing on the practice context of community work. In this research, I argue that love, as an antidote to domination (hooks 2000), can be the ethical core of action for progressive people's movements and community workers to bring about a new world order of equality and sustainability.

1.2 Theoretical framework

My theoretical worldview for this research has two major influences: bell hooks' radical feminist ethic of love and the participatory methodological paradigm. I define myself as a radical feminist participatory action researcher.

1.2.1 bell hooks' love ethic

bell hooks' (2000) love ethic is founded on the need for a radical cultural shift from an 'ethic of domination' to an 'ethic of love'. Although love and the heart are considered irrational and weak in our increasingly scientific society, hooks affirms that there exists a societal desire to know, to experience and to share love:

> 'Everywhere we learn that love is important, and yet we are bombarded by its failure. In the realm of the political, among the religious, in our families, and in our romantic loves, we see little indication that love informs decisions, strengthens our understanding of community, or keeps us together. This bleak picture in no way alters the nature of our longing. We still hope that love will prevail. We still believe in love's promise' (hooks 2000, p. xxvii).

hooks identifies a lack of public discussions of love and a popular 'love' culture that does not reflect the 1960s and 1970s concept of love as a life-affirming discourse. In contrast, she argues that the popular message propagates the meaningless and irrelevance of love; in short, that society is cynical of love. In her epistemological discussion, hooks exhorts us to reclaim an ethic of love.

Contrary to constructs of love as emotion, hooks (2000) explains that love is an action and a choice. She uses Peck's (1978) definition of love as '(t)he will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth' (cited in hooks 2000, p. 4). The ingredients of love are care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust, and love requires honest and open communication, forgiveness and giving. Reflecting her radical feminist lens, hooks argues that love is the antidote to the ethic of domination, which

manifests in inequitable systems of capitalism, racism and patriarchy. She identifies various forms of love that fit within her typology, including self-love; intimate partner love and romance; love for children and family; love for students; community love; love at work; and spiritual love.

As an ethic of action, hooks explains that love involves accountability and responsibility, and cannot occur where there is abuse, greed and unequal power. Love relies upon justice through transforming dominant systems of power. Perfect love, from hooks' perspective, can vanquish fear and is a healing force that brings sustained peace: 'When we love, we no longer allow our hearts to be held captive by fear... To return to love, to know perfect love, we surrender the will to power' (hooks 2000, p. 221). In this regard, she believes that our hope as a society lies in the reality that many still believe in love's power. It is this hope that will enable our culture to re-embrace the love ethic.

hooks' radical feminist theory of the love ethic provides an innovative structural lens to systems of inequality and injustice. She stresses that love can be a professional ethic of practice (2000; 2003), using her field of education as a key example. Additionally, with the purpose of transforming systems of dominance, love is a powerful tool to establish a new world order. As I discuss in Chapter 2, hooks' view is reinforced by numerous activist, spiritual and academic leaders.

I am a feminist activist with a deep sense of justice and spiritual connectedness, and my personal practice framework is founded on love. hooks' theory provides a transformative lens to theories of community and social work, my personal community work practice and this research. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4 I analyse hooks' theory of the love ethic in relation to relevant spiritual, academic and philosophical literature regarding definitions, characteristics and types of love, philosophies of ethics and practice frameworks based on love as an ethic of action to bring about structural change. The literature enhances and strengthens hooks' love ethic as a holistic process for structural transformation.

1.2.2 Participative knowledge paradigm

In addition to hooks' love ethic, this research is significantly influenced by the participative knowledge paradigm, championed most strongly in the field of action research. This paradigm understands knowledge as culturally contextualised (Somekh 2003) and a basis for change (Reason & Bradbury 2008) by challenging systems of oppression (Freire 1974). Heron (1996) explains that the participative reality has a holistic epistemology, incorporating propositional (theory), practical (skills), presentational (creativity) and experiential

(experience) knowledges. When conducting research within this paradigm, participative researchers work with co-inquirers / co-researchers (not subjects or participants) to collaboratively generate knowledge and enact local and structural change through the research process with systematic cycles of action and reflection.

To engage in the participative knowledge space, I developed an epistemology of change entitled *change-oriented research,* which involves shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. *Change-oriented research* informs my methodological paradigm and challenges the neoliberalisation of academia by promoting a model of critical social work research that supports communities to design and implement an inquiry process to develop solutions to problems, build solidarity and transform inequitable social structures. In a journal article I wrote that is presented in Chapter 5, I define *change-oriented research* as follows:

> '*Change-oriented research* is a participatory inquiry paradigm that can support radical, gender transformative and sustainable change from individual to structural levels. It is a collaborative research process that aims to understand and transform social injustices through cycles of action and reflection, generating multiple and contextualised knowledges that empower participants to collectively take radical action' (Godden under review(a)).

Importantly, *change-oriented research* aims for the highest possible forms of participation, whereby citizens (including marginalised citizens (Chambers 1983; 1994)) democratically seize control of their circumstances through empowered self-mobilisation (Arnstein 1969; Davidson 1998; Pretty et al. 1995). A participative approach demands collective decision-making about the research process, flexibility and contextual responsiveness, dialogue and shared power, mutual respect, reflexivity and collective action (Kesby, Kindon & Pain 2007; Leal 2007; Mikkelsen 2005; Stringer 2007). Importantly, *change-oriented research* is sensitive to intersectional inequality (Dominelli 2006; McCall 2005; Noffke & Brennan 2004), and prioritises a gendered lens to support the research to challenge the dominant system of patriarchy (Ramazanoglu & Holland 2002; Reid & Frisby 2008; Wickramasinghe 2010). Further to this, *change-oriented research* is responsive to diversity and local context, particularly indigenous worldviews (Delva, Allen-Meares & Momper 2010; Denzin & Giardina 2009; Saukko 2003) through collective reflexivity and 'empowered humility' (Harrell & Bond 2006). This involves using creative and emergent methods such as visual art, theatre, dialogue and storytelling to explore reality (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010; Holt 2013; Knowles & Cole 2008; Leavy 2008; Lewis 2011; Markula 2006; Pauwels 2011).

My methodological theoretical framework in this research celebrates the co-construction of knowledge. It emphasises decolonial practice (Denzin 2008) and dialogical sharing of power, with a holistic focus on relationships and connectedness between people and between people and nature. As such, participatory ethics and values are fundamental to my research (Manzo & Brightbill 2007; Stoecker 2005). Importantly, in *change-oriented research,* and the co-operative inquiry method used in this study, I report the collaborative research from my personal perspective and I do not speak on behalf of other co-inquirers but share our collaboratively agreed analysis and outcomes (Heron 1996; Stoecker 2005). This reflects feminist research by valuing voice and autonomy, requiring me to reflexively understand my position as the privileged initiating researcher (Letherby 2003; Manzo & Brightbill 2007). My co-inquirers gave me permission to report on our research results and I do so from my own perspective of our collective process and outcomes. I honour the collective ownership of our research outcomes and graciously accept my co-inquirers' trust to share our process, findings and outcomes in an emancipatory way. Reflecting my roles as both an initiating and participating co-inquirer in this study, a dual position strongly promoted by Heron (1996), I use the first person voice throughout this thesis. I use 'I' and 'my' to emphasise that the thesis is my personal perspective of our research, and 'we' and 'our' to emphasise my co-inquirer status working in collaboration with my peers.

In Chapter 5, I comprehensively explore the methodological worldview of *change-oriented research* and constructions of knowledge within the space of participative knowledge paradigm. In that chapter, I also explore the feminist ethics strategies we used when applying the *change-oriented research* approach.

1.2.3   My personal ethical values

As a participatory action researcher with radical feminist ethics, it is paramount that I reflect upon my personal values and practice before, during and after conducting research. Understanding the participatory inquiry paradigm as both epistemic and political (Heron 1996), I summarise my ethical values within a framework of ontology, epistemology, methodology and social purpose, as suggested by Heron (1996) and Whitehead and McNiff (2006).

Ontology is a branch of metaphysics that considers reality, being and existence ('what is known?'). As a co-operative researcher, my ontological values are that humans are interconnected and interdependent and we have individual and collective autonomy and multiple identities. We are capable of inquiring and knowing through our own processes,

needs, desires and dreams. Humans can enact change within ourselves and our communities and we are reflexive learners. Furthermore, the individual's mind-shaped reality is subjective-objective: it is subjective because it is only known through the form the mind gives it; and it is objective because the mind interpenetrates the given cosmos that it shapes (Heron 1996).

Epistemology is a branch of philosophical reasoning that studies knowledge and considers how knowledge can be attained ('how is it known?'). As a co-operative researcher, my epistemological values reflect a radical stance that recognises and aims to transform unjust power relationships and structures that oppress humans. As Kindon, Pain and Kesby (2007) state, 'it is not enough to understand the world, but that one has to change it for the better' (p. 13). I recognise that reality is socially constructed, and there are multiple and diverse knowledges that are particularly powerful when produced collaboratively through action (Fine et al. 2004). Furthermore, there is a participative relation between the knower and the known (Heron 1996).

Methodology is the theoretical analysis of knowledge ('how is knowledge produced?'). In this study, my methodological values are *decentralisation* through emphasising the local context and holistically understanding local problems; *deregulation* through removing restrictive conventional research rules while maintaining validity that is measured according to the workability of actions and increased community control over their situations (Greenwood & Levin 2007); *committed co-operativeness* through joining the researcher and subjects as co-inquirers and co-participants; and *creativity and innovation* through exploring multiple knowledges within practice, theory, imagination and emotion and celebrating human beings' diversity of experience and capacity. I value using systematic cycles of reflection and action that explore knowledge and enable action to make knowledge socially useful, while enhancing empowerment through consciousness-raising. (My methodological values were informed by Freire (1974; 1989); Greenwood and Levin (2007); Guba in Stringer (2007); and, Heron (1996)). My methodological approach challenges the hierarchy of theory over practice, a view invoked by Midgley (2004), who argues against reductionism and 'scientistic imperialism' (p. 32) for a plurality of sciences that acknowledges multiple forms and sources of knowledge.

Social purpose is the reasoning for engaging in knowledge generation ('why produce knowledge?'). The social purpose values of my research are to promote loving and respectful interactions between humans and between humans and nature; demand equality, democratic practice and justice at micro, mezzo and macro levels; reject social

theories and practices that marginalise and oppress peoples and nature; encourage individual and collective critical thinking; and, enhance relationships and communal togetherness while celebrating diversity.

1.3   Aims of the research

This research has several aims:

- To explore love in community work and contribute to filling a glaring gap in social work theory and practice.

- To co-operatively inquire into love in community work with grassroots community work colleagues and collaboratively generate knowledge that is contextually relevant, useful and experientially-based.

- To use innovative and emergent methods to support holistic research that considers four areas of knowledge: propositional, practical, presentation and experiential knowledges (Heron 1996). This includes inquiring into the strengths and challenges of co-operative research and challenging the social work profession to more readily and authentically embrace the feminist participatory action research paradigm.

- To stimulate discussion and further exploration of love in social work and activism.

This research and the final theoretical framework that I contribute to academia and activist movements, *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change,* are deliberately provocative and stimulating. Reflecting the political imperative of radical social work, I actively intend to challenge structural inequality within our societal systems and the social work profession with this research. As such, my study is itself a form of radical activism, whereby the research process aims to support transformation at personal, household, organisational, community and societal levels.

1.4   Research Question

Within the aforementioned context and theoretical paradigm, and with my research aims in mind, the two research questions guiding this study are:

- What is love in international rural community work?

- How can love transform structural inequality?

I do not propose secondary questions, as they emerged collaboratively with co-inquirers in each co-operative inquiry.

It is necessary to define the key aspects of these research questions. Rubin and Babbie (2007, p. 90) discuss the importance of operationally defining variables and they identify three categories for definitions. *Self-reports* define variables 'according to what people say about their own thoughts, views, or behaviours'. *Direct observation* defines variables based on observing behaviour. *Available records* use existing data and information collected by others. A mixture of these three categories is used to define the key variables of my research questions:

Question 1: What is love in international rural community work?

What

The question word *what* is used in a descriptive sense to seek an explanation and definition of love in practice. The word may be construed as confining the concept of love to a linear and unitary format of a single definition, but this is not my intention. I wish to explore co-inquirers' ontological constructs of love and the epistemological framework within which they understand and explore the concept, reflecting Heron's (1996) notion of propositional knowledge. Furthermore, the research considers how love is expressed and actualised by co-inquirers and others in international rural community work. This reflects Heron's idea of practical knowledge.

Love

The concept of *love* has multiple meanings, to be discussed in Chapter 2. As mentioned, hooks (2000) explains that love is a verb, an action and a choice that assumes accountability and responsibility. She asserts that love encompasses care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust; and it requires honest and open communication, forgiveness and giving. Importantly, this study considers love in a holistic way, integrating self-love, intimate partner love, love for family, love for community, love for colleagues and clients, love for humanity, love for nature and spiritual love. Although influenced by the comprehensive works of hooks and Fromm (1957) and the philosophies of spiritual activists King Jr. (1963; 1967a; 1967b); Gandhi (1957; 2005); and, Hanh (1993; 1998), I did not propose a definition of love prior to conducting this study. This study instead invites co-inquirers to explore and collaboratively develop definition/s of love, reflecting the *change-oriented research* paradigm and the participatory imperative of grassroots knowledge generation.

International

My study explores love in the *international* context, as in the global context. I conducted research in rural communities in Timor-Leste, Australia and Peru. In this regard, the research is not Australian-centric but takes a more global view; yet importantly, I do not intend to produce global generalisations. The word *international* is used politically to position the research within the international social work and development literature. Furthermore, *international rural community work* can involve cross-cultural community work (Healy 2008) and transnational social work (Negi & Furman 2010). *International* has also been included in my question to indicate that this research considers the international development sector.

Rural

Rural is a contested term, with varying culturally specific, political and geographical definitions (see, for example, Alston & Kent 2006; Chambers 1983; Cheers, Darracott & Lonne 2007; Maidment & Bay 2012)**.** The word *rural* is used in this research in line with the United Nations' recommendation to define rural according to internal definitions with the country of focus (United Nations Statistics Division 2012). This honours the multiplicity of perspectives and experiences regarding rurality. The case study sites of my study reflect the relevant national definitions of *rural* in Timor-Leste, Australia and Peru, which generally determine rurality based on small population size of a community.

Community work

As the foundation of the global social work profession, I use the term *community work* in this research to encapsulate collective action taken by groups based on location, identity or interest that have common objectives in reaching specific goals (Dominelli 2006). I use *community work* as Dominelli does, as a broad term to encompass the models of community care, community organisation, community development and community action. Despite its overwhelming use in the literature (see DeFilippis & Saegart 2012; Ife 2001; Kenny & Clarke 2010; Saleebey 1997)**,** I deliberately do not use the term *community development,* as I believe it pathologises communities and individuals as 'backwards', lacking skills to enrich their communities (Dominelli 2006). However, definitions of community development assist our understanding of *community work*. For example, Saleebey (1997) states,

> 'Community development involves helping unleash the power, vision, capacities and
> talent within a (self-defined) community so that the community can strengthen its
> internal relationships and move closer toward performing the important functions

of solidarity and support, succour and identification, and instructing and socialising' (p. 202).

Similarly, Somerville (2011) explains that community development is the '…specific combination of economic, cultural, symbolic and social capital, generated by communities located within specific habitus (plural) interacting with specific fields' (p. 63). In this research question, *community work* also encapsulates localised international development programming.

It is also relevant to define the word *community*, and I draw from Day's (2006) three core elements of the meaning of community:

> 'A particular way of organising social relationships, a general (and desirable) quality of sociability and mutual regard, and a summons to undertake joint mutual action' (cited in Somerville 2011, p. 24).

Importantly, in this research I collectively embrace locational, identity-based and interest communities.

Question 2: How can love transform structural inequality?

How

The question word *how* indicates an exploratory study that intends to explore a topic we know little about (Dudley 2011). In the second question, I use *how* rather than *what* or *why*, because I do not have a hypothesis to test, or the basis to establish a causal relationship. These words may be used in future research that builds from my findings. The word *how* challenges co-inquirers (and readers) to reflect upon their epistemological approach to structural transformation and love. The use of *how* indicates that co-inquirers will explore and discuss their multiple definitions and experiences of love through a critical, reflexive process.

Love

Applied as described above.

Transform

The term *transform* reflects hooks' (2000) suggestion that love is a verb and an action. It positions this research as action-oriented (Heron 1996). *Transform* is used instead of *change* to suggest an evolution and (re)awakening from the dominant neoliberal patriarchal and racist paradigm, reflecting a strong sense of hope and optimism for an alternative world

order, with a fresh perspective to 'see the world anew' (Murray 2006, p. 12). *Transform* also implies my radical feminist politics, informed by Hawthorne (2002); hooks (2000; 2004); Oakley (2002); Sen and Grown (1988); and, Shiva (1989), and my commitment to working collectively with others to recognise, challenge and radically alter systems of inequality. In this regard, the research question allows for inquiry into revolutionary transformation of the unequal status quo.

Structural inequality

The profession of social work is focussed on recognising and transforming social systems and structures that preserve inequalities and injustice (Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) 2010). I understand *inequality* as the unequal distribution of resources and power whereby particular groups of people experience discrimination and marginalisation and are denied their human rights. As discussed earlier in this chapter, societal structures that cause inequality include capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation (Allan, Briskman & Pease 2009; hooks 2000; IFSW, IASSW & ICSW 2012), which I believe are all rooted in patriarchal ideology (Hawthorne 2002; Oakley 2002). These structures are human-made and therefore able to be changed. Importantly, feminist theory emphasises the importance of intersectionality, namely 'the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations' (McCall 2005, p. 1771), and analysing individual and collective inequality within multiple dimensions such as gender, race, ability, income level, religion, geographic location, sexuality and age. Briskman, Pease and Allan (2009) argue that social workers must position ourselves as activists to transform these inequitable systems through policy development.

1.5   Research methodology

In Chapter 5, I provide an analytical overview of my methodological approach. As discussed, I developed a methodological paradigm informed by *change-oriented research,* an epistemology of change that involves shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity to enable research that supports personal, local and structural change through a collaborative inquiry process. This methodological paradigm informed my inquiry approach. Reflecting my commitment to participatory knowledge generation, I selected the co-operative inquiry as my main research method. According to Heron (1996), a key theorist in this field,

> Co-operative inquiry 'does research with other people, who are invited to be full co-inquirers with the initiating researcher and become involved in operational decision-making, and is committed to this kind of participative research design in principle, both politically and epistemologically. The co-inquirers are also fully involved in decisions about research content, that is, about the focus on the inquiry, what it is seeking to find out and achieve' (pp. 9-10).

Through cycles of reflection and action, co-inquirers collaboratively inquire into a democratically developed research topic through a four-part epistemology of knowledge that is experiential, presentational, propositional and practical (Heron & Reason 2008).

I initiated a co-operative inquiry with a group of up to ten community workers, volunteers, activists and community members in three rural coastal communities:

- Liquica: a community of 20,938 people located 35km west of Dili, the capital city of Timor-Leste.

- Margaret River: a community of 6,550 people located 234km south of Perth, the capital city of Western Australia, Australia.

- Lobitos: a community of 1,506 people located 1,115km north of Lima, the capital city of Peru.

In each site, I joined with participants as *co-inquirers,* whereby we democratically and systematically inquired into the research question through cycles of reflection and action. We used innovative and creative research tools such as drawing, role-play, discussion, journaling and gift-giving to collect, record, analyse and interpret our data. Each co-operative inquiry concluded with the collaborative development of a proposed model of practice of love-based community work. As a participating co-inquirer, I was given permission from my colleagues to share the process and outcomes from this research in this thesis and in publications and conferences, acknowledging the co-operative inquiry imperative that I do not speak on behalf of others, but I share from my perspective of our research (Heron 1996). In this regard, the research findings and discussion provided in this thesis are my experience and observations of our collaborative research.

1.6   Thesis Plan

This is a *Thesis including Published Works.* It contains six articles reporting my research that I have submitted for publication to relevant journals, with a binding exegesis between each

article. I have structured the thesis within the traditional format, ensuring that it includes the relevant aspects of a comprehensive research study. To that end, the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter One: Introduction. In this chapter, I introduce the research context and problem and outline the theoretical framework guiding the research. I also outline the research project, including the research aims and methodology.

Chapter Two: Literature Review - What is love? This is the first of three chapters that explore and critique the diverse philosophical, spiritual, academic and popular literature regarding love and social action. In Chapter 2, I analyse literature regarding definitions of love, characteristics of love and types of love, positioning love as action.

Chapter Three: Literature Review - Love as an ethic: In Chapter 3, I consider love as an ethic. I analyse hooks' love ethic within virtue, deontological and relationship ethics. I also consider the love ethic within constructions of social work ethics.

Chapter Four: Literature Review - Love as an ethic of action for equality: In this chapter, I position love as an ethic of action for equality by examining existing community work models that integrate love, including relevant empirical research in social work, education and nursing. I identify literature gaps regarding love within community work, social work and progressive activist discourses. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the key trends and gaps in the literature and argue for participatory, grassroots development of knowledge to generate a theory of love for community work and social action.

Chapter Five: Methodology. In Chapter 5, I discuss the research methodology. I begin with a discussion of knowledge and enclose my first journal article submitted to *International Social Work* entitled 'Change-oriented research: critical social work inquiry for 'a new world order''. This article outlines my methodological paradigm of *change-oriented research* that is informed by a four-part epistemology of change that involves shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. Following this methodological critique, I present the research design, discussing and justifying my methods, data instruments, data analysis and validity procedures. I then present my second journal article submitted to *Action Research,* entitled 'Feminist ethics and co-operative inquiry: Reflections of theory and practice', discussing numerous ethics strategies that attempted to transform neoliberal and patriarchal power relations within the research process. I conclude with a discussion of the research limitations.

Chapter Six: Findings – Study sample and Liquica case study. This is the first of three findings chapters that outline the process and outcomes of the co-operative inquiry in each case study site. In Chapter 6, I explain the overall sample of the research and then discuss the case study from Liquica, Timor-Leste. I present my third journal article entitled 'Love in community work in rural Timor-Leste: a co-operative inquiry for a participatory framework of practice', submitted, revised and resubmitted to *Community Development Journal.* This article considers the process and findings of the Liquica co-operative inquiry, focussing on the disconnect between dominant development discourse in post-independent Timor-Leste and the experience of local community workers using participatory research to construct a localised practice framework for grassroots activism based on love. Following the article, I discuss the key findings regarding the co-operative inquiry experience in Liquica.

Chapter Seven: Findings – Margaret River case study. In Chapter 7, I discuss the second case study in Margaret River, Australia. I present my fourth journal article entitled 'A co-operative inquiry about love using narrative, performative and visual methods', submitted, revised and resubmitted to *Qualitative Research.* This article discusses the Margaret River co-operative inquiry, focusing on the narrative, performative and visual methods that we engaged to develop a framework of practice for love-based community work. I then discuss key findings relating to this group's experience of the co-operative inquiry method.

Chapter Eight: Findings – Lobitos case study. In this chapter, I discuss the third case study in Lobitos, Peru. I present my fifth journal article entitled 'Love-based community work and the indigenous worldview of *buen vivir* in Peru', submitted to *British Journal of Social Work.* This article considers the Latin American indigenous paradigm of *buen vivir* as an alternative to Western development theory. It locates the Lobitos co-operative inquiry as localised research to enhance *buen vivir*. I then outline the findings regarding this group's experience of the co-operative inquiry method.

Chapter Nine: Discussion. In Chapter 9, I interpret and discuss the findings of the research in relation to the literature. I discuss definitions of love and how love can be an ethic of action for structural transformation. I then present my proposed theory of practice that emerged from the research, *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change.* This theory is documented in my sixth journal article entitled 'The Love Ethic for Transformational Change: A radical theory of sustainability', submitted to *International Journal of Sustainability in the Economic, Social and Cultural Context.* This article also discusses the implications and possible limitations of this theory for community work practice. I also discuss methodological learnings and implications of the study.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion. In this conclusion chapter, I summarise the research, discussing the research journey, findings and implications for social work. I also identify opportunities for further research to build upon the emerging knowledge regarding love-based community work.

1.7   Summary

The central argument in this chapter is that love can be a values-based ethic for social movements (including the professionalised movement of social work) to transform structural inequality. The context and problem for this research is a current world order of inequality, exemplified in structures of neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation. These systems manifest in issues such as growing wealth inequality, high rates of men's violence against women and girls and the climate crisis – issues that social movements aim to change. The human biological tendency to love (Maturana & Verden-Zoller 2008), and the recent global surge and reach of active citizenship, suggests that activists, social workers and community workers have significant capacity to collaboratively develop an ethic of love that guides us to challenge and transform these dominant structures of inequality.

My research considers the love ethic in international rural community work, theoretically informed by bell hooks' (2000) theory of the love ethic and the participatory research paradigm. In the following three chapters, I review relevant theoretical and empirical literature related to the love ethic in international rural community work. My analysis of the literature justifies the need for empirical research to inform a love-based theory of practice for structural transformation.

2   Literature Review: What is love?

[Love is] the will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth (Peck 1978 cited in hooks 2000, p. 4).

[Love has] the power to reveal the full humanity of those whose affliction had made their humanity invisible (Gaita 1999, p. 20).

This is the first of three chapters that explore and critique the diverse philosophical, spiritual, academic and popular literature regarding love and social action. With a radical feminist lens, in this chapter I consider literature regarding definitions of love, characteristics of love and types of love, positioning love as action. In Chapter 3, I discuss love as an ethic, and analyse hooks' love ethic within constructions of virtue, deontological and relationship ethics and social work ethics. In Chapter 4, I analyse theoretical and empirical literature regarding love as an ethic of action for social change.

2.1   Introduction

In 2012, a documentary entitled *Occupy Love* provided an alternative perspective to 21st Century protest movements. The filmmaker explored activists' motivations and goals through the lens of love, asking the provocative question, 'how could the global crisis we are facing become a love story?' (Ripper dir. 2012). *Occupy Love* contributes to a small but growing body of literature that considers love as an ethical framework for social action. The documentary connects well to hooks' (2000) influential text *All About Love: New Visions* and her 'love ethic', which is the theoretical lens I use to critique relevant literature. hooks' theory of the love ethic provides a radical feminist interpretation of society. She argues that love is impossible within systems of power (understood as 'power over' rather than power through solidarity), and love cannot be present in situations where one group of individuals dominate another. hooks explains that love is inhibited by the ethic of domination of capitalism, patriarchy and racism. However, reflecting pedagogies of emancipation of oppressed peoples through consciousness-raising (Freire 1989), authentic love can be the foundational ethic of social action for a new world order. In order to explore the emancipatory potential of love, we first must understand love itself.

Love is complex. This is perhaps another reason why love is poorly explored in social work and community work literature. However, as exemplified by King Jr. (1963) and Gandhi (1957; 2005), love has been, and continues to be, significantly relevant to social movements across the globe. It would be remiss of the social work profession to unquestionably disregard love in our quest for structural transformation. Importantly, hooks' assertion that love is an ethic of action requires further exploration. In this chapter, I consider love as action, reviewing relevant literature relating to the definitions, characteristics and types of love.

2.2 Definitions of love

In the love-related literature regarding social movements and structural change, love is generally defined as a verb. This starkly contrasts with a neuroscientific perspective that considers the psychobiology of love as emotion (Lewis, Amini & Lannon 2000), or Fredrickson's (2013) thesis that love is the supreme emotion that makes us feel part of something larger than ourselves. Love as an ethical and activist concept is considered an action rather than a feeling. In her thorough explorations of love for radical change, hooks (2000) draws from M. Scott Peck's definition of love from his 1978 book *The Road Less Travelled:*

> Love is '(t)he will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth' (cited in hooks 2000, p. 4).

hooks explains that love is a verb, an action and a choice. In his text, *The Art of Loving,* Fromm (1957) also asserts that love is action taken by choice, which involves committing oneself without guarantee:

> 'Love is an action, the practice of a human power, which can be practiced only in freedom and never as the result of a compulsion. Love is an activity, not the passive affect; it is a 'standing in', not a 'falling for'. In the most general way, the active character of love can be described by stating that love is primarily giving, not receiving' (Fromm 1957, p. 22).

Love as action is reiterated further in Kahane's work on power and love, in which he uses a definition of love from theologian and philosopher Paul Tillich, that love is 'the drive towards the unity of the separated' (1954 cited in Kahane 2010, p. 2). Kahane also refers to other similar definitions of love, including: Bill O'Brien's explanation of love as 'a predisposition towards helping another person to become complete: to fully develop their potential' (2008

cited in Kahane 2010, p. 31); Humberto Maturana's definition, 'Love is the domain of those relational behaviours through which another (a person, being or thing) arises as a legitimate other in coexistence outside itself' (1999 cited in Kahane 2010, p. 32); and, Robert Johnson's explanation, 'Love is the one power that awakens the ego to the existence of something outside itself' (1983 cited in Kahane 2010, p. 32).

Love as action is also considered a way of living. In his text *The Good Life,* Australian social researcher Hugh Mackay (2013) asserts, 'a good life is a loving life' (p. 128). He explains that a good life/loving life is lived according to the (almost) universal 'Golden Rule' - treat others as you would like to be treated - involving a commitment to take other people seriously, respect them and acknowledge their desire for proper recognition (p. 207). He recognises that manifestations of love are kindness, care, compassion, generosity, tolerance, encouragement and support, and involves human engagement through living a life for others.

Love as action is also considered within various spiritual and religious traditions. His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2000) explains that all religions are directed towards helping human brings achieve lasting happiness, and that the purpose of religion is to facilitate love and compassion, patience, tolerance, humility and forgiveness. He asserts that the true religion is compassion, which involves love for others and respect for their rights and dignity, no matter who or what they are. Similarly, love is a verb in Christianity (de la Torre 2004), exemplified in *The Holy Bible* (1984) verse, 'Let us not love in words, nor in mere talk, but in deed and in truth' (1 John 3:18). Christ's depiction of love is differentiated from affection or attachment (Peck 1987). Conversely, love is martyrdom in the Muslim Sufi tradition (Nasr 2002).

Various sources suggest that love as action has the purpose of ensuring social justice. In Christianity, love has the role to 'question, analyse, challenge, and dismantle the social structures responsible for preventing people from reaching the fullest potential of the abundant life promised by Christ' (de la Torre 2004, p. 11). In contrast, Bauman (2003) personalises love as a verb that remoulds 'an other' into a 'quite definite someone':

> 'Making an other into the definite someone means rendering the future indefinite. It means consent to the future's indefiniteness. Consent to a life lived, from its conception to its demise, on the only site allocated to humans: the void stretching between finitude of their deeds and infinity of their aims and consequences' (p. 20).

Gaita (1999) also affirms that love is behaviour with the 'power to reveal the full humanity of those whose affliction had made their humanity invisible' (p. 20).

Love is also integral to dialogue, as 'a foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself' (Freire 1989, p. 77). Freire disregards the idea of love as emotion or sentiment, expressing that love is a necessary element of social transformation to alter structures of oppression and inequality:

> 'No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. As an act of bravery, love cannot be sentimental; as an act of freedom, it must generate other acts of freedom; otherwise, it is not love. Only by abolishing the situation of oppression is it possible to restore the love which that situation made impossible. If I do not love the world – if I do not love men (sic) – I cannot enter into dialogue' (p. 78).

Freire reinforces hooks' feminist commitment to love as a process for transforming inequitable structures and systems of power.

Several authors and activists also consider love as nonviolence. In the Gandhi tradition, nonviolence is *ahimsa,* which means non-hurting, and *ahimsa* is extended to love for the enemy - loving those who hate us (Gandhi's *Letter of December 31 1934* cited in Gandhi 2005, p. 82). Highly influenced by Christianity, Tolstoy (1970) also argues that violence cannot be responded to with violence and insists that, without exception, people should not deviate from love: love is the maintenance of nonviolence. He compares love (as nonviolence) to violence:

> 'On one side are liberty, peace and sincerity; on the other, slavery, fear and dissimulation. One the one side is faith, on the other the lack of belief; on one side truth, on the other lies; on one side love, on the other hatred; on one side a radiant future, and on the other a frightful past' (Tolstoy 1970, p. 65).

King Jr. (1963) also stresses that love is a key component of nonviolence, as 'one of the most potent weapons available to an oppressed people in their struggle for freedom' (p. 138).

When considering love as action, the literature reviewed in this section thus suggests that love is a choice and nonviolence in the pursuit of equality and justice. Interestingly, much of the literature about love was written by men (including influential male activists), is gender blind and was published some time ago. There is both scope and necessity for contemporary women as feminist activists and writers to engage in this topic alongside bell hooks.

2.3 Characteristics of love

The literature also shows that love as action encompasses various characteristics or virtues. hooks (2000) identifies characteristics of love including care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust, requiring honest and open communication, forgiveness and giving. From a Buddhist perspective, Hanh (1998) explains that the four aspects or elements of true love are the *Brahmaviharas* (Four Immeasurable Minds) of *maitri* (love or lovingkindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (joy) and *upeksha* (equanimity). Love (lovingkindness) is 'the intention and capacity to offer joy and happiness' (p. 4), compassion is 'the intention and capacity to relieve and transform suffering and lighten sorrow' (p. 5), joy involves bringing happiness to ourselves and others, and equanimity is nonattachment, non-discrimination, evenmindedness or letting go.

Across the literature, characteristics of love include trust, commitment, care, respect, knowledge, responsibility, joy, compassion, equanimity, giving, nonviolence, justice, forgiveness and altruism (Fromm 1957; Gandhi 2005; Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1996; hooks 2000; King Jr. 1963; Orlie 1997; Oslo University College 1999; Tolstoy 1970; de la Torre 2004).

2.4 Types of love

Love can be narrowed to an object or specific relationship, but love as action is in fact an orientation to all:

> 'Love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an *attitude*, an *orientation of character* which determines the relatedness of a person to the world as a whole, not towards one "object" of love' (Fromm 1957, p. 38).

Nevertheless, key texts reviewed in this thesis identify various different types of love, outlined in the following table:

Table 2.1: Types of love

Author and year	Types of love
Fromm 1957	Brotherly love; motherly love; erotic love; self-love; and spiritual love.
hooks 2000; 2003	Self-love; intimate partner love and romance; love for children and family; love for students; community love; love at work; and spiritual love.
King Jr. 1963	*Eros* (erotic love); *philia* (love between friends); and *agape* (redemptive goodwill for all).
Lewis 1960	Affection; friendship; erotic love; and the love of God.

Across the reviewed literature, identified types of love include:

- Self-love
- *Eros* (romantic/erotic love)
- *Storge* (parental love; love between parents and offspring)
- Intergenerational love
- *Philia* (love between friends)
- Love at work (love for clients and love for colleagues)
- Community love
- *Agape* (neighbourly/brotherly love; love for humanity; other-regarding love; love for enemies)
- Environmental love (love for country/place/nature)
- Love for the Divine

(Andolsen 1981; Barker & Payne 2006; Bauman 2003; Butot 2004; 2007; Caldicott 1992; Dickson 2004; Fromm 1957; Gaita 1999; Gandhi 1957; Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1996; 2000; hooks 2000; King Jr. 1963; Lewis 1960; Nwonye 2009; Rose 2008; Shantideva 1979; Templeton 1999; Willis 2003).

In this section I briefly analyse each type of love.

2.4.1 Self-love

Popular literature promotes the idea that self-love is necessary to love others. hooks (2000) agrees with this notion, arguing that self-hate is not a positive basis for action: 'Don't expect to receive the love from someone else you do not give yourself' (hooks 2000, p. 68). Fromm also advocates that love for self and love for others are 'inseparably connected' (p. 46), highlighting that self-love is not selfish or narcissistic, but necessary for genuine love for others. Indeed, a loving relationship with the self is considered important for social workers (Butot 2004; 2007). Self-love is also an important element of nonviolent theory (King Jr. 1963), exemplified in the following statement:

> 'You cannot continue to be of help to other people if you do not take care of yourself. Your solidity, your freedom, your happiness, are crucial for other people' (Hanh cited in Willis 2003, p. 167).

Unlike other authors, Bauman (2003) believes that in this liquid modern era, self-love is only possible when we are loved by others.

2.4.2 Eros / Intimate partner love

hooks (2000) explains that intimate love involves giving to each other and making mutuality the basis of the bond. She asserts that intimate love cannot exist within a structure of patriarchy, which relies on unbalanced power and control. True love involves deconstructing social concepts of gender and romance, engaging in mutual recognition as 'two individuals seeing each other as they really are' (hooks 2000, p. 183). Intimate partner love therefore requires ongoing commitment to constructive struggle and change and a willingness to reflect on our actions with a loved one. Hanh reiterates that 'true love' in intimate relationships includes a sense of responsibility and accepting the other person as they are (cited in Willis 2003, p. 178). Importantly, intimate partner love is considered an act of will (Fromm 1957; hooks 2000). Fromm (1957) identifies erotic love as 'the craving for complete fusion, for union with one other person' (p. 42), with an exclusive nature that results from sexual happiness.

2.4.3 Family love

Various authors suggest that familial experiences, such as experiences of abuse and parental relationships, can affect children's concepts of love (Hanh cited in Willis 2003; hooks 2000). In this regard, families are the 'original school of love' (hooks 2000, p. 17). hooks explains that acts of physical and emotional abuse, disguised as discipline, deny children the opportunity to learn the art of loving, whereas deliberate abstention from abuse and a focus on love in the family can enable children to learn to love. Unconditional love from parents towards their children is not an external standard imposed from elsewhere, but 'it is one of the standards internal to that love itself' (Gaita 1999, p. 24).

With a non-feminist discourse reflective of his era, Fromm (1957) discusses familial love as motherly love, which he describes as unconditional – it is love for the helpless, and an unconditional affirmation of the child's life and needs. Importantly, feminist literature exposes the oppressive nature of societal expectations regarding women's roles in loving children and families. Graham (1983) argues that caring roles in families demand both love and labour (identity and activity), and within gender-divided societies, caring has particular consequences for the identity and activity of women. Caring is a 'labour of love' for women (Graham 1983, p. 13), and the gendered nature of caring ensures that women are more likely to have caring responsibilities in the home and work in caring professions (such as social work), with resultant economic dependency and poverty for women. Within the experience of caring as a labour of love, women are accepted into and belong in the social

world. Although Graham's perspective is 30 years old (and gender relations have evolved in Western societies), this view provides important insight into the potential misuse of love in the familial (and professional) context. Social work researcher Lena Dominelli (2011 pers. comm. 16 September) reiterates that women's expression of love through undertaking a caring role can be exploited, as their 'labour of love' is not adequately recognised or compensated.

2.4.4   Community love

The concept of community love has several meanings in the reviewed literature. Community can be interpreted in a variety of ways (for example, a person's 'inner circle', an interest group, a geographical location, or the human species in general). This section considers various forms of community love, including hooks' perspective of the 'circle of love', brotherly love, neighbourly love and love for the enemy.

Circle of love

hooks (2000) refers to one's community as a 'circle of love'. She advocates living one's life within this circle of love, 'interacting with loved ones to whom we are committed' (p. 138), a community of extended family and friends. Within this circle, love in action involves being kind and courteous, mutual giving, sharing and greeting. She asserts that although we are all born into a world of community, systems of capitalism and patriarchy have destroyed the familial system of extended kin, necessitating connecting to and loving the extended kin network and engaging in friendship. hooks also briefly refers to love in rural communities, asserting that small towns are strongly evident of the love ethic through their neighbourliness (fellowship, care and respect) and when governed with love and communalism.

Brotherly love

Brotherly love is a non-feminist term that implies a sense of connectedness between non-blood related peoples with responsibility to each other. Fromm (1957) describes brotherly love as 'the sense of responsibility, care, respect, knowledge of any other human beings, the wish to further his (sic) life' (p. 38). He equates it to the Golden Rule maxim *love thy neighbour as thyself* as a love for all human beings. Brotherly love involves solidarity, an acknowledgement that all people are equals and identity of 'the human core common to all' (p. 38). Brotherly love occurs through compassion (involving knowledge and identification)

and assumes that we are all one in a brotherhood, emphasising love for strangers. 'Sisterly love', although not in common vernacular, could perhaps be understood as *sisterhood*, a feminist construct of political solidarity between women (hooks 1986).

Neighbourly Love and the Golden Rule

Although hooks does not discuss unconditional love for others, neighbourly love is comprehensively explored in spiritual and philosophical literature. It is present in all major spiritual traditions. In Christianity, neighbourly love is exemplified in *The Holy Bible* (1984) parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) that defines a neighbour as anyone who is in need. According to Gaita (1999), the Good Samaritan recognised the full humanity of the undesirable man who was half-dead on the roadside, and provided help to him with no expectation of reciprocity. Hanh (1993) reiterates that the Buddhist concept of neighbourly love is non-discriminatory, through equal regard for all people, including our enemy. He reiterates that when we love our enemy, they are no longer our enemy but someone suffering who needs our compassion. Neighbourly love is present in Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism through the Four Immeasurables of *maitri* (love or lovingkindness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (joy) and *upeksha* (equanimity) (Hanh 1998). *The Qur'an* highlights neighbourly love in the verse, 'Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess' (*The Qur'an* n.d., 4:36). Through the philosophy of *ren* (translated as benevolence, love, altruism, tenderness, charity, compassion, human-heartedness and humaneness), Confucian writings also emphasise love for the neighbour through viewing society as a large family with no differentiation between private and public spheres (Li 1994).

His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2000) also references neighbourly love as non-harmfulness to others within his framework of modern ethics:

> 'Given our basic premise that an ethical conduct consists in not harming others, it follows that we need to take others' feelings into consideration, the basis for our innate capacity for empathy. And as we transform this capacity into love and compassion, through guarding against those factors which obstruct it and cultivating those conducive to it, so our practice of ethics improves. This, we find, leads to happiness both for ourselves and others' (p. 80).

Importantly, King Jr. (1963) highlights the pervasive conditionality of neighbourly love in modern society whereby neighbourly concern is limited to tribe, race or nation. He insists

that the 'good neighbour' discerns the inner qualities that makes all people human and therefore neighbours. To that end, King Jr. promotes unconditional neighbourly love that transcends identity distinctions. This is reflected in Derrida's (2001) philosophical notion of cosmopolitanism, which advocates hospitality as a duty and a right beyond the confines of the State.

Neighbourly love is often equated with the Golden Rule, an ethical principle of reciprocity that one should treat others as one would like to be treated. The negative form of this rule (the Silver Rule) is that one should not treat others as one would not like to be treated. The Golden Rule and Silver Rule are present in various spiritual traditions, outlined in the following table:

Table 2.2: Spiritual iterations of the Golden Rule and Silver Rule

Spiritual tradition	Golden Rule
Christianity	'Do to others as you would have them do to you' (*The Holy Bible* 1984, Luke 6:31). 'You shall love your neighbour as you love yourself' (*The Holy Bible* 1984, Leviticus 19:18).
Buddhism	'The man who loves himself so much, should do no injury to others' (*The Udana* 1902, Son Thera 5.1).
Hinduism	'One should never do that to another which one regards as injurious to one's own self' (*The Mahabharata* 1896, Anusasana Parva 113).
Islam	'None of you (truly) believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself' (*An-Nawawi's Forty Hadith* n.d., No. 13).
Judaism	'Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself' (*The Torah* n.d., Leviticus 19:18).
Confucianism	'Never do to others what you would not like them to do to you' (*The Analects of Confucius* 1989, 15:23).

According to the Edmonton Interfaith Centre for Education and Action (2015), the Golden Rule is expressed in many other religious traditions including Baha'i Faith, Brahamanism, Jainism, Native American spirituality, Roman Paganism, Scientology, Shintosim, Sikhism, Sufism, Taoism, Unitarianism, Wicca and Zoroastrianism.

Neighbourly love is not just a spiritual construct. In his non-religious text, Mackay (2013) explains that the Golden Rule calls for a highly co-operative approach, requiring us to consider ourselves as members of a community rather than individuals in competition with each other. Thus, in a Golden Rule world, nations would not invade each other, political debates would have a spirit of courtesy, the marketplace would be transparent and fair and violence would not occur. Mackay extends the Golden Rule to, 'Treat all stakeholders…the

way you yourself would like to be treated, provided that would be just, fair and reasonable in the circumstances' (2013, p. 177). A loving life lived according to the Golden Rule involves a commitment to take other people seriously, respect them and acknowledge their desire for proper recognition. The 'three great therapies' of the good life are to listen attentively, to apologise sincerely and to forgive generously (Mackay 2013, p. 207).

Similarly, Bauman (2003) argues that the call to Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself is 'one of the fundamental precepts of civilised life. It is also the most contrary to the kind of reason that civilisation promotes: the reason of self-interest, and of the pursuit of happiness' (p. 77). Bauman shares that loving our neighbours as we love ourselves means respecting each other's uniqueness. However, this virtue cannot be forced:

> 'For this world of ours you cannot legislate perfection. You cannot force virtue on the world, but neither can you persuade the world to behave virtuously. You cannot make this world kind and considerate to the human beings who inhabit it, and as accommodating to their dreams of dignity as you ideally wish it to be. *But you must try.* You will try' (Bauman 2003, p. 83).

2.4.5   Love for enemies

Loving the enemy is a tenet of Christianity, as Christ emphasised that 'neighbour' includes everyone, even one's enemies (Dickson 2004; King Jr. 1963). This is also present in other spiritual traditions such as Buddhism. His Holiness the Dalai Lama (1996) defines an enemy as,

> 'someone who either directly harms or hurts us, or someone who is motivated to or has the intention to harm or hurt us. The realisation that such a person is fully intent on hurting and harming you cannot give rise to a feeling of closeness and empathy as long as such feeling require an attachment to the person' (p. 68).

He explains that this realisation that another person wishes to harm and hurt us cannot undermine genuine compassion, based on the recognition of that person as someone who is suffering. He encourages us to consider that our enemy shares the same divine nature as us and is therefore worthy of our 'genuine compassion free from attachment' (p. 69). In this regard, no one is our enemy (Hanh 1993).

Reflecting nonviolent theory (Gandhi 2005), loving one's enemy is necessary for our survival: 'While abhorring segregation, we shall love the segregationist. This is the only way to create the beloved community' (King Jr. 1963, p. 40). King Jr. argues that we should love our

enemies for three reasons: firstly, responding to hatred with hatred only perpetuates hatred; secondly, hate scars the soul and distorts the personality; and thirdly, love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend. For King Jr., the act of loving an enemy has several tasks. These include forgiveness, understanding that the evil deed of the enemy-neighbour never expresses all that they are, and never seeking to defeat or humiliate the enemy but win their friendship and understanding. King Jr. asserts that only through loving our enemies can we know God and experience his holiness.

2.4.6   Love for clients

In the caring professions, love for clients is not widely discussed or promoted (Banks 2006). Yet some empirical research studies suggest that love for clients is a motivation for caregivers. In a qualitative study with home-based volunteer caregivers in South Africa, Akintola (2011) found that some volunteer carers were specifically motivated by love, with participant statements such as, 'I have got love for the community' (p. 57). Some participants also identified the relationship between volunteering and blessings from God: 'Sometimes you have a big sin in front of God and by helping another person with your love and care perhaps that sin will be reduced' (Interviewee, p. 59). In an appreciative inquiry also with home-based volunteer carers of people with HIV/AIDS in South Africa, Naidu (2011) found that carers expressed the nature of care through a metaphor of love and mothering, referring to their group named *uthando lomama* (translated as the love of the mothers). Love was the carers' primary motivation for volunteering. Other research regarding gay activism in rural United States also found that the HIV/AIDS epidemic gives black churches the opportunity to demonstrate unconditional love to sick and dying (Hudson & Robinson 2001). Yet while these studies suggest that love is an important aspect of a carer's work, the nature of love in the caring relationship is poorly explored. In Chapter 4, 'Love as an ethic of action for equality', I analyse other empirical studies that more deeply explore and propose love as a social work framework of critical practice (Butot 2004), a moral worldview of risk-taking in nursing (Fitzgerald & van Hooft 2000), the relationship between the student and educator (Horsfall 2008; Wong 2004), and a community work value (Nelson et al. 2000).

Some theoretical education literature also explores the loving relationship between the teacher and student. As an educational philosopher, hooks (2003) presents her love ethic in relation to the classroom, an approach that is useful when conceptualising love for clients in social work and community work practice. She explains that to be successful in the

classroom, teachers must nurture the emotional growth of students. Within this nurturance (both emotional and academic) love can flourish. She proposes 'conscious teaching', which involves reading the emotional climate and affirming the emotional wellbeing of students, which is teaching with love. She asserts that this does not make the teacher less objective, but rather when teaching with love, teachers are better able to respond to the unique needs of individual students while integrating those of the classroom.

In the nursing sector, Arman and Rehnsfeldt (2006) consider how love is visible through virtue and the art of caring, arguing that love is a universal/ontological value. Drawing from theoretical literature, they assert that the 'ethical and existential practice' of love enables a caregiver to connect more closely with their own essential personality and live more authentically. Importantly,

> 'We believe that love, if it is viewed only as a phenomenon without connection to a universal or ontological philosophy, risks being a problematic concept for caring science. If, on the other hand, love is seen as the ontological basis for caring and ethical acts, then we can look for and practice phenomenological expressions for love that can enhance the patient's understanding of life as well as give relief to their suffer' (p. 11).

Conversely, although she does not consider love, Noddings (1984) discusses care for the client, emphasising the need to see clients as individuals rather than cases. From an educational perspective, she asserts Buber's (1970) concept of achieving mutual inclusion, which reflects hooks' (2003) statement, 'All meaningful love relations empower each person engaged in the mutual practice of partnership' (p. 136).

2.4.7   Love at work

In her discussion of the love ethic, hooks (2000) highlights the need for love at work. She argues that our capacity to be self-loving is shaped by the work we do and whether that work enhances our wellbeing. Love at work involves seeking work that we love and doing a job well, even if we hate it, in order to be loving to ourselves and our personal wellbeing. This is reinforced by King Jr. (1963), who argues, 'All labour that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence' (p. 71). hooks also stresses the importance of ensuring a loving environment at work, and connects the workplace to happiness in the home.

Love as a practice concept is growing in the business world (Trinca & Fox 2006) and is also present in volunteer communities such as fire stations. A study with volunteer firefighters in the United States (Haski-Leventhal & McLeigh 2009) found that love between firefighters existed in a sense of 'brotherhood':

> 'We're here 24 hours a day every third day. This is our family. A lot of people don't understand that. You have to get along with your family.… Just like you, I love my family. This is my family here, this is what really intrigues me about this place … It's not only the love we have for each other; it's knowing that in a split second we could be in a situation where you have to depend on your family members to save your life. You have to have that trust. We have that here' (pp. 85-86).

The literature suggests that a loving work environment informs our capacity to love others and ourselves. Furthermore, the work environment is a community where love can be practised.

2.4.8 Love for humanity

Love for humanity is often depicted as *agape.* Christian ethicists have discussed the concept of *agape* for millennia, from its first discussion in the *New Testament* where it refers to the 'fatherly love of God for humankind and humankind's reciprocal love for God' (Nwonye 2009, p. 5), God's selfless love that make us capable of loving our fellow humans. *Agape* is a Greek term utilised within the Christian tradition for other-regarding love and self-sacrifice, which includes loving the unlovable neighbour (Andolsen 1981). King Jr. (1967b) explains agape as 'understanding, creative, redemptive goodwill toward all men. Agape is overflowing love which seeks nothing in return' (p. 74). King Jr.'s concept of *agape* love is all-embracing, for the oppressor and for the oppressed (Nwonye 2009). Similarly, *agape* is understood as equal-regard (Outka 1972), without regard for one's 'social utility, personal attractiveness, or individual merit' (Andolsen 1981, p. 72). However, the narrow definition of *agape* as other-regarding can be exploitative for women who define themselves in terms of their relationships to others, and is inappropriate for women who are excessively selfless (Andolsen 1981). Andolsen contends that some feminist Christian theologians have defined love (*agape*) as mutuality, which 'demands a reintegration of private and public life' (p. 79).

Although *agape* is traditionally associated with Christianity, *agape* is present in eight world religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism and Native American Spirituality). Recognising this spiritual diversity, Templeton (1999) defines *agape* as 'feeling and expressing pure, unlimited love for every human being with no

exception' (p. 1). *Agape* is expressed towards all humanity, even Creation, and is unconditional and unlimited in its expression towards all the world's people as part of the same family. With important considerations of potential exploitation, love for humanity is a relevant inclusion in a holistic perspective of love.

2.4.9 Love for nature

hooks (2000) does not discuss love for the environment, nor do other love-focussed philosophers such as King Jr., Tolstoy and Fromm (who all embrace a Christian or Jewish worldview). However, a loving relationship between people and nature is a significant element of Buddhist philosophy and various indigenous worldviews, and an important consideration in this research.

It is argued that Hebrew and Greek traditions place humans at the centre of the moral universe, a contrast to ancient Eastern traditions (Singer 2011). This modern Western paradigm is influenced by *The Holy Bible* (1984) call for humanity to 'rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground' (Genesis 1:28). Singer (2011) interprets this relationship of domination that the natural world exists for the benefit of human beings, although this attitude does not rule out concern for the environment as long as concern is related to human wellbeing. Indeed, Genesis 2:15 states, 'The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it' (*The Holy Bible* 1984). Thus, it is suggested that Judeo-Christianity promotes human stewardship of the earth (see, for example, Dobel 2008). However, White highlights a notable historical exception in Christianity, when St Francis of Assisi purportedly tried to establish a 'democracy of all God's creatures' with equality of all creatures (White 2008, p. 20). He attests that in *Canticle of Brother Sun,* St. Francis embraced all elements of creation as members of one family.

Other spiritual traditions have different perspectives regarding the relationship between people and nature. Dwivedi (2008) shows that in Hinduism, God has absolute sovereignty over all creatures; therefore, while humans are authorised to use natural resources, we do not have dominion over the earth or other non-human life. *Ahimsa* (nonviolence) thus applies to both humans and animals, rooted in the cycle of rebirth where a person may come back as an animal. In this regard, '... the life of a lamb is no less precious than that of a human being' (Gandhi 1957, p. 235). Similarly, Buddhism promotes abstention from injury to life through *metta*: a lovingkindness towards all creatures and plants that reflects equal

preciousness (de Silva 2008). Reflecting interdependence between the earth and humans, Buddhist monk Hanh (1993) promotes unconditional love for the environment:

> 'Birds' songs express joy, beauty, and purity, and evoke in us vitality and love. So many beings in the universe love us unconditionally. The trees, the water, and the air don't ask anything of us; they just love us. Even though we need this kind of love, we continue to destroy them. By destroying the animals, the air, and the trees, we are destroying ourselves. We must learn to practice unconditional love for all beings so that the animals, the air, the trees, and the minerals can continue to be themselves' (pp. 131-2).

As humans belong to nature, love involves living in harmony with nature by taking 'mindful steps' (Hanh 1994, p. 131).

Indigenous worldviews also provide important insight into love between people and nature. A non-indigenous anthropologist argues that ATSI Australians' understanding of relationship sustainability emphasises love as kinship between human and nonhuman species (Rose 2008), an interdependent, familial relationship between people and nature. For example, Ngiyampaa elder Paul Gordon describes the pademelon (a small marsupial) as 'my people, my relations' (cited in Rose 2008, p. 83). The prevention of species extinction by Indigenous peoples is thus an act of love. Similarly, African relationships with nature invoke respect and awe, with a moral concept of not taking more than one needs from nature (Ogungbemi 2008).

The evidence suggests that love between people and nature is an important component of love-centred community work. Indeed, medical practitioner Caldicott (1992) states, 'if you love your country enough to cure its ills, you will be able to love and cure this planet' (p. 15). She explains that loving the planet involves direct human connection with the earth and taking action through loving, learning, living and legislating. Importantly, although love between humans and nature is not overtly discussed in theories of ecofeminism, deep ecology and the Latin American knowledge paradigm of *buen vivir* (although human love of companion animals is increasingly considered in the field of anthrozoology (for example, Belk 1996))*,* it is relevant to consider these discourses in the construction of love as an ethic of action. These and other indigenous theories of ecological ethics are discussed in Chapter 3.

2.4.10 Spiritual love

The final type of love I identify in the literature is spiritual love. hooks (2000) does not propagate a particular religion or dogma, but discusses love for the divine. She associates God as love, and promotes a spiritual awakening as necessary for a culture of love, as '[l]iving life in touch with divine spirit lets us see the light of love in all living beings' (p. 71). She stresses selecting a spiritual practice that best enhances our life and practising tolerance as one community in love. hooks conceptualises spirituality embedded in loving action as conscious practice and willingness to unite thinking with action:

> 'A commitment to spiritual life necessarily means we embrace the eternal principle that love is all, everything, our true destiny. Despite overwhelming pressure to conform to the culture of lovelessness, we still seek to know love. That seeking itself is a manifestation of divine spirit' (hooks 2000, pp. 77-8).

Similarly, Fromm (1957) explains that love of God 'springs from the need to overcome separateness and to achieve union' (p. 49). However, King Jr., as a Christian pastor, emphasises love as a means of spiritual fulfilment. While encouraging us to 'love your neighbour as you love yourself', he prioritises the First Commandment, 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind', as the height of life (1963, p. 77). hooks, however, resists dogmatic approaches to divine love and instead emphasises setting an example by being loving. Furthermore, although hooks and others focus on a theistic notion of spiritual love, Moss (2005) provides an alternative explanation of spirituality as 'what we do to give expression to our chosen worldview' (p. 13). Atheistic spiritual love within his construct would involve horizontal relationality rather than an upward and inward spiritual connectedness.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter, I considered definitions, characteristics and types of love within the framework of hooks' theory of the love ethic. Several trends emerge from the literature. Love is generally defined as a verb rather than a feeling and is considered an ethic to guide behaviour. It is strongly related to notions of common humanity, connectedness and moral responsibility. Additionally, love has many varied characteristics (including compassion), which positions love as an overarching ethic that encapsulates multiple values. The literature suggests that there are several types of love, and despite recognising differences between each type, scholars such as hooks and Fromm write generally about love as an all-

encompassing construct. It is also clear that most available literature regarding types of love derives from spiritual and religious traditions. The religious and spiritual dominance of literature relating to love perhaps explains some of the resistance in the humanist social work tradition to engaging with love as a discourse of practice. Indeed, Butot (2004) recognises the need to extract love from benevolent missionary practice. Nevertheless, love is often explored within ethical philosophy, and hooks' (2000) construction of the love ethic promotes greater focus on love and ethics.

In the next chapter, I consider love as an ethic, analysing hooks' love ethic within ethical philosophy.

3   Literature Review: Love as an ethic

A genuinely ethical attitude presupposes a fundamental experience of worth and love, a binding understanding of the other person's importance and of the value of life. In that sense, love is a central theme in ethics (*Swedish Social Work Code of Ethics,* Akademikerförbundet SSR 2011, p. 12).

… justice is what love looks like in public and tenderness is what love feels like in private (Cornel West 2011).

This is the second of three chapters that examines relevant literature regarding love. In this chapter, I critique love as an ethic, analysing hooks' love ethic within philosophical constructions of ethics. I consider firstly the love ethic within virtue ethics. I then discuss the love ethic as 'right action' within the field of deontological ethics, using Orlie's (1997) framework of ethical living. I also analyse the love ethic as an ethic of relationship, focussing on three major fields of ethical philosophy: ethic of caring; global ethics; and, ecological ethics. I then consider love as an ethic within professional social work ethics. In the following chapter, I analyse theoretical and empirical frameworks of love as action for social change.

3.1   Introduction

hooks (2000) proposes that love is an ethic of action. She explains that love is a practice we choose to engage in, with accountability and responsibility whereby we accept the consequences of our actions. By positioning abuse, greed and power as the opposite of love, hooks' love ethic is a philosophical ontology to guide action. Love is considered a service to others, based on principles and behaviours of trust, commitment, care, respect, knowledge and responsibility. She also claims that love is reliant upon justice (recognizing and transforming dominant systems of power), with essential practices of forgiveness and honesty. The love ethic prioritises valuing and nurturing human life and wellbeing over wealth, 'finding ourselves in the other' (p. 93) through awareness and critical examination of our actions and radically changing practices of greed and violence. In sum, hooks' love ethic is values-based action to transform dominant inequitable systems of patriarchy, racism and

capitalism. In doing so, the love ethic in practice '…is the healing force that brings sustained peace' (hooks 2000, p. 220).

Given hooks' deliberate use of the term 'ethic', it is appropriate to consider her work within ethical philosophy. Ethics is concerned with both the ends and the means of human action (Goulet 1997), which Gandhi explains are convertible terms when considering morality (*Young India* 26 December 1924 cited in Gandhi 2005). Recognising the complexity of ethics, Banks and Gallagher (2009) identify the following elements of ethics, which reflect various ethical philosophical traditions:

- The character of the moral agent (the main focus of virtue ethics);

- The nature of right action (the main focus of deontological ethics);

- The outcomes of action (the main focus of consequentialist ethics); and

- The relationships between people (the main focus of the ethics of care and proximity).

hooks' love ethic does not neatly fit into a specific area of ethics, but is a complex ethical approach that incorporates the character of the moral agent, the nature of right action and relationships. Midgley (2004) confirms that knowledge is a network of lateral links rather than a one-dimensional system of hierarchy, and as such it is appropriate to consider hooks' love ethic within various areas of ethical philosophy. In this section, I begin with a discussion of love and morality, and then consider the love ethic within three ethical philosophies that I consider relevant to hooks' framework, namely virtue ethics, deontological ethics and ethics of care and proximity. I do not explore consequentialist ethics because, according to my analysis, hooks' love ethic does not emphasise consequences but the dialogical process *towards* intended outcomes. This is consistent with nonviolent theory that advocates that the means (process) *are* the ends (Fernandes 2003; Kelly & Sewell 1988).

3.2   Love and morality

Although hooks does not discuss morality in her love ethic, morality is widely considered in philosophy. Morals are conventions, views and rules about what is right/good/bad, while ethics concerns theories, approaches and principles about morals (Gasper 2000). Morality is not the servant of desires and interests but their judge (Gaita 1999). It is 'nothing but an innately prompted manifestation of humanity – it does not "serve" any "purpose" and most surely is not guided by the expectation of profit, comfort glory or self-enhancement'

(Bauman 2003, p. 92). Although I attempt to differentiate morality and ethics in this chapter, my discussion highlights the interdependence of these concepts, reflecting the fluidity and liquidity (Bauman 2000) of modern philosophical inquiry.

Some authors question whether humans are innately moral beings (Bauman 2003; Gaita 1999; Maturana & Verden-Zoller 2008). In a series of filmed interviews, Bauman (1999) discusses the fundamental question of morality, raised by Cain from *The Holy Bible Old Testament* Book of *Genesis*: 'Am I my brother's (sic) keeper?'. Bauman asserts that being our brother's (neighbour's) keeper is our human condition. Emphasising human interconnectedness, Bauman articulates that everything we do affects other people and thus we are responsible for others' wellbeing. Morality therefore is taking responsibility for that responsibility. Such responsibility guides our behaviour as we consider whether our actions are 'good or bad' and whether they bring 'happiness or unhappiness'. Bauman explains that in taking responsibility, the moral person must negotiate two disparate stances: 1) respecting the other's autonomy and not interfering; and 2) assuming a position of superior knowledge and forcing the other to follow advice. He also defines immorality as refusing to help a person in danger (Bauman 2000). Although Bauman does not specifically discuss love in relation to morality, the literature already discussed and hooks' framing of the love ethic suggests that love and morality are well connected. Reflecting a holistic view of love discussed earlier, Gandhi states that the highest moral law is 'we should unremittingly work for the good of [hu]mankind' (*Ethical Religion* 1930 cited in Gandhi 2005, p. 72).

Other theorists also provide useful insights into morality. Gaita (1999) discusses two forms of thinking about morality – one where individuals, rights and obligation are at the centre, and another where human beings, human fellowship, love and its requirements are at the centre. He understands morality as knowing and recognising the full humanity of another, identifying that 'the fact that our various ways of loving condition our sense that human beings are precious beyond reason and beyond merit' (p. 8) is the most serious cause of conflict within morality and between morality and other values. Morality is in tension with what conditions its most fundamental concept. Furthermore, cultures are partly defined and distinguished by what is unthinkable in them – what is indefensible, or what is considered wicked to even contemplate.

It is also argued that the basis for morality is a willingness to consider other people's costs and benefits, requiring a reflection of feelings and reasoning (Gasper 2000). Moral exemplars (inspirational cases and persons, particularly from within a suffering group) can

help promote fellow-feeling and motivation. With individualistic reasoning, Gandhi suggests that true morality consists in not following the beaten track, but in 'finding out the true path for ourselves and in fearlessly following it' (*Ethical Religion* 1930 cited in Gandhi 2005, p. 169). He stresses that involuntary actions and actions dictated by fear or coercion cannot be considered moral; that moral action is conducted consciously and as a matter of duty. Importantly, morality requires human consistency (Garvey 2008) and must go together with power to enforce change (King Jr. 1967a).

In general there lacks a consensus of what constitutes moral action. However, 'far from being a major threat to morality (and so an abomination to ethical philosophers), *uncertainty is the home ground of the moral person and the only soil out of which morality can spring shoots and flourish'* (Bauman 2003, p. 93). The literature discussed in this section shows that morality as a concept of 'rightness' engages a number of elements, including a recognition of full humanity, a commitment to helping others, following a 'true' path for ourselves, and conscious decision-making and action – concepts that reflect the variety of definitions of love discussed earlier.

3.3   The love ethic as virtue

Virtue ethics refers to ethical theories that focus on the moral qualities (virtues) of individuals and/or institutions whereby virtues are character traits (Banks & Gallagher 2009). Virtue ethics shifts the focus onto professional practitioners, to the kinds of people they are and could or should be rather than focussing on their action or conduct:

> 'Virtue ethics is a theoretical perspective within ethics which holds that judgements about the inner lives of individuals (their traits, motives, dispositions and character), rather than judgements about the rightness or wrongness of external acts and/or consequences of acts, are of the greatest moral importance' (Louden 1998, p. 491 cited in Banks & Gallagher 2009, p. 34).

There exists a long history of virtue ethics in world philosophy and religion. Plato (2014) and Aristotle (2015) explore four cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, moderation and justice. *The Holy Bible* (1984) lists nine virtues as 'fruit of the Spirit' of 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' (Galatians, 5:22-23). His Holiness the Dalai Lama (2000) suggests that ethical discipline involves the cultivation of virtue, including the essential qualities of love and compassion, patience, tolerance and forgiveness. And as discussed earlier, love has many characteristics, including care, affection,

recognition, respect, commitment and trust, along with honest and open communication (hooks 2000).

Banks and Gallagher (2009) explain that virtues are both self and other-regarding. Examples of other-regarding virtues can include generosity, conscientiousness, compassion, kindness, honesty, veracity and justice, while self-regarding virtues are temperance, prudence, circumspection and industry. Virtue ethics embraces 'feeling well' in addition to 'acting well', and actively engages emotion. In the sectors of health and social care, the authors identify the following virtues: courage, professional wisdom, respectfulness, trustworthiness, care, justice and integrity. They consider faith, hope and love (charity) as theological virtues; directly contrasting with hooks' assertion that love is relevant to social and non-theological action. Nevertheless, the general thrust of virtue ethics suggests that hooks' love ethic, with its extensive characteristics (virtues), can be positioned within this philosophical space.

3.4   The love ethic as right action

The study of virtue ethics provides insight into the constitution of the moral person, and, in the work of Banks and Gallagher (2009), the moral practitioner. However, virtues and principles are only evident in action (Noddings 1984; Orlie 1997). Deontological ethics consider the nature of *right action*, which is relevant to hooks' (2000) construct of love as an ethic of action. As discussed, hooks explains that the love ethic involves conscious action to challenge systems of power and dominance through nurturing the spiritual growth of others, serving others, practising forgiveness and honesty and actualising the key ingredients of love: care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust.

Orlie's (1997) framework for ethical living supports us to understand right action. She argues that living ethically involves acknowledging trespasses, forgiving promises, thinking, not complying with social norms and acting politically. These actions enable us to identify 'right' and 'wrong' action. Firstly, she differentiates willed evil (a clear 'wrong' action) from 'trespasses' ('ordered evil'), which 'are not willed wickedness, but inadvertent, unthinking, often unknown or invisible harms' (p. 24). Although unintentional and not acted out of desire, trespasses are unavoidable because they constitute and condition us in the daily living of our lives, and in order to satisfy our needs, violence is often inherent. This state of affairs means that harm and wrongdoing are often inadvertent, unseen and contrary to our intentions (p. 141). As trespasses are considered 'unethical' within Orlie's framework, she asserts that right action involves being aware and assuming responsibility for our trespasses.

Although hooks' love ethic does not specifically recognise trespasses, she does highlight the importance of mindfulness and reflexivity in action.

Secondly, Orlie also identifies 'right' action in forgiving promises, by being responsible for our character and our trespass. Forgiveness involves a commitment to act together and to engage with those whom we trespass as political friends. Orlie refers to Arendt's prerogative of individually and privately 'loving the world', which involves a spiritual and personal (thus a-political) practice of overcoming through forgiveness that transgresses limits. hooks' asserts that forgiveness is a key component of love as action, as a gesture of respect and releasing others from guilt or anguish:

> 'A useful gift all love's practitioners can give is the offering of forgiveness. It not only allows us to move away from blame, from seeing others as the cause of our sustained lovelessness, but it enables us to experience agency, to know we can be responsible for giving and finding love' (hooks 2000, p. 163).

Hanh (1993) also argues that forgiveness is the fruit of awareness, which enables compassion for others. While Orlie, hooks and Hanh promote forgiveness as freely and easily given, Derrida (2001) asserts that true forgiveness consists in forgiving the unforgivable, meaning that forgiveness should be exceptional and extraordinary, as a pure process of forgiveness without power – unconditional but without sovereignty.

Thirdly, Orlie explains that 'right action' through living ethically encourages 'thinking'. She suggests that we are 'thoughtless subject-citizens' in action and decision-making when we exercise power without self-reflection or other-regard, and participate unwittingly, yet willingly, in ordered evil (p. 147). She asserts that thinking enables us to experience the limits of our bodies/minds and discover their transfigurative potential, and encourages us to consider exercising power thoughtfully to embolden and secure our own and others' freedom. This would involve asserting 'power with' others in solidarity to achieve rights. Within this construct of 'thinking', we should act and judge actions in light of reasons to which all affected could agree. While thinking does not resolve the problem, it opens a space of possibilities. Political thinking may begin principled action by enabling thoughtful redirection of our power effects. Orlie's focus on thinking connects to the Buddhist concept of mindfulness, which involves a considered, consistent awareness of thought and action, as the seed of 'enlightenment, awareness, understanding, care, compassion, liberation, transformation, and healing' (Hanh cited in Willis 2003, p. 151). Mindfulness is a process of considering the roots of a problem (not just the surface) and making a thoughtful response

(Hanh 1993). Reflecting the 'thinking' aspect of right action, hooks asserts, 'The heartbeat of true love is the willingness to reflect on one's actions, and to process and communicate this reflection with a loved one' (p. 185). Like thinking, mindfulness enables deep understanding of others and us, encouraging compassion.

Fourthly, Orlie asserts that ethical living involves not complying with social norms; that is, thinking politically and not blindly adhering to social rules. She defines social rules as,

> '... the means by which individuals remake themselves in conformity with the collective projection of 'the people' within their corporeal souls. A body politics' prevailing views and practices reflect and reinforce congealed patterns of social rule' (p. 139).

Normalised social rules are generated through popular authorisation of governing power (p. 57). Orlie explains that social norms depend upon our 'willing subjection' to social order and knowledge of good and evil. As we become freely subject to these social processes, we 'elaborate and extend the social rules that secure order' (p. 55). A key problem with freedom is that our own and others' actions are 'thwarted by constrictive social patterns and threatened by unthinking social behaviour' (p. 12). Orlie's suggestion to challenge social norms reflects theories of nonviolence and civil disobedience, which, as discussed, are closely connected to love (Gandhi 2005; King Jr. 1963; Tolstoy 1970).

Finally, Orlie encourages acting politically in order to act ethically. Thinking and acting politically involves opening ourselves to others' perspectives with a willingness to transfigure our minds/bodies and reveal who we are becoming. This greatly reflects hooks' argument that consciously acting through love can transform inequitable systems of patriarchy, racism and capitalism. When viewed through Orlie's framework of right action, it can be argued that hooks' love ethic is an ethic of right action, and can be situated in the field of deontological ethics.

3.5   The love ethic as relationship

In addition to embracing virtues and guiding right action, the love ethic challenges constructions of power by building communities of communalism, connectedness and interdependence through relationship. hooks maintains that love in practice involves connection, 'to find ourselves in the other' (2000, p. 93). Connection occurs through resisting the temptation of greed, and we honour communalism by sharing resources and affirm our connection to a world community. This reflects Buber's (1970) I-Thou construct of

committed responsibility. Importantly, hooks' love ethic has a global vision whereby 'our lives and our fate as intimately connected to those of everyone else on the planet' (pp. 87-88), involving mutual responsibility. In this regard, the love ethic is related to ethical philosophies that consider relationships of responsibility between people and between people and nature. Some relevant ethical theories are the ethic of caring, global ethics and ecological ethics.

3.5.1 Ethic of caring

Key theorists previously discussed in this literature review (including hooks, Gandhi, Hanh, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, King Jr., Orlie and Tolstoy) do not explicitly discuss caring as love. In particular, hooks (2000, p. 8) explains that while care is a dimension of love, giving care does not mean that we are loving. I do not equate love with care, particularly because care is often depicted as an apolitical or a micro approach to change (Noddings 1984), while love (in hooks' framework) involves radical action for structural transformation. Nevertheless, the nature of the ethic of caring is an important consideration when exploring the love ethic as an ethical philosophy of proximity and relationship.

Building from the work of Mayeroff (1971), Noddings (1984) refers to the ethic of caring as 'receiving the other into myself' (p. 30), also described as 'engrossment' (p. 24). She asserts that there is a form of caring that is natural and accessible to all human beings; but the ethic does not embody a sense of universal moral judgements. The ethic of caring locates morality in the pre-act consciousness of the one-caring. 'Caring-about' refers to the verbal commitment to the possibility of caring, while 'caring-for' has a sense of actuality:

> 'Caring involves stepping out of one's own personal frame of reference into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his (sic) objective needs, and what he (sic) expects of us. Our attention, our mental engrossment is on the cared-for, not on ourselves. Our reasons for acting, then, have to do both with the other's wants and desires and with the objective elements of his (sic) problematic situation' (Noddings 1984, p. 24).

Specifically in the sector of social work, the ethic of caring has the following principles (Meagher & Parton 2004):

- Human beings are interdependent and responsible to each other.

- All human beings have equal worth, and informal and interpersonal relations are an appropriate object and ground of moral deliberation.

- Caring is a moral disposition. Moral subjects should attend to others with compassion as each person is unique and irreplaceable, and each moral decision takes place with a specific context.

- Caring is a process that fosters the growth of participants and their willingness to take open-ended responsibilities in regard to each other.

In practice, Noddings (1984) suggests that caring involves the displacement of interest from my own reality to the reality of the other, to see another's reality as a possibility for my own. In this regard, the one-caring and the cared-for are both dependent on each other in the caring and moral relationship, whereby 'something from A must be received, completed, in B' (p. 19). Caring involves 'feeling with' the other (similar to empathy) with engrossment and motivational displacement. It is attitudinal through being present. The motivation in caring is directed toward the welfare, wellbeing, protection or enhancement of the cared-for. For an action to be caring, it either brings a favourable outcome for the cared-for or seems likely to do so. The one-caring's motive energy is shared and is at the service of the other, and an intangible 'something' has been added to both the cared-for and the one-caring. Noddings explains that the caring relationship is actualised when the cared-for recognises the caring, in the following logical framework (p. 69):

i.   W cares for X (as described as one-caring) and

ii.   X recognises that W cares for X.

Thus care is reciprocal, whereby the caring relation involves the engrossment and motivational displacement of the one-caring, and the recognition and spontaneous response of the cared-for. Practically, the ethic of caring relies upon the will to be good and to remain in caring relation to the other. The ethic of caring seeks to maintain caring itself, and 'feeling, thinking and behaving as one-caring mark ethical behaviour' (p. 114). Caring fosters interdependency as care contributes to behaviours and choices, which enhance self-respect (Sevenhuijsen 1998).

The ethic of caring is considered feminine (Meagher & Parton 2004; Noddings 1984). However, the feminisation of the ethic of caring with a focus on self-sacrifice has inherent risks, particularly for women who practice the ethic (Hugman 2005). Hugman highlights women must not be exploited or oppressed within practice that utilises the ethic of caring, and burnout and compassion fatigue are serious possibilities. Self-care is therefore highly important and strongly relates to hooks' focus on self-love. Additionally, Noddings' depiction of the ethic of caring suggests an apolitical relationship. However, Tronto (1993) considers

care as an ethical *and* a political concept. Several scholars identify the qualities of care, including: attentiveness; responsibility; competence; responsiveness (care-receiving); trust; and, integrity (Banks & Gallagher 2009; Sevenhuijsen cited in Barnes 2007; Tronto 1993). In particular, Banks and Gallagher (2009) argue that care involves a motive of attentiveness and competence, tailored to the responses of the person cared for. In this regard, care is not only a motive or emotion but also a political idea, as all humans need care. Indeed, Williams (2001) argues that a political ethics of caring must embrace mutualism, autonomy, inclusive diversity and voice, whereby care is considered part of citizenship.

In direct contrast to hooks, Noddings (1984) rejects the notion of universal love and does not consider the ethic of caring as agapism or a command to love, asserting that ethics based on universal love or universal justice are masculine. However, Meagher and Parton (2004) highlight that the ethic of care challenges the individualist focus of rights and managerialism. They affirm that emotions, such as compassion and empathy, are necessary in the ethical decision-making process. Like hooks' love ethic, the ethic of caring also provides for a dialogical relationship between the worker and the service-user. The feminist discourse of the ethic of caring is 'the conceptual space and a vocabulary for recognising and valuing care absent from rational-technical approaches to knowledge and practice, whether professional, bureaucratic, or managerialist' (Meagher & Parton 2004, p. 20).

As relational challenges to unequal power, the ethic of caring and the ethic of love therefore have many similarities. Both ethical frameworks include mutual responsibility, feminist characteristics, a feminisation of action and the political goal of equality. However, hooks' love ethic appears to have a stronger focus on structural transformation by directly engaging love to challenge systems of patriarchy, racism and capitalism through relationships. hooks' love ethic is an ethics of proximity focussed on micro, mezzo and macro relationships.

3.5.2 Global ethics

Constructs of global ethics challenge the nation-state and consider the interconnectedness of all human beings, aligning with hooks' (2000) assertion of love as interdependence between peoples. Global ethics is 'a field of theoretical inquiry that addresses ethical questions and problems arising out of the global interconnection and interdependence of the world's population' (Hutchings 2010, p. 1). It investigates and evaluates the standards of behaviour of individual and collective actors in a global world. Global ethics is a broad umbrella that includes international ethics (relations between nation-states) and cosmopolitan ethics (universalism). Hutchings (2010) asserts five debates that are significant

to the field of global ethics: the moral significance of human individuals; the relative moral significance of individual versus community or culture; the ethical importance of 'fault'; the ethical significance of procedure versus outcome; and the basis of the authority of moral claims. The question as to what is morally 'right' is difficult within global ethics, particularly regarding whether values and principles have a worldwide scope. However, a conglomeration of world religions has attempted to recognise a worldwide ethic.

In 1993, the Council for a Parliament of the World Religions released its *Declaration Towards a Global Ethic.* The Council defines global ethic as a 'fundamental consensus on binding values, irrevocable standards, and personal attitudes' (Kung 1993, p. 5). This ethic is summarised as 'the full realization of the intrinsic dignity of the human person, the inalienable freedom and equality in principle of all humans, and the necessary solidarity and interdependence of all humans with each other' (p. 5). The fundamental demand of this Declaration is that every person must be treated humanely:

> 'This means that every human being without distinction of age, sex, race, skin color, physical or mental ability, language, religion, political view, or national or social origin possesses an inalienable and untouchable dignity, and everyone, the individual as well as the state, is therefore obliged to honor this dignity and protect it' (p. 6).

The 'irrevocable directives' of this ethic include:

- Commitment to a Culture of Non-violence and Respect for Life.

- Commitment to a Culture of Solidarity and a Just Economic Order.

- Commitment to a Culture of Tolerance and a Life of Truthfulness.

- Commitment to a Culture of Equal Rights and Partnership Between Men and Women.

This global ethic reinforces the notion of love as interconnectedness, interrelatedness and interdependence of all humans along with the key principles of love (hooks 2000), whereby the fate of each individual is inextricably linked to the fate of all humans. Indeed, love as a global ethic assumes,

> '[f]or us to have a healthy civilisation, everyone must be born with the equal right to education, work, food, shelter, world citizenship, and the ability to circulate freely and settle on any part of the Earth. Political and economic systems that deny one person these rights harm the whole human family. We must begin by becoming

aware of what is happening to every member of the human family if we want to repair the damage already done' (Hanh 1993, p. 120).

Referring to the Good Samaritan as an act of neighbourly love, King Jr. (1963) asserts that we must not ignore the wounded man (sic) on life's Jericho Road, because 'he is a part of me and I am a part of him. His agony diminishes me, and his salvation enlarges me' (p. 23). Whatever affects one affects all through the inescapable network of mutuality. This echoes Buber's (1970) construction of the I-Thou relationship of commitment and responsibility, where a person 'becomes an I through a You' (p. 80). Equanimity (equal worth of all) is also promoted by Gandhi: 'I am more concerned in preventing the brutalisation of human nature than in the prevention of the suffering of my own people' (*Young India* 29 October 1931 cited in Gandhi 2005, p. 80).

Yet a global ethic is challenging in the current state of international affairs, particularly as globalisation has seen the wealth gap grow between rich and poor and within and between countries (Hawthorne 2002; Isbister 2001; Oakley 2002; Oxfam International 2015; Shiva 1989), with oppressive relationships within societies and on a global scale (Singer 2011). Bauman (2000) argues that in the era of liquid modernity there is no sense of a common cause and 'the utopias of the good society have stopped being written' (p. 62). Nevertheless, challenging ethical partiality for our own kind, Singer (2002) explains that we live in one world and we experience issues that affect the entire planet, encouraging us to consider ourselves part of the imagined community of the world rather than nation-states (p. 187). He argues that our problems as human beings are now too intertwined on a global scale to be resolved within the nation-state, but '[d]espite the lip-service most people pay to human equality, their circle of concern barely extends beyond the boundary of their country' (p. 200).

However, in our interconnected global community, and as more issues demand global solutions and national boundaries and individual identities diminish, global ethics are both relevant and crucial (Derrida 2001; Singer 2002; 2011). As King Jr. (1967a) states,

> 'In a real sense, all life is interrelated. The agony of the poor impoverishes the rich; the betterment of the poor enriches the rich. We are inevitably our brother's keeper because we are our brother's brother (sic). Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly' (p. 181).

Living with a global ethic has several implications, including sharing wealth and resources to people in extreme poverty (Singer 2011), environmental obligations (discussed in the next

section) and considerations of consumption patterns (Oakley 2002; Shiva 1989). Clarke's (2006) popular text *The Rough Guide to Ethical Living* considers the far-reaching implications of Western lifestyles and suggests two approaches for ethical living: reducing our carbon footprint by becoming more efficient in our use of electricity, gas, petrol and other fuels; and ethical shopping, through considering social and environmental matters when deciding which products and services to buy. As affluent Western lifestyles negatively affect billions of people across the planet, we are 'eternally "in the red". We are everlasting debtors to known and unknown men and women' (King Jr. 1963, p. 54). In this regard, love-based ethical action and discipline through the cultivation of virtues becomes an instrument to benefit the whole human family (His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2000) by embracing the equal worth and interconnectedness of all global citizens. As a framework for structural transformation, it is thus highly relevant to position hooks' love ethic as a global ethic.

3.5.3 Ecological ethics

hooks' (2000) love ethic pays minimal attention to interconnected relationships between people and nature. However, this is a vital consideration when exploring love as an ethical philosophy. Noddings (1984) also maintains that there is no true ethical relation between humans and animals or plants as the ethic of care relies upon a conscious receiving of caring. Yet other ethical constructs provide insight into interconnectedness between people and nature that enhance hooks' anthropocentric framework of the love ethic.

Ecological ethics considers the inherent value of non-humans, independent of their contribution to the wellbeing of human beings (see Isbister 2001). Yet much discussion tends to focus on human reliance and impact on nature rather than an interconnected relationship between humans and nature. For example, Singer (2002) argues for global action regarding the environment, accentuating that all humans share the same planet. Indeed, it is indisputable that nations in the Global North have higher emissions per capita than developing nations and that people from the Global South will be more negatively affected by climate change (IPCC 2014b). Thus, responsibility for planetary destruction and the prevention/mitigation of harm is in the hands of those who destroy the planet, both high emitting nation-states and individuals (Garvey 2008; Singer 2002). Due to the serious nature of the harm caused by climate change, Singer argues that we have an obligation to stop harming the world's poor and to compensate them for the harm we have already caused, asserting culpability for high-emitting states. Singer (2011) also affirms that if we do not destroy the wilderness we will not wrong future generations, unlike previous

generations who caused the loss of species such as the dodo, the Tasmanian tiger, the great auk and the passenger pigeon. This ethical framework is somewhat similar to Ife's (2001) argument that human rights frameworks must consider the rights of future generations and Isbister's (2001) concept of environmental justice for future generations.

However, Singer (2011) argues that we should not limit ourselves to a Western human-centred ethic regarding the environment. His ecological ethic considers all sentient beings, including subsequent generations, with an appreciation for wild places. His proposed ethic discourages large families, rejects materialism and measures success on the development of one's abilities and the achievement of fulfilment and satisfaction. The ethic promotes frugality and re-use, necessary for minimising our impact on the planet, and reassessing our notion of extravagance, such as consumption of timber materials, eating beef and unnecessary travel. In specific reference to climate change, Garvey (2008) also asserts that morally adequate proposals to address climate change (on large geopolitical scales and individual scales) must consider historical responsibilities, present capacities, sustainability and procedural fairness. Anthropocentric constructions of ecological ethics such as these reflect hooks' (2000) human-centred love ethic, but other theories support a more holistic ethical perspective, particularly indigenous worldviews and ecofeminism.

Indigenous philosophies of interconnectedness

The rights of all sentient beings are key to 'interconnectedness' as a deeper construction of ecological ethics. Some philosophers, particularly Buddhist and indigenous philosophers, expand the notion of human interconnectedness to include interconnectedness between all living species. In this framework, human beings are part of nature and should live in harmony with nature:

> 'To harm nature is to harm ourselves, and vice versa. If we knew how to deal with ourselves and our fellow human beings, we would know how to deal with nature. Human beings and nature are inseparable. By not caring properly for either, we harm both' (Hanh 1993, p. 119).

Hanh argues that the best way to take care of human beings is to take care of the environment, and the best way to take care of the environment is to take care of the environmentalist. This form of care involves taking 'mindful steps' in caring for Mother Earth and changing our daily lives through the way we think, speak and act.

The interconnected relationship between humans and nature is fundamental to indigenous worldviews. Australian Aboriginal knowledges are based on the interconnectedness between the individual, family unit, community and larger environment:

> 'Aboriginal worldviews emphasize the interconnectedness of all beings with their environments. Indeed, human beings and the environment form one large interacting system. This systemic view approaches each element or aspect of experience as related, so that changes are not simply additive but interact in nonlinear ways: a small change may have very large effects over time as it is amplified by the response of other parts of the system. Human agency is only one element in this dynamic system. In traditional systems of knowledge other forms of non-human persons and non-human agency are recognized. Thus, human beings have practical and moral obligations to maintain good relations with all aspects of their social, physical and spiritual environment' (Kirmayer et al. 2009, p. 79).

The relationship between Australian ATSI peoples and 'country' (the common term for nature and environment) is a spiritual relationship of reciprocity and symbiosis (Graham 1998; Kingsley et al. 2009; Rose 1999). Similarly, Ogungbemi's (2008) 'ethics of nature-relatedness' based on African worldviews, without religious affiliation or spirituality, is based on the concept that natural resources do not need humans for their existence and functions. This ethical framework 'leads human beings to seek to co-exist peacefully with nature and treat it with some reasonable concern for its worth, survival and sustainability' (p. 337).

Another relevant ethical paradigm is *buen vivir,* an indigenous worldview regaining traction in Latin America that challenges neoliberalism through a radical alternative to development (Acosta 2011) by emphasising the interconnected relationship between people and nature. *Buen vivir,* meaning 'good way of living', was institutionalised in the 2008 Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador through a unique set of rights of people and nature. Along with outlining the rights of people to ensure the good way of living, the Constitution outlines the rights of nature, including integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes and the duty of the State to apply preventive and restrictive measures on activities that might lead to the extinction of species, the destruction of ecosystems and the permanent alteration of natural cycles (Republic of Ecuador 2008). Recognising these mutual rights, the Constitution includes a development structure to actualise *buen vivir,* which includes environment-related objectives such as: building a fair, democratic, productive, mutually supportive and sustainable economic system based on the egalitarian distribution of the benefits of

development and the means of production, and on decent, stable employment; restoring and conserving nature and maintaining a healthy and sustainable environment; and, protecting and promoting cultural diversity (Republic of Ecuador 2008, Article 276).

Similarly, the Plurinational State of Bolivia used a similar term of *vivir bien,* meaning live well, as a national ethical framework in its 2009 Constitution:

> 'I. The State adopts and promotes the following as ethical, moral principles of the plural society: *ama qhilla, ama llulla, ama suwa* (do not be lazy, do not be a liar or a thief), *suma qamaña* (live well), *ñandereko* (live harmoniously), *teko kavi* (good life), *ivi maraei* (land without evil) and *qhapaj ñan* (noble path or life).
> II. The State is based on the values of unity, equality, inclusion, dignity, liberty, solidarity, reciprocity, respect, interdependence, harmony, transparency, equilibrium, equality of opportunity, social and gender equality in participation, common welfare, responsibility, social justice, distribution and redistribution of the social wealth and assets for well being' (Plurinational State of Bolivia 2009, Article 8).

Vivir bien is proposed as an ethical framework for an alternative world where people and nature co-exist in harmony.

These Constitutions and related literature regarding *buen vivir* do not explicitly mention love. However, *buen vivir* provides a vital frame of reference to guide a more holistic and interconnected interpretation of hooks' love ethic. In Chapter 8, I share a journal article regarding *buen vivir* and the research findings from Lobitos, Peru. In this paper I discuss the *buen vivir* literature and the positionality of our co-operative inquiry's love ethic framework within the *buen vivir* discourse*.*

Ecofeminism

A final consideration when discussing ecological ethics is ecofeminism, which provides a critical perspective to the relationship between people and nature. Ecofeminism connects the exploitation of women to the exploitation of nature (Warren 1990), reflecting the interrelationship between organisms and their environment (Daly 1990). In this regard, ecofeminism provides a vital gender lens. Ecofeminism explains that patriarchal views of women are similar to masculinist and dominant views of nature (Daly 1990; Hawthorn 2002; Shiva 1989). Oakley (2002) outlines the dual domination of nature and women in the following statement:

'Our industrial, technological and capitalist society is a violent society which behaves as though it's at war with nature. Soil, forests, oceans, animals and people are treated as if they have no integrity or meaning. Capital and energy-intensive global growth spawn a volatile monoculture which is insensitive to cultural diversity and in which no one feels connected to place, tradition or the planet. We need a new world order which values all human beings, the right to satisfy all basic human needs, ecological tolerance and a respect for the future. The domination of nature and of women, the eating of animals, the economic goal of unlimited growth (for some), monopolistic corporate power and the pursuit of technology for its own sake are the same side of the same coin. A new relationship with nature and respect for Mother Earth are needed to reverse these malignancies, but these won't come about until we've untangled the links between culture, masculinity and violence against all forms of life' (p. 153).

Like Oakley, Hawthorne (2002) also argues that instead of Western views of individual ownership of land, there is a need for a radical shift to perceiving land as 'a living entity with which one has a relationship, and for which we are all responsible and from which we all benefit' (p. 162). While the philosophy of deep ecology also promotes a transformed perception of nature (Naess 1973), ecofeminism supports a politicised and feminised lens to analyse systems of inequality that are violent and exploitative of people and planet.

hooks' (2000) love ethic, although a radical feminist theory, does not adequately integrate interconnected relationships between people and nature. However, the open and empowering structure of the love literature suggests that we can incorporate *buen vivir,* ecofeminism and other ecological ethics concepts into a more holistic construct of love. Indeed, Hugman (2005) highlights that ecological ethics in the caring profession emphasises holism. In this regard, ecological ethics are a vital consideration in the further development of the love ethic.

3.6   Love as a professional social work ethic

Finally, it is relevant to consider hooks' love ethic within constructs of professional ethics. IFSW and IASSW define social work as,

'… a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and

respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing' (IFSW 2014).

Social work is a social movement based on 'international solidarity around a shared purpose of challenging poverty, promoting human rights and social justice' (Banks 2006, p. xvi). The social work profession is values-based with strong ethical standards, outlined in national and international codes of ethics for practitioners (for example, see AASW 2010; IFSW 2012). Ethics in social work are based on the values of the worth and dignity of each person, non-discrimination and equality, the rights of persons to self-determination and confidentiality in their dealings with social workers and the recognition that social workers have multiple ethical responsibilities; in addition to avoiding harmfulness through professional actions (Healy 2007).

hooks (2000; 2003) maintains that love can be a professional ethic of practice, which is reinforced in other texts (Barker & Payne 2006; Horsfall 2008). However, as discussed, the social work profession is resistant to love as an ethic of practice (Butot 2004; 2007; Morley & Ife 2002) and indeed, love is marginalised from health and welfare professions more generally (Arman & Rehnsfeldt 2006; Stickley & Freshwater 2002). In her analysis of international and national codes of ethics for social work, Healy (2007) found that social work codes of ethics are biased towards individualism and do not elucidate the communalist perspective. Love, or even care, are not recognised as key values across the social work ethics codes. Healy also identified a range of intercultural clashes between these universal concepts and localised contexts, particularly regarding women's rights and the collectivist construction of some cultures. She highlights the complexity of applying universal codes of ethics in a globalising world.

Similarly, in her international analysis of social work codes of ethics from over 30 countries, Banks (2006) found that codes are principle-based not character based, have more emphasis on Kantian-type rights and duties than utilitarian approaches and have some reference to virtues. She indicates that the 1997 version of the Swedish code of ethics was the only social work code that mentioned love. I identified five references to love in the more recent 2011 Swedish code of ethics for social workers, as follows:

'**Human value**… The principle of human dignity can be seen as a declaration of *love* for human life and entails showing respect towards and taking responsibility for our own and others' lives' (Akademikerförbundet SSR 2011, p. 7, emphasis added).

'**The personal mooring of ethics.** A genuinely ethical attitude presupposes a fundamental experience of worth and *love*, a binding understanding of the other person's importance and of the value of life. In that sense, *love* is a central theme in ethics. In the introduction to Akademikerförbundet SSR's 1997 Ethical Guidelines for Social Work Professionals, now superseded by this present ethical code, one particular passage has been paid due notice and is cited in the international literature on ethics in social work. It is the following formulation, which expresses the importance of having a personal rooting in an ethical ground: "Moral lacks a deeper personal basis without experience of values and *love*. Ethics purely under subjects such as rational egoism, obedience, group pressure or care of one's own conscience is not sufficient, as they have not been touched by *love* and seriously discovered the other individual and the values of one's own life." (Banks, S. (2001, p. 93). Ethics and Values in Social Work. Palgrave, England.)' (Akademikerförbundet SSR 2011, p. 12, emphasis added).

This document suggests that love is central to professional social work ethics in the sense of universal human dignity and worth. Love enables social workers to recognise the humanity and value of the other. Although the moral responsibility of social workers transcends both public and private realms, Banks (2006) asserts that social workers need to hold onto personal values not for unconditional love to clients but to challenge injustice. Reflecting the activist literature of hooks and others, I argue that love is indeed a process of challenging injustice.

Although love is generally not considered within social work ethics, the ethic of care is. However, Meagher and Parton (2004) argue that increased rational technical managerialism within the social work profession, particularly in government social welfare programs and funding bodies, requires social workers to take a more instrumental and impersonal approach to their work, whereby care for service users is labour in a structure of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In this context, 'care' as a social work ethic and action is not prioritised. A social worker's capacity to care is influenced by prescribed models of professionalism and bureaucracy, with a particular focus on detachment, distance and impersonality (Meagher & Parton 2004). Indeed, Somerville (2011) highlights that government approaches to community involve neoliberal, neo-colonial, communitarian and

pragmatic partnership approaches, whereby love (and care) are completely dismissed. Meagher and Parton (2004) explain that the notion of 'care' has been associated with organisational oppression as paternalistic, marginalising and patronising, with a historical foundation in charity and dependency. However, this does not adequately reflect the ethics of care framework, which embraces interdependency, connectedness and empowerment. The ethics of care, in fact, overcomes the divide between rationality and emotion.

As demonstrated by the progressive Swedish code of ethics for social workers, there is scope for the social work profession to engage with love in our ethical worldview. This would require shedding our sectorial stigmas about love and reawakening to the emancipatory potential of love (hooks 2000). Interestingly, while the AASW and most other social work bodies are glaringly silent about love, a recent speech by the Chief Executive Officer of the Australian Council of Social Services suggests that love is integral to social justice and it should be included in professional conversations. In 2014, Dr. Cassandra Goldie spoke publicly about love in response to the Australian National Commission of Audit and 2014/2015 Federal Budget, which institutionalised neoliberalism and austerity in unprecedented ways in Australia. I provide a relevant excerpt:

> '… every time I speak, somehow I want to find an opportunity to talk about love… [U]ltimately, whether you're looking at it from a human rights lens, or you're looking at it from the lens of the common good, the one thing that binds us together is [love]. That we come into the world wanting to be loved and that's how we go out. And the way in which we conduct ourselves and allow the motivation of love not fear to drive us, I think, in the end, is the core value that can underpin every move we make…' (Goldie 2014, min 23:47).

Goldie's speech is a call to our sector to readily engage with love as an ethical framework of practice for sustainable change, directly challenging social work's resistance to love.

3.7   Summary

In this section, I discussed hooks' love ethic within a body of literature regarding ethics. Specifically, I positioned the love ethic as an ethical paradigm that belongs to several ethical traditions, including virtue ethics (the characteristics of the moral person), deontological ethics (ethics of right action) and relationship ethics (including the ethic of caring, global ethics and ecological ethics). The literature highlights the breadth of coverage of the love ethic and some gaps in hooks' construct. In particular, the ecological ethics literature

relating to indigenous worldviews and ecofeminism significantly enhances the scope and holism of hook's theory. In doing so, the love ethic is more relevant for social movements that holistically address the denial of human rights and ecological destruction. The literature also shows that the love ethic is marginalised in the ethical constructs of the international social work profession, but love is indeed highly relevant to social work practice. I argue that there is sufficient evidence in the literature to support social work to more openly embrace love as a holistic ethic of virtue, action and relationship.

In the following chapter, I consider the available theoretical and empirical literature that specifically explores love as an ethic of action for equality.

4 Literature Review: Love as an ethic of action for equality

Love is not some wishy-washy, hippie-dippy, starry-eyed romanticism, idealism or fantasy; but a conscious commitment to practising our politics and the values of human emancipation, which requires analysis, judgement and discernment about the world and about people. Love as a practice framework is intensely grounded in the real (Participant cited in Butot 2004, p. 88).

This is the third of three chapters that explore and critique the literature regarding love and social action. In this chapter, I analyse various theoretical frameworks of love as an ethic of action for equality, including hooks' radical feminist theory of the love ethic, nonviolence, the beloved community approach, social work through a love of humanity, dialogical approaches and the intersection of power and love. I then consider previous research that has empirically explored love in social work, education and nursing. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the key trends and gaps in the literature and argue for participatory, grassroots development of knowledge to generate a theory of love for community work and social action.

4.1 Introduction

hooks (2000) claims that love is an ethic and action. In the previous chapters, I explored her theory by analysing relevant literature to position her claims. Chapter 2 considered the literature that recognises love as a verb. The discussed definitions, characteristics and types of love challenge notions of love as an emotion (Fredrickson 2013; Lewis, Amini & Lannon 2000) and reinforce that love is indeed action. In Chapter 3, I considered hooks' construction of love as an ethic and analysed her work within philosophies of virtue, deontological and relationship ethics. However, in her writing, hooks does not specifically differentiate love as an ethic and love as action. Therefore it is necessary to consider literature that explores love as an ethic of action. In particular, given hooks' emphasis on love as an ethic of action to bring about structural transformation, I consider relevant theoretical and empirical literature that explores love as a framework of practice for social movements, including community work.

As the foundation of social work, community work involves collective action taken by groups based on location, identity or interest, with common objectives in reaching specific goals; and comprises community care, community organisation, community development and community action (Dominelli 2006). There are diverse community work approaches such as anti-oppressive, feminist, rights-based, dialogical, nonviolent, critical, ecological, asset-based and network-based (Butcher et al. 2007; Dominelli 2006; 2007; Freire 1989; Gilchrist 2004; Green & Haines 2008; Ife 2001; Kelly & Sewell 1988; Westoby & Dowling 2009; 2013). These approaches nestle within different theoretical and political persuasions, including neoliberalism, radicalism, conservatism, communitarianism and relativism. Some community work approaches engage love as an ethic of action, including Somerville's (2011) 'beloved community' approach and the ecological practice of permaculture (Mollison 2013). Importantly, just as the 'personal is political', a love-centred approach to community work holistically engages multiple and diverse types of love discussed earlier. I examine available practice frameworks regarding love in social work, community work and social movements. These frameworks present the body of available work regarding love in action and highlight the glaring gaps (including empirical research) regarding love in community work.

4.2   The love ethic as a radical feminist framework for social change

As discussed throughout the literature review, hooks' (2000) love ethic is a comprehensive approach to love as action. Love as an action and a choice involves nurturing the spiritual growth of another through care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust. Love in practice involves honesty, open communication, giving generously, forgiveness and compassion. Furthermore, hooks explains that in order to love, we must befriend death – lose our fear of death and embrace it by living in the present. In particular, the love ethic is framed as an antidote to systems of oppression, dominance and violence, including patriarchy, racism and capitalism:

> 'When we understand love as the will to nurture our own and another's spiritual growth, it becomes clear that we cannot claim to love if we are hurtful or abusive. Love and abuse cannot coexist. Abuse and neglect are, by definition, the opposites of nurturance and care' (hooks 2000, p. 6).

hooks shares that love in social justice is perceived as naive, weak and hopelessly romantic. However, as she states, '[a]ll the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasised love' (hooks 2000, p. xix). The love ethic is thus a theory of action for social justice movements.

In presenting the love ethic, hooks challenges her readership (a primarily United States audience) to shift from ethics of patriarchy, capitalism, individualism and racism to love – implying trust, communalism, giving and freedom. Her definition of love is deeply personal and may be alienating to people afraid of vulnerability. hooks states that the love we give and receive is necessarily conditional. This defies my personal perspective on love as unconditional, presenting a clash in perspective, which is further reinforced with hooks' focus on receiving love as a motivation for giving love. However, hooks maintains that unconditional self-love is possible:

> 'When we interact with others, the love we give and receive is always necessarily conditional. Although it is not impossible, it is very difficult and rare for us to be able to extend unconditional love to others, largely because we cannot exercise control over the behaviour of someone else and we cannot predict or utterly control our responses to their actions. We can, however, exercise control over our own actions. We can give ourselves the unconditional love that is grounding for sustained acceptance and affirmation. When we give this precious gift to ourselves, we are able to reach out to others from a place of fulfilment and not from a place of luck' (hooks 2000, p. 67).

Extending this perspective beyond self-love and into the realm of love for others enables my holistic approach to the love ethic and hook's theory to align with more strength.

Her theory recognises various forms of love, including self-love, intimate love, family love, community love, love at work and spiritual love. There is little focus on the extended community, humanity and nature – these concepts, which are beyond an individual's daily experience, are not considered. In particular, hooks' interpretation of community is limited to circles of family and friends and geographic communities. For example, hooks does not consider community interaction such as interest groups, identity groups and faith groups. Furthermore, there is limited discussion of the global community and environmental justice. My holistic approach to the love ethic utilises hooks' theory as a base to then integrate these additional elements, extending her theory to an ethical theory of holistic justice and social action.

Finally, hooks individually developed her theory based on her deeply personal experiences as a woman, a feminist, an academic, an African-American and a survivor of child abuse and domestic violence. My research incorporates her work into grassroots social research and community work practice to explore her theory with co-operative rigour.

4.3   Nonviolence as love in action

Theories of nonviolence provide an important approach to love as action for social change, and are highly influenced by Thoreau's (1849) essay *On the duty of civil disobedience.* Written in the context of refusing to pay taxes in protest to the Mexican-American war and slavery, Thoreau questions whether citizens should resign their conscience to the legislator. Like Orlie (1997), he argues that citizens are morally responsible when supporting a government of aggressors:

> 'If a thousand men (sic) were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood' (Thoreau 1849, p.15).

Nonviolence theory suggests that citizens have a duty to rebel against oppressive regimes, and civil disobedience is a complete giving of the self for others. Thoreau advocates nonviolent resistance by the minority who is powerless when conforming to the majority. By sacrificing the self, such as imprisonment, the minority (in numbers) can influence government and society by 'clogging' the system, because 'if the alternative is to keep all just men (sic) in prison, or give up war and slavery, the State will not hesitate which to choose' (Thoreau 1849).

Nonviolence activists such as Leo Tolstoy, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Thich Nhat Hanh were inspired by Thoreau's thesis on civil disobedience. Building from King Jr.'s activism, The King Centre (2014) proposes several key principles of nonviolence: it is a way of life for courageous people; it seeks to win friendship and understanding; it seeks to defeat injustice, not people; it holds that suffering can educate and transform; it chooses love instead of hate; and, it believes that the universe is on the side of justice.

As discussed earlier, these influential activists describe nonviolence as love in action, for example:

> 'Out of love and the willingness to act selflessly, strategies, tactics and techniques for a nonviolent struggle arise naturally. Nonviolence is not a dogma; it is a process. Other struggles may be fuelled by greed, hatred, fear or ignorance, but a nonviolent one cannot use such blind sources of energy, for they will destroy those involved and also the struggle itself. Nonviolent action, born of the awareness of suffering and nurtured by love, is the most effective way to confront adversity' (Hanh 1993, p. 39).

Nonviolence counteracts all forms of violence and hatred through love. This is reflected in Gandhi's conceptualization of *ahimsa*, whereby hatred can only be overcome by love (*Mahatma VII Harijan* July 1946 cited in Gandhi 2005, p. 102). Similarly, Tolstoy (1970) argues that we should return to the Golden Rule. He asserts that if the rule of mutual help does not affect thieves it is because 'they constitute a part of the immense majority of people who for generation upon generation have been robbed and despoiled by men who do not see the criminal character of their own acts' (p. 91). In this regard, love through nonviolence is the only way to support people to act morally. Nonviolence necessitates complete abstention from exploitation in any form (*Harijan* 11 November 1939 cited in Gandhi 2005, p. 87).

Importantly, through nonviolence we resist and attack a system but not the author: 'we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism' (*Young India* 26 March 1931 cited in Gandhi 2005, p. 130). Nonviolence involves love for the enemy (Hanh 1993; King Jr. 1963) and forgiveness of the oppressor (King Jr. 1967a). The oppressed must love the oppressor, using nonviolent protest as a form of education for the oppressor. Nonviolence stimulates the conscience of the opponent to the reality of reconciliation (King Jr. 1963).

Furthermore, a key aspect of nonviolence is self-sacrifice, the farthest limit of humility – we must put ourselves last among our fellow creatures (Gandhi 1957). We must be willing to be persecuted or to die through being nonviolent. We concern ourselves with conduct dictated by conscience that may make us lose our own life but save that of another person (Tolstoy 1970). Hanh highlights that immolation, a radical interpretation of nonviolent theory that involved self-burning to cause self-death by Buddhist monks during the Vietnam War, is not suicide but an act of courage and unconditional willingness to awaken the world to suffering that inspires change. He believes that 'love and sacrifice always set up a chain reaction of love and sacrifice' (p. 43). Nonviolence means breaking the 'logic of oppression', with self-suffering as a source of empowerment and transformation to break the cycle of violence (Fernandes 2003, p. 72).

Nonviolence as an act of love is a spiritual act (Fernandes 2003; Hanh 1993; King Jr. 1967a). Fernandes (2003) highlights that spiritualised nonviolence 'actively breaks from any desire for retributive justice' through focussing on principles of love, compassion and forgiveness to all, including those who commit injustice (p. 63). She states,

> 'The practice of non-violence is the spiritualisation of suffering. It is founded on the understanding of the immeasurable spiritual damage that an act of violence causes

to the perpetrator. It is founded on the understanding of the deep wells of spiritual strength that are necessary for victims of oppression to break out of cycles of violence in ways that can be truly transformative. It is founded on a recognition that, in spiritual terms, there is no distinction between the means we use and the ends we seek. It is founded on an understanding of a form of transformation that involves the liberation of both the oppressed and the perpetrators of oppression. For the practice of non-violence demands that activists struggle against all forms of injustice and hierarchy without reproducing a conflict-oriented model of the world' (p. 73).

Importantly, nonviolence is a form of activism to ensure social change, and involves the following practicable aspects:

- Strive for the greatest good of all. Have equal regard for all religions.

- Have faith in nonviolence, that is, the 'God of Love' and have equal love for all humankind. Personally commit to nonviolence whereby it pervades the whole being and not be applied in isolated acts.

- Work in your own locality. Give personal service to the people. Relate to people, not roles. Wear distinctive dress so that you can be easily recognised in a crisis.

- Change involves everyone – powerful and powerless. Encourage all to participate. Work singly or in groups.

- Be courageous. Be willing to die so that others may live. Overcome all fear except for fear of God. Reward the fearless.

- Be disciplined. Be beyond reproach in character and be impartial. Practice civility ('…an inborn gentleness and desire to do the opponent good' (Gandhi 1957, p. 437)). Leadership is sacrifice. Never ask a person to do what you would not do yourself.

- Gather information and become an expert on your opposition's position. Inform and educate others, including the opposition, on your issues. State and restate the cause, so the integrity of the cause becomes apparent. It is a moral argument as to what is right and wrong, not an economic or political one.

- The means are the end. Effective action is measured by the benefit it has to the poorest of the poor.

- Try to anticipate conflict (and resolve it). Maintain friendly relations with other workers.

- There are no secrets.

- Always compromise, but never with the ideal. Make every effort to ensure there is no winning and no losing. There is always more than one possible way. Use direct action when the opponent is unwilling to engage in conversation/negotiation.

- Love the enemy; there is no enemy. Look after the losers, no matter who they are. Seek reconciliation with the opposition.

- Glorify defeat. Prepare for defeat, but see it as a step in the journey. Only the defeated react.

(Compiled from Gandhi 1957; 2005; Kelly & Sewell 1988, p. 36; The King Centre 2014).

Fernandes (2003) also highlights the importance of applying nonviolence to knowledge practice, by infusing love in research, writing, teaching and learning. This is because 'any form of political practice that engages in violence or personal harm to another in fact only ends up mirroring the spiritual and material violence of the oppressor and ultimately cannot lead to a deeper transformative justice' (p. 64). The activist framework outlined above suggests that nonviolence is an ethical approach to social, economic and political processes through the rejection of violence. Drawing on nonviolence ideology, Kelly and Sewell (1988) suggest that nonviolence in community work comprises head, heart and hand with a holistic, participatory approach.

Nonviolence theory is highly relevant to the love ethic as a framework of ethics and action for social change. Importantly, most of the reviewed literature, particularly early theorising (Thoreau 1849), does not integrate a gendered lens to recognise patriarchy as a form of violence. Additionally, only Hanh (1993) considers human violence towards nature, an issue strongly acknowledged by ecofeminist authors (Hawthorne 2002; Oakley 2002; Shiva 1989). This suggests significant gaps in nonviolent theory. Nevertheless, nonviolence community work models explain that love is empowering, whereby those who practice the nonviolent approach gain a new self-respect and find unknown resources of strength and courage (King Jr. 1963). Nonviolence clearly reinforces that love, as a paradigm of community work, must condemn all forms of violence and exploitation.

4.4   Beloved community approach

Somerville (2011) proposes a community development approach based on the 'beloved community', a construct derived from King Jr. The beloved community is achieved through the flourishing of all individual members. Somerville defines community as '... an embodied or imagined group of persons who are meaningfully interconnected within habitus (understood as relatively stable everyday ways of going on in the world)' (p. 67). He suggests that part of the core meaning of community is the capacity of individuals to act co-operatively as members of the same collectivity.

Somerville emphasises the importance of internal and external connectedness in the beloved community. These connections are not only networks, but also 'shared attachments, identities, obligations, sympathies, affinities and so on' (Somerville 2011, p. 63). Within the 'meaningful connectedness' (p. 54) of the beloved community, he asserts that each individual is free to fulfil her or his highest potential and develop together and fairly as a whole. This requires a just community where resources and power are distributed to enable every individual to actualise their potential, with equal respect and value for all community members. An example is a beloved community approach to housing:

> '... a beloved community would be one where home owners and tenants are valued
> equally, where the production, use and enjoyment of their homes and of the living
> space that they share with others is made possible through cooperation with others
> on an equal basis and where no community members profit (from their housing) at
> the expense of another' (p. 199).

In practice, community development to achieve the beloved community requires mutual respect among all members based on equal worth, democratic decision-making, the mutuality of freedom and order, the right (not duty) to participate and justice. Importantly, 'the flourishing of every individual member secures the order of the community as a whole' (Somerville 2011, p. 206). In this regard, the beloved community is not a desired end state but a guide to action, as the cessation of desires. Community development towards the beloved community involves changing the world according to 'clear principles of freedom, equality and justice' (Somerville 2011, p. 240).

Somerville's community development approach accentuates the impetus of love for structural transformation, which aligns with hooks' notion of love as action for systemic change. Like hooks' work, the beloved community values democracy, participation, equality, freedom and order (Somerville 2011). However, Somerville also fails to adequately

acknowledge gender inequalities, and his concept of community is anthropocentric rather than positioning humans within an ecological community.

4.5   Social work through a love of humanity

In one of the few discussions of love in social work, Morley and Ife (2002) propose that the key values of social work are intrinsically aligned with *agape,* or a love of humanity. They explain that love of humanity emphasises the importance of the lived experience, and love links the private and the public and links values and action. They propose that social work through love for humanity is love as action, involving valuing the lived experience; letting go of the desire for control; dialogue; hope; faith; courage; trust; critiquing power relations; revelling in the complexity of human consciousness; crossing the boundaries of private and public; and, incorporating and transcending concepts such as commitment, altruism, value base, social justice, caring, hope and compassion.

Importantly, love for humanity as action in social work requires that individual experiences and structural oppression be addressed, incorporating the personal and the political. Morley and Ife state,

> 'A "love of humanity" rather is about a consciousness that can see its own limitations while at the same time seeing and acting on the potential for change. It is a discourse that binds the optimistic theory of those who dare to dream with the realist practicalities of those who dare not to. With its feet grounded in reality a "love of humanity" does not lead us to placing unrealistic expectations on clients, or to a passive "agony aunt" practice. Love, as understood in the context of a "love of humanity" is not just about making people feel good with "easy" solutions, but it is also about challenging and provoking change, which is often painful' (p. 76).

Furthermore, they explain that a love of humanity works towards a position where 'no assumptions need be made about human experience except that our humanity connects us, despite the limitations imposed by privilege and under-privilege' (p. 76). Morley and Ife's work emphasises human connectedness and focuses on human rights at local and global levels. Although they focus on love as a 'fundamental human emotion', they explain that love is also an action and 'it is only in the living out of one's essential humanity that love can be realized' (p. 71), thereby linking the private and the public and values and action. Similar to hooks' love ethic, the 'love of humanity' enables principle-based politics, vital for holistic social work praxis.

4.6   Dialogical approaches

Dialogue is a process to bring about social change by 'naming the world' through critical reflection and action (Freire 1989; Westoby & Dowling 2013). Importantly, dialogue cannot exist without love for the world and for other people (Freire 1989), and community work without love becomes technical, routinised, shallow and exploitative (Westoby & Dowling 2013). Dialogue is,

> '… a deep, challenging, responsive, enriching, disruptive encounter and conversation-in-context; and also a mutual and critical process of building shared understanding, meaning and creative action. Furthermore, dialogue is understood historically as the interplay of social forces that shape the life now lived individually and collectively' (Westoby & Dowling 2013, p. 21).

Dialogue is communication to build consciousness of systematised inequality, whereby human life holds meaning. Freire (1989) maintains that dialogue is only possible with love for the world, life and people, requiring humility, faith in humanity, hope and critical thinking (reality as process and transformation). Importantly, 'dialogue does not impose, does not manipulate, does not domesticate, does not sloganise' (p. 168). Dialogue involves a dialectic logic whereby we appreciate interrelationships between factors and understand that meaning making is a social phenomenon (Kelly & Sewell 1988).

Freire (1989) maintains that dialogue between revolutionary leaders and 'the people' is considered necessary for authentic revolution. Importantly, revolutionary leaders cannot use the same tactics as oppressors – they cannot dominate or attempt to conquer the people. Solidarity between the oppressors and the oppressed requires 'that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is solidary; it is their radical posture' (p. 34). He explains, however, that an oppressor who joins the oppressed still feels a position of power and they must execute a transformation. The 'conversion to the people' is a new rebirth, whereby the oppressor is reborn as the oppressed and then works in partnership utilising dialogue to support the oppressed to critically reflect on their world and take action. Through dialogue, the oppressed discover their oppressor and their own consciousness, and by freeing themselves they can free their oppressors. Freire emphasises that with love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship with mutual trust. Rebellion is thus a gesture of love – it can initiate love and people can then pursue the right to be human and restore to the oppressors their humanity by taking away the dehumanization (pp. 41-42).

For community workers with positions of power, the process of dialogue involves constant re-examination of ourselves, entering into communion with people and trust in the oppressed and their ability to reason (Freire 1989). In particular, dialogical action involves co-operation, unity for liberation, organisation and cultural synthesis while anti-dialogical action involves conquest, divide and rule, manipulation and cultural invasion. Importantly, Freire contends that localised community development can alienate people from the totality and keep oppressed people divided (p. 138).

Westoby and Dowling (2013) also argue that community development has been captured by modernist and market-oriented worldview, losing some of its depth, soul and potential for solidarity with marginalised peoples. As an alternative to instrumentalist and shallow community work approaches, they propose *dialogical community development.* At the heart of this framework is depth, a philosophical approach to community development. The cornerstones of the framework are community as hospitality, as *communitas*, as ethical space and as collective practice; and, an alternative pluralistic vision of development that emphasises collective and co-operative control over decision-making. The framework also has six other dimensions of practice, including social solidarity, soulful orientation, vocational practice, reconstituting community work as a social practice, ecological sensibility and openness to deconstructive movements (p. 17). Drawing from extensive literature, Westoby and Dowling (2013) assert that community work through dialogue is process-oriented, involving critical thinking and thoughtful questioning, participatory consciousness, hospitality, a transformational space through collective analysis and an awareness of practitioner positionality. Recognising dialogical community work as a practice of love, they encourage practitioners to awaken love through 'a fundamental, counter-cultural shift towards the other' (p. 34) with a commitment to people's stories and relationship-building, reflecting the theory and practice of feminist community work (Dominelli 2006).

Dialogical theory is vital to a love-based approach to community work and, indeed, is a cornerstone of hooks' love ethic (2000; 2003). Dialogue is a reciprocal, relationship-oriented process that uses participatory communication through solidarity to understand and transform structures of inequality. Participatory action research, a methodological paradigm key to this research, is grounded in Freirean dialogue (Ozanne & Saatcoiglu 2008).

4.7 Power and love

Some writers promote practice for social change that infuses love and power. As King Jr. (1967a) states,

> 'One of the greatest problems of history is that the concepts of love and power are usually contrasted as polar opposites. Love is identified with a resignation of power and power with a denial of love... What is needed is a realisation that power without love is reckless and abusive and that love without power is sentimental and anaemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. Justice at its best is love correcting everything that stands against love' (p. 37).

Kahane (2010) also asserts that when our power and love are disconnected we fall down, when our power is stronger than our love, or vice-versa, we stumble dangerously, and when we balance and shift between power and love so that they become one, we walk fluidly (p. 56).

Power is 'the ability to achieve purpose', as a strength to bring about systemic change and implement the demands of love and justice (King Jr. 1967a, p. 37). King Jr. integrates power into nonviolence practice, with many parallels with Freire's dialogical philosophy. These include the need to love the oppressor and raise their consciousness to cease oppressive behaviours, and that violence perpetrated by the oppressed within their community is an expression of the hostility and frustration with the larger society. Kahane (2010) describes practice that collectively engages love and power as connectedness and kinship with each other and all life. In multi-actor movements, it involves diverse peoples working closely and creatively in a contained place to align self-realisation of the whole and self-realisation of the part when co-creating new realities. Importantly, this approach requires individual actors to 'walk together', which includes being conscious of both our power and our love; balancing ourselves with willingness to recognise and admit our woundedness and work through our fears; to fluidly move between power and love with creativity and non-attachment to outcome; and, stepping forward.

In this regard, love-based community work should capture both love and power to recognise and transform systemic inequality. As King Jr. (1967a) asserts,

> '… it will be power infused with love and justice, that will change dark yesterdays with bright tomorrows, and lift us from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope. A dark, desperate, confused and sin-sick world waits for this new kind of man (sic) and this new kind of power' (p. 66).

4.8 Empirical research regarding love to bring about equality

In addition to these theoretical frameworks regarding love as action for equality, I also consider available empirical research regarding love in practice. Love is largely absent from social work research and discourse (Banks 2006; Butot 2004; 2007; Morley & Ife 2002). My extensive review of the literature found only a few studies that empirically explore love as a framework of practice in the caring, education and community sectors (Butot 2004; Fitzgerald & van Hooft 2000). Not one empirical study has been conducted regarding love in local or international rural community work; despite its recognised importance by leading international development theorists (Edwards 2005; Edwards & Sen 2000). In this section, I examine the main studies that are relevant to my research, analysing methodologies, findings and notable gaps.

4.8.1 Love as critical social work practice

Butot (2004) explores how critical social workers conceptualise love in practice. Her qualitative methodology involved conversational in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of seven social work practitioners (five females and two males), exploring their definitions of love and experiences of love in practice. Six of the seven participants agreed that love was relevant to their practice, identifying four ways the social work discourse refers to love: 1) ideas that are incorrectly called love, such as oppression, appropriation, othering and abuse; 2) affection and caring; 3) compassion and empathy described as tools or technologies; and 4) spirituality and interconnection as love of humanity and/or all beings and the Earth (p. 60). The participants framed love through spirituality conceptualised as the intrinsic interconnection of all beings and of one's intrinsic wholeness, sacredness and value as an expression of the diversity of this interconnection (Butot 2004; 2007). Critical social work practice was considered inherently spiritual. Love in critical social work practice is therefore theorised as spirituality, interconnection, embodied practice, open-heartedness, mutual change and an antidote to compassion fatigue.

Butot's (2004) participants also considered love as a mode of being in intersubjective relationship, framing love as compassion and caring and distinct from liking. Regarding social, community and individual change, love was understood as liberating and necessary to critical practice, through seeing humanity beyond or below social construction. Furthermore, change through love involves acceptance and non-judgement, opening to change and speaking your own truth without trying to *make* change, and deep engagement with self and others in critical practice. Love in critical social work as affecting change also

occurs through acceptance, nonattachment and non-interference, compassionate challenge, 'trust in the organic process of change as life force unfolding' and 'staying in the game' (p. 102). One participant emphasised love as discernment:

> 'Love is not some wishy-washy, hippie-dippy, starry-eyed romanticism, idealism or fantasy; but a conscious commitment to practising our politics and the values of human emancipation, which requires analysis, judgement and discernment about the world and about people. Love as a practice framework is intensely grounded in the real' (cited in Butot 2004, p. 88).

As critical social workers, participants described their relations with the self and the other as beginning from an assumption of inherent goodness, wholeness, perfection or value.

From her research, Butot (2004) proposes the following elements of love as emancipatory practice (p. 108):

- Recognition of the intrinsic interconnection of all beings.

- Recognition of and respect and reverence for one's own and others' intrinsic wholeness, sacredness and value as an expression of the diversity of this interconnection.

- Recognition of and respect and reverence for one's own and others' inherent humanity, dignity and claim to universal human rights based in a valuing of difference.

- Deep presence (seeing, hearing, perceiving, experiencing and caring deeply), mindfulness and compassion/lovingkindness.

- Deep embodied engagement, critical analysis and truth-telling within an atmosphere of acceptance, non-judgement and non-interference.

- Commitment to participation and engagement in life, community and relationships.

- Willingness to not know or understand, willingness to not be 'right'.

- Willingness to know, deep openness to others' experience and definition of self as they offer it.

- Commitment and willingness to shift or self-transcend and embrace changing and being changed, commitment to self-work.

- Willingness to support, recognise, acknowledge, or accept others' shifting, self-transcending and changing in their own way.

In quite a radical contribution to social work theory, Butot (2004) also suggests that love is principled critical practice, coining the phrase *spiritually-informed critical practice*. Furthermore, she explains love as an ontology, which she defines as the context, ground or guide of all practice (including activism) and the foundation of social work tools. Finally, she emphasises the importance of love in enabling social workers to recognise and value diversity while perceiving a common humanity and interconnectedness.

Butot's study provides insight into social workers' perspectives of love in practice, along with an empowering theoretical framework. The study is limited by a very small sample and the interviewing method that restricted collaborative knowledge generation in a dialogical space. Nevertheless, Butot highlights the importance of holistic, connected and mindful social work practice that is political, reflecting hooks' impetus for love as an antidote to the ethic of domination through structural inequality.

4.8.2   Love in nursing

A study by Fitzgerald and van Hooft (2000) in the Australian nursing sector considered the question, What is love in nursing?. The researchers employed the qualitative Socratic dialogue method, a participatory focus group study with collective inquiry into the ideas, concepts and values that influence everyday real-life decision-making and the assumptions that underlie everyday actions and judgements. Socratic dialogue involves a systematic process to reach a consensual agreement. The dialogue ran from 11.00 am to 5.00 pm, with nine nursing participants (seven women and two men), using a case example to explore the research question.

The study found that love in nursing is 'the willingness and commitment of the nurse to want the good of the other before the self, without reciprocity' (p. 482). Love was differentiated from caring as the nurse moved to a dimension of commitment and dedication. Nurses acting from love,

> '… nurture a relationship of understanding of people that accepts or tolerates the will of the other where that other's choice is based on a well-informed health belief. It is bringing the nurse's own self to a relationship of understanding and feeling with the patient in order to nurture a state of health, well-being and comfort. It is an

intention that expresses the nurse's own health beliefs in the light of the desires of the other' (p. 491).

Fitzgerald and van Hooft (2000) found that nurses who love in the practice of caring go beyond the duty of care as competent risk takers committed to the betterment of the other before themselves. In this respect, the findings reflect elements of political action for structural transformation, although limited to the micro-relationship between the nurse and the patient and to the extent that the patient has a well-informed health belief.

4.8.3   Other relevant studies

A handful of peer-reviewed articles have been written by education, community work and social work practitioners that involve critical reflection of love in practice. Horsfall (2008) considers love within the supervisor/student relationship in the academic environment in Australia, utilising hooks' (1994) pedagogy of hope. Her critique is based upon her personal reflections and analysis of sources of written communication between herself as a supervisor and her students. She emphasises the importance to embrace a head and heart felt stance towards supervision work, situating postgraduate supervision as a pedagogical practice.

Nelson and colleagues (2000) explore love within community work with women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the United Kingdom. They analyse two case studies reflecting particularly on language and translation, and found that translation and interpretation require a relationship of trust. When discussing love in community work, they state that the loving society we dream of must depart from previously instituted interpretations of love. Furthermore, in most current languages, they believe that love has been 'impoverished by its confinement to the personal and the individual' (p. 351). The authors state, 'love as a social ethic recognises that oppression instils self-hatred and love as the practice of freedom must therefore promote self-love among oppressed people' (p. 359). In culturally and linguistically diverse community work, movement for change based upon the metaphor of the beloved community must begin 'from the divided place in which we are' (p. 361).

Finally, Wong (2004) discusses mindfulness in critical social work pedagogy, reflecting on her teaching experience at a Canadian university and students' reflective journals. Mindfulness, as considered within Buddhist literature, is a meditative process of awareness that highlights the interconnectedness of all things. She proposes an integrated mind-body-emotion-spirit engagement in critical social work education, discussing the transformative potential of the

pedagogy of mindfulness for critical social work education. When integrating the practice of mindfulness in her teaching, she asked students to embrace feelings of discomfort and not to judge them or push them away. She argues that this practice of 'safe' awareness, reflection and intimacy enabled loving educational relationships.

While these reflection-based articles provide some insight into love and community work, they are limited in scope and do not provide a holistic framework or approach to love-based practice. Some elements are useful for conceptualising love in practice, such as the importance of self-love amongst oppressed peoples (Nelson et al. 2000) and embracing pedagogical practice (Horsfall 2008), but fall short of providing a comprehensive approach to inform community work practice.

4.9   Summary of literature regarding love as an ethic of action for equality

In this section, I discussed key theoretical frameworks regarding love and social action. I shared relevant theories of love-based practice, including hooks' radical feminist theory of the love ethic, nonviolence, the beloved community approach (Somerville 2011), social work through a love of humanity (Morley & Ife 2002), dialogical approaches and the intersection of power and love. Each theoretical perspective is an important consideration and contribution to my research and emerging theory regarding love-based community work. There is a significant lack of empirical literature regarding love in community work, particularly using a dialogical methodology. This provides further justification for my research approach with co-inquirers to collaboratively inquire into love in community work and generate a framework of practice. Furthermore, the overwhelming domination of Western research regarding love-based practice highlights the necessity for research outside the English-language social work spheres of the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Australia for a more holistic and global view of love in practice.

4.10 Implications of the literature for the research

hooks' (2000) theory of the love ethic is the foundational paradigm for my research and thesis. As an innovative theory of social change, her work can be influential for social workers, community workers and activists seeking an alternative paradigm of ethics and practice. However, like all ethical theories, hooks' work can be strengthened, particularly when considered in the fields of social and community work and social movements. In Chapters 2, 3 and 4, I analysed relevant literature through the lens of hooks' love ethic, considering three key areas: love as action; love as an ethic; and, love as an ethic of action

for equality. I identified literature that supports and reinforces hooks' assertions, literature that challenges her theory and highlights gaps and literature that strengthens her love ethic as a theoretical approach for activism and social change.

In this section, I discuss the key findings of the literature review and the implications for my research. I argue for empirical, collaboratively developed research regarding love in community work to strengthen hooks' love ethic as a holistic theory of community work practice for equality and structural change.

4.10.1 Love as action

hooks (2000, p. 4) uses Peck's (1978) definition of love, '[t]he will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth'. She asserts that love is action and a choice. However, the literature review reinforces the assertion that love is terminologically confusing (Arman & Rehnsfeldt 2006). Furthermore, the diversity of definitions of love analysed in this literature review reflect the complexity of love as a construct and tool for community workers. Nevertheless, my analysis of relevant literature through the lens of hooks' definition and construction of the love ethic suggests that love is action, a choice and nonviolence in the pursuit of equality and justice. Importantly, love is also considered a relationship of connectedness, relating to the Golden Rule, 'treat others as you would like to be treated' (Bauman 2003; Mackay 2013). Additionally, love and power are mutually dependent (Kahane 2010; King Jr. 1967a), and love is a process of recognising and challenging unjust power structures for universal equality (Butot 2004; Gandhi 2005; hooks 2000; King Jr. 1963; Somerville 2011). Despite hooks' contestation, several theorists argue that love is unconditional (Fromm 1957; Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2000), and reciprocity occurs through the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings (Daly 1990; Graham 1998; Hanh 1993; Hawthorne 2002; Kingsley et al. 2009; Kirmayer et al. 2009; Rose 1999).

hooks (2000) also proposes that love involves care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust, and love also requires honest and open communication, forgiveness and giving. Analysis of the literature suggests that others also reiterate these characteristics of love, but important additions include justice, compassion, knowledge, responsibility, joy, equanimity and altruism (Fromm 1957; Gandhi 2005; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1996; Hanh 1993; King Jr. 1963; Oslo University College 1999; Orlie 1997; Tolstoy 1970; de la Torre 2004).

Furthermore, while hooks reflects Fromm's (1957) assertion that love is an orientation to all, she identifies and focuses on some specific types of love, including self-love; intimate partner love and romance; love for children and family; love for students; community love; love at work; and spiritual love. This list is exhaustive and she provides comprehensive inquiry into each type of love. However, the reviewed literature suggests that hooks' typology lacks some particularly important forms of love that are specifically relevant for community work, namely neighbourly love, love for humanity and love between people and nature.

Neighbourly love is a key type of love considered in most philosophical, activist and spiritual literature reviewed in this thesis (Bauman 2003; Gaita 1999; Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2000; King Jr. 1963; Li 1994; Mackay 2013). Although hooks disregards unconditionality in love, other literature suggests that neighbourly love, particularly in the structure of the Golden Rule, is the crux of other-regarding love. It requires abandonment of self-interest (Bauman 2003), a co-operative approach (Mackay 2013) and a commitment to equality of humanness (Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2000; King Jr. 1963). Love for humanity is related to neighbourly love, often considered within the concept of *agape* as a universal value (Templeton 1999).

While readers may assume that hooks' work promotes a love for all, she does not specifically explore this element of the love ethic. In doing so, she restricts the ethic's focus to intimate and familial relationships. The work of Nwonye (2009); King Jr. (1967b); and Andolsen (1981) provide important insight into *agape* as love for humanity and, in particular, Andolsen's feminist lens highlights concerns for women regarding the sacrificial intent of neighbourly love and love for humanity. In response to this legitimate feminist concern, I argue that love is a holistic practice of love for self *and* others, and that neighbourly love and love for humanity can be conducted when reflexively applied with self-care and self-respect. In this regard, neighbourly love and love for humanity are important inclusions in the love ethic and reflect the social work value of universal worth of all people (AASW 2010; Banks 2006; Healy 2007; IFSW 2012).

Additionally, hooks' (2000) framework does not integrate love between people and nature, and neither do several other love philosophers (Fromm 1957; King Jr. 1963; Tolstoy 1970). This is a serious gap in this ethical theory. Although perhaps unintended, hooks' anthropocentric ethic reinforces the Western tradition of human domination over the earth, directly challenging her notion that love and domination cannot co-exist. However, love philosophy informed by Eastern and indigenous worldviews highlight the interconnected

relationship between people and nature, suggesting that hooks' love ethic can be extended. Indeed, as the social work profession increasingly recognises that social justice is dependent upon environmental justice (IFSW, IASSW & ICSW 2012), reflecting ecofeminist theory (Hawthorne 2002; Oakley 2002; Shiva 1989), hooks' work must be strengthened with this additional paradigm. By integrating neighbourly love, love for humanity and love between people and nature, hooks' love ethic can support a holistic worldview for social workers, community workers and activists grappling with the current world order of inequality.

4.10.2 Love as an ethic

Although hooks (2000) frames her theory as an ethic, she does not explore the philosophical space to which her ethic belongs. While this is not necessarily important, it perhaps limits the capacity for her love ethic to be seriously considered within ethical philosophy; or for professions such as social work to legitimately consider love as an ethical construct. In Chapter 3, I analysed hooks' love ethic within three relevant areas of ethical philosophy that I deemed relevant: virtue ethics (the character of the moral agent), deontological ethics (the nature of right action) and the ethics of care and proximity (relationships between people). hooks' theory does not fit neatly into one specific category, but incorporates all three elements, reflecting the fluidity of modern philosophy (Bauman 2000). Additionally, although hooks does not explore love as morality, my analysis suggests that hooks' depiction of love reflects many aspects of morality, such as a focus on human connectedness and responsibility (Bauman 2003), a recognition of humanity (Gaita 1999), consideration of the other (Gasper 2000), a commitment to helping others, conscious decision-making and action and following our true path (Gandhi 2005).

My analysis of virtue ethics, particularly in the social work tradition, shows that love is a virtue and hooks' love ethic is a framework of virtues. Indeed, as discussed earlier, hooks' love ethic provides a description of a loving person, with moral qualities or characteristics (virtues) that are both self-regarding and other-regarding. Many of the virtues that Banks and Gallagher (2009) identify for social workers reflect hooks' 'ingredients of love', although hooks does not actively incorporate wisdom or courage. Importantly, I reject Banks and Gallagher's assertion that love is a theological virtue. I suggest that hooks' conceptualisation of love is an important consideration in professional constructions of virtue ethics.

I also considered hooks' love ethic within the field of deontological ethics, considering love as 'right action'. Analysed through Orlie's (1997) framework of ethical living, hooks' love ethic provides a strong guide for action to challenge systems of power and dominance. In

particular, right action within the love ethic involves nurturing the spiritual growth of others, serving others, practising forgiveness and honesty, mindfulness and reflexivity, activism through nonviolence, conscious action through love and actualising the key ingredients of love: care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust. This construct is very similar to Orlie's framework, suggesting that the love ethic is also an ethic of right action.

hooks' love ethic focuses on building communities and connectedness. In this regard, love is practised through relationship with others, implying that the love ethic is an ethic of proximity. I considered hooks' love ethic in relation to three philosophical constructs of relationality: the ethic of caring, global ethics and ecological ethics. Although love is not specifically considered in any of these ethical frameworks, hooks' ethic has similarities to them all. For example, while literature regarding the ethic of caring deliberately disregards love as masculine (Noddings 1984), caring reflects various aspects of love as an ethic of relationship, including human interdependence and responsibility, compassion, fostering the growth of the other and reciprocity (Banks & Gallagher 2006; Meagher & Parton 2004; Noddings 1984; Tronto 1993; Williams 2001). However, although the ethic of caring has a political imperative, it does not venture as far as hooks' love ethic to emphasise micro, mezzo and macro relationships to challenge structures of inequality and domination.

Constructions of global ethics reflect hooks' notion of mutual responsibility and interconnectedness, whereby the fate of individuals is linked to the fate of all people. Global ethics particularly reflects discussion of neighbourly love and love for humanity, which hooks fails to adequately explore. However, hooks' love ethic aims for structural transformation, a political goal that reflects the aim of global ethics to transform systems of inequality to ensure equal rights for all peoples (Hawthorne 2002; Kung 1993; Singer 2002). Building from this, ecological ethics provide an important perspective for the love ethic, particularly notions of the interconnectedness of people and nature (Graham 1998; Hanh 1993; Kingsley et al. 2009; Kirmayer et al. 2009; Ogungbemi 2008; Rose 1999) and the rights of nature (Plurinational State of Bolivia 2009; Republic of Ecuador 2008) as worldviews that extend hooks' anthropocentric approach. Additionally, hooks' love ethic as a radical feminist theory blatantly ignores ecofeminism, a highly relevant paradigm that connects the exploitation and abuse of nature to the exploitation of women (Daly 1990; Hawthorne 2002; Oakley 2002; Shiva 1989). The political position of ecofeminism is vital for holistic relationship-orientation of the love ethic. Nevertheless, despite these recognised gaps in hooks' work, the literature regarding the nature of relationship-based ethics suggests that the love ethic

is an ethic of proximity, with its focus on relationship through which morality (love) can be practised.

Finally, I explored love as a professional ethic. Love does not feature as a value, principle or practice in most social work codes of ethics (Banks 2006; IFSW 2014), despite hooks' assertion that love is an important ethic of professional practice. The resistance of social work and other caring professions to love (Arman & Rehnsfeldt 2006; Butot 2004; 2007; Morley & Ife 2002; Stickley & Freshwater 2002) is unfounded, particularly as the Swedish social work code of ethics articulates the importance of love as a grounding of values and practice regarding human dignity and worth. Social work aims to alter systems of injustice (AASW 2010; IFSW 2012), and hooks' love ethic provides a comprehensive process for doing so. Indeed, given the increasing neoliberal influence on social work (Kenny 2006; Meagher & Parton 2004; Somerville 2011), the love ethic as a process for transforming structural inequality is an important inclusion in social work ethical frameworks to resist neoliberalism (Goldie 2014).

My analysis of relevant literature shows that hooks' love ethic is positioned within virtue, deontological and relationship ethics, and love is connected to morality. Furthermore, love is an important consideration in social work and community work ethics, and should be more readily integrated into professional ethical frameworks of theory and practice.

4.10.3 Love as an ethic of action for equality

In the third part of my literature review, I considered love as an ethic of action for equality, analysing hooks' love ethic in relation to other theoretical approaches of love as an ethic of action in social justice spaces. The literature review found a handful of social work, community work and activist frameworks that support practitioners to work from love, which enhance hooks' love ethic with their specific focus on community work. In particular, theories of nonviolence (Gandhi 2005; Hanh 1993; King Jr. 1963; Thoreau 1849; Tolstoy 1970) and dialogue (Freire 1989; Westoby & Dowling 2009; 2013) provide useful principles and practicable processes for love-based community work, while reinforcing hooks' focus on love as an antidote to domination and abuse. Additionally, the beloved community approach emphasises the importance of strengthening the collective, focussing on human connectedness (Somerville 2011). The very limited empirical research regarding love in action also suggests that embodying and practising love is a radical shift from mainstream professional practice in social work, education and nursing (Butot 2004; Fitzgerald & van Hooft 2000; Horsfall 2008; Nelson et al. 2000).

Indeed, working through love involves a level of risk as practitioners transcend normative professional boundaries and rules, reflecting the principles of nonviolence and civil disobedience. The theoretical and research literature I reviewed all emphasise love as emancipatory practice through interconnectedness and relationship. Additionally, spirituality features as an intrinsic foundation of love. Furthermore, loving practice is both other-centred and self-centred, with a symbiotic relationship between the self and others when seeking justice, equality and rights.

By analysing trends across the theories of practice and research, I found that love as an ethic of action for equality involves dialogue, nonviolence, interconnectedness between people and between people and nature, the pursuit of justice through transforming structures of inequality, personal reflexivity, sharing power and solidarity. Love as a practice approach incorporates the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. Importantly, all theoretical approaches and research studies I considered highlight that love is action to transform structures of inequality. This shifts traditional notions of love as benevolent charity (Butot 2004) to an understanding of love as activism, supporting practitioners to adopt a radical epistemology and holistically challenge neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation by transcending private and public realms to a space of conscious politics.

There is significant potential for community work practice based on these constructs of love as action for equality. However, I recognise a number of gaps in the available literature that I hope this research addresses. Firstly, most theories of love-based community work are gender-blind and, therefore, de-politicised. Although love as action for equality implies a restructuring of patriarchy, few male authors specifically recognise patriarchy as the foundational form of inequality. And although hooks has a unique radical feminist lens regarding love, she fails to consider the dominant patriarchal relationship between people and nature. Nevertheless, hooks' framework of inequality based on capitalism, patriarchy and racism is a holistic view of structural injustice that can be transformed through love. This research thus engages hooks' triadic construct of structural inequality with the important addition of environmental exploitation. Furthermore, feminism is a key theoretical foundation for my research methodology. I conduct gender-aware inquiry through the research, including supporting the co-operative inquiry groups to practise feminist ethics and gender analysis.

Secondly, most approaches to love as an ethic of action for equality, including hooks' love ethic, do not include love between people and nature and are overly anthropocentric. With

growing global consciousness regarding the interconnected relationship between people and nature (Hawthorne 2002; Oakley 2002; Plurinational State of Bolivia 2008; Republic of Ecuador 2008; Shiva 1989; Women's Major Group 2014; World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth 2010), it is vital that this research embraces nature as a key actor in the ontological construction of 'community'. In this regard, my work builds upon hooks' love ethic and other frameworks of love as an ethic of action for equality by bringing a lens informed by indigenous worldviews and ecofeminism.

Thirdly, there is a significant lack of empirical research regarding love in community work. Few theoretical frameworks of love as an ethic of action for equality are based on data or research. The minimal research that has been undertaken is small-scale and primarily located in United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. I was unable to locate any research regarding love that was conducted with peoples in the Global South or with indigenous peoples, indicating a significant knowledge gap. Furthermore, no empirical research considered love in community work, and reviewed research tended to focus on clinical and micro practice settings rather than community-based and collective spaces. This research is a unique addition to available literature, providing possibly the first comprehensive and empirical inquiry into love in community work and activism. In addition, by conducting research in three international sites, including communities in Timor-Leste and Peru with non-English languages, I challenge the Global North bias of the available evidence base regarding love in health and wellbeing professions.

Fourthly, the available literature regarding love as an ethic of action for equality does not generally appear to be collaboratively developed, and authors are often positioned as experts rather than participants in a collaborative process of knowledge development. An exception is Fitzgerald and van Hooft's (2000) Socratic dialogue with nurses, which involved an intensive participatory process to explore love in nursing and collectively generate knowledge. The context and characteristics of community work call for a participatory research approach that reflects our professional preferences for collectivist and group-based action (Dominelli 2006; Ife 2001; Kenny 2006). In this regard, I developed a methodology entitled *change-oriented research,* informed by an epistemology of change that involves shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. This methodological approach supports a democratic and collaborative research process and positions me as a co-inquirer working alongside peers.

My research regarding the love ethic as a theory and practice framework for structural transformation is informed by a strong body of theoretical literature. However, there is very

little empirical research that considers love in grassroots social movements. As a result, my research provides important insight into a severely under-researched topic and is an important contribution to the marginalised but important space of love-based community work. Furthermore, the research strengthens hooks' love ethic through building an evidence base to inform a practicable theory of love-based community work practice and integrating an indigenous and ecofeminist lens of interconnectedness between people and nature.

4.11 Summary

In this chapter, I considered theoretical and empirical literature that provide frameworks of practice for love-based community work. I compared each area of work to hooks' theory of the love ethic, identifying similarities and areas required to extend hooks' theory to support community workers to work from an ethical position of love. Specifically, there lacks a theoretical framework regarding love-based grassroots activism and community work that holistically integrates the various forms of love identified in Chapter 2, including an ethical relationship of interconnectedness between people and nature. There is also a significant lack of empirical evidence, especially beyond dominant Western contexts, of love in community work practice, health and welfare professions and social movements. I argue that my research provides insight into a significantly under-researched area, and our collaboratively generated knowledge will be useful in the social work, community work and social movement literature.

In the following chapter, I discuss the methodological design and approach I undertook in this research.

5   Methodology

Let us renew our efforts to decolonize the academy, to honour the voices of those who have been silenced by dominant paradigms (Denzin & Giardina 2009, p. 15).

For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, men (sic) cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men (sic) pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other (Freire 1989, p. 58).

In this chapter I discuss the methodology of my research. I firstly consider knowledge and reiterate my ontological, epistemic, methodological and social purpose values. I then discuss the research methodological paradigm that I entitled *change-oriented research*. This approach is informed by a four-part epistemology of change that includes shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity, and is presented in a journal article I authored. Following this methodological critique, I discuss the research design, presenting and justifying my methods, data instruments, data analysis and validity procedures. I then share a journal article I authored which analyses the feminist ethical framework I applied in the research, including numerous ethics strategies within the research process that attempted to transform neoliberal and patriarchal power relations of exploitation and discrimination. I conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the research.

5.1   Knowledge

In this period of global uncertainty, we cannot allow a 'hegemonic politics of evidence' (Denzin 2009, p. 155). My research is situated within the epistemological participatory knowledge paradigm, which suggests that knowledge is a basis for change and is generated through cycles of action and reflection (Reason & Bradbury 2008). I am also influenced by assertions that knowledge is culturally contextualised (Somekh 2003) and an emancipatory process for challenging systems of oppression (Freire 1974). Heron (1996, pp. 14-15) explains that the participatory paradigm has five corollaries:

1. Knowers can only be knowers when known by other knowers. Knowing is a mutual awakening, mutual participative awareness.

2. There is a distinction between explicit and tacit knowledge. To participate in anything explicitly is to participate in everything tacitly. The whole is thus implicit in the part.

3. There is a distinction between participative knowing and alienated non-participative knowing in which the knower conceptually splits subject from object.

4. There are three stages of integration that equate with 'the progression from the prepersonal state of the child in its undifferentiated participative world where it is over-participative and under-individuated, through ego development where the person is over-individuated and under-participative, to the transpersonal state where there is a mature integration of individuating and participative ways of being' (p. 15). Reason (1994) describes these stages as original participation, unconscious participation and future participation.

5. There is a holism of inquiry: the researcher's conclusions and applications are grounded in their own participative knowing.

Within the participative reality, a multidimensional/holistic approach to knowledge considers propositional, practical, presentation and experiential knowledges and beliefs, outlined in the following table:

Table 5.1: Multidimensional approach to knowledge

	Knowledge	Belief
Propositional	Knowing about something as ideas or theories; intellectual statements.	Belief that something is the case.
Practical	Knowing how to exercise a skill.	Belief in one's intuitive feel for a meaningful pattern.
Presentational	Intuitive grasp of the significance of imaginal patterns in various art-forms.	Belief in one's developing skill.
Experiential	Meeting and feeling the presence of some energy, entity, person, place, process or thing.	Belief in one's dawning sense of presence.

Source: Heron & Reason 2008; Heron 1996, pp. 33-54.

My research embraces the multidimensional epistemology of knowledge within the participatory knowledge paradigm and is nestled within a conceptual framework of love as an ethic of action for equality, as discussed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4. I also align myself with the moral imperative of academia to generate knowledge that helps others (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) and the feminist recognition that knowledge is traditionally dominated by men (Letherby 2003). Community work is based on the principles of co-operative, responsible

and active communities, participatory democracy, capacity development for identifying and solving problems, resourcing communities and community integration (Campfens 1997, p. 23 cited in Kenny 2011). Love encompasses values such as care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust (hooks 2000). With these foundational assumptions, my methodological approach rests upon ontological, epistemic, methodological and social purpose values outlined in Chapter 1, briefly summarised again here.

My research recognises the moral responsibilities of knowledge generation and embraces a collaborative, change-oriented, loving approach. My ontological values are that human beings are interconnected, autonomous, capable, reflexive and loving, with multiple identities. My epistemological values are radical social constructivism and participative reality. My methodological values are decentralisation, deregulation, co-operativeness, creativity and systemic cycles of reflection and action, embedded with consciousness-raising. My social purpose is to promote love, equality, justice, critical thinking, relationships and diversity while rejecting social theories and practices that marginalise and oppress peoples. To adequately reflect these values, my research is guided by an umbrella methodological paradigm I name *change-oriented research*.

5.2   Research paradigm: Change-oriented research

My methodological paradigm is informed by *change-oriented research,* an epistemology of change that critically combines shared power ('power with' / solidarity), participation, action and contextual reflexivity. This methodological paradigm proposes that research is a process for transforming systems of inequality and oppression to achieve a 'new world order' of peace, equality and sustainability. In this regard, *change-oriented research* supports positive individual, community and structural change *through,* rather than *after,* the research process. My methodological framework somewhat reflects theories of feminist participatory action research (FPAR), although I specifically integrate theories of cultural responsiveness to address a notable gap in FPAR theory – the power and importance of engaging with cultural (in particular indigenous) knowledges, rituals and paradigms. In this regard*, change-oriented research* intends to connect diverse peoples in an ethical and empowering way to lovingly engage in knowledge generation to bring about structural transformation. The following journal article shares a critical discussion of my proposed epistemological framework of *change-oriented research,* which is the foundation of my methodological approach.

5.2.1 Journal Article 1: Change-Oriented Research

Title: Change-oriented research: critical social work inquiry for 'a new world order'.

Journal: *International Social Work*

Publisher: Sage

Status: Submitted, under review

Abstract

Critical social work engages research to advocate and implement a 'new world order' by transforming structures of inequality and social injustice through emancipatory inquiry. *Change-oriented research* is a proposed four-part epistemology of change that includes shared power by challenging intersectional inequality; participation through democratic inclusion; action for change; and, contextual reflexivity with cultural responsiveness. *Change-oriented research* is a collaborative process that aims to understand and transform social injustices through cycles of action and reflection, generating multiple and contextualised knowledges that empower participants to collectively take action for sustainable change. This paradigm supports radical, gender transformative change at multiple levels.

Introduction

Social work is located in local and global systems of inequality that are dominated by patriarchy, racism, neoliberal capitalism and environmental exploitation – destructive projects that pervade social relationships and structures, economic systems, the relationship between humans and nature and cultural processes. The social work profession, particularly critical social work, recognises the insidious nature of these systems of inequality and aims for holistic change at individual, household, community, organisational and structural levels. In this regard, critical social work is activism. It is a vehicle for liberation, radical social transformation and the promotion of solidarity, involving commitment to social transformation, developing solidarity, challenging power relations, building emotional connection, 'prefigurative action' (everyone can participate in building change) and making spaces for action (Chatterton, Fuller and Routledge, 2007).

A key activist tool for critical social workers is research, the 'systematic and rigorous inquiry or investigation that enables people to understand the nature of problematic events or

phenomena' (Stringer 2007: 4). However, the way that social workers engage with and conduct research can in fact perpetuate the injustice of patriarchy, racism, neoliberalism and environmental exploitation. In this article, I propose an epistemological paradigm entitled *change-oriented research*, which has four components of shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. *Change-oriented research* informs critical social work research that supports communities to design and implement an inquiry process to understand and develop solutions to problems, build solidarity and transform inequitable social structures. *Change-oriented research* is a participatory inquiry paradigm that can enable radical, gender transformative and sustainable change from individual to structural levels. It supports a collaborative research process that aims to understand and transform social injustices through cycles of action and reflection, generating multiple and contextualised knowledges that empower participants to collectively take radical action for a changed world.

In this article, I discuss the need for *change-oriented research* and share the four foundations of the *change-oriented research* epistemology; namely, shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. I then provide suggestions for how *change-oriented research* can be practicably applied. I argue that conducting research through the multifaceted epistemology of *change-oriented research* is rigorous, gender- and culturally-responsive and supports transformation of inequitable power relations within the research and within society through emancipatory practice.

'Change' and social work research

Critical social workers are acutely aware that dominant systems of patriarchy, racism, neoliberal capitalism and environmental exploitation disenfranchise vulnerable peoples, destroy our natural environment and divide the wealthy and the poor. *The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development Commitment to Action* highlights that in the current global state of affairs, the majority of people cannot access their human rights; unjust economic systems cause poverty and inequality; globalisation marginalises particular groups; supportive relationships in communities are eroding; and, unsustainable environments negatively affect people's health and wellbeing (International Federation of Social Workers, the International Association of Schools of Social Work and International Council on Social Welfare, 2012). The document calls for 'a new world order which makes a reality of respect for human rights and dignity and a different structure of human relationships' (1).

Advocating and operationalizing a 'new world order' are the intended aims of critical social work, a theoretical, practical and social movement that supports structural change for holistic justice and equality. Critical social work views social problems as 'arising from a specific social context – liberal-neo-conservative capitalism - rather than from the failings from individuals' (Mullaly, 1997: 133). It understands that societal structures uphold dominant oppressive ideologies (Thompson, 1997), thereby marginalising liberation and change for people who live in poverty (Fook, 1993). Critical social work promotes activism in social work by identifying systematised processes that generate inequality, promoting reflexivity, engaging co-participatory practice and aiming for social transformation (Healy, 2001). Importantly, ecosocial work theory strengthens critical social work by shifting the profession's anthropocentric foundation to a holistic approach to address social, environmental and economic justice (Norton, 2012).

Critical social workers can understand and transform inequality and injustice, and generate systemic change, through research. As Denzin and Giardina (2009) share, '[t]he purpose of research is not to produce new knowledge, per se, but to "uncover" and construct truths that can be used for the pursuit of peace and social justice' (29). This orientation towards *change* is reflected in the principles and processes of action research (Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Somekh, 2006; Stoecker, 2005; Stringer, 2007) and qualitative inquiry more generally (Denzin and Giardina, 2009). While research can generate knowledge to inform change (such as policy developments), the way we conduct research can also bring about change; and change may occur at multiple levels. For example, research may stimulate individual change through consciousness-raising of participants (Freire, 1989; Stringer, 2007); organisational change may occur through the development of new programs or program modifications (Somekh, 2006; Stringer, 2007); and research may produce structural change through 'disrupting stable patterns of power and interaction' (Stoecker, 2005: 79). However, in order to change unjust systems of patriarchy, racism, neoliberal capitalism and environmental exploitation, critical social workers require theoretical frameworks to ethically, appropriately and effectively work with people to identify, understand and bring about the change we desire *through* the research process.

My proposed paradigm of *change-oriented research* has a four-part epistemology to support critical social workers to engage with change in our research practice. The four components of this paradigm are shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. I draw from existing theoretical knowledge to understand each aspect.

Shared power: prioritising intersectional equality

Change-oriented research occurs in social contexts of unequal power relations, perpetuated by hegemonic systems of patriarchy, racism, neoliberal capitalism and environmental exploitation. *Change-oriented research* is thus grounded in the identification, critique and transformation of structures of intersectional power inequality within social problems, research processes and enacted solutions. A key theoretical lens that informs the epistemological notion of shared power is feminism. There is no universal definition of feminism (Letherby, 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002; Reid and Frisby, 2008), as feminist knowledges and methodologies are varied and multidisciplinary (Buikema, Griffin and Lykke, 2011; Fonow and Cook, 2005; Reinharz with Davidman, 1992; Wickramasinghe, 2010). However, feminist research theories generally emphasise respect, inclusion, equity, transforming unjust power relations and the lived reality of intersectional inequality in all communities in which we work (Dominelli, 2006; Noffke and Brennan, 2004; Reid and Frisby 2008).

When exploring shared power within the epistemology of *change-oriented research*, feminist theory assists us to consider issues of equality, difference, empowerment, patriarchy and gender (Wickramasinghe, 2010). Importantly, feminism supports change-oriented researchers to be reflexive of our power (Letherby, 2003; Naples, 2003; Ramazanoglu and Holland, 2002) and our subjectivity, including discipline and work roles, family ethnicity and religion, class, politics and language (Wickramasinghe, 2010). In particular, Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) theory informs the political imperative of *change-oriented research* to share power through centering gender and women's diverse experiences while challenging forms of patriarchy; accounts for intersectionality; honouring voice and difference through participatory research processes; exploring new forms of representation; reflexivity; honouring many forms of action; and preventing situations where privileged researchers benefit most by publishing work (Reid and Frisby 2008).

The *change-oriented research* paradigm also emphasises shared power at various levels. Wickramasinghe's (2010: 76) matrix of feminist research ontology of political and social change is particularly useful for change-oriented researchers to conceptualise power and equality:

- Feminist Internationalisms: The impetus of international influences / standards and resulting epistemologies in research.
- Feminist Structural Reformative Intents: The influence of neoliberal forces, structural reforms and the epistemologies of gender mainstreaming in institutions.

- Feminist Localism: The contemporaneous socio-political developments that provide local imperatives for research epistemologies.
- Feminist Personal Political Interests: The internal personal political drive of the researchers and the epistemologies that arise therein.

This framework assists change-oriented researchers to adopt a critical lens to understand structures of power through gender, marginalisation, corporatisation and exploitation at individual, local and systemic levels. In a world where intersectional inequality pervades every social and economic structure, sharing power as a political feminist practice (Fonow and Cook, 2005; Letherby, 2003; Mies, 1991) is fundamental to *change-oriented research* as an inquiry epistemology for a new world order.

Participation: democratic inclusion for equitable change

The second component of the four-part epistemology of *change-oriented research* is participation. *Change-oriented research* embraces the view that people who are affected by or have an effect on the research topic must be actively engaged in all cyclical stages of the research process, including decision-making (such as research design), data collection, analysis and reporting (Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Heron, 1996; Kindon, Pain and Kesby 2007; Stoecker, 2005; Stringer, 2007). A *change-oriented research* participatory process is co-designed and co-managed by researchers and participants, who I refer to as 'co-researchers'. Stakeholders are integral, as their perspectives, responses and collaborative analyses provide the basis for 'deep-seated' understandings that lead to effective action (Stringer, 2007: 20). In *change-oriented research*, participation means that co-researchers collaboratively co-manage the process to define the problems to be examined, cogenerate knowledge about them, learn and execute social research techniques, take actions and interpret results of the actions based on the learnings (Greenwood and Levin, 2007: 3). As a result, knowledge acquisition/production is a collective process (Stringer, 2007).

However, participation is a contested concept, and change-oriented researchers must be cognisant of its political, wide and loose interpretations (Mosse, 2011; White, 1996). For example, in international development, participation is conceptualised as both a mandatory approach and a new form of tyranny (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Mikkelsen, 2005) and is mainstreamed at micro and macro levels (White, 1996) to the extent that participation is a development 'buzzword' (Leal, 2007). There are, however, many forms of participation. Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Citizen Participation* suggests that participation as citizen power occurs through citizen control, delegated power and partnership, while

placation, consultation and informing are merely tokenistic forms of participation, and therapy and manipulation embody nonparticipation. Reference is also often made to Pretty, Guijit, Thompson and Scoone's (1995) *Seven Stages of Participation*, which identifies a continuum of participation from passive participation to self-mobilisation, through information-giving, consultation, material incentives, functional participation and interactive participation. Davidson's (1998) *Wheel of Participation* has also emerged, conceptualizing participation as a journey from information to consultation to participation and, finally, empowerment. Drawing from the literature, Mikkelsen (2005) identifies other categories of participation, including catalysing change (community members influence others to participate and initiate change); 'optimum' participation (paying closer attention to the context and purposes to determine the appropriate form of participation); and manipulation.

Importantly, participation itself does not constitute good *change-oriented research* process; participation must be considered an 'instrument of a broader process of cogenerative knowledge creation, action design, and evaluation', in a process that is often 'complexly differentiated and uneven and occasionally even contradictory' (Greenwood and Levin 2007: 256). It is argued that participatory research is most effective when it enables significant levels of active involvement, enables people to perform significant tasks, provides support for people, encourages plans and activities that people are able to accomplish themselves, and deals personally with people rather than with their representative or agents (Stringer, 2007: 32). In community-based participatory research, Ahmed, DeNomie, Young and Maurana (2011) suggest that participation involves a continuous process of learning reflections, based on the 5 Ps: participate, prepare, predict, preempt and prevent. Participatory resources include discourses/practices such as equity, democracy, collective action, self-reflection and dialogue (Kesby, Kindon and Pain, 2007). *Change-oriented research* should attempt to subvert the oligarchic concentration of power in the hands of the elite by opening up and including the 'powerless' in decision-making (Stringer, 2007).

In response to the extensive misuse of participation in social research, I suggest that *change-oriented research* embraces participation by integrating Mikkelsen's (2005) strategies for participatory research and practice:

- Ensure stakeholder participation at all levels.

- Use grounded theory to keep the empirical material in constant dialogue with theoretical generalisation.

- Choose a flexible research topic.

- Be reflexive regarding the possible impacts of pre-conceived notions of participation.

- Avoid being dogmatic.

- Be contextually sensitive.

- Listen to people's own knowledge, but don't think that only the voice of the grassroots counts.

- Create dialogue between those who will be directly or indirectly affected by the study and intervention and share decisions and responsibilities.

- Respect the will not to participate.

- Use your imagination but do not impose your views.

- Reflect on your own role and legitimacy of your own encroachment.

Furthermore, participation as collaboration means that each side of the partnership respects each other's values and assumptions, 'moving between and inhabiting each other's worlds' (Somekh, 2006: 23), while also building on complementary strengths and overcoming the distinct 'weaknesses' of each side (Stoecker, 2005). *Change-oriented research* also deliberately includes relevant stakeholders of diversely affected groups and issues, ensuring co-operation with other groups, agencies and organisations, and ensuring that relevant groups benefit from activities (Stringer, 2007: 35). Inclusion of the excluded, to 'put the last first' (Chambers, 1983), is paramount, particularly from a political rights perspective. This includes genuine inclusion of women (Eichler, 1988).

Change-oriented researchers actualise participation through a democratic research process in which all those involved have responsibility (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). The epistemological imperative of participation encourages us to conduct research that is equitable (acknowledging people's equality of worth), liberating (providing freedom from oppressive, debilitating conditions) and life enhancing (enabling the expression of people's full human potential), with non-exploitative social relations (Stringer, 2007: 11). Importantly *change-oriented research* does not aim for development or poverty alleviation, but embraces participation to transform cultural, political and economic structures that reproduce poverty and marginalisation (Leal, 2007). Participation, as a deliberate and reflexive paradigm for practice, is therefore fundamental for *change-oriented research* that

intends to support transformative change. Change-oriented researchers thus need a participatory worldview (Kindon et al., 2007).

Action: transformation *through* the research process

The third aspect of the *change-oriented research* epistemology is action, emphasising transformation *through* the research process. A theoretical perspective that supports this epistemological concept is action research, an 'orientation to inquiry' (Kindon et al. 2007) that embraces the participatory paradigm and its respective methodologies, such as participatory action research (Fals Borda and Rahman, 1991); community-based participatory research (Stoecker, 2005); co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1996; Heron and Reason, 2001; Reason, 1999); feminist participatory research (Maguire, 1987); feminist participatory action research (Reid and Frisby, 2008); participatory rural appraisal (Chambers, 1983); and living systems research (Wadsworth, 2010). There are numerous definitions of action research within the literature (Alston and Bowles, 2012; Greenwood and Levin 2007; Mikkelsen, 2005; Patton, 2002; Saukko, 2003; Somekh 2006; Stringer 2007; Whitehead and McNiff, 2006). According to Greenwood and Levin (2007: 1), action research is,

> 'a set of self-consciously collaborative and democratic strategies for generating knowledge and designing action in which trained experts in social and other forms of research and local stakeholders work together. The research focus is chosen collaboratively among the local stakeholders and the action researchers, and the relationships among the participants is organised as joint learning processes. Action research centres on doing "with" rather than doing "for" stakeholders and credits local stakeholders with the richness of experience and reflective possibilities that long experience living in complex situations brings with it'.

They emphasise that action research uses a collaborative approach to 'enhance liberating social change processes' (101). Reflecting a radical approach, Mikkelsen (2005: 132) explains that action research is 'applied research that treats knowledge as a form of power and abolishes the line between research and social action'.

Change-oriented research involves a systematic approach to social transformation by working collaboratively with co-researchers to understand, develop and enact solutions to problems. It emphasises the action research imperative to understand *how* things occur as opposed to *what* is occurring in a localised space and time, understanding the ways that stakeholders perceive, interpret and respond to events related to the issue being

investigated, providing participants with new understandings and means for taking action (Stringer, 2007). Change-oriented researchers go beyond describing, analysing and theorising social practices to the action research process of 'working in partnership with participants to reconstruct and transform these practices' (Somekh, 2006: 27).

Some key concepts from action research inquiry inform the action component of *change-oriented research.* We conduct research with, not for, people. Our research process embraces knowledge as contextualised, multiple and empowering, and we undertake organic processes of reflection, action and learning for social change and social justice at local and structural levels. Importantly, through action we aim to alter the state of a group, organisation, or community to become 'more self-managing, liberated, and sustainable' (Greenwood and Levin, 2007: 6). Additionally, *change-oriented research* rejects a traditional, lineal research process and assumes a cyclical and organic action research process, a continuous and participative learning process with ongoing cycles of Reflection and Action. The interacting spiral of recycled activities is not a neat, orderly activity, but may involve repetition, revision, rethinking and changes in direction (Stringer, 2007: 9). In this regard, action in the *change-oriented research* process is organic, responsive and flexible to the local context and, importantly, we must not be blind to gender (Frisby, Maguire and Reid, 2009). The emphasis on action through a transformative research process supports change-oriented researchers who are interested in innovation (Somekh, 2006), through operationalizing the critical social work vision for a 'new world order'.

Contextual reflexivity: cultural responsiveness and diversity in the change process

The previously discussed elements of *change-oriented research*, namely shared power, participation and action, may suggest a methodological paradigm similar to Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR). However, the *change-oriented research* epistemology extends FPAR theory by engaging a fourth component of contextual reflexivity. Given the complexity of the human condition and our global community, *change-oriented research* always occurs in spaces of diversity. Indeed, cultural elements are more fluid, changing and dynamic due to increased global interconnectedness (Delva, Allen-Meares and Momper, 2010). It is therefore vital that change-oriented researchers challenge structures of neo-colonialism, racism and embrace indigenous worldviews through a lens of contextual reflexivity.

Uehara and colleagues' (1996: 613-4) criteria for multicultural social work research inform contextual reflexivity. They suggest that, firstly, researchers should engage in a constant

process of private and public reflection on a range of issues critically affecting collaboration – from how her or his biases and motives affect the research process, to the impact of the larger political economy on the sociocultural history of disadvantaged groups. Secondly, researchers should democratise the research process, supporting a continuous process of community collaboration rather than token representation of community members in limited advisory roles. And thirdly, the research objectives should reflect community empowerment, social justice and social transformation goals.

Similarly, Saukko (2003) shows us how cultural or intellectual phenomena, material circumstances and political regimes are intertwined:

> 'Understanding lived experience demands a hermeneutic or phenomenological approach that aims to understand lived realities. The interest in discourses calls for a (post)structuralist analysis of the tropes and patterns that shape our understanding of our social, cultural and research environment' (33).

While upholding universal human rights, *change-oriented research* is reflexive of context through various principles of cultural responsiveness, in particular: the importance of cultural and social contexts; the value of democratic participation; the interplay between culture, material reality and politics; and the focus on social justice. Through cultural responsiveness, change-oriented researchers value difference, a position also promoted in feminist research (Letherby, 2003; Naples, 2003). *Change-oriented research* reflects Saukko's (2003) multidimensional research approach that respects different modes of inquiry and reality, and does not try to come up with one enlightened view nor acknowledge that there are different views. Collaboration, self-reflexivity, polyvocality and social sensitivity are highly relevant.

For contextual reflexivity, *change-oriented research* can also integrate Harrell and Bond's (2006) 'connected disruption' approach in community research. *Community culture* involves having a solid understanding of the composition, characteristics, functioning and interactions within the community, including the 'unique and contextualised manifestation of cultural expression and diversity' (368). *Community context* understands that individual and group behaviour is inseparable from context, requiring an understanding of the dimensions of historical events and patterns of change, socio-political context, the local setting and institutional structures. *Self-in-Community* assumes that the values, cultural lenses and identity statuses of co-researchers impact all stages of work, and therefore 'it is impossible to separate who we are from the work that we do' (367). Harrell and Bond

promote a stance of empowered humility, involving a not-knowing stance and sensitivity of action, acknowledging our own limitations and focussing on the community's right to self-determination by shedding our expert role. This considers cultural socialization, identity and social location (exploring self-identity), power and privilege and biases, alliances and 'isms' (a reflexive examination of self).

Importantly, to be reflexive of context, *change-oriented research* must incorporate 'appreciation for a deep shared humanity while also confronting historical and cultural legacies that maintain differential privilege and access to resources' (Harrell and Bond, 2006: 374). We are responsive to racial, ethnic and cultural characteristics, experiences, norms, values, behavioural patterns and beliefs (Delva et al., 2010). Practicable strategies include avoiding sweeping generalisations of the people we work with, considering multiple identities of individuals and using multiple (and contextually appropriate (Mikkelsen, 2005)) methods to better understand the complexity of human and organisational behaviours (Delva et al. 2010: 12).

A further consideration in contextual reflexivity in *change-oriented research* is valuing that all human beings have expert knowledge about their lives, environments and goals (Greenwood and Levin, 2007). We embrace the action research (and critical social work) ideal of research participants as co-researchers, thus challenging researchers from remaining locked in their personal worldview (Stringer, 2007). Change-oriented researchers privilege local knowledge (Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Patton, 2002; Somekh 2006) and assume that generalised solutions may not fit particular contexts or groups, finding appropriate solutions for the "particular dynamics at work in a local situation" (Stringer, 2007: 5). A particularly powerful perspective is Denzin and Giardina's (2009) critical indigenous pedagogy, which is grounded in self-definitions and identities arising from the researcher's participation in moral community. They promote research to be ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonising, participatory, committed to dialogue, community, self-determination and cultural autonomy, meeting peoples' perceived needs and resisting efforts to confine inquiry to a single paradigm or interpretive strategy. They state that inquiry should be 'unruly, disruptive, critical, and dedicated to the goals of justice and equity' (29), and it should be accountable to indigenous persons, who should have first access to findings and control over the distribution of knowledge. *Change-oriented research* incorporates context through planning and implementing research that is respectful, aware, reflexive, and culturally responsive and celebrates multiplicity of perspectives, experiences and knowledges.

Conducting change-oriented research

Change-oriented research within the critical social work movement for a 'new world order' is grounded in a four-part epistemology of shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. *Change-oriented research* deliberately positions multiple levels of change as a value, a process and an outcome of the research. Therefore, although we need to understand the theoretical underpinnings of this research approach, it is equally important to consider ways to practicably implement *change-oriented research* for sustainable change. Key considerations for *change-oriented research* in practice are equality; relationships; democratic decision-making; relationships; methods; and, ethics.

Equality

In *change-oriented research*, the partnership approach between researchers and co-researchers attempts to transform the traditional unequal relationship between privileged academics and oppressed subjects. Indeed, the notion of participants as 'co-researchers' deliberately challenges this hierarchical relationship (Heron, 1996) by aiming for equitable process and outcomes. Power is integral to any group or organisation (Somekh, 2006) and therefore all *change-oriented research* must integrate continued reflexivity of power relations, ideologies and histories. Equality in practice requires co-researchers to recognise privilege - to be aware and challenge power structures and processes during all phases of the research (Fine et al. 2004; Heron, 1996; Kindon et al., 2007). Approaches such as active community participation and continued democratic decision-making can challenge unequal power relationships; however, White (1996: 6) asserts that 'sharing through participation does not necessarily mean sharing in power', as participation can entrench and reproduce unequal power relations. In this regard, self and (appropriate and safe) collective reflexivity can support co-researchers to understand intersectional identity and 'check in' with the research experience as it relates to feelings, power and identity. Trusting relationships are crucial for a safe space to explore power and work towards equality.

Relationships

The *change-oriented research* approach considers solidarity relationships as integral to meaningful and sustainable change. Stringer (2007) asserts that positive working relationships should promote feelings of equality for all people involved; maintain harmony; avoid conflicts, where possible; resolve conflicts that arise, openly and dialogically; accept people as they are, not as some people think they ought to be; encourage personal, co-operative relationships, rather than impersonal, competitive, conflictual, or authoritarian

relationships; and be sensitive to people's feelings. Relationships should avoid imbalances of status or power, utilising co-operative and harmonious methods of interaction and collegial relationships. Furthermore, initiating researchers can consider the community/organisation's capacity to contribute their resources and research needs, while the community can consider whether the researcher is willing to follow the community/organisation's lead, the researcher's ability to meet deadlines and communicate in a community context (Stoecker, 2005). Importantly, *change-oriented research* moves beyond the bounds of 'normal' research into realms of friendship and kinship (Pain, Kesby and Kingdon, 2007), an issue also explored by Tillman-Healy (2003). The ethical implications of *change-oriented research* relationships are obviously complex and it is crucial that co-researchers carefully consider, discuss and reflect upon their collective research ethics.

Effective relationships in *change-oriented research* require styles of communication that facilitate harmony and effectively attain group objectives, reflected in the 'ideal speech situation' that encapsulates understanding, truth, sincerity and appropriateness (Habermas, 1979). We can embrace Stringer's (2007: 30) suggestion that researchers listen attentively to people, accept and act on what they say, be understood by everyone, be truthful and sincere, act in socially and culturally appropriate ways and regularly advise others about what is happening.

Democratic decision-making

Change-oriented research implements the democratic research assumption that humans know more about their own lives than others and, with reasonable support, everyone is capable of contributing knowledge and analysis to a collaborative social process (Greenwood and Levin, 2007: 261-2; Kesby et al., 2007). Greenwood and Levin (2007) explain that democratic research involves mutuality between co-researchers, whereby local knowledge, experience and historical consciousness are complemented by the initiating researcher's skills in facilitating learning processes, technical skills in research and comparative and historical knowledge of the subject. Democratisation occurs in an open, participatory and fair research process, by attaining research outcomes that support the co-researchers' interests with knowledge to increase their ability to control their own situation. Specifically, Greenwood and Levin assert that the fundamental point in any democratic process is 'deciding what is to be decided' (261), stressing that democracy is context bound. Consciousness-raising is particularly relevant, and a dialogical approach includes co-operation, unity for liberation and organisational and cultural synthesis to connect oppressors and the oppressed (Freire, 1989). In practice, the systematic process of the Co-

operative Inquiry can support change-oriented co-researchers to conduct democratic research (Heron, 1996). Collective decision-making through the entire research process considers group structure and values; research topic ('launching statement'); methods for collecting and recording data ('actions'); approaches for analysing and interpreting the data ('reflection'); and ways to share or report the group's collective findings. Although time-consuming, this deliberative process can be liberating and transformative for co-researchers.

Diverse methods

Change-oriented research uses creative methods to gather rigorous data while also strengthening collective activism. Diverse methods can capture the holistic nature of knowledge that includes practical knowledge (knowing how to engage in action or practice which involves skills and competencies); propositional knowledge (knowing about something as ideas or theories); experiential knowledge (a person's direct acquaintance with other people, living beings, places or things); and, presentational knowledge (the intuitive grasp of imaginal patterns in art-forms) (Heron, 1996). *Change-oriented research* involves mixed methods that move beyond 'standard' social research methods of numerical survey, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. Possible methods for *change-oriented research* may include performative methods such as theatre, dance, poetry (Denzin 2003; Heron, 1996; Leavy, 2008; Markula, 2006); visual and arts-based methods such as photography, drawing and painting, collage, sculpture and installations (Knowles and Cole 2008; Pauwels, 2011); narrative and storytelling methods such as journaling and autoethnography (Holt, 2003; Lewis, 2011; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Rosenthal, 2003); Participatory Rural Appraisal methods such as participatory mapping, ranking and scoring (Chambers, 1983); and, social media fora such as Facebook and Twitter. These methods can make research more accessible, engaging and useful for co-researchers, and a triangulation of creative methods may provide richer insight than more traditional data instruments. *Change-oriented research* can also use performative, embodied and arts-based processes to collectively analyse and interpret data, shifting the power of analysis to the collective (see Heron, 1996, regarding co-operative analysis). Co-researchers can collectively conduct quantitative, thematic and grounded analysis with technical support from the initiating researcher.

Ethics

Ethics is a crucial tenet of *change-oriented research*. The four-part epistemology of shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity does not necessarily fit with

traditional research practice. Possible ethical challenges in *change-oriented research* may include ensuring confidentiality and anonymity; managing factions; making the research useful; sharing control over the research; engaging people in potentially controversial social action; and the risk of revealing survival strategies to oppressors (Manzo and Brightbill, 2007; Stoecker, 2005). Standard social research ethics processes apply, such as voluntary participation, no harm to participants, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, incentives and goodwill for participants, honesty to participants and ethical reporting (Alston and Bowles, 2012; Babbie 2013; Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2006; Padgett, 2008; Stoecker, 2005; Whitehead and McNiff 2006). In *change-oriented research,* additional participatory ethics considerations include representation (self-representation); accountability (being accountable to stakeholders such as participants, partners and communities); social responsiveness (being responsive to participants' needs and perspectives); agency (ethical behaviour of researchers and participants); and reflexivity (continued ethical review of the research project) (Manzo and Brightbill, 2007).

Is change-oriented research valid?

The participatory and contextually reflexive nature of *change-oriented research,* with ongoing cycles of action and reflection, strengthens the rigour of data collection, analysis and interpretation of findings. Indeed, Greenwood and Levin (2007) argue that action research processes achieve superior results, due to shared decision-making about methods, collaborative case analysis and teaching analytical skills to research partners. Importantly, assessing validity in *change-oriented research* differs from mainstream social research. Instead of standard validity criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Padgett, 2008), *change-oriented research* is assessed according to the validity of the research process.

I propose the following validity criteria for *change-oriented research*, adapted from Ozanne and Saatcoiglu's (2008) work. *Outcome validity* occurs when the research successfully explores and resolves the identified social problem. *Democratic validity* means that the research comprises the maximum alternative perspectives and interests, involving people of diverse and intersectional identities and minority groups. *Process validity* occurs when the research process is participatory and trusting and supports co-researchers to engage in learning and relationship building. *Catalytic validity* involves co-researchers feeling motivated to understand and change their social reality at individual, local, national and global levels. *Dialogic validity* occurs when co-researchers engage in critical dialogue about the research processes, findings and actions.

Change-oriented researchers can also consider applying practical validity procedures of the Co-operative Inquiry, such as analysing data within descriptive, evaluative, explanatory and applied reflection; challenging uncritical subjectivity (Devil's Advocate); monitor and manage co-researcher defensiveness; and, encouraging divergent actions and ideas (Heron, 1996).

Conclusion

This article proposes *change-oriented research* as a critical social work research paradigm to achieve a 'new world order' through and following the research process. *Change-oriented research* is grounded in an emancipatory four-part epistemology of change through shared power through understanding and challenging intersectional inequality, participation through democratic inclusion, action for change *through* the research process, and contextual reflexivity through cultural responsiveness and diversity in the change process. *Change-oriented research* occurs when researchers join with participants as co-researchers to deliberatively, democratically and critically explore and transform an identified problem.

Change-oriented research is organic, reflexive and flexible to the local environment and context. For critical social work researchers, it involves working with communities 'where they are at', and is grounded in trusting relationships, dialogue and shared motivation for change. Importantly, change-oriented researchers do not have a specific agenda, but use an egalitarian, emancipatory and culturally responsive inquiry process to collectively understand and transform a social problem. In this regard, *change-oriented research* is not a rapid process and is most useful in critical social work settings with long-term commitment.

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The above journal article provides a comprehensive overview of the *change-oriented research* epistemological framework that informs my research methodology and is the foundation of the research design.

5.3   Research design

As discussed in Chapter 1, my research questions are, 'What is love in international rural community work?' and 'How can love transform structural inequality?'. In this section, I discuss the research design that supports me to respond to these questions, including research methods, sampling, data instruments, data analysis, research ethics and research trustworthiness and validity.

5.3.1   Research methods

This research involves two key research methods: case study and co-operative inquiry. Within each co-operative inquiry, groups used tools such as discussion, writing, drawing, journalling and performance to record and analyse data. These specific tools are discussed in more depth in the journal article shared in Chapter 7: Findings - Margaret River case study.

Case study

Guided by the *change-oriented research* methodological paradigm, my study involved co-operative inquiries in three rural case study sites in Liquica (Timor-Leste), Margaret River (Australia) and Lobitos (Peru). Case studies are in-depth examinations of a single instance of a social phenomenon within its real life context (Babbie 2013; Yin 2009). Yin (2009) explains that case studies are a preferred method when a) 'how' or 'why' questions are posed; b) the investigator has little control over events; and c) the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. This method allows for investigators to 'retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events' (p. 4), a key consideration in my research. He asserts that the case study is useful in a situation with more variables of interest than data points and where prior knowledge can guide data collection and analysis (p. 18). The participatory nature of my research supports a responsive rather than a pre-ordinate case study approach, as advocated by Gasper (2000) in his discussion of case studies in emergency relief work. He asserts case studies can be conducted responsively if the researcher and participants are able to question categories, focus and criteria. He promotes the thick case study that is 'holistic and includes distinctive, even idiosyncratic situations and details, people and cultures, and treats them in contexts, technical and institutional, local and beyond' (p. 1058). The criteria for 'thickness' include: 1) broad scope to contextualise a case and view it holistically; 2) degree of detail (case-specific, person-specific); and 3) plurality of methods, perspectives and voices.

My participatory research study involved multiple sites, which 'helps us to imagine a research and politics that is capable of doing justice to difference and to point to unities across differences' (Saukko 2003, p. 180). Saukko highlights that multiple-sited research draws attention to the way the social phenomena cannot be typified, and locates phenomena in a social and global context. It also highlights links between people and places. Multiple case studies also provide opportunity for comparison, requiring a literal replication design when engaging only a few sites (Yin 2009). However, my study does not have a strict replication design – although the co-operative inquiry approach was used in all three sites over a similar amount of time, the participatory nature of the research resulted in slightly different designs and processes within each site. Given that *change-oriented research* produces local, contextualised theory and practice (Somekh 2006) and I do not compare the sites, the need for replication is not significant. Additionally, fitting nicely within the action research cycles of action and reflection, the multiple case study process allows for theoretical feedback loops, where theory is reconsidered and redesign necessary (Yin 2009).

In this regard, my study enables methodological reflection as well as theory development as we consider how the co-operative inquiry method and the love ethic theory take shape and transform across multiple sites (Saukko 2003).

Yin's (2009) concerns regarding the case study method include the supposed lack of rigour, the limited basis for scientific generalisation, and that case studies are too long and result in large, unreadable documents. However, these issues are addressed through the use of multiple sites and multiple data sources, the specific thematic focus of the data collection within the co-operative inquiry method and the restriction of time for fieldwork. Furthermore, my research is not designed for results to be generalizable, but to provide insight into local contexts and learn from individual cases to develop new ideas. Additionally, Yin (2009) differentiates between research that is conducted to develop and test theory. As this study involved theory development, generalizability was not a significant focus. Future research can test the research results with a more disciplined approach.

Co-operative inquiry

In each case study site, I initiated a co-operative inquiry with up to ten community workers, volunteers, activists and community members. Co-operative inquiry is a systematic research process whereby inquiry members use democratic decision-making to collaboratively design the research topic and process to explore the topic through cycles of reflection and action (Heron 1996; Reason 1988a). Co-operative inquiry belongs to the human inquiry tradition, which values experience and engagement, recognises the emotional and ethical dimensions of relationships, desires the world of experience to invalidate preconceptions and commits to creative living (Greenwood and Levin 2007). Co-operative inquiry involves critical subjectivity, 'the quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed and swept along by it; rather we raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process' (Reason 1988b, p. 12).

In this method, I am the initiating researcher and I work in partnership with 'co-inquirers' to generate knowledge for practice. Co-operative inquirers are involved in two types of inquiry – inquiry into the topic and inquiry into the inquiry process (Heron 1996). Co-operative inquiry has an emergent process, as co-inquirers negotiate and re-learn the inquiry process (Reason 1988a). Additionally, co-operative inquiry emphasises holistic knowledge that is not fragmented or separated from practice and experience (Reason 1988b). Importantly, co-operative inquiry has an extended epistemology of experiential, practical, presentational

and propositional knowing, which holistically celebrates creativity in knowledge development - particularly relevant in cross-cultural research contexts (Rosenwasser 2002).

The co-operative inquiry theory and process is extensively explained and critiqued within four journal articles within this thesis. The first relevant journal article, 'Feminist ethics and co-operative inquiry: Reflections of theory and practice', submitted to *Action Research,* considers my experience of conducting the co-operative inquiry with a feminist ethical lens. Three further articles are included in the Findings chapters of this thesis, and each article provides experiential insight into theory and practice of the co-operative inquiry in a case study site. Importantly, within each case study, co-inquirers and I integrated presentational inquiry tools such as storytelling, dialogical performance, gift-giving, drawing and other non-traditional approaches to explore the research topic and collaboratively generate knowledge. My journal article in Chapter 7 discusses the process and findings of the second case study in Margaret River and specifically focuses on these arts-based, narrative and performative methods.

5.3.2   Sampling

Padgett (2008, p. 56) expresses some general rules regarding qualitative research sampling:

- The smaller the sample, the more intense and deep are the data being collected.

- Larger sample sizes are needed for heterogeneity, smaller sizes for homogeneity.

- Avoid sacrificing depth for breadth.

- Larger numbers need not be shunned as long as the study has sufficient resources and sufficient depth.

A qualitative sampling strategy should identify inclusion and exclusion criteria for recruitment and ethics reasons (Padgett 2008). With this in mind, my sampling strategy used purposive sampling, conducted in collaboration between stakeholders and I, a key principle of action research (Reason & Bradbury 2008).

Action research generally purposely samples people who are stakeholders in an issue (Stringer 2007). My study used purposive sampling based on the judgements of stakeholders and I regarding people who were most useful for the study and who could provide the needed information (Babbie 2013; Padgett 2008), focussing on quality over quantity and selecting people based on a specific criteria (Dudley 2011; Teddlie & Yu 2007). In collaboration with stakeholders in each case study site, I used purposive sampling to select

the case study sites and co-operative inquiry co-inquirers. My criteria for selecting the case study sites of Liquica (Timor-Leste), Margaret River (Australia) and Lobitos (Peru) were specifically based on the methodological focus of 'international rural community work' in my first research question.

Rurality

The first criterion to select my case studies was rurality. Despite increased urbanisation across the world, 50% of the world's population are rural (United Nations 2011) and rural peoples experience significant marginalisation and human rights issues. In particular, at least 75% of the world's very poor people are rural and a high proportion of them are children and young people (International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) 2010). IFAD explains that rural poverty is caused by 'lack of assets, limited economic opportunities and poor education and capabilities, as well as disadvantages rooted in social and political inequalities' (p. 16) and disadvantaged rural groups include women, young people, indigenous peoples and ethnic minority peoples. My intentional focus on rural communities highlights this global inequality. In selecting 'rural' sites, I considered the recommendation of the United Nations Statistics Division (2012) to define 'rural' according to the definition within the country of focus. This resulted in a complex application of 'rural' in the research.

In Timor-Leste, although 'rural' is a colloquial term for agricultural areas (National Statistics Directorate (NSD) and UNFPA 2008), it is used in the national census as a classification of 'not-urban'. Rather than providing a definition for rural, the NSD (2010) defines urban as areas within district capitals that have the following characteristics: a population of about 2,000 people or more; less than 50 per cent of its population are employed in agricultural/fishing activities and the remaining people employed in the modern sector; have electricity and piped water; and, have access to schools, medical care and recreational facilities. Liquica, the case study site in Timor-Leste, is the capital of the district of Liquica. According to this definition, the central sub-district of Dato is considered urban. However, most community workers involved in my study work with communities in the surrounds of Dato that are not urban. As a result, Liquica was an appropriate case study site to bring together people engaged in rural community work.

In Australia, 'rural' is no longer statistically defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS); instead, remoteness is considered. The Australian case study site of Margaret River is classified as 'outer regional Australia' (which comprises 9% of Australia's population) and 'non-metropolitan' within the Australian Statistical Geographic Standard Remoteness

Structure (ABS 2012). Other definitions of rural also exist in Australia, although they are now less commonly used. The Rural, Remote and Metropolitan Areas classification defines areas according to population, and Margaret River is classified as 'other rural towns' according to its urban centre population of fewer than 10,000 people (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2011). Furthermore, the Accessibility/Remoteness Index for Australia (ARIA) classifies locations according to access to goods, services and opportunities for social interaction. According to this classification, Margaret River scores 3.05 and is considered 'accessible', with some restrictions to access (Medicare 2012). These varying definitions do not provide an indication whether Margaret River is 'rural' or not, but it is clear that the site is not classified as metropolitan, or outer metropolitan. In this regard, this case study site is considered appropriate.

In Peru, rurality is defined very specifically by the Instituto Nacional de Estadistica e Informacion (INEI) [National Institute of Statistics and Information] (2015), whereby 'urban area' or 'urban population centre' is defined as the district capital, or an area that has a population of a minimum of 100 people who live adjacently grouped. INEI explains that this definition includes large capitals *and* villages with rural characteristics with a very small population, resulting in a heterogeneous understanding of urbanity. In contrast, a community is considered 'rural' if it is not the district capital and there are no more than 100 residents living adjacently grouped. This definition is useful for localised analysis to differentiate between people living within and outside a village centre, but does not provide for national (or international) analysis to differentiate between people living in urban cities and remote communities. According to this definition, the community of Lobitos where I conducted this research is not rural; yet, it only has a population of 1,506 (INEI 2007) and has limited access to basic health and education infrastructure and other services. In this regard, I did not follow the national definition of rural when selecting Lobitos as a rural case study, but rather acknowledged the community's small population, geographic remoteness and main economic industry (artisanal fishing) to determine that this was a rural community.

Practicality

My second criterion for selecting the case study sites was based on practicality. The co-operative inquiry process I undertook required at least two months in each site, and therefore I preferenced communities where I had experience, relationships and networks that would support me to recruit potential co-inquirers. Padgett (2008, p. 20) recognises two advantages of studying the familiar: the easier development of rapport and a head start in

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knowledge about the topic and site. One disadvantage, of course, is the risk of being too close; however, this was considered and addressed through the participatory co-operative inquiry process. My levels of familiarity varied for each site. I was raised in Margaret River and have strong community networks and trust that significantly assisted me to initiate the co-operative inquiry. In this site, I had a position of 'insider researcher' (Asselin 2003; Dwyer & Buckle 2009; Kanuha 2000).

Comparatively, prior to initiating the co-operative inquiry in Liquica (Timor-Leste), I had no experience or networks in Timor-Leste. However, a two-month fieldwork deployment with my (then) employer to Dili, the capital city, provided me the opportunity to quickly connect with civil society in Timor-Leste, which enabled me to swiftly build relationships and initiate a co-operative inquiry in Liquica, one-hour from the capital. In this site, I was an 'outsider researcher'. Finally, between 2009 and 2010, I worked as the Program Manager with the community-based organisation WAVES for Development in Lobitos, Peru, and I have strong relationships with the local community. These existing relationships gave me a unique opportunity to return to Lobitos and work collaboratively with community members to initiate a co-operative inquiry. In Lobitos, I was both an insider *and* outsider researcher, with familiarity and pre-existing relationships with the site but with cultural, linguistic and nationality characteristics that made me an 'other' in the social milieu. My case study sample was therefore convenient. Due to my already established relationships with the communities, these case sites were easy to find, known to me and easy to recruit for participants (Dudley 2011).

International

The first research question considers 'international' community work and therefore I conducted research in sites in three different countries. In addition to the practicality aspect discussed above, my third criterion for selecting these case study sites was based on language. Reflecting the complexity of cross-cultural research, I wished to include multiple languages in my study, in particular to challenge the dominance of English-language knowledge generation. I speak both English and Spanish fluently, which significantly assisted me to initiate co-operative inquiries in Margaret River and Lobitos without an interpreter. Additionally, prior to visiting Liquica, I engaged in intensive language study of Tetun (the Timorese national language) and continued classes when in Dili. This gave me basic language skills that were enhanced through working with an interpreter and living with a local family. The linguistic and cultural diversity of the study enabled rich insight into multiple worldviews

and also gave voice to grassroots community workers in sites that are not often engaged in the generation of community work theory.

Additionally, my fourth criterion was that I wished to conduct research in developed and developing country contexts, in order to provide more holistic (and non-Westernised) insight into the research topic and produce localised knowledges to deliberately challenge the hegemonic dominance of Western knowledge. Importantly, my sample did not aim for generalizability regarding the similarities and differences between wealthy and poorer nations, but rather to gain diverse insight into the research topic. Accordingly, the countries of the three case study sites provide diversity in development status. The UNDP *Human Development Report* (2014) shows that Timor-Leste is considered to have 'medium human development', ranked 128 of 187 countries, with a Human Development Index (HDI) value of 0.620 and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of US$9,764. In contrast, Australia is considered to have 'very high development', ranked second of 187 countries, with an HDI value of 0.933 and GNI per capita of US$41,524. Comparatively, Peru is considered to have 'high human development', ranked 82 of 187 countries, with an HDI value of 0.737 and GNI per capita of US$11,280. The developmental diversity in the sample provides for more holistic insight into the research topic, particularly in contexts that are often marginalised from Western-dominated social work theory.

Sample of co-operative inquiry co-inquirers

The co-operative inquiry co-inquirers were also recruited through purposive sampling. I worked with staff members of local organisations in Liquica, Margaret River and Lobitos to promote the research to relevant staff and community members, identify potential participants and invite them to participate. I had minimal criteria to select co-inquirers:

- Minimum age of 18 years.

- Women and men (targeting at least 50% representation of women).

- Involved in paid employment in community work, unpaid volunteering or activism in community work, or a community member.

- Commitment to working collaboratively over six weeks to explore and develop a theory of practice of love in community work.

Importantly, my research did not follow strict 'case study' approach with replication logic, as advocated by Yin (2009). The cases did not enable literal replication, or theoretical

replication, as my study was localised and did not seek generalizability. Rather, the cases provide cross-cultural insight into the research question, generating a theoretical foundation for future, replicable research.

5.3.3   Data instruments

The reflection and action cycles of the co-operative inquiries involve co-inquirers collaboratively collecting and analysing data regarding the research topic. The scope of data in this study includes collaborative notes and recorded outcomes of each co-operative inquiry process, individual journal recordings from the action cycles, and my journal notes regarding methodological reflections and personal transformations from participating in the research process. As discussed, our co-operative inquiries engaged multiple innovative and expressive data instruments to gather this data, integrating four types of knowledge (propositional, practical, presentation and experiential (Heron 1996)). Importantly, prior to initiating the research, I did not prescribe the data instruments that we used in the organic co-operative inquiry process. Rather, each co-operative inquiry group collaboratively and democratically selected the data instruments that were used within our reflection and action cycles. In particular, in each action cycle, co-inquirers recorded data in their journals, primarily through drawing and writing, while in the reflection cycles we collectively analysed and interpreted the shared data using multiple creative approaches such as dialogue, role-play, drawing and writing.

In keeping with the *change-oriented research* paradigm, the data instruments used in this research are eclectic and creative and were not prescriptive, as advocated by action research theorists such as Heron (1996) and Reason (1988b). Across the three sites, data instruments include journaling, field notes, radical memory, discussion, storytelling, drawing, performance, gift-giving, sculpture and other creative instruments that are increasingly acknowledged in qualitative research theory (Abma 1998; Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010; Clandinin 2007; Clandinin & Connolly 2000; Cole & Knowles 2008; Denzin 2003; Finley 2008; Leavy 2008; Lewis 2011; Markula 2006; Neile 2009; Pauwels 2011; Weber 2008). My fourth journal article in this thesis, 'A co-operative inquiry about love using narrative, performative and visual methods', submitted to *Qualitative Research,* provides insight into the variety and experience of creative data instruments used in this research, with theoretical positioning and reflection. This article is located in Chapter 7.

For my own records, I also recorded and transcribed each reflection meeting. Additionally, I prepared a short summary of each reflection meeting with the key decisions, findings and

collaboratively developed statements about the co-operative inquiry topic, which I gave to co-inquirers each week (in the relevant language). This enabled an ongoing record of our work. I also wrote personal reflective notes throughout each co-operative inquiry, which assisted me to process my experience, concerns and learnings. A summary of these notes was shared with my three supervisors during each co-operative inquiry process for feedback.

5.3.4 Data Analysis

In this *change-oriented research* study, I engage Yin's (2009) case study analysis and the action research approach to analysis, which has a cyclical, organic and collaborative process. Both approaches honour the localised context, allowing for theory to emerge from the data and position me in a not-knowing stance that empowers co-inquirers as experts and producers of knowledge. I also apply coding to analyse co-inquirers' methodological experiences.

Case study data analysis

I use a case description approach to analyse and organise the case study data. My research does not compare and contrast the material of the three sites of Liquica, Margaret River and Lobitos, as they are divergent, localised and unique sites. I therefore use cross-case synthesis (Yin 2009), which considers each case as an individual study. My final proposed theoretical overview of *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* combines the key concepts that emerged from each of the three sites.

Change-oriented research approach to data analysis

The co-operative inquiry method does not generate findings that will be analysed and theorised by the initiating researcher, but rather involves collaborative analysis and theory development throughout the research process (Heron 1996). This is a key tenet of data analysis in action research (Reason & Bradbury 2008; Stringer 2007). In this regard, the co-operative inquiry data are consistently and collaboratively gathered, analysed, re-gathered and re-analysed within the inquiry process. In each site, I worked with co-inquirers to reflect upon our data and personal experiences during the action phases, while also generating and reflecting upon the data of our reflection phases. Our data analysis was guided by our launching statement and our collaborative goals. Therefore, my approach to case study data analysis was indeed to have no predetermined approach. Instead, co-operative inquiry

group members collectively and organically developed and applied processes for analysing the data *through* the co-operative inquiry journey. We collaboratively identified similarities, differences, trends and themes across our data in each reflection meeting, and interpreted the information to make meaning and inform our following action cycle. Across the sites, we collectively analysed our individual and collaboratively generated data in innovative and creative ways, through tools such as individual and collective drawing, performance and writing. This iterative process reflects the organic nature of living systems research (Wadsworth 2010).

Each group terminated when we believed we had answered the research question, culminating in a final reflection meeting that produced a concluding analysis of our data and our methodological approach. Reflecting the collaborative principles of the co-operative inquiry method (and *change-oriented research* more generally), I do not engage in further analysis of our data. Importantly, all my reporting of this study explicitly reflects my personal perspective of our collaborative research processes, outcomes, collective knowledges and learnings.

Coding

An important area of data analysis in co-operative inquiry is considering the experience of the research method itself (Heron 1996). Each co-operative inquiry involved active and ongoing reflection on the co-operative inquiry method and process. In order to include this data in the case study reporting for each site, I coded relevant data from my observation notes and reflection meeting transcripts from each co-operative inquiry to analyse the experiences of my colleagues and I when participating in the method. My approach to coding was informed by Corbin and Strauss's (2008) *grounded theory approach,* which flexibly attempts to derive theories from the analysis of patterns, themes and categories in the data (Babbie 2013) rather than applying structured procedures. The methodological process findings are presented within the themes of process and learning and transformation.

5.3.5   Research ethics

Research ethics are a vital consideration in my study, reflecting the ethical imperative of social work, feminism and *change-oriented research*. As a feminist researcher working in the *change-oriented research* paradigm, participating in the co-operative inquiry method required significant ethical reflection. I developed a number of feminist ethics strategies to

support me to engage my political and social values in initiating and participating in the co-operative inquiry. The following publication provides insight into the co-operative inquiry method, and the research ethics framework and strategies I applied to support an empowering and transformative research process.

5.3.6   Journal article 2: Feminist ethics in a co-operative inquiry

Article title: Feminist ethics and co-operative inquiry: Reflections of theory and practice.

Journal: *Action Research*

Publisher: Sage

Status: Submitted, under review

Abstract

Co-operative inquiry is a research method within the action research paradigm. In this method, a group of co-inquirers engage in systematic cycles of reflection and action to collaboratively inquire into a research topic. It is a democratic, ever-evolving and change-oriented research process that embraces holistic knowledge, critical subjectivity and knowledge generation through action. In particular, co-operative inquiry encourages an organic and democratic approach to research ethics. However, key texts regarding this method do not adequately discuss ethics, particularly feminist ethics, within the process. This article explores the feminist implementation of the co-operative inquiry in a study that considered 'the love ethic in international rural community work' in rural Australia, Timor-Leste and Peru. The article discusses feminist ethics and analyses and reflects upon the complex strategies that were used by the groups to conduct the co-operative inquiries in a feminist ethical way. The process shows that the organic, flexible nature of co-operative inquiry, when conducted through a feminist ethical lens, can enable democratic and empowering research processes that are both transformative and informative. Importantly, applying this epistemological worldview challenges the neoliberal trends in academia that favour expertise, hierarchy, authorship and individualism.

Introduction

As a grassroots feminist activist committed to democratised knowledge generation, I am concerned about the pervasive influence of neoliberalism on society. In particular, social researchers are increasingly pressured to betray our radical preferences in favour of

neoliberal constructs such as funding competitiveness, managerialism and individualism. Inherent in this neoliberal era of academia is a structural emphasis on research output rather than ethical research process, whereby inclusive, relational interaction between researchers and research participants are institutionally deprioritised for relationships of power and exclusivity that 'efficiently' produce market-friendly outcomes. The corporatisation of knowledge through subscription-only journals, elite, expensive conferences and institutional preferences for public-private partnerships means that collaborative feminist research processes that support communities to generate their own experientially based knowledge for social change are a form of academic activism.

In this inequitable structural context, thoughtful and radical approaches to research ethics are vital. Feminist social researchers have developed numerous strategies to transform institutionalised research norms that entrench power imbalances. As a doctoral candidate at the Gender, Leadership and Social Sustainability Research Unit at Monash University, I aim to stand in solidarity with feminist scholars by embodying a feminist ethical lens to challenge the aforementioned neoliberal trends that propagate inequality in research. My doctoral research topic, 'the love ethic in international rural community work', gave me an opportunity to develop and implement a democratised research process. The research involves co-operative inquiry with a feminist ethical lens. In 2013 and 2014, I initiated three co-operative inquiries to work collectively with grassroots activists to generate a love-based theory of community work practice. I formed groups with rural community workers, volunteers and community members in Margaret River (Australia), Liquica (Timor-Leste) and Lobitos (Peru). Each inquiry involved up to ten people (females and males) for cycles of reflection and action over six weeks. I was involved as both an initiating researcher (recruiting co-inquirers and beginning the process) and as a co-inquirer participating alongside my peers.

In this article, I discuss my experience of initiating and participating in three co-operative inquiries that integrated a feminist ethical lens. I begin with an overview of the co-operative inquiry and a critical discussion of feminist ethics and my epistemological stance as a feminist co-operative researcher. I then analyse the integration of feminist ethics in the co-operative inquiries, interweaving my reflective and reflexive accounts with conceptual theories. I conclude with a personal reflection of the process. Honouring the co-operative inquiry tradition, I write this article from my personal perspective and I do not speak on behalf of my co-inquirers.

Co-operative inquiry

Co-operative inquiry is a research method within the participatory knowledge paradigm and is situated in the action research methodological framework. Action research aims to generate sustainable change by supporting co-inquirers to understand social problems, develop solutions and take action (Greenwood & Levin, 2007; Stringer 2007). Heron (1996) emphasises the primacy of the practical in action research and the importance of 'concerted' action with 'people acting together and interacting through intersubjective consensus' (p. 166). Action research seeks to replace the 'extractive' model of social research with one that directly benefits the community (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007). Theories of action research are influenced by Lewin's (1947) social psychology research with cycles of testing and improvement in workplaces, Dewey's (1997) theory of learning by doing and Freire's (1989) emancipatory theory of conscientisation (Freire particularly influenced the evolution of Participatory Action Research). Action research is also rooted in the radical tradition of Marxism and the 1960s liberation movement (Padgett, 2008).

Co-operative inquiry is a prominent and unique method within action research. Heron (1996, p.1) explains that co-operative inquiry involves

> '…two or more people researching a topic through their own experience of it, using a series of cycles in which they move between this experience and reflecting together on it. Each person is a co-subject in the experience phases and co-researcher in the reflection phases'.

He stresses that co-operative inquiry is distinct from Lewin's (1947) conceptualisation of action research, in that people inquire together in reciprocal relations using the 'full range of their sensibilities' (p.1). It is a democratic, ever-evolving and change-oriented research process that embraces holistic knowledge, critical subjectivity and knowledge generation through action (Reason 1988a).

I used the co-operative inquiry method in my doctoral research because of its organic, participatory and non-extractive characteristics. In particular, I felt that the systematic process of reflection and action in a democratic group structure could embrace feminist ethics and values, despite poor discussion of feminism in foundational co-operative inquiry texts (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1988a, 1988b). Indeed, co-operative inquiry has an emergent process, as co-inquirers negotiate and re-learn the inquiry process (Reason, 1988b). The systematic cycles of reflection and action enable co-inquirers to engage, explore and apply our ethics while generating collective knowledge. In particular, the ethical positions of co-inquirers are constantly renegotiated through dialogue.

Heron (1996) explains that co-operative inquiry has multiple outputs. Firstly, it supports personal and collective transformation through engagement with the focus and process of inquiry. Secondly, co-operative inquiry can result in diverse presentations of information, such as dance, drawing, drama and other expressive modes. Thirdly, it produces collaborative reports which 1) are informative about the inquiry domain in describing and explaining what has been explored, 2) provide commentary on other outcomes and 3) describe the inquiry method. Fourthly, co-operative inquiry assists co-inquirers to develop practical skills. These multiple outcomes are creative, emancipatory and action-oriented, and align well with my personal epistemology and feminist ethics.

Feminist ethics and co-operative inquiry

Prior to conducting my research, I interrogated the action research and co-operative inquiry literature and was concerned about the notable lack of discussion of ethics, particularly feminist ethics, and a lack of practicable strategies for ethical research processes. Discussions of action research and co-operative inquiry were often gender blind, and feminism was poorly recognised as a foundation of the participatory knowledge paradigm. When preparing the research methodology, I combined theories of feminism, participatory action research and cultural responsiveness and developed a research approach I have termed *change-oriented research* (Godden, under review). This theoretical preparation was tantamount to conducting a research project that integrated my values and ethics as a feminist activist with 15 years of community work experience. Furthermore, Melissa Orlie's (1997) text, *Living Ethically, Acting Politically* gave me confidence to develop and initiate a collectivist research methodology with feminist ethics.

Ethics is concerned with the ends and the means of human action (Goulet, 1997) and deontological ethics considers the nature of right action (Banks & Gallagher 2009). However, 'right action' is difficult to identify, as Orlie (1997) explains:

> 'Good and harm are done simultaneously and in ways that perpetuate power relations that precede new activities. Such situations, manifest in the places we live, the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the other goods we use, and the activities we propose, pose, I believe, the principal ethical and political challenge of our late modern time' (p.3).

Orlie argues that 'living ethically' involves acknowledging trespasses, forgiving promises, thinking, not complying with social norms and acting politically, and these actions enable us to differentiate 'right' and 'wrong' action. Drawing from Arendt, Orlie states that an

important process of right action is 'political problematisation' - accepting at least partial responsibility for what we have been made to be, in order to 'live responsibly and freely' and to 'act extraordinarily and to reveal who we are' (p.169). She says, '[i]f we do not exercise power deliberately, we reinforce and expand the socially produced necessities that not only harm others but also constrict the power of our own action' (p.169). Importantly, Orlie asserts that ethical living involves not complying with social norms; that is, thinking politically and not blindly adhering to social rules. This work challenged me to critique the social construction of hierarchy and reconstruct a research methodology that embodies egalitarian power structures and processes.

My feminist ethical stance in this research is also influenced by the love ethic - a radical framework of feminist ethics developed by bell hooks (2000). 'Right action', according to hooks, is loving action. hooks explains that love is a verb, not a noun, an action rather than a feeling and a choice. Love involves care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust, as well as honest and open communication. The 'love ethic' presupposes that 'everyone has the right to be free, to live fully and well' (p.87). It is an alternative to structures of oppression, such as patriarchy, racism and capitalism, and involves actions of honesty and trust, giving, compassion, forgiveness and losing our fear of death. The love ethic radicalised my positionality to embrace the emancipatory potential of research and prioritise transformation in the research process and outcomes. This aligned with Freire's dialogical process of consciousness-raising.

The feminist ethics of this research are therefore grounded in Orlie's concept of 'right action' and hooks' love ethic. My position as a feminist ethical researcher is also informed by feminist research principles, in particular Reinharz's (1992 p.240) ten concepts of feminist research. Reinharz explains that feminist research recognises that feminism is a perspective, not a research method; it uses a multiplicity of research methods; it involves an ongoing criticism of non-feminist scholarship; it is guided by feminist theory; it may be transdisciplinary; it aims to create social change; it strives to represent human diversity; it frequently includes the researcher as a person; it frequently attempts to develop special relations with the people studied (in interactive research); and it frequently defines a special relation with the reader.

Reflecting feminist values, I also must understand my privilege, positionality and power in the research process and society more generally, and the responsibility of the self as researcher (Letherby 2003). Patton (2002) suggests that qualitative researchers consider our participateness, revealedness, role intensiveness and extensiveness, and variation of the

researcher's role depending on whether the study's focus is specific or diffused. Action research literature, however, provides an alternative explanation of the researcher's role. Greenwood and Levin (2007) state,

> 'To be an action researcher is to believe that other, better situations are possible than those currently existing. Action researchers aim to reopen the possibilities for change, enhance a sense of responsibility for the direction of the future, and emphasize that human agency, not impartial control systems, is the centrepiece of social change. One consequence of this perspective is that action researchers do not 'apply' techniques to a situation. Rather, we bring knowledge and skills to a group of people who collaboratively open up the possibilities for self-managed social change' (p.119).

Established knowledge suggests that I am not an expert, but a resource person and facilitator who acts as a 'catalyst' to assist stakeholders in defining problems and working toward effective solutions (Stringer, 2007). I should therefore engage a grassroots/bottom-up approach, focussing on process rather than outcomes, human development and supporting people to develop their own analysis of their issues and ultimately create their own change.

Importantly, gender analysis is not adequately integrated into major works regarding the co-operative inquiry method, but feminist ethics are necessary for co-operative research to encourage transformation of patriarchal gender relations towards equality. An important element of feminist ethics is gender mainstreaming, which the United Nations Economic and Social Council defines as,

> '… the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality' (United Nations, 1997 p.28).

Gender mainstreaming seeks to advance gender equality by revising all mainstream policies, institutionalizing gender concerns, highlighting sex and gender in all aspects of an organisation's work and empowering women through their inclusion in decision-making processes (Moser & Moser, 2005; Walby, 2005; Woodford-Berger, 2004). Gender

mainstreaming seeks to institutionalise equality by 'embedding gender-sensitive practices and norms in the structures, processes and environment of public policy' (Daly, 2005 p.435). Various strategies promote outcomes for gender equality, including increased women's participation and access to resources, gender equity goals, flexible programme design, ownership of gender equality, participatory approaches and dialogue and approaching gender mainstreaming as a policy approach rather than a concept (Daly, 2005; Mikkelsen et al. 2002, cited in Moser & Moser, 2005 p.18). In my research, gender mainstreaming is a feminist tool that extends the egalitarian intention of the co-operative inquiry to a political space of transformative gender relations for equality.

My role as initiating researcher is one of considerable responsibility and power. I felt that it was imperative to apply my feminist ethic of love, by embodying conscious action based on other-centred decision-making for just transformation and interconnected wellbeing. I developed practicable strategies to integrate feminist ethics in my role and research methodology, which I share and reflect upon in the remainder of this article.

Conducting feminist co-operative inquiry: an ethical process

Ethics are not merely a consideration or aspect of my study; rather, my research approach involves ongoing and deliberate ethical reflexivity. Being an ethical practitioner is fundamental to development co-operation and research (Mikkelsen, 2005) and the social work profession to which I belong. It is well documented that key ethics considerations in social research include voluntary participation, informed consent, honesty, anonymity and confidentiality, incentives for participants, no harm to participants and ethical reporting (Babbie, 2013; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Stoecker, 2005). Padgett (2008) also emphasises social responsibility: an ethical stance as being sensitive to diversity and taking the larger structural context into consideration, including stigma and social exclusion. In order to receive ethics approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics committee, I demonstrated that my research methodology would meet these required standards. Reflecting the participatory research paradigm, I embraced numerous radical feminist ethical strategies as integral to our critical and transformative research approach.

My feminist research ethics are influenced by the Australian and International Social Work Codes of Ethics (Australian Association of Social Workers, 2010; International Federation of Social Workers, 2012). I also value Manzo and Brightbill's (2007) suggestions for participatory ethics: representation (facilitating self-representation develops notions of justice), accountability (researchers have multiple responsibilities and are accountable to

participants, partners and communities – stakeholders who decide whether research is ethically sound), social responsiveness (researchers are responsive to the needs and perspectives of participants and the research process is fluid and responsive), agency (ethical behaviours of the researcher and participants) and reflexivity (participants should engage in ethical review of their projects). During the cyclical process of the co-operative inquiry, my co-inquirers and I developed a number of feminist ethical strategies regarding participation, non-harmfulness and 'doing good', language and translation, reflexivity and rapport. The following table summarises the key feminist ethics strategies and their possible transformative outcomes:

Table 5.2: Feminist ethics strategies and transformative outcomes

Theme	Feminist ethics strategies	Transformative outcomes
Participation	• Purposive and diverse sample • Informed consent through explanatory statement and induction meeting • Participatory development of values and ethics guidelines • Democratic collaboration in research design, data collection, analysis and interpretation • Transparency and honesty • Flexibility to women's schedules	• Democratic, inclusive and safe gender relations • Empowerment of women
Non-harmfulness and doing good	• Collaboratively developed boundaries to manage the project • Anonymity and confidentiality • Collaborative learning and capacity strengthening • Equity approach to payment for co-inquirers • Social justice orientation • Ethic of care • 'Giving back'	• Strengthened capacity and confidence • Redress of power imbalances
Language and translation	• Use of translators and linguistic member checking • Using localised words when there is no literal translation • Honouring the original language of the data • Reporting in non-sexist language	• Decolonisation of the written word

Reflexivity	• Initiating researcher participates as a co-inquirer	• Collective responsibility
	• Friendship as method	• Personal growth
	• Continuous individual and collective reflexivity	• Transformed power relations
	• Endogenous and referential reflexivity	
	• Cultural reflexivity to minimise 'othering'	
Rapport	• Social work skills such as active listening, engagement and attending	• Reciprocal respect
	• Participatory partnerships with co-inquirers that are reciprocal and respectful	• Collaborative knowledge construction
	• Humility	
	• Philosophy of 'co'	

Participation

Co-operative inquiry requires a participative worldview (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1994), which sees reality as 'subjective-objective, an intermarriage between the creative, construing of the human mind and what is cosmically given' (Heron, 1996 p.162). A co-operative inquiry must have open negotiation of the involvement of participants, full participation in creative thinking and authentically collaborative relationships (Reason, 1988b). The co-operative inquiry involves relationships of care and love:

> '… in co-operative inquiry we work with our co-researchers, establishing relationships of authentic collaboration with dialogue; ideally care for each other, and approach each other with mutual love and concern. While not ignoring the necessity for direction and the role of expertise, we eschew unnecessary hierarchy and compulsive control' (Reason, 1988a p.11).

Heron (1996 pp.20-21) identifies two kinds of participation in the co-operative inquiry. *Epistemic participation* considers the relation between the knower and the known and is incorporated because propositions of human experiences based on research have questionable validity if they are not grounded in the researcher's experience. Heron argues that research is most rigorous when we participate as co-subjects, reflecting the human condition of shared and dialogic embodiment. *Political participation* considers the relation between people in the inquiry and the decisions that affect them. Heron explains that people have the right to participate in research decision-making, and political participation supports participants to identify and express their preferences and values in the research design, empowering them as fully human persons and avoiding their being disempowered, oppressed and misrepresented by the researcher's values. In the co-operative inquiry, researchers are subjects in our own research, because

> '[i]f researchers are not subjects of their own research, they generate conclusions that are not properly grounded either in their own or in their subjects' personal experience, as in traditional quantitative research; or they try to ground them exclusively in their subjects' embodied experience, as in traditional qualitative research' (Heron, 1996 p.21).

Thus, in co-operative inquiry, our roles are plural (Reason, 1988b) and constantly negotiated. The initiating researcher's active facilitation decreases throughout the process and roles are delegated, such as group facilitators, organisers for written reflections, note takers, personal

recorders and distress managers (Heron, 1996). Importantly, there is no absolute parity of influence between initiating researchers and co-inquirers, and this must be acknowledged and discussed (Heron, 1996).

We applied various feminist ethical strategies to enhance the participatory nature of the research. Adhering to the principle of voluntary participation, co-inquirers were not coerced to participate. Local organisations invited interested people to contact me to participate, reducing the possibility of coercion. Reflecting my feminist ethical commitment to intersectionality, I promoted diverse participation in each group, seeking safe and culturally responsive involvement of people from marginalised and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I engaged with several local organisations to invite potential co-inquirers, including women's organisations. Women comprised a majority of co-inquirers, reflecting the gender composition of community workers. I also extended the ethical practice of informed consent. All potential co-inquirers received an explanatory statement and consent form when they indicated interest in participating. I then held an information session ('induction meeting') one week prior to the first reflection meeting, whereby I explained the research topic and co-operative inquiry process, outcomes and outputs. Attendees asked questions of the approach and process and decided whether they wished to participate.

The research also involves participatory ethics – a discursive, dialogical approach to research ethics. In the first reflection meeting of a co-operative inquiry, co-inquirers designed the inquiry structure, topic and first action plan. Although not promoted in the co-operative inquiry literature, I also integrated participatory ethics into the first reflection meeting. We collaboratively developed a feminist framework of ethics and values, such as respect, trust, listening, confidentiality, supporting equal participation and processes for conflict resolution and decision-making. The list of values and ethics was displayed at each meeting. When required, we could refer to the information and adapt our behaviour to align with our mutually agreed group culture.

Emphasising the moral validity of the democratic decision-making process (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006), the research emphasises democratic collaboration between co-inquirers and me, as peers rather than subjects. This supports a transparent, fair and inclusive research process. We embraced egalitarian and democratic decision-making in each co-operative inquiry, emphasising women's equal opportunity to speak and participate. Conducted within the physical space of a circle and guided by our collective ethics and values, deliberative democracy and genuine participation assisted the research to be respectful, beneficial, just,

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representative, accountable, socially responsive, action-oriented and reflexive. Co-inquirers collaboratively developed the research design, including timeframes, and we flexibly accommodated women's needs, schedules and responsibilities. I also offered to provide childcare. As the initiating researcher in our democratic space, I aimed to be honest, open and transparent. At the conclusion of each inquiry, we discussed the use and reporting of research results, acknowledging that the results were collectively owned (Stoecker, 2005), and my peers gave me permission to report on our results. These ethics strategies supported a deeply participatory and democratic research process.

Non-harmfulness and 'doing good'

The collective development of participatory research ethics provides an excellent foundation for avoiding harm to my co-inquirers. Each group developed and integrated strategies such as developing safe and comfortable discussion spaces. As the initiating researcher, I was particularly aware of the commitment required of co-inquirers and we developed boundaries to ensure that participation was not overly time-consuming or tiring. Each group held weekly reflection meetings that were two-hours long, and we planned actions between the meetings that were not demanding. Another important consideration regarding avoiding harm is anonymity and confidentiality. Each group discussed this at length and collaboratively agreed to keep our participation and discussions confidential. We also agreed to only provide data that we felt comfortable sharing, and co-inquirers would be de-identified in all reporting.

Building from ethical strategies to avoid harm, the research particularly emphasises incentives and goodwill for co-inquirers. Capacity strengthening is a significant focus of action research (Cameron, 2007; Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008) and community development in general (Kenny, 2011), while skill sharing between co-inquirers is integral to the co-operative inquiry (Reason, 1988b). We engaged in collaborative learning and capacity strengthening activities throughout the co-operative inquiry process, particularly through reflexive and experiential learning about the co-operative inquiry methodology, participatory research and community work practice. I specifically supported female co-inquirers to strengthen their skills and confidence as leaders, encouraging them to co-lead sessions and initiate activities. As the methodology intends, the cycles of reflection and action, and our safe discussion spaces, also supported co-inquirers to strengthen and transform our community work theory and practice.

A complex issue regarding beneficence is payment of co-inquirers. Mikkelsen (2005) asserts that payment has always been considered bad practice in social research as it may bias participants. However, she argues, 'people in the South frequently complain that their role has

been reduced to delivering "raw material" in research…while Western researchers go back and earn their credentials on the basis of that material' (p.344). Payment, therefore, is one strategy to equalise the unfair division of labour, with the more preferred option being strengthening the research capacity of people in the Global South.

A challenge with my research was developing a strategy regarding payment that encompassed feminist ethics of reciprocity and equality, while also challenging the neoliberal commoditisation of research participation. After careful deliberation, I applied an equity approach to paying co-inquirers, informed by cultural and contextual considerations. I provided a stipend of US$70 to each of my nine co-inquirers in Liquica, Timor-Leste. This payment acknowledged the pervasive poverty in Timor-Leste and the very low wages of community workers (several co-inquirers were unwaged volunteers and community members). Although the research was intended to directly benefit co-inquirers, the stipend acknowledged the time and effort required to participate, which could otherwise be used for earning an income in the (mainly) informal local economy. The stipend was a gesture that honoured co-inquirers' goodwill, but did not assume that people would otherwise not participate. Comparatively, in Lobitos, Peru, I did not provide a stipend to my four co-inquirers, due to the historical reciprocal nature of our relationships when I previously lived in this community. I instead provided a restaurant meal for the group at the conclusion of our research, reflecting the local cultural practice of gift exchange. Finally, my co-inquirers in Margaret River, Australia were not offered a monetary or gift incentive, due to the comparative affluence of the community and co-inquirers. These arrangements were discussed and agreed upon with co-inquirers and no notable negative repercussions were identified, but further feminist analysis of the ethical imperative of research payment would be useful in future participatory scholarship.

The co-operative inquiry has a strong orientation to action and social change, reflecting the ethical imperative of 'doing good'. I engaged a number of discursive strategies for pursuing social justice, including using open definitions, being sensitive to different interpretations and identifying and respecting diversity and difference (Somekh, 2006). Co-inquirers and I emulated community work processes by reciprocally sharing skills, knowledge and information to support personal emancipation and enhance our activism. The 'learning-by-doing' process also supported co-inquirers to demystify and implement future *change-oriented research* (Cameron, 2007; Ozanne & Saatcioglu, 2008).

The focus on beneficence is deliberatively feminist. I integrated Manzo and Brightbill's (2007) suggestion to include the ethic of care, with an emphasis on empathy, relationships and

commitment to others rather than objective decisions. Our research went beyond the standard ethic of non-harmfulness to trying to do good, described as 'giving back' by Delva and colleagues (2010) in their research with Native American groups.

Language and translation

Another ethical consideration in this research is language and translation, as my research involved English, Spanish and Tetun languages. I speak English and Spanish fluently; therefore, I did not require a translator when conversing in Australia and Peru. In Timor-Leste, I engaged a translator and I also studied Tetun prior to conducting the research, enabling me to understand most discussion. Using translators and translated data has ethical concerns regarding possible filtering of information (Mikkelsen, 2005). This was particularly challenging in Timor-Leste, where translation occurred in the context of evolving standardisation and documentation of the Tetun language. Furthermore, when reporting translated data, Marshall and Rossman (2011) explain that we may practice interpretation, which lifts the burden of absolute accuracy. They assert that researchers should aim for a reasonable approximation of the participant's words and intent and explain where data have been translated. They also highlight the need to decentre the hegemony of the English-centred world through including localised words when a literal translation is not available and providing a list of these words for reference.

I applied several strategies to support ethical and transparent translation. Firstly, I practiced linguistic member checking with Peruvian and Timorese co-inquirers, clarifying words, phrases and meanings. Secondly, I contracted external translators to translate the collaborative research notes from Spanish and Tetun to English, to ensure that I did not bias the translation and for greater accuracy. Thirdly, in my English-language publications, I indicated where data were translated and I retained Spanish and Tetun words that could not be literally translated. Finally, the research findings and outcomes were reported in non-sexist language, with a focus on not dehumanising or marginalising women. Although these strategies may not overcome the complexity of multi-lingual research, they support the research to try to decolonise the written word.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a necessary feminist ethics strategy in my research. Somekh (2006) asserts that the quality of action research depends on the reflexive sensitivity of the researcher. Reflexivity is significantly discussed within critical social research and social work literature (see, for example, Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; T. May, 2011; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). At its basic,

reflexivity occurs when the practitioner is continuously self-aware, making explicit the power relations and exercise of power in the research process (Reid & Frisby, 2008) and reflecting upon how our personal agendas and influences impact the research and construction of knowledge (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Reflexivity also demands 'awareness of, and appropriate responses to, relationships between researcher and researched' (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002 p.157).

Indeed, I was an 'insider researcher' in Margaret River as I conducted research with my own community (Kanuha, 2000; see Asselin (2003) and Dwyer & Buckle (2009) for further analysis of 'insider researcher'). Furthermore, across the three groups, I had existing relationships with seven co-inquirers, as colleagues, friends or neighbours. 'Dual relationships' are an unavoidable reality of rural community work, but they may create challenges for trustworthiness and bias in research. However, the previously established relationships also assisted us to establish our group norms, commit to the co-operative inquiry process and develop cohesion. Tillman-Healy's (2003) concept of 'friendship as method' was particularly useful in reflexively negotiating this aspect of the research.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) suggest that researchers should consider how much, when and how regarding reflexivity. In my research, I consider reflexivity as collective and continuous, an 'active, ongoing process that saturates every stage of the research' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004 p.274). I am also influenced by T. May's (2011) important differentiation between endogenous reflexivity (the researcher's actions and understandings contribute to the modes in which research practices are constituted) and referential reflexivity (understanding degrees of epistemological permeability). Endogenous reflexivity involves reflexivity *within* actions, while referential reflexivity is reflexivity *upon* actions. In this regard, the practice of reflexivity involved being aware of potential influences on the research and being able to step back and critically look at my role in the research process and research ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). The co-operative inquiries also included reflexive discussions of gender.

Reflecting the feminist commitment to intersectionality, I also applied Delva and colleagues' (2010 p.141) strategies for cultural reflexivity. I considered cultural elements as fluid and dynamic, I recognised complex and intersecting identities and their relationship to behaviours, values, beliefs and attitudes, and avoided sweeping statements and gross generalisations. I tried to show respect by validating co-inquirers' experiences through active listening and respectful communication, and studied and learned the customs and languages of co-inquirers. Importantly, ethical reflexivity involved being self-aware of power differences and of my

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images of 'others'. This included recognising the distinction between central and peripheral cultural norms (Mikkelsen, 2005) and critically embracing a decolonising approach (Denzin, 2008). By participating as a co-inquirer, I had some insight into the research experience from the participant perspective, minimising my potential 'other-ness'. These strategies supported me to practice active, continuous and critical reflexivity in my research.

Rapport

Research with people requires sensitivity and rapport - the application of social work skills such as active listening, engagement and attending (Egan, 2004; Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-Gottfried & Larsen, 2006). Rapport refers to the sense of respect, trust, positive regard between researcher and participants, maintaining good relations with study sites and representatives, in addition to maintaining a sense of humour, a willingness to be wrong and an eagerness to learn (Padgett, 2008). In order to build rapport in my research, I focussed on participatory partnerships with co-inquirers that were reciprocal and respectful (Hesse-Biber, 2006). I aligned with the action research paradigm by trying to be humble in the presence of multifaceted expertise (M. May, 2011 p.144). As Kirby (2011) states, 'participatory partnerships that embrace *the philosophy of "co-"* encourage *all* partners toward growth' (p.378). The philosophy of 'co-' emphasises collaborative knowledge construction and sharing power *with* others. Using the framework of 'co-', I applied my micro social work skills within the empowering, participatory and partnership-focussed paradigm of action research.

Final reflections

I have shared various strategies I used to integrate feminist ethics in three co-operative inquiries. While they are not necessarily a panacea for ensuring ethical feminist participatory action research, these strategies strengthened standard research ethics practices and supported the research to be empowering and transform gender relations towards equality. However, some research limitations potentially influenced these learnings, including small sample size and pre-existing relationships and shared worldviews amongst co-inquirers.

Nevertheless, as initiating researcher and co-inquirer in each co-operative inquiry, applying these ethical strategies was personally liberating, challenging and transformative. Integrating feminist ethics was liberating because I felt we were able to co-construct knowledge that would directly inform and strengthen our community work practice, challenging the elitist position of academia. The organic nature of co-operative inquiry, coupled with deliberative participatory and democratic process, supported us to collectively develop research questions

and methods and analyse and interpret our data. This process somewhat 'freed' me from the oppressive positions of 'research subject' and 'expert researcher'. It was also emancipatory – as a community work practitioner, I was empowered to develop and apply my personal practice framework in dialogue with peers.

Conducting research within this ethical framework was also very challenging. I found that continued reflexivity of constructs such as power, culture and politics was both exhausting and invigorating. The dialogical space of the co-operative inquiries supported me to deeply explore my practice and beliefs in a nurturing, safe and trusting space. I experienced reciprocal support as we collectively reflected upon the topic and the methodology. As initiating researcher, it was humbling to reflexively restrain myself from embodying a leadership role and actively facilitate the group. In holding back, I felt that my co-inquirers could spontaneously be leaders.

Finally, participating in the co-operative inquiry with feminist ethics was personally transformative. As a grassroots activist with deep commitment to participatory community change processes, I was thrilled to experience a rigorous research process with collective design, data collection, analysis and interpretation. I witnessed 'citizen control', the highest rung of Arnstein's *Ladder of Participation* (1969), legitimising the argument for participatory, community-based research. I also developed reciprocal friendships with co-inquirers in Australia, Timor-Leste and Peru, deepening my global connectedness.

This study highlights that although key co-operative inquiry texts inadequately engage gender analysis, the systematic co-operative inquiry process is sufficiently flexible to integrate feminist ethics. In order to achieve an alternative global order of equality, sustainability and peace, we need democratic methodologies that embody a feminist ethic of 'right action' that is inclusive, political and loving. Radical feminist ethical strategies also support social researchers to challenge neoliberal and patriarchal structural inequalities we desperately hope to transform - within and beyond academia.

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5.3.7   Research trustworthiness and validity

Traditionally, the trustworthiness of qualitative research is considered within the concepts of credibility, transferability, auditability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba 1985). Padgett (2008) explains her interpretation of each concept:

> '*Credibility* is the degree of fit between respondents' views and the researcher's description of interpretations. *Transferability* refers to generalizability, not of the sample (as in quantitative terms) but of the study's findings... *Auditability* (or *dependability)* means that the study's procedures are documented and traceable – they need not lead to the same conclusions but should have a logic that makes sense to others. *Confirmability* is achieved by demonstrating that the study's findings were not imagined or concocted but, rather, firmly linked to the data' (p. 180).

Drawing from the literature, Padgett also locates other concepts for trustworthiness, such as truthfulness, consistency, reflexive accounting and social validity. Validity is regularly considered in the social and action research fields, and various authors provide useful insight into validity.

Establishing validity involves showing the authenticity of the evidence base, explaining the standards of judgement used and demonstrating the reasonableness of the claim, while establishing legitimacy involves getting others to accept the validity of the claims (usually related to power rather than rationality) (Whitehead & McNiff 2006). Conversely, in their discussions of social work research, Rubin and Babbie (2007) identify the following forms of validity (p. 103):

Table 5.3: Rubin and Babbie's forms of validity

Face validity	Whether a measure merely seems to be a reasonable way to measure some variable based only on subjective judgement.
Content validity	The degree to which a measure seems to cover the entire range of meanings within a concept.
Criterion validity	The degree to which an instrument relates to an external criterion that is believed to be another indicator or measure of the same variable that the instrument intends to measure.
Predictive validity	The degree to which an instrument accurately predicts a criterion that will occur in the future.
Concurrent validity	The degree to which an instrument corresponds to an external criterion that is known concurrently.

Source: Rubin & Babbie 2007

Action research theorists have a significant focus on validity, with a different approach than mainstream social research. Greenwood and Levin (2007) believe that 'valid social knowledge can only be derived from practical reasoning engaged in through action' (p. 6), accentuating the need for action researchers to defend the quality and validity of our research. They reject the imposition of research on other human beings claiming that social research is not a professional right, and they promote action research processes that enable non-professional researchers to 'enhance their own control over their lives and their social situations' (p. 117).

As such, validity criteria in action research are different than the mainstream social research criteria discussed earlier. Several theorists present different models and focuses, which were considered by the co-operative inquiry groups. For example, Ozanne and Saatcoiglu (2008) present the following criteria for validity in Participatory Action Research (PAR):

Table 5.4: Ozanne and Saatcoiglu's criteria for validity in PAR

Outcome validity	Successful exploration and resolution of social problem.
Democratic validity	Maximise alternative perspectives and interests in the research, such as including less visible stakeholders and minority groups.
Process validity	Process allows for ongoing learning and improvement. Capacity building, trust and rapport are necessary.
Catalytic validity	The extent to which research collaborators are motivated to understand and change social reality – this includes breaking down the researcher-researched dichotomy and participating in local, national and global social change beyond the research site.
Dialogic validity	Critical dialogue with peers about action research processes, findings and actions.

Source: Ozanne & Saatcoiglu 2008

In another process for action research evaluation, Stringer (2007, pp. 23-4) refers to Kelly and Gluck's (1979) evaluative criteria for effective research practice, focussing on people's social and emotional lives. Their criteria are outlined as follows:

Table 5.5: Kelly and Gluck's evaluative criteria for effective research practice

Pride	People's feelings of self-worth
Dignity	People's feelings of autonomy, independence and competence
Identity	People's affirmation of social identities (such as woman, worker, ethnicity)
Control	People's feelings of control over resources, decisions, actions, events and activities
Responsibility	People's ability to be accountable for their own actions
Unity	The solidarity of groups of which people are members
Place	Places where people feel at ease
Location	People's attachment to locales to which they have important historical, cultural, or social ties

Source: Kelly & Gluck 1979 cited in Stringer 2007

In mainstream qualitative research, threats to trustworthiness include reactivity, researcher biases and respondent biases (Padgett 2008). Padgett (2008) suggests six strategies for enhancing rigour in qualitative research: Prolonged engagement; Triangulation; Peer debriefing and support; Member checking; Negative case analysis; and leaving an audit trail. In direct contrast, Heron (1996, pp. 59-61) proposes eight procedures for validity within the action research method of co-operative inquiry, including:

- Research cycling: systematically conduct collective and individual cycles of reflection and action through the inquiry process.

- Divergence and congruence: group members conduct similar and different inquiry actions.

- Reflection and action: ensure sufficient time for reflection and action.

- Aspects of reflection: inquiry data are analysed within descriptive, evaluative, explanatory and applied reflection.

- Challenging uncritical subjectivity: engage a devil's advocate to critique group collusion.

- Chaos and order: be creatively divergent to support chaos and order in the inquiry process.

- Managing unaware projections: monitor and manage co-inquirer defensiveness.

- Sustaining authentic collaboration: support coherence between the perspectives of co-inquirers.

It is clear that both approaches to enhance rigour are very different. While Padgett centres on the validity of the data, Heron accentuates validity of the research process.

Whitehead and McNiff (2006) also provide an interesting contribution to validity of action research. They refer to Habermas' (1987) criteria for social validity as whether a person's account is comprehensible, truthful, sincere and appropriate. Utilising this as a validity criteria, Whitehead and McNiff (2006) suggest that practitioners have the responsibility to establish the personal, social and institutional validity of knowledge claims. They propose that an ethical approach to validity needs to critically reflect and interrogate Habermas' criteria and identify the standards of judgement they use to check whether they are doing so.

In my research, I engaged multiple validities, drawing from the aforementioned research and working collaboratively with co-inquirers to develop validity procedures that were effective, empowering and accessible. Saukko (2003) justifies the advantages of multiple validities. Firstly, multiple validities draw attention to how theories, methods and modes of writing that underpin our research open up different and always partial and political views on reality, and ask us to be more critically aware of what drives our research. Secondly, as there is more than one way to make sense of social phenomena, we need a more multidimensional, nuanced and tentative way of understanding one's object of study. In my research, I worked with co-inquirers to consider alterative validities, such as those presented by Saukko (2003). *Dialogic validity* evaluates research in terms of how truthfully it captures the lived world of people being studied – truthfulness, self-reflexivity and polyvocality. *Deconstructive validity* evaluates research in terms of how well it unravels social tropes and discourses that have come to pass

as 'truth' about the world, including postmodern excess (how well it highlights the multiple ways phenomena can be understood); genealogical historicity (how truths are products of historical and political agendas); and deconstructive critique (questions the binaries that organise our thoughts). *Contextual validity* evaluates the capability of the research to locate the phenomena within the wider social, political and global context.

Because of the focus on contextualised knowledge, action research is

> '… cautious in its claims, sensitive to variation and open to reinterpretation in new contexts. It is, therefore, not only more useful than traditional forms of knowledge as the basis for action but also more open than traditional forms of knowledge to accepting the challenge of its own socially constructed nature and provisionality' (Somekh 2006, p. 28).

In my research, the approach to validity was participatory, process-focused and multiple, and was collaboratively developed with co-inquirers, drawing from the extensive literature outlined above. This design, however, poses some potential issues regarding validity, which I now identify and respond to.

Validity in case studies

Yin (2009) explains that case study design needs to maximise quality through critical conditions (or tests) that include construct validity, external validity and reliability, as outlined in the following table:

Table 5.6: Yin's conditions for case study validity

Construct validity	Identifying correct operational measures for the concepts being studied.
External validity	Defining the domain to which the study's findings can be generalised.
Reliability	Demonstrating that the operations of the study can be repeated with the same results.

Source: Yin 2009

I reject Yin's empirical approach to knowledge generation, as I have a non-conventional case study design with cases that are not necessarily selected to be replicable or compared. The case studies are, rather, examples of different contexts that explore the research question. As an action research study, the research aims to be locally relevant and useful (Stoecker 2005) and does not aim for generalizability. Additionally, the research does not intend to be replicable. Nevertheless, my use of the case study method is valid through the following procedures. Regarding *construct validity*, each case study is descriptively analysed according to

contextually and linguistically relevant definitions of love, community work and other relevant concepts. These definitions were collaboratively developed by co-operative inquiry co-inquirers and informed by the local context. The potential definitional differences between the case study sites does not undermine validity, but rather strengthens the validity of this action research study as honouring the local context.

Regarding *external validity*, the case studies are not intended to be typical cases from which findings can be generalised, a key tenet of action research (Patton 2002). Equally, they are not considered to be atypical or unique cases. Again, the action research focus of local knowledge generation does not require generalizability. Nevertheless, a similar systematic process and methods were utilised within each case study site, with the same research question which, remarkably, yielded similar and consistent theoretical outcomes. However, I do not propose that the findings are generalizable, as action research focuses on localised knowledge generation rather than generalizable findings (Saukko 2003). Regarding *reliability*, the case study sites engaged the same operational methods, but it cannot be assumed that a repeat of the study would produce the same outcomes. This is because, as my personal ontology argues, human beings have multiple identities and multiple worldviews. Furthermore, the collaborative knowledge generated from my study is dependent on local context, politics and culture, as well as the individual personalities of those involved and dialogical interaction between co-inquirers. This research does not intend to develop a positivist theory of unitary truth, but rather embraces multiple truths. In this regard, a repeat of my study would also produce localised knowledges regarding love in community work practice, reflecting the reliability of the process.

Validity in co-operative inquiry

Validity in co-operative inquiry is the central question and it is tested in action by the degree to which the results satisfy the participants' goals and needs (Greenwood & Levin 2007). Reflecting the partnership approach of *change-oriented research*, the co-operative inquiry process requires that co-inquirers discuss and decide on validity criteria and procedures for assessing the group, which are systematically applied throughout the research process (Heron 1996; Reason 1988a). Validity is not measured according to conventional approaches, but rather based on participative, experiential and methodological strengths. As Heron (1996) states,

'Research findings are valid if they are sound or well-grounded, and have been reached by a rational method – one that offers a reasoned way of grounding them. What is important is that researchers are clear about the grounds of validity they are claiming and critical about the extent to which they have reached them' (p. 159).

In my study, the co-operative inquiry method was valid because we engaged a number of procedures, informed mostly by Heron (1996), whose work is considered to be the most comprehensive discussion of validity in action research (Greenwood & Levin 2007). Firstly, each co-operative inquiry collaboratively developed validity criteria and continuously and reflexively assessed our performance against those criteria. This process strengthened the trustworthiness of the methodology and findings, as all participants continuously critiqued the reliability of our outcomes. Secondly, the cyclical process tested and retested all assertions, analysis and interpretations, culminating in research outcomes that were deeply and multiply explored. Thirdly, the inquiry process balanced *divergence* and *convergence* through individually and collaboratively critiquing commonalities and differences of opinion, findings and worldviews. This validity procedure ensured that knowledge (results) is critical and democratically represents the group.

Fourthly, co-operative inquiry involves reflection cycles, during which co-inquirers critically reflect on the methods, validity procedures and findings. A key priority in my study was to avoid *groupthink* (Janis 1972)**,** which was challenged through naming and exploring this risk. Finally, Heron (1996) proposes member checking as a validity procedure, where two people can agree that they grasp the reality of the other. This was particularly important for group functioning and decision-making. Importantly, co-operative inquiry embraces rather than rejects validity procedures, as 'such concepts are too central to the integrity of everyday human life and discourse to be abandoned by the research community in the cause of postmodernism and poststructuralism' (Heron 1996, p. 163). In this regard, co-inquirers and I dialogically embraced and critically reflected upon validity throughout each co-operative inquiry, a process that I argue significantly strengthens the validity of our collaboratively developed knowledges that emerged from the research.

5.4   Limitations of the study

Like all research, this study has a number of limitations. Firstly, I restricted the data collection to three data sites, significantly limiting the generalizability of the findings. This, however, is not a significant concern, nor is it an actual limitation, as *change-oriented research* is

intentionally localised and aims to generate locally relevant knowledge and action rather than generalizable information. Secondly, I was located in each research site for two months to initiate and implement the co-operative inquiries. This is not a large amount of time for a *change-oriented research* project - an ideal process would involve the continued development and testing of the collaborative theory of love-based community work practice through ongoing action and reflection. This limitation was, however, mitigated in two ways: my pre-established relationships with organisations and community members in the three sites significantly supported a time-efficient process; and, the research emphasised developing theory of practice that will later be applied and tested in community work contexts.

Thirdly, the research study engaged the socially confusing concept of love, a term which has traditionally been difficult to define (Arman & Rehnsfeldt 2006; hooks 2000). I do not believe this is a significant issue, as the research explored multiple meanings and demonstrations of love, reflecting the multiplicity of knowledges that is privileged in action research philosophy (Heron 1996). Fourthly, conducting research in a second language posed some limitations in understanding and engaging with native Tetun and Spanish speakers. I engaged external people to translate meeting transcripts and reflection meeting notes to enhance the accuracy of reporting and I also constantly conducted linguistic member checking to clarify language and meaning. The journal articles regarding the Margaret River and Lobitos co-operative inquiries have been (blind) reviewed by people with contextual and linguistic knowledge of the country of each site, which strengthened the rigour of reporting in the articles.

Fifthly, this research study was the first time I undertook the co-operative inquiry method. This meant that the study involved a methodological learning process that, particularly in the first site (Liquica), sometimes interrupted flow and personal confidence. However, the 'new-ness' of this method significantly assisted me to participate as a co-inquirer rather than an expert and also supported collaborative methodological reflections. Finally, my personal status and privilege, characteristics, experiences and politics invariably affected all stages of the research, including development of the research design, my relationships with co-inquirers, interpretation of the research outcomes and reporting. Reflexive practice (T. May 2011) was therefore the key to critically appraising these issues, as was the collaborative decision-making focus and deliberate devolution of power. While I cannot remove these elements of my identity and positionality, I could actively critique and confront them.

5.5   Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the theoretical basis for my research design. The methodology is informed by a proposed epistemology of change called *change-oriented research*, which involves shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. *Change-oriented research* supports change at micro, mezzo and macro levels through collaborative, democratic and empowering research processes that are culturally responsive. Guided by this paradigm, this research involved the key methods of case studies and co-operative inquiry, with an eclectic range of data instruments such as journaling, field notes, radical memory, discussion, storytelling, drawing, performance, gift-giving and sculpture. Data analysis was conducted in collaboration with co-inquirers using aspects of Yin's case study approach and action research approaches.

I have also shown that conducting co-operative inquiry informed by the *change-oriented research* epistemological framework raises a number of unique ethical considerations and challenges, particularly as a feminist researcher. I developed a number of feminist strategies to address issues of participation, non-harmfulness and 'doing good', language and translation, reflexivity and rapport.

I also argued that *change-oriented research* is valid, particularly due to the deliberatively collaborative approach each co-operative inquiry group undertook to identify and apply validity strategies such as those promoted by Heron (1996). Other influential validity criteria are adapted from Ozanne and Saatcoiglu's (2008) work and include outcome validity, democratic validity, process validity, catalytic validity and dialogic validity. Finally, I recognised the limitations of this research, including the small sample size, limited time in each case study site, the complexity of love, language challenges, my relative inexperience with the co-operative inquiry method and my personal privilege. Importantly, the values, theory and practice of my research methodology were a significant focus of this doctoral study, with ongoing and critical reflection and adaptation. I believe that this research design enabled my study to be genuinely participatory, engaging, empowering and ethical, producing collective, valid and useful knowledge.

In the next three chapters, I share the research process and outcomes from the co-operative inquiries in three sites, Liquica, Margaret River and Lobitos. Each case study is discussed in a separate chapter, with a journal article that examines an important aspect of the relevant case study.

6   Findings: Study sample and Liquica case study

Domin mak hanesan hahalok nebe ita hatudu liu husi manera oi-oin hodi ema seluk bele sente ho diak: liberdade, demokrasia, toleransia, moris, adaptasaun, unidade no felisidade [Love is actions that we show through a variety of ways so that other people feel freedom, democracy, tolerance, alive, adaptation, unity and happiness] (Liquica co-operative inquiry).

In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, I share the process and outcomes of the three co-operative inquiries that I initiated in this research. In this chapter, I firstly explain the study's sample. I then discuss the first case study from Liquica, Timor-Leste and share a journal article entitled 'Love in community work in rural Timor-Leste: a co-operative inquiry for a participatory framework of practice', submitted, revised and resubmitted to *Community Development Journal*. This article considers the process and findings of the co-operative inquiry in Liquica. I specifically focus on dominant development discourse and trends in the post-independence context of Timor-Leste and the experience of community workers using participatory research to construct a localised and relevant practice framework for grassroots activism based on love. This article also provides insight into the co-operative inquiry process. Reflecting the methodological impetus of this thesis, I conclude this and the following two chapters with key findings regarding the experience of participating in a co-operative inquiry in the site.

6.1   Research sample

This research considered the love ethic in international rural community work. Guided by the *change-oriented research* paradigm, research was conducted through the co-operative inquiry method in three rural communities: Liquica (Timor-Leste), Margaret River (Australia) and Lobitos (Peru). The following world map shows the location of each site.

Figure 6.1: Map of case study sites

Source: Vector World Maps, vecteezy.com

Each case study site is explained in more detail in a corresponding journal article and explanatory information in the following chapters. Each site involved a co-operative inquiry with regular meetings to explore love in community work and develop a love-based framework of community work practice. However, although the structure of each co-operative inquiry was similar, the group sample, process and outcomes were unique to each site. The following table explains the whole study sample:

Table 6.1: Sample of co-inquirers in the co-operative inquiry groups

	Liquica	Margaret River	Lobitos	TOTAL
Total group size	10	9	3	**22**[2]
Number of women	7	6	2	**15**
Number of men	3	3	1	**7**
Number of organisations represented	4	10	3	**17**
Number of community workers	6	3	3	**12**
Number of community volunteers	2	6	0	**8**
Number of community members	2	0	0	**2**

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[2] I, as initiating researcher, am only counted once, in the Liquica group

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The above table shows that twenty-two people (including me) participated in this study, across the three case study sites. This included fifteen women and seven men, which accurately reflects the gendered composition of the community work sector in Australia and internationally (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2010; YWCA Australia, the Australian Council of Social Service & Women on Boards 2012). Seventeen different organizations were represented and the majority of co-inquirers (twelve people) were employed community workers, while eight co-inquirers were community volunteers. Only two co-inquirers self-identified as neither community workers nor volunteers. I was the initiating researcher in all three sites and participated fully in the three co-operative inquiries as a co-inquirer.

Across the three sites, this research was conducted in three languages, Tetun (Liquica, Timor-Leste), English (Margaret River, Australia) and Spanish (Lobitos, Peru). Additionally, the cultural and political contexts of each site were distinct. In this regard, this research was geographically, linguistically, culturally and politically diverse, providing rich international insight into the research topic. As discussed, the participatory and organic nature of the research does not intend for generalization of the research findings. However, the broad scope of the study and the similarities within the research outcomes do provide a solid foundation for a meta-theory of practice of love-based community work, which I present in Chapter 9.

6.2   Research process and findings in Liquica, Timor-Leste

The first case study was conducted in Liquica, a coastal village located 35 km (one-hour drive) west of Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste. It is the capital of the Liquica district and has a population of 20,938 (NSD & UNFPA 2011a). Our co-operative inquiry was conducted in Liquica over six weeks in March and April 2013 and involved ten participants (including me). The co-operative inquiry group comprised seven women and three men, representing three local community organisations working in women's rights, maternal and child health and peace and conflict resolution. Five co-inquirers were employed community workers, three were volunteers and two were community members.

Timor-Leste is a post-conflict state with many development challenges. As I discuss in the following journal article, the significant presence and power of international donors and aid agencies has resulted in the dominance of Western development ideology, which can undermine indigenous and culturally responsive knowledges in the quest to alleviate poverty, support economic growth, ensure universal human rights and address the impacts of climate

change. Civil society in Timor-Leste has grown rapidly since independence in 2002, but national and local organisations are often constrained by ideological, bureaucratic and funding requirements of international donors. This research was an opportunity for grassroots community workers to connect with their own indigenous worldviews and theories of practice for community work and identify and construct a love-based practice framework that celebrates their knowledge.

6.2.1 Journal article 3: Co-operative inquiry in Liquica

The following journal article, submitted to *Community Development Journal* and currently under second review for publication, shares the experience of the first co-operative inquiry in Liquica. It critically analyses the donor-influenced development context of Timor-Leste, and follows the co-operative inquiry process that supported grassroots community workers, volunteers and community members to develop our own theory of community work practice based on love.

Article title: Love in community work in rural Timor-Leste: a co-operative inquiry for a participatory framework of practice

Journal: *Community Development Journal*

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Status: Submitted, revised, resubmitted for final decision.

Abstract

'Love' is poorly explored as an ethic and framework of practice in community work for transformational social change. This is despite the large body of work regarding love as a foundation of activism, as articulated by bell hooks, Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi and Thich Nhat Hanh. These and other activists promote the radical potential of love; yet, the social work, community work and international development sectors have been resistant to engage with love as a process for sustainable structural change. This article shares a framework of practice of love-based community work that was developed through a co-operative inquiry with ten rural community workers in Liquica, Timor-Leste. I describe our co-operative inquiry method and share the group's design, data and analytical approaches and findings. I then discuss the group's collaboratively developed framework of love-centred community work. I show that our egalitarian process and framework of love in community work reflects feminist,

radical and Freirean theories and indigenous worldviews, demonstrating how international development donors can more openly embrace collaborative and grassroots social action in rural Timor-Leste.

Introduction

bell hooks' (2000) theory of the 'love ethic' provides a unique feminist perspective to structural social change. Like influential activists Martin Luther King Jr. (1963; 1967), Mahatma Gandhi (2005) and Thich Nat Hanh (1993), hooks proposes that love can transform inequitable structures of domination, such as patriarchy, capitalism and racism, to alternative sustainable systems of equality and peace. She maintains that love is a verb, not a noun, and an action rather than a feeling, with characteristics of care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment and trust (hooks, 2000). As an ethic of action, love involves knowing and recognising the full humanity of another (Gaita, 1999) and taking responsibility of our responsibility for others' wellbeing (Bauman, 2003).

Activists aim to transform loveless structures of inequality and their manifestations of poverty, corruption, addiction, violence and greed. In Timor-Leste, civil society is highly influenced by activist events such as the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre, the 1999 UN-sponsored independence ballot and the 2006 political-military crisis (Wigglesworth, 2013), which aimed to influence equitable nation-building processes. Internationally, the social work profession is grounded in community work and activism (Dominelli, 2006) to challenge structural inequality (International Federation of Social Work [IFSW] 2012). However, social and community work movements have limited literature and research to support practitioners to practically, effectively and safely work through love (Butot, 2004; Morley and Ife, 2002)**,** despite its recognised importance by leading development theorists (Edwards, 2005).

This article presents a 'love ethic' practice framework developed through a co-operative inquiry with grassroots community work practitioners, volunteers and community members in rural Timor-Leste. I begin with a literature review regarding love and community work and civil society in Timor-Leste and I explain the research methodology and context. I then discuss the process, data and collaborative analysis of our co-operative inquiry. Finally, I analyse potential implications of our group's research and framework of practice for community work in Timor-Leste and internationally. Consistent with co-operative inquiry principles, throughout this article I use inclusive language that positions me within the co-operative inquiry group, as research initiator and co-inquirer.

Love and community work

In activist literature, love is understood as action for justice and equality (Fromm, 1957; Gandhi, 2005; Hanh, 1993; hooks, 2000; Kahane, 2010; King Jr. 1963). Neighbourly love, through the 'Golden Rule' ('love your neighbour as you love yourself'), is an ethic of co-operation in most spiritual worldviews (Mackay, 2013). However, love is absent in mainstream social work ethics and practice, purportedly due to the profession's colonialist history of 'missionary benevolence' (Butot, 2004 p.9) and the incompatibility of love and rational professionalism (Morley and Ife, 2002). In Banks' (2006) analysis of 30 codes of ethics of national social work associations, only the Swedish code mentioned love, discussed as a grounding of values and practice regarding human dignity and worth.

Nevertheless, some activist frameworks explore love and social change. Nonviolence, as deliberate non-harmfulness, enshrines love for the oppressor when resisting structural inequality (Gandhi, 2005; Hanh, 1993; King Jr., 1963; Tolstoy, 1970). Somerville (2011) proposes that King Jr.'s nonviolent 'beloved community' can be achieved through universal flourishing and meaningful connectedness. Community work within this framework involves mutual respect based on equal worth, democratic decision-making, a mutuality of freedom and order, a right to participate and justice. Similarly, Morley and Ife's (2002) construct of love for humanity prioritises the lived experience, connecting the private and public and values and action. Dialogue, as solidarity between the oppressed and oppressor, is also found in the 'plenitude of the act of love' (Freire, 1989 p.35), through connectedness and co-operation. Dialogical community development is a relationship- and process-oriented approach that shifts 'towards the other' (Westoby and Dowling, 2013 p.34).

A handful of empirical studies also explore love in caring professions. Through qualitative research with seven Canadian social workers, Butot (2004) found that love in critical social work is spirituality conceptualised as the intrinsic interconnectedness of all beings. Love is liberating through respecting humanity beyond social construction. Conversely, Fitzgerald and van Hooft's (2000) Socratic dialogue with nine Australian nurses found that love in nursing involves going beyond the duty of care as competent risk-takers committed to the betterment of others before the self. Finally, Nelson and colleagues' (2000) exploration of community work with culturally and linguistically diverse women in the United Kingdom found that love as a practice of freedom promotes self-love amongst oppressed peoples.

Apart from hooks' theory, most literature regarding love and community work is generally blind to gendered inequality. Additionally, most conceptualisations of love, including hooks'

work, do not consider a bi-directional spiritual relationship between people and nature, despite indigenous worldviews in Timor-Leste and elsewhere that challenge Western human dominance over the earth (Acosta, 2011; de Carvalho, 2011; McWilliam and Traube, 2011; Ogungbemi, 2008; Rose, 2008). Furthermore, there is a significant lack of empirical literature regarding love in community work, particularly research using a dialogical methodology to generate knowledges in non-English speaking contexts. This study with community workers in Timor-Leste attempts to contribute to these knowledge gaps.

Community work in Timor-Leste

Since the independence of Timor-Leste in 2002, Timorese civil society has steadily grown (Wigglesworth, 2008). National organisation Belun (meaning 'friend' in Tetun, an official Timorese language) lists more than 800 international, regional, bilateral, national and community-based organisations throughout Timor-Leste (Belun, 2013), including in rural communities that comprise 70% of the national population (National Statistics Directorate [NSD] and United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA] 2011a). Commitment to locally-led development is evident in national civil society networks such as FONGTIL (Timor-Leste NGO Forum) and Rede Feto (Women's Network).

Timorese civil society is necessarily active. In 2013, Timor-Leste was ranked 134th on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index (UNDP, 2013), and basic human rights are unable to be universally achieved due to widespread poverty in the post-conflict context. According to UNDP, 68% of the population experience multidimensional poverty and 37% live below US$1.25 per day. Furthermore, Timor-Leste is unlikely to achieve all Millennium Development Goals by 2015 (Ministry of Finance 2014). Feminisation of poverty is particularly evident: Timor-Leste's maternal mortality rate is 300 maternal deaths/100,000 live births (UNDP, 2013), a quarter of women are malnourished and one-third of women have experienced domestic violence since the age of 15 (NSD, 2010). To address these human rights issues, numerous Timorese civil society organisations adopt a community development approach, with interventions including capacity building, education and awareness-raising.

In her analysis of Timor-Leste civil society, Wigglesworth (2008) explains that from Indonesian occupation in 1975, civil society was organised as resistance, church and youth/student movements. With independence, international donors had greater influence on local organisations and activities:

'the vast majority of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are led by the educated younger generation who desire to participate in the development of an independent Timor Leste. These organisations have often found it difficult to obtain donor funding to do what they consider important, and the desire to obtain funds has led sometimes to their greater attention to donor articulated needs than to the needs of the communities which they seek to serve' (Wigglesworth, 2008 p.2).

Although some international donors promote participatory grassroots social action in Timor-Leste (see, for example, The Asia Foundation, 2015), several authors suggest that localised priorities and approaches of Timorese civil society have been sidelined by donor processes such as tokenistic community participation, acculturation of Timorese community workers into Western development practice, bypassing customary governance, short-term vision and free marketization (Brown, 2009; McGregor, 2007; Moxham, 2005; Neves, 2006). Neves (2006) argues Timor-Leste has been 'co-opted to adopt global standards and ideologies set up by rich countries, and to neglect our reality and our local values' (p.18). This restrains Timorese people from developing and applying culturally strengthening and contextually-relevant community work theories that encapsulate faith-based ethics, the people's liberation movement and indigenous knowledges such as spiritual relationships between people and land, *tara bandu* (taboo justice systems), customary governance and traditional social systems and rituals (Brown, 2009; de Carvalho, 2011; McWilliam and Traube, 2011). Furthermore, despite its aforementioned relevance for activism, love has not been explored in Timorese community work. My research engaged Timorese community workers to collectively develop a framework of practice that honoured local knowledges, using *domin* ('love' in Tetun) as the foundational concept.

Research methodology and context

The overarching research questions for this study were 'What is love in community work?' and, 'How can love transform structural inequality?'. The questions were deliberately general to support co-inquirers to collaboratively design our own, more refined research questions. We applied the co-operative inquiry method, a democratic and emancipatory process with cycles of Reflection and Action whereby a group of co-inquirers systematically refine ideas and practice (Reason, 1988). Co-operative inquiry supports co-construction of knowledge (Heron, 1996) through a 'self-fulfilling feedback loop' within a living system (Wadsworth, 2008 p.33). Our research aimed to subvert elitist concentration of power by opening up and including the 'powerless' in decision-making (Stringer, 2007) to collaboratively generate a community work

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framework based on love. Each cycle of Reflection and Action involves four stages: Stage 1 is decision-making about the upcoming Action; Stage 2 is applying the Action; Stage 3 is full immersion in the Action with openness to experience; and Stage 4 involves sharing and analysing data from the Action and reviewing the research launching statement (Heron, 1996 pp.49-50). The following table represents the collaboratively developed co-operative inquiry process in Liquica:

Table 6.2: Overview of Liquica co-operative inquiry

Theme	Activity	Description
Planning	Induction meeting	Introduce topic and process and develop inquiry timeframe.
	First Reflection	Design inquiry structure and launching statement (topic), plan First Action.
What is love?	First Action	Individual journaling about definitions and types of love.
	Second Reflection	Analyse data from First Action, plan Second Action.
Love in the family	Second Action	Individual journaling about feelings and actions of love in the family.
	Third Reflection	Analyse data from Second Action, plan Third Action.
Love in the community	Third Action	Individual journaling about love in the community.
	Fourth Reflection	Analyse data from Third Action, plan Fourth Action.
Expressions of love	Fourth Action	Individual journaling about expressing love in community, family or workplace.
	Fifth Reflection	Analyse data from Fourth Action, plan Fifth Action.
Work of love	Fifth Action	Individual journaling about working with love in the community.
	Final Reflection	Analyse data from Fifth Action, respond to launching statement.

In our research, the six Reflection meetings involved various strategies to support decentralization of power, democratic decision-making and inclusive participation. Each Reflection meeting began with a reiteration of the Reflection-Action research cycling concept, including principles of participation and sharing power. Furthermore, co-inquirers collaboratively developed the meeting agenda and delegated a co-facilitator. In a circle, we then individually shared our data from the preceding action, while one person recorded key ideas. After each co-inquirer shared our data, we questioned and commented on the data, stimulating critical discussion and debate. Our process for analysis and interpretation was collaboratively developed through group discussion. We often laid notes on the ground and collaboratively organised, analysed and interpreted the data using thematic coding, identifying key concepts and trends. After analysing the data, we collaboratively developed our next Action, reflecting the theme determined in our initial co-operative inquiry design. Each

reflection meeting concluded with a reflection on the co-operative inquiry process, including our feelings and experiences.

I initiated the general research topic; however, honouring co-operative inquiry values, I did not dictate the process of group-based design, data collection and analysis. Instead, my role was to guide empowering and gender equal processes that supported participation, personal change and collective knowledge construction.

Context and sample

The co-operative inquiry was conducted with ten community workers, volunteers and community members who work with rural peoples in Liquica, Timor-Leste. This was one of three case studies in my doctoral study regarding love in international rural community work (the other sites were Lobitos, Peru and Margaret River, Australia). Liquica is a coastal town of 20,938 people (NSD and UNFPA, 2011a), situated 35 km (one-hour drive) from the nation's capital, Dili. Agriculture and fishing are the main economic industries of the area (NDS and UNFPA, 2011b). The town is known for a tragic massacre that occurred during the Indonesian occupation on 6 April 1999, when between 30 and 100 people were killed in the local Catholic Church (Robinson, 2003). More than 40 non-government organisations, community-based organisations and community groups are based in Liquica, working with issues such as peace and conflict resolution, women's rights, agricultural production, land rights, environmental protection, child rights, education and veteran's rights (Belun, 2013).

A local women's rights organisation hosted the co-operative inquiry meetings and invited local community workers, volunteers and community members to participate. Potential co-inquirers attended an induction meeting to discuss the research topic and method and decided whether to participate. At this meeting, I explained the cyclical process and values of the co-operative inquiry, including: all co-inquirers commit to understanding the method and make it our own; engage in participatory decision-making and authentic collaboration; and, create a safe space for emotional expression (Heron, 1996). We developed the inquiry time structure (weekly two-hour meetings with individual actions between each meeting) and discussed ethics considerations such as informed consent, privacy and benefits to participants.

Our co-operative inquiry comprised ten co-inquirers (including me), outlined in the following table:

Table 6.3: Demographics of Liquica co-inquirers

Co-inquirer demographic	Female	Male	Total
Group size	7	3	10
Number of Timorese organisations represented	-	-	3
Civil society role: community worker	5	0	5
Civil society role: volunteer	0	3	3
Civil society role: community member	2	0	2
Age: 18-25	0	0	0
Age: 26-40	4	3	7
Age: 41-55	3	0	3
Age: 56+	0	0	0
Highest education level: Primary	1	0	1
Highest education level: Secondary	5	1	6
Highest education level: Vocational	0	0	0
Highest education level: University	1	2	3

Co-inquirers were aged 26-43 (mean of 32.3 years). Co-inquirers' levels of education included primary, secondary and university level education. University educated participants included two young male volunteers and me, the initiating researcher. The five employed community workers were all female. Community workers and volunteers represented three community organisations providing programming in women's rights, maternal and child health and peace and conflict resolution. The research was conducted in Tetun, with a Timorese interpreter providing translation to English, and I also spoke intermediate Tetun.

Research findings and analysis

With permission from my co-inquirers, and honouring the co-operative inquiry tradition, I report my perspective of our process and collaborative data analysis, avoiding further interpretation.

Forming our co-operative inquiry

The First Reflection meeting of a co-operative inquiry involves designing the inquiry structure and topic (Heron, 1996). We began with a recapitulation of the research topic and process and signed participant consent forms. In a circle, we shared our names, community work roles and reasons for joining the inquiry, including learning new information and skills, new experiences, strengthening community work practice, making new friends and understanding love. After I introduced aspects of social research ethics, we listed collective values to guide our research process, including listen to other people's ideas and trust each other, consideration, participation, be active during discussion, give people time to speak, don't push yourself too

hard, confidentiality and privacy, honesty, understand each other and mediation. We determined a 6/10 voting requirement for decision-making and decided our co-operative inquiry structure, considering various dichotomous options provided by Heron (1996, pp.40-48), outlined in the following table:

Table 6.4: Heron's types of co-operative inquiries

Inquiry type	Description	Description
Full / partial	Full form inquiry: Initiating researcher and co-inquirers participate in decisions and experience in Action and Reflection phases.	Partial form inquiry: Initiating researcher and co-inquirers fully participate in decisions, but initiating researchers only partially participate in experience while co-inquirers fully participate in experience.
Inside / outside	Inside inquiry: Action occurs in the same place within the whole group.	Outside inquiry: Action occurs in members' work or personal lives, outside the group meeting.
Closed / open	Closed boundary: Inquiry only focuses on interactions within and between the co-inquirers.	Open boundary: Includes interaction between the co-inquirers and others outside the group.
Apollonian / Dionysian	Apollonian inquiry: A rational, linear, systematic, controlling and explicit approach with sequenced steps (a structured inquiry).	Dionysian inquiry: An imaginal, expressive, spiralling, diffuse, impromptu and tacit approach (an unstructured inquiry).
Informative / transformative	Informative inquiry: Describes practice.	Transformative inquiry: Transforms practice.

Source: Heron 1996

Group members designed the inquiry as transformative to encourage personal change, and open and transparent but with closed boundaries, maintaining the current group size and constitution. We also wished to conduct the same activities in each Action phase, an Apollonian inquiry. Our 'launching statement' (collective topic or research goal) was '*Aproximasaun domin hatudu ba komunidade liu husi serbisu no hahalok*' [The ways that love is expressed to the community through work and actions]. We also identified several themes to explore and refine our understanding of love and contextualise love-based community work, including:

   I.   *Saida mak domin?* [What is love?];
  II.   *Domin iha familia* [Love in the family];
 III.   *Domin iha komunidade* [Love in the community];
  IV.   *Hahalok domin* [Expressions of love]; and

V. *Objetivu domin / serbisu domin* [Work of love / love's objective].

The meeting concluded by developing our First Action to individually conduct before the next reflection meeting. The Action involved self-reflective journaling through writing and drawing regarding what is love?; what are different types of love?; and, asking other people about love.

What is love?

At the Second Reflection meeting, we shared and analysed our data from the First Action by writing definitions of love on sticky notes and thematically categorising them for collective interpretation. The following table provides a selection of the fifty-five proposed definitions.

Table 6.5: Selection of coded data from First Action: what is love?

Theme	Selection of definitions of love
Service	• Love is a person's feelings that they give or show to other people through their heart's voice, such as their etiquette, work and honest behaviour. • Love is the feelings I have for my family, the benefits I gain from my work and also my behaviour towards my family. • Love is like a shady place that provides space for us and also for our family.
Feelings	• Love is like a breath. • Love is like a candle that gives light. • Love is an instrument / tool.
Nature	• Love is like water that gives us life (creation). • Love is like the sun that gives life to all nature in the world.
Protection	• Love and the Nation are like protection. • Loving myself means looking after myself and being careful of my health, both mental and physical.
Behaviour	• Speaking to each other in a loving way.
Listening	• When communicating with other people it must be with respect.
Time and situation	• Look at our actions in our everyday lives compared to the past. • Recognise that I am one of God's creatures.
Participation	• Love for all people. • Love gives inspiration and collaboration.

Collaborative interpretation of the coded data identified key concepts for a collective definition of love, including love as subject – materials, appreciation, practical, concern, responsibility for our behaviour, a pathway, an important key for living, attitudes and feelings from the heart and a seed. Acknowledging the diversity of information, love was summarised as feeling and action. The data also highlighted many types of love, including self-love, love for family, community, community leader, work, the church, the nation, nature and God.

Our collaboratively developed Second Action involved journaling about the question, 'What are my feelings and actions regarding love in the family?'. When presenting our data at the Third Reflection meeting, ideas of love in the family included 'forced love', communication, sharing work, time and food, helping each other, being patient, accepting reality and feeling calm. One co-inquirer highlighted that love in the family involves trusting each other and listening to each other, as 'then there will be peace'. Another co-inquirer explained love in the family as a circle representing the Holy Trinity, with Father as the creator, Mother as server/saviour and Children as spirit. The *servidor* (server) emerged as a role of someone who loves in the family; in particular, several co-inquirers identified mothers serving by preparing food, caring for children, taking children to the hospital and 'looking after everything'. A co-inquirer said love in the family means it is harmonious and happy, and another suggested it is giving children freedom to play, study and do jobs around the house. One co-inquirer associated love in the family to equal rights between women and men. The following figure shares a co-inquirer's drawing of a woman caring for a sick family member.

Figure 6.2: A co-inquirer's drawing of love in the family

Group members explored love in relation to issues such as gender inequality, freedom for young people to explore and learn, culture, poverty and human rights. Our collaborative data analysis identified that love in the family involves hope, peace, concern, trusting each other,

preparation, protection, participation, freedom, collaboration (sharing workload), communication, honesty and reality.

Love in the community

Our Third Action involved journaling about the question, 'What is love in the community?'. At the Fourth Reflection meeting, co-inquirers explained that love in the community has values of reconciliation, nonviolence, protection and security, non-discrimination, no racism, no status, unity and partnership between families, *Xefe* [Chief] and organisations. Processes of love in the community include knowing, trusting and helping each other, working together and strengthening unity, communication, responsibility, respect, participation and consultation, celebrating, sharing and 'developing ideas with people that are not alike' by appreciating differences of opinion. Several co-inquirers identified specific activities such as distributing mosquito nets and medicine, preventing sickness, teaching cooking skills and providing information. One co-inquirer explained that love in the community involves 'learning from the past, celebrating together and having hope for the future', while two others highlighted environmental protection. The following figure is a drawing of a woman reading to children.

Figure 6.3: A co-inquirer's drawing of love in the community

[Translation: As a mother I must let my children study and play].

In our initial discussion about the data, some co-inquirers felt a community is loving when all community members think alike, telling people what to do, not supporting diversity and limiting freedoms – concepts contrary to egalitarian community development theory. However, we also highlighted that love involves freedom, protection of children and unity. Comprehensive data analysis identified love in the community as communication, protection, working together, no discrimination, nonviolence, participation, responsibility, honesty, respect, trust, reconciliation, giving advice and unity. Our emerging concept of love in the community was interpreted through a collaborative role-play of a community education session about child protection, with an 'expert' providing information to community members about strategies to ensure children's safety. Collective reflection highlighted the role-play did not sufficiently reflect love in the community because it lacked a question and answer session.

Expressing love in community, family and workplace

The Fourth Action considered the question, 'how is love shown (or expressed) in the community, family or workplace?'. The following figure is a drawing of a woman accompanying children to the hospital [*sentru saude*]*.*

Figure 6.4: A co-inquirer's drawing of expressing love in the community, family or workplace
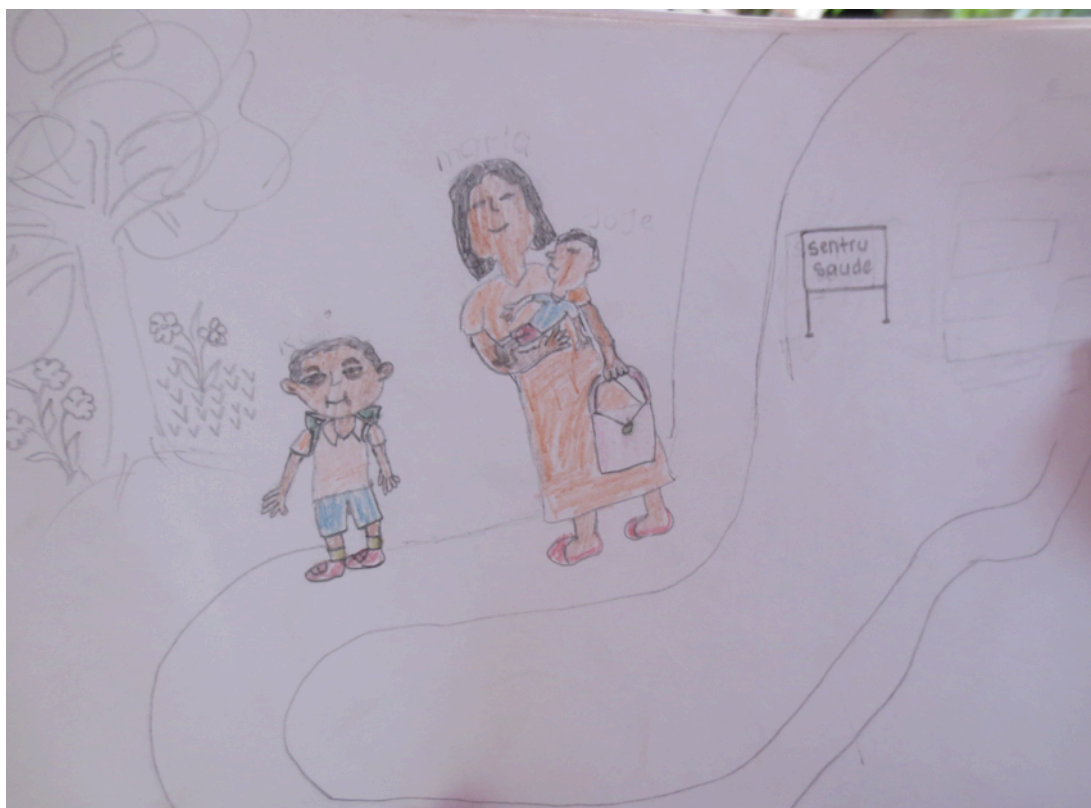
Small groups shared our data from the Fourth Action by role-playing stories of expressing love in the community, family or workplace. The first group led a role-play of a community worker responding to a domestic violence incident, including interrupting the violence, police intervention with the male perpetrator and relationship counselling. The second group role-played accompanying an ill person to the doctor. The third group role-played neighbours responding to a house fire. Collective analysis of the role-plays identified actions expressing love in the community, family or workplace of patience, witness, trust, looking after family and self, collaboration, responsibility, giving your time, solidarity, observation, mediation, being professional, helping each other and calming each other.

How do we work through love in the community?

The Fifth (and final) Action considered the question, 'how do we work with love in the community?', journaling about our personal practice and research learnings. The Final Reflection meeting began with the whole group sitting in a circle holding hands and one-by-one identifying words we associate with love, while passing a 'pulse' (hand squeeze). Some words included peace, protection, contribution, action, participation, respect, trust, communication, relationship, freedom, helping, hope, unity and responsibility. Each co-inquirer then shared a summary of love in community work, such as the drawing in the following figure.

Figure 6.5: A co-inquirer's drawing of working through love in the community

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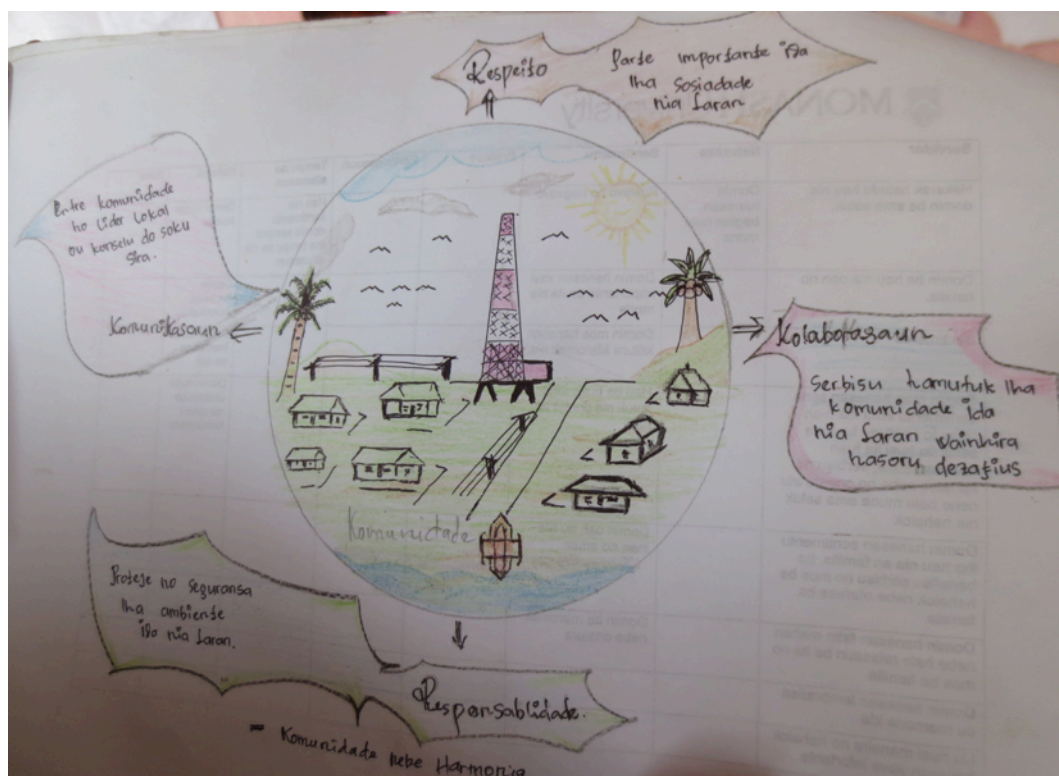
[Translation, clockwise from top: Respect – an important aspect for society; Collaboration – community works together when facing challenges; Responsibility – protection and security in society/community/environment; Communication – between a community and local leaders or village councils].

Collective data analysis identified numerous approaches of love in community work, such as communication, trust, empathy, respect, collaboration, reconciliation and hope. Our final response to the original launching statement was: '*Domin mak hanesan hahalok nebe ita hatudu liu husi manera oi-oin hodi ema seluk bele sente ho diak: liberdade, demokrasia, toleransia, moris, adaptasaun, unidade no felisidade*' [Love is actions that we show through a variety of ways so that other people feel freedom, democracy, tolerance, alive, adaptation, unity and happiness]. A collaborative drawing in the following figure depicts our framework of love-based community work.

Figure 6.6: Collaborative framework of love in community work
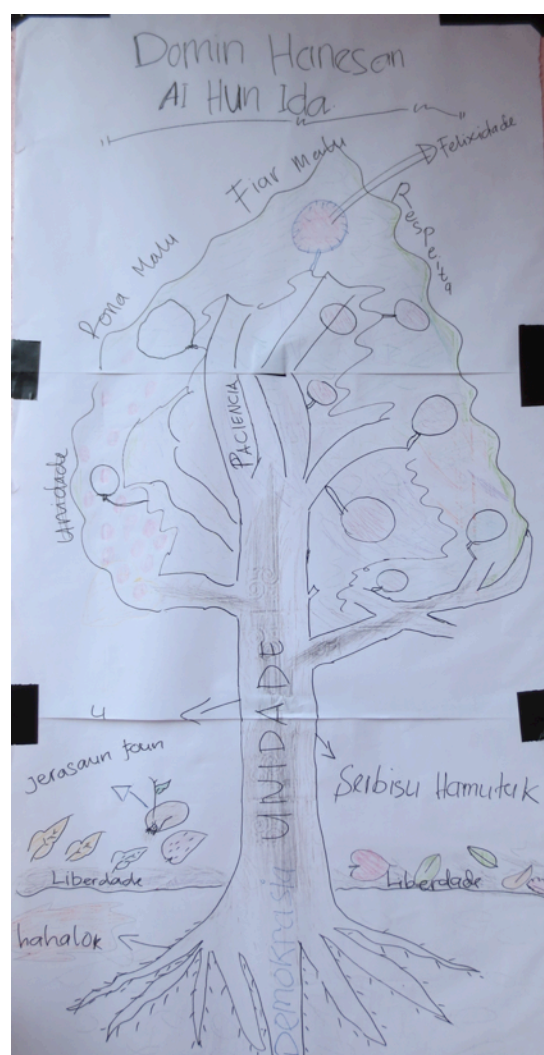
Group members explained, '*Domin hanesan ai hun ida'* [Love is like a tree]. Love is founded in the tree roots of *hahalok* [actions]. The tree trunk and branches are processes of *demokrasia* [democracy], *unidade* [unity], *paciencia* [patience], *serbisu hamutuk* [working together], *rona malu* [listening to each other], *fiar malu* [trusting each other] and *respeita* [respect]. This process results in fruits of *felicidade* [happiness]. Fruit and leaves falling from the tree represent the *liberdade* [freedom] that comes from love, and new saplings, the *jerasaun foun* [new generation] of trees, indicate that love is cyclical and ongoing.

Process reflections

Each Reflection meeting involved collective reflection of the co-operative inquiry process. The data suggests the co-operative inquiry was an empowering experience for co-inquirers. For example, in the Third Reflection meeting, co-inquirers conveyed enthusiasm about the research, feeling energised, engaged and involved in debate. They affirmed they were learning and 'opening our minds'. In the Fourth Reflection meeting, identified strengths were information sharing and hearing new ideas, while challenges were language difficulties and unequal participation. In the Final Reflection meeting, we acknowledged the co-operative inquiry was a new experience with significant learning and enabled us to develop new knowledge, action and theory we could proudly implement at work and in our personal lives. Co-inquirers also highlighted a deeper understanding of love, participatory research and community work and new friendships. Identified challenges of our process were lengthy and sometimes confusing translation between Tetun and English, participation difficulties (attending every meeting and different energy levels in group activities) and managing diverse ideas and needs.

As initiating researcher, my role as methodological guide supported co-inquirers to embody co-operative inquiry principles and process. This sometimes required me to challenge co-inquirers. For example, when planning the Second Action, some co-inquirers wanted to observe love as feeling and action in their family, and I gently highlighted that co-operative inquirers do not speak on behalf of others; rather, we explore our own experiences and worldviews. We instead developed a self-reflective action. My role also involved supporting co-inquirers to apply validity procedures to critically question the data and strengthen research rigour. In the Third Reflection meeting, we discussed Heron's (1996 pp.131-157) co-operative inquiry validity procedures, including questioning the data (who, what, when, where, why and how); encouraging divergence and convergence of opinions; collaborative interpretation; and,

research cycling. This led to collective compilation of validity processes for constant referral. Notably, my guidance role diminished as co-inquirers actualised the co-operative inquiry.

Discussion

Honouring the collaborative nature of the co-operative inquiry, I will not further interpret our participatory data and analysis. I will, however, discuss the research outcomes in relation to the literature, which may have implications for community work research and practice in Timor-Leste and elsewhere.

Our collective framework of love-based community work reflects and extends reviewed literature. Our construct of love as action for social change to achieve happiness, freedom and democracy reinforces the social justice imperative of other discussions of love (Fromm, 1957; Gandhi, 2005; Hanh, 1993; hooks, 2000; Kahane, 2010; King Jr. 1963). Specifically, our framework highlights reconciliation, particularly relevant in post-conflict Timor-Leste. This affirms hooks' assertion that compassion and forgiveness can sustain a loving community: 'Being part of a loving community does not mean we will not face conflicts, betrayals, negative outcomes from positive outcomes, or bad things happening to good people. Love allows us to confront these negative realities in a manner that is life-affirming and life-enhancing' (hooks, 2000 p.139). Nonviolence writings also emphasise reconciliation between oppressed peoples and oppressors and love for the enemy (Gandhi, 2005; Hanh, 1993; King Jr., 1963; Tolstoy, 1970). Importantly, Nelson and colleagues (2000) advocate self-love amongst oppressed peoples in reconciliation processes. Although acknowledged as a type of love, self-love was not particularly prioritised in our co-operative practice framework.

Our framework also reflects hooks' (2000) articulation of community as a 'circle of love', with love in action as being kind and courteous, mutual giving, sharing and greeting and emphasising communication. She identifies service as a necessary dimension of communal love. However, hooks' concept of community is limited to family and friends. The Liquica co-operative inquiry's framework of love-based community work extends hooks' work to include community based on place, identity or interest, regardless of kin or friend relationship. Emphasising connectedness (echoing Butot (2004) and Morley and Ife (2002)), we suggest love in community is participatory, democratic and values-based service, reflecting dialogical approaches (Freire, 1989; Westoby and Dowling, 2013). Furthermore, 'service' reflects the Golden Rule construct of unconditional giving, honouring the humanity (Gaita, 1999) and priority (Fitzgerald and van Hooft, 2000) of the other.

'Beloved community' approaches do not consider environmental love, nor connect social and environmental justice (hooks, 2000; King Jr., 1963; Somerville, 2011). In contrast, our research extends anthropocentric frameworks to locate love in context. We include love for nature as a typology of love, consider environmental protection as love in community and represent love as water, sun and a tree. Reflecting Timorese indigenous worldviews (de Carvalho, 2011; McWilliam and Traube, 2011), our framework recognises the interconnectedness of people and planet and the cyclical nature of love-based community work to sustain living systems (Wadsworth, 2008).

The co-operative inquiry also identifies various forms of love, such as self-love, love for family, community, nature and spiritual love. Although these types of love are not necessarily considered equal, they are located underneath the broad concept of love. Fromm (1957) and hooks (2000) both stress the holism of love as an all-encompassing orientation. However, these and other authors (King Jr., 1963; Lewis, 1960) also differentiate types of love, acknowledging multiple experiences and priorities. Although our framework specifically focuses on love in community work, it suggests that all types of love can involve democratic and collaborative processes of mutual respect and trust for universal happiness and freedom. Potential tensions between different types of love can be mediated by a common commitment to values-based, nonviolent and dialogical practice.

The Liquica study also suggests learnings about participatory research. It was evident that co-inquirers initially had limited understanding and experience of participatory research and participatory community development theory and practice, despite working in programs funded by international donors that value participation (see Moxham, 2005). The dominant rhetoric of 'participatory development' (Narayan, Patel, Schafft, Rademacher and Koch-Schulte, 2000; United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 1999) is often incongruous with practice in development settings, reflecting the politicization of participation (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Leal, 2007; Mikkelsen, 2005). In contrast to shallow 'participation' in the dominant neoliberal development agenda (Neves, 2006; McGregor, 2007), our group prioritised democratic participation; a time-consuming and sometimes frustrating process to devolve power and co-construct knowledge. We demonstrate that participatory research aiming for the top rung of Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Participation,* 'citizen control', can support self-empowerment for co-inquirers (not research subjects) in solidarity. Importantly, such participatory approaches have heightened ethical considerations, requiring

collectively established group norms and values to nurture participation and challenge systems of power (such as patriarchy and racism) within group processes.

Finally, the collaboratively identified challenges of this study, notably language difficulties, inconsistent participation and navigating consensus decision-making, are not unexpected in cross-cultural participatory research, and I highlight key learnings. Firstly, co-operative inquiry is chaotic (Heron, 1996), requiring respectful relationships, flexibility and communal trust of process. Reflexive consensus decision-making becomes more comfortable with time and experience. Secondly, language translation can be inefficient and risks filtering information, and is compounded by social, cultural and educational differences (Mikkelsen 2005). This can be navigated by linguistic member checking and co-inquirer note-taking. Thirdly, while participation may wane during discussion, expressive data collection and analysis methods such as theatre, bodily movement, drawing and storytelling can be engaging, empowering and celebrate indigenous worldviews. Finally, this research highlights tensions for the initiating researcher between providing methodological support and decentralizing power. Individual and collective reflexivity (May, 2011) are crucial to ensuring the process actualises collective values and co-operative inquiry principles.

Conclusion

This co-operative inquiry explores the values and practices of rural community workers in Timor-Leste who identify as working through love. It highlights that love is meaningful and action-oriented in a community work context. Through participatory knowledge construction, we show that love as a framework of practice is relevant and practicable, holistically connecting the self, family, community, humanity, environment and spirituality to help support social change.

The research has several implications for practice. Our collaborative framework can be applied in grassroots community work, social work and international development programming as a values-based approach that integrates dialogue, nonviolence, participation and indigenous worldviews. Practicably, this may involve dismantling hierarchical organizational structures for collective decision-making with service-users about program design, implementation and evaluation; implementing gender equal workplace conditions such as flexible working hours and on-site childcare; supporting community members to self-advocate for their rights through capacity strengthening and peer mentoring; and, integrating the rights of nature through policies to mitigate environmental and climate impact. Our love-based framework can help support change at local, household, community and structural levels as community workers

actualise deliberative dialogical practice to challenge inequality and shift power to marginalised peoples.

The research also suggests that practitioners can work collaboratively with community members to generate localised, values-based community work frameworks through co-operative inquiry. We demonstrate that grassroots community workers are motivated and capable of developing culturally strengthening practice frameworks that encapsulate indigenous and spiritual worldviews. In particular, research cycling, creative methods, democratic decision-making and collaborative analysis and interpretation can support co-inquirers to generate collaboratively owned knowledge *through* practice, encouraging personal transformation, increased confidence and skill-sharing.

This study recommends that in Timor-Leste, international development practitioners and donors work with community workers to engage with their complex indigenous living systems (Wadsworth, 2008) and collaboratively develop dialogical and non-hierarchical approaches to community work. Our research shows the emancipatory potential of localised knowledge by exploring and celebrating love as spiritual, indigenous and nonviolent action for change.

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The above article shared the Liquica group's collaboratively developed framework of practice of love-based community work. Key features of this framework are:

- Love is action to bring about transformation of societal structures.

- Love as action is based in values of respect and trust.

- Love is spiritual.

- Love in community work involves co-operative processes that are democratic, with open communication and patience.

- Freedom, tolerance and unity, issues particularly pertinent in newly independent Timor-Leste, are outcomes of love.

- Love is cyclical.

6.2.2   Group's experience of the co-operative inquiry method

Heron (1996) maintains that the co-operative inquiry involves learning about the research topic as well as the method. As such, throughout the Liquica co-operative inquiry, group members consistently reflected upon their experiences and learnings of the method. Such data were recorded in the reflection meeting transcripts, and were also included in my personal notes written after each meeting. Reiterating my reporting approach throughout this thesis, the findings I share regarding the group's methodological experience are based on my perspective of the discussion data and my observations. I do not speak on behalf of my co-inquirers. The findings are considered in two key themes: process and learning and transformation.

Process

The Liquica co-operative inquiry group members repeatedly articulated that they found the co-operative inquiry process *diak* [good], enjoyable, difficult and frustrating. Positive aspects of the process included exploring and collaboratively developing our understanding of love and sharing our knowledge. Articulated challenges and frustrations included language translation and grasping the systematic process of the co-operative inquiry. Co-inquirers explained that the process became less frustrating as time went on and was increasingly enjoyable.

Interestingly, in the fourth reflection meeting, co-inquirers explained that the research topic of love in community work was not difficult. Upon reflection, I realise that it was the process and not the topic that was challenging. When we grasped the cyclical method of the co-operative inquiry, discussion, analysis and theory-building were much easier with better flow. By the final (sixth) reflection meeting, co-inquirers were pleased we had developed new theory and action.

Through the co-operative inquiry process, co-inquirers were increasingly open and trusting with each other. For example, at the beginning of the process, there was some hesitation about the group being a space to share emotions. However, as group members developed relationships with each other, we became more engaged, participated in debate and argument and expressed our feelings. At the end of the process, several co-inquirers expressed that they valued their new friendships from the co-operative inquiry.

The six-week co-operative inquiry involved various methodological tools that we collaboratively selected, such as group discussion, drawing, writing, role-play and bodily movement. I observed that group energy was particularly high and participation was most equal when we engaged presentational tools such as theatre and group drawings. Other factors that facilitated high energy included sitting on the ground rather than formally in chairs, wearing comfortable clothing and integrating humour.

Co-inquirers identified two key challenges with the co-operative inquiry: participation and language. The group had fairly high expectations of participation, which were not completely fulfilled. In the early stages of the co-operative inquiry, volunteers and community members were less involved and spoke less than employed community workers. Although this changed through the process, participation consistently emerged as an issue in our collective reflections on process, specifically lack of equal participation from all co-inquirers and some attendance inconsistencies. I observed that meeting participation was at its highest when we were involved in expressive activities such as role-play (with a group warm-up to feel comfortable with our bodies) and when the group was smaller due to lower attendance. A further key difficulty with this co-operative inquiry was language. As I do not speak fluent Tetun, the use of an interpreter significantly slowed the process and disrupted flow of conversation, requiring a lot of patience. One co-inquirer also stated that sometimes the group did not understand my questions.

A challenging element I identified in the co-operative inquiry process was critical discussion. Reflecting Heron's validity procedures (1996), I consistently encouraged co-inquirers to ask questions of each other's perspectives, challenge ideas and critically analyse the

interpretations presented to the group. This was quite difficult, particularly in the early stages of the co-operative inquiry. However, collective critical thinking and debate improved throughout the process. Given the group's preference for presentational methods such as role-play, it is possible that observation may have been a more appropriate method than discussion.

Learning and transformation

At the beginning of the co-operative inquiry process, it was clear that co-inquirers were very keen to learn, evidenced in the group's intention for the process to be transformative as well as informative. It was consistently expressed that the co-operative inquiry was a 'new experience' for all co-inquirers (including me). Throughout the co-operative inquiry, co-inquirers identified learning such as enhanced understanding of the participatory methodological process, concepts of love in the family and community, community work practice and critical thinking more generally (expressed as 'opening our minds'). Other identified areas of learning included:

- Understanding love, including in families and communities.

- Applying love in practice in families and communities.

- Understanding our feelings.

- Approaches to building unity in families.

- Understanding new theoretical concepts.

- Developing a deeper understanding of family and community.

- The importance of love in families and communities.

I explained that through the process, I learned about Timorese culture, language and worldviews.

Methodologically, articulated key learnings included increased knowledge about research, increased ability and confidence to use action research cycles of action and reflection, applying these cycles in future research to understand practice issues and applying the co-operative inquiry method and principles in community work to enhance knowledge and practice.

Several co-inquirers identified that they felt better able to act through love in their families and community following our research process. Some also recognised that, after the co-operative inquiry, they would share their new knowledge with their families and communities. Co-inquirers identified factors that aided learning and transformation, including information sharing, hearing new ideas and applying and experiencing concepts in practice.

6.3　Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the overall sample of my research study, which comprised twenty-two co-inquirers, including me. The research was conducted in three case study sites, in Liquica (Timor-Leste), Margaret River (Australia) and Lobitos (Peru). I then shared the process and outcomes of the first co-operative inquiry in Liquica, Timor-Leste, with a journal article I authored that has been submitted, revised and resubmitted in *Community Development Journal,* entitled, 'Love in community work in rural Timor-Leste: a co-operative inquiry for a participatory framework of practice'. This article discusses the research context, the experience of the co-operative inquiry through the systemised process and the research outcomes.

The Liquica co-operative inquiry considered the launching statement, 'The ways that love is expressed to the community through work and actions'. Our six-week process led to the eventual formation of a definition of love as '…actions that we show through a variety of ways so that other people feel freedom, democracy, tolerance, alive, adaptation, unity and happiness'. A key research outcome was a collaborative framework of community work practice that shows that love is values-based, spiritualised action to transform social structures through democratic and dialogical processes to achieve freedom, tolerance and unity. The findings also indicate positive aspects of the co-operative inquiry process, including developing our understanding of love and sharing knowledge. Challenges included language translation and grasping the systematic process of the co-operative inquiry. Group members experienced learning about the participatory methodological process, love in the family and community, community work practice and critical thinking.

In the following chapter, I share the research process and outcomes from the second co-operative inquiry conducted in Margaret River, Australia.

7   Findings: Margaret River case study

Love is a gift given unconditionally in the hope of response, accepting risk of rejection (female co-inquirer, Margaret River co-operative inquiry).

In this chapter, I discuss the second case study in Margaret River, Australia. I present my fourth journal article entitled 'A co-operative inquiry about love using narrative, performative and visual methods', submitted, revised and resubmitted to *Qualitative Research*. This article discusses the Margaret River co-operative inquiry and specifically focuses on the narrative, performative and visual methods that we engaged to develop a framework of practice of love-based community work. The article provides insight into the liberating complexities of the co-operative inquiry method to generate original knowledge. I then discuss the findings relating to this group's experience of the co-operative inquiry method.

7.1   Research process and findings in Margaret River, Australia

The second case study site for this research was Margaret River, a rural coastal community in Australia, located 234 km south of Perth, the capital of Western Australia, and 3,111 km west of Canberra, the nation's capital. The population of Margaret River is 6,550. In September and October 2013, ten co-inquirers (including me) participated in the six-week co-operative inquiry. The local economy of Margaret River is comprised mainly of tourism, viticulture and services, and the community has a large environmental movement with over twenty local environment-focussed organisations. The community is particularly renowned for its artisans, wine, surf and stunning natural beauty, and it has one of the highest Australian Greens party votes in Western Australia (Australian Electoral Commission 2015). Reflecting the artisanal and environmental influence in the community, our co-operative inquiry was very organic and we engaged various creative and presentational methods to explore the research topic.

7.1.1   Journal article 4: Co-operative inquiry in Margaret River

The following journal article, submitted, revised and resubmitted to the journal *Qualitative Research* and currently under second review for publication, discusses the co-operative inquiry process and outcomes in Margaret River, with specific reflection on the narrative, performative and visual methods we engaged throughout the project. These methods were used to collect,

analyse and interpret our data, reflecting the broad methodological scope of the co-operative inquiry (Heron 1996).

Article title: A co-operative inquiry about love using narrative, performative and visual methods.

Journal: *Qualitative Research*

Publisher: Sage

Status: Submitted, revised, resubmitted for final decision.

Abstract

Participatory researchers advocate using presentational arts-based methods to collectively inquire into a social phenomenon. In a co-operative inquiry in an Australian rural community, ten community workers inquired into the 'love ethic' in their community work practice using narrative, performative and visual methods to gather, analyse and interpret data within cycles of reflection and action. Group members collectively and democratically chose to use presentational inquiry tools such as storytelling, dialogical performance, gift-giving, drawing and other non-traditional approaches to explore the topic and generate collaborative knowledge. These methods were engaging and empowering and supported group members to develop a love-based framework of community work practice. The group's final collective drawing depicts the roots, trunk, fruit and saplings of a tree representing the values, process, outcomes and cyclical nature of the love ethic in community work.

Introduction

Co-operative inquiry, a method within the participatory paradigm, embraces multiple dimensions of knowledge: experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowing. Heron and Reason (2008) provide a useful explanation of each aspect of this extended epistemology. *Experiential knowing* is the foundation of all-knowing and involves direct encounters with people, living beings, places or things. It is knowing through meeting and feeling the presence of others through empathy and resonance. *Presentational knowing* is the expression and communication of our experiences in images through visual arts, music, dance, movement, poetry, drama and storytelling. *Propositional knowledge* is knowing about something as ideas or theories. *Practical knowledge* is knowing how to engage in action or practice, and involves skills and competencies that consummate others forms of knowing.

Despite the primacy of practical knowledge, the authors argue that in co-operative inquiry, these four forms of knowledge interconnect, as 'there is a dynamic interplay between their actions and their state of being, mediated by intuitively grasping a significant pattern in their current behaviour and by conceptually naming the quality it reveals' (Heron and Reason, 2008: 378).

Presentational knowledge, the key focus of this article, is a privileged epistemology within co-operative inquiry as a creative and imaginal space (Heron, 1996). Presentational knowledge is explored through narrative, performative, embodied and visual methods, which are still considered 'emergent methods' (Leavy, 2008). However, some branches of qualitative research recognize the importance of presentational knowledge and the political imperative of presentational research methods. Arts-based research is 'an epistemological foundation for human inquiry that utilizes artful ways of understanding and representing the worlds in which research is constructed' (Finley, 2008: 79). Cole and Knowles (2008) explain that arts-based research can bridge the academy and the community through acknowledging multiple dimensions of the human condition (physical, emotional, spiritual, social and cultural) and the various ways of engaging in the world, such as oral, literal, visual and embodied. The authors support research that is 'accessible, evocative, embodied, empathic and provocative' (Cole and Knowles, 2008: 60).

It is also argued that critical arts-based research occupies a radical and ethical space, as a political movement that deliberately attempts to democratize knowledge generation by engaging oppressed peoples in inquiry, supporting a 'people's pedagogy' (Finley, 2008: 75). Central to presentational knowledge is performativity through tools such as theatre, film, music, poetry, writing and narration, for diverse constructions of our world (Gergen and Gergen, 2010). Unlike Butler (1997), who conceptualizes 'performativity' as reinforcement and production of power through speech, I use performativity in the performance ethnography sense, as embodied action to represent and understand everyday rituals (Denzin, 2003a). Performativity is necessary for inquiry that is 'activist, engages in critical reflection, resists neoconservatism in preference of social justice and purposefully facilitates imaginative thinking about multiple, new and diverse ways of understanding and living in the world' (Finley, 2008: 80). In this regard, activist research should transcend the performance/audience dichotomy that dominates performative methods (Leavy, 2008).

The activist characteristics of performativity (Freire, 1989) are particularly reflected in feminist participatory action research (FPAR) scholarship, which increasingly employs presentational

methods for collectively gathering, analysing and interpreting data (Alexander et al., 2007; Bessarab and Ng'andu, 2010; Chambers, 1983). Presentational methods such as storytelling, performance and visual methods support participants to co-operatively and creatively inquire into social phenomena and develop practical and propositional knowledge to inform social action (Heron, 1996). Specifically, presentational methods support personal, collective and structural transformation through Freirean dialogical processes of naming and making meaning of the world to build consciousness of structural inequality and take collective action for positive change (Kelly and Sewell, 1988; Westoby and Dowling, 2013).

This article is an in-depth exploration of the presentational aspect of the extended epistemology of the co-operative inquiry. I specifically explore narrative, visual and performative arts-based methods as modes of presentation in a co-operative inquiry I initiated in rural Western Australia, which focussed on 'the love ethic in international rural community work'. The article demonstrates that co-inquirers can embody presentational methods to dialogically inquire into social phenomena and generate new knowledge for transformative practice. Co-inquirers and I collaboratively developed the research process and outcomes discussed in this article and I received permission from my colleagues to report our co-operative inquiry from my perspective as initiating researcher (methodological guide) and co-inquirer. I conducted theoretical analysis of the literature while research findings were co-operatively generated and I share data and findings according to our collective research notes. For anonymity, co-inquirers are given pseudonyms.

The article begins with a critical review of literature about love in community work, and FPAR and co-operative inquiry. I then examine literature regarding paradigmatic and methodological approaches to presentational epistemology, focussing on narrative, visual and performative methods. I outline this study's context and methodology and then discuss the narrative, visual and performative methods that co-inquirers and I applied in our inquiry, sharing presentational and experiential explorations of love in community work. I demonstrate the depth and validity of these approaches in qualitative research and present our collaboratively developed framework of love-based community work practice. The article highlights that presentational methods, when performed in dialogical and interactional ways, can provide innovative insights into the research topic while supporting individual and collective transformation.

Love in community work

Love is a marginal construct in social and community work and most activist movements (Banks, 2006; Butot, 2007; Morley and Ife, 2002). This is despite social theories that understand

love as nonviolence and nonharmfulness (Gandhi, 2005; Hanh, 1993; King Jr., 1963), as dialogue and co-operation (Freire, 1989) and bell hooks' (2000) feminist construct of love as action (not emotion) to challenge inequitable systems of patriarchy, racism and capitalism. A small body of research explores love as emancipatory practice in social work, nursing and education (Butot, 2007; Fitzgerald and van Hooft, 2000; Horsfall, 2008). These studies suggest that love-based practice focuses on relationship, transformation of structural inequality and spiritual interconnectedness of people and nature.

Furthermore, despite the values-base of social and community work and the sectorial focus on collectivist, citizen-led action (Dominelli, 2006; Kelly and Sewell, 1988), few studies specifically consider love in community work. Nelson and colleagues' (2000) research with British culturally and linguistically diverse women highlighted the importance of self-love amongst oppressed peoples, while a United States study found that love between volunteer firefighters existed in 'brotherhood' (Haski-Leventhal and McLeigh, 2009). Additionally, separate studies regarding care for people with HIV/AIDS in South Africa and the United States found that love was a key motivation for volunteering (Akintola, 2011; Hudson and Robinson, 2001).

However, no studies involve participatory development of love-based practice. Additionally, limited theoretical literature specifically guides community workers to work through love (Somerville, 2011; Westoby and Dowling, 2013). As such, this article's exploration of co-operative inquiry about love in community work is unique, particularly due to the methodological emphasis on presentational epistemology to collaboratively develop a framework of love-based community work.

FPAR and co-operative inquiry

FPAR emphasizes the co-construction of transformative knowledge and action through cycles of collaborative inquiry (Fals-Borda and Rahman, 1991; Healy, 2001; Maguire, 1987; Ozanne and Saatcioglu, 2008; Reid and Frisby, 2008). Grounded in critical, feminist and Freirean theories, FPAR reflects Denzin and Giardina's (2009: 15) call to researchers to 'renew our efforts to decolonize the academy, to honour the voices of those who have been silenced by dominant paradigms'. Specifically, FPAR centres on gender and women's diverse experiences, and challenges patriarchy by honouring voice and intersectional difference through participatory research to explore new forms of representation and action to change a system (Reid and Frisby, 2008). FPAR prioritizes collaborative research design, data collection, analysis and reporting through cycles of reflection and action. Reflection is making meaning of social phenomena, while action involves developing and implementing strategies to transform

recognized issues. Importantly, despite a dialogical imperative (Freire, 1989), FPAR is not immune to power imbalances, requiring collective reflexivity to share power (Healy, 2001).

Co-operative inquiry is an effective FPAR method due to its holistic conceptualisation of knowledge that challenges academia's traditional emphasis on theoretical and intellectual constructions (Heron, 1996; Heron and Reason, 2008). In co-operative inquiry, people 'work together as co-researchers in exploring and changing their world' (Reason, 1988a: 18). Heron (1996: 19) outlines six features of co-operative inquiry: 1) All subjects are as fully involved as possible as co-researchers in *all* research decisions about content and method. 2) There is intentional interplay between reflection and making sense and experience and action. 3) There is explicit attention through appropriate procedures to the validity of the inquiry and its findings. 4) The method can be both informative about and transformative of any aspect of the human condition. 5) There is a range of special skills for experiential inquiry; and, 6) All human sensibilities are available as instruments of inquiry, with a multidimensional epistemology of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowing.

The co-operative inquiry process is systematically democratic and cyclical, with several stages of reflection and action (Heron, 1996; Mullett, Jung and Hills, 2004; Riley and Scharff, 2013; Rosenwasser, 2002). In the First Reflection meeting, co-inquirers decide the inquiry structure, values and roles and select a 'launching statement' (similar to a research question) that guides the inquiry. The group develops the First Action, which they undertake individually or collectively, and record their experiential data in an agreed format. Co-inquirers experience full immersion with openness to experience when undertaking the action. They return for the Second Reflection meeting to share, collectively analyse and interpret the data from the First Action, modify the launching statement and develop the Second Action. The group conducts between five and eight cycles of Reflection and Action, with ongoing reflection on the topic, process and action. The Final Reflection meeting culminates in a collective response to the research topic and reflection on the inquiry process.

Co-operative inquiry was selected to explore love in community work because previous inquiries illustrate the effectiveness of exploring multidimensional knowledges for transformational change with feminist approaches that challenge inequitable power. For example, in a North American co-operative inquiry about internalized oppression, Jewish women transformed experiences of marginalization into tools for community building (Rosenwasser, 2002). Similarly, a co-operative inquiry with feminist-identified academics that considered the ideological dilemma of 'feminism vs femininity' enabled co-inquirers to 'engage

authentically with the world' through identity sensemaking (Riley and Scharff, 2013: 221). Initially, inquiry members prioritized propositional knowledge, but exploration of lived experience transcended theoretical critique. Importantly, an emphasis on democratic participation challenges unequal power relationships between initiating researcher and co-inquirers (Lloyd and Charson, 2005), reflecting radical community work.

Co-operative inquiry also has a 'participative approach to planetary transformation' (Heron, 1996), reflecting activist movements for progressive change (King Jr., 1963). Through reflection and action, co-inquirers dialogically make meaning of the world and implement strategies to transform recognized injustices (Lloyd and Carson, 2005). Indeed, a co-operative inquiry with Canadian civil society practitioners developed a propositional model for collaboration that emphasized reflexivity, relationships and personal and intersubjective development (Mullett, Jung and Hills, 2004).

Additionally, co-operative inquiry engages creativity in knowledge development (Heron, 1996; Reason, 1988a). Co-operative inquiry is not a prescribed method, but supports co-inquirers to organically inquire into the topic through imagination, skill-sharing and collective ownership of process and findings (Riley and Scharff, 2013). Co-operative inquirers use presentational research tools to gather, record, analyse and interpret data. These include drawings, paintings, photos, sculptures, musical forms, mime, dance, ritual, thick multi-sensory descriptions, poetry, story, allegory, drama and demonstrations, in addition to traditional methods such as group discussions, note-taking, observation and interviews (Heron, 1996). Co-operative inquiry's creative, imaginative scope aligns with Denzin's assertion that 'we perform culture; we do not write it' (2003a: 78). In this regard, co-operative inquiry can encapsulate the principles and methods of FPAR and arts-based research through practising and celebrating presentational knowledge.

Presentational epistemology and methods

Presentational knowledge is a key component of the extended epistemology of the co-operative inquiry and the focus of this article. Although co-operative inquiry literature has very limited empirical exploration of tools to generate presentational knowledge, other qualitative research literature provides insight into presentational approaches such as those used in our co-operative inquiry regarding love in community work: storytelling and narratives, embodiment and performativity, and visual methods.

Co-operative inquirers can explore, analyse and interpret the inquiry topic using the presentational approach of storytelling (Heron, 1996). Stories enable people to speak from lived and concrete experience, moving away from theoretical, abstract or detached ways of making meaning. Abma (1998) explains that stories are social constructs whereby people in intensive interaction with each other make meaning of common experiences, and co-inquirers can live through stories by inviting mutual reaction. Storytelling, particularly comprehensive biographical narration, can also have healing effects by supporting the storyteller to understand her/ himself while sharing feelings and experiences (Rosenthal, 2003). Indeed, Bessarab and Ng'andu's (2010) research on yarning (story-based interviewing) with indigenous peoples in Australia and Botswana highlights the transformative potential of storytelling.

As a process for social change, stories can also be a site for paradox, and both storytellers and listeners can flexibly consider alternative perspectives through dialogical feedback (Neile, 2009). Importantly, stories, and the sacred space created when sharing stories, connect the personal and the spiritual: 'When we share our stories, they come to life through the telling, however, the story has a life of its own and that life is given through the spirit of story and the storyteller' (Lewis, 2011: 507).

Embodied and performative methods also explore and produce presentational knowledge. Movement, dance and bodily expression are unusual methods in qualitative research, but are gaining traction, particularly as tools for representing research findings (Leavy, 2008). Denzin (2003b) argues performances are a complementary way of interpreting and presenting ethnographic work. However, in FPAR, performative methods can be used for collecting, analysing and interpreting research data. As Heron (1996: 89-90) states,

> '… there is an important future for inquiries which sustain their sense-making, cycle after cycle, primarily within the presentational mode, with a secondary and subordinate interpretation of the presentations in propositional form… The inquiry group becomes an artists' collective, demonstrating art as a mode of knowledge, giving powerful access to the pre-predicative, extralinguistic world which phenomenologists tend to write about too much in analytic mode'.

Heron highlights that presentational methods, including performative methods such as movement, enable a metaphorical understanding of the world. Denzin (2003a: 33) describes this as 'performance ethnography', which 'represents and performs rituals from everyday life, using performing as a method of representation and a method of understanding'. Performance ethnography is pedagogical, reflexive, critical and conscious, a 'civic, participatory,

collaborative project' that can create 'oppositional utopian spaces, discourses, and experiences' (Denzin, 2003a: 8-17). However, Markula (2006: 355) suggests that researchers must 'harness the performative, the aesthetic, to transgress social boundaries'. Freire's (1989) dialogical process of conscientization suggests that through performative methods, researchers can move from representing the world to transforming the world by holistically and collectively building consciousness of systemic oppression, and developing and implementing strategies to change these systems through cycles of action and reflection.

A third approach that explores presentational epistemology is visual methods. Visual data sources may be existing materials, researcher-generated products or respondent-generated products, and can include drawings, maps, conceptual representations, photography, film and scientific imaging techniques (Pauwels, 2011; Weber, 2008). In participatory research, visual methods are often used within Participatory Rural Appraisal processes to support communities experiencing poverty (often with literacy challenges) to collaboratively collect and analyse relevant data (see Chambers, 1983). Visual methods recognize the 'embodied' nature of knowledge:

> 'People are not ideas, but flesh and blood beings learning through their senses and responding to images through their embodied experiences. The visual disarms or bypasses the purely intellectual, leading to a more authentic and complete glimpse of what a particular experience is like or of what people think and feel' (Weber, 2008: 46).

Weber contends that the use of images in research can assist reflexivity, provoke action for social justice and evoke and sometimes transcend the research context, while also presenting multiple interpretations. In a participatory space, collaborative drawings provide an alternative medium for dialogical reflection and communication.

In the co-operative inquiry research discussed in this article, co-inquirers and I utilized narrative, performative and visual methods to explore love in community work practice. These methods supported us to collaboratively develop a theoretical framework of love-based community work for practitioners to challenge oppressive systems of capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation in our quest for a just and sustainable world.

Overview of project and methodology

In 2013-14, I conducted participatory research for my doctoral study regarding love in international rural community work, exploring how community workers, activists and volunteers understand love in our practice and how love can transform structural inequality. I

initiated a co-operative inquiry with community workers in three rural communities: Liquica in Timor-Leste, Margaret River in Australia and Lobitos in Peru. Each site involved a group of up to ten participants ('co-inquirers'), meeting regularly to undertake five cycles of Reflection and Action to collaboratively explore the research topic. My role as initiating researcher was to guide the methodological process and participate as a co-inquirer. The project received written consent from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (project number CF13/724 – 2013000321).

This article focuses on the co-operative inquiry in Margaret River, Western Australia. Margaret River is a coastal community located on the country of the Wardandi Aboriginal people, 234 km south of Perth, the capital of Western Australia, and 3,111 km southwest of Canberra, the capital of Australia. The population of Margaret River is 6,550. The co-operative inquiry was conducted with weekly two-hour reflection meetings for six weeks in September and October 2013. The group comprised seven women and three men, representing ten community organisations working in environmental sustainability, rural women's issues, community welfare, business and industry, ethics and faith community organising. Co-inquirer demographics are outlined in the following table, which shows that co-inquirers were aged between twenty-five and seventy-three, seven co-inquirers had a university education and most were community volunteers.

Table 7.1: Demographics of Margaret River co-inquirers

Participant demographic	Female	Male	Total
Group size	7	3	10
Number of organisations represented	7	3	10
Civil society role: community worker	3	1	4
Civil society role: volunteer	4	2	6
Civil society role: community member	0	0	0
Age: 18-25	1	0	1
Age: 26-40	3	1	4
Age: 41-55	1	1	2
Age: 56+	1	1	2
Age: not provided	1	0	1
Highest education level: Primary	0	0	0
Highest education level: Secondary	1	1	2
Highest education level: Vocational	0	1	1
Highest education level: University	6	1	7

Co-inquirers were recruited by emailing local organisations to invite staff and volunteers to participate. Interested people contacted me and attended an induction meeting to discuss the

project prior to the First Reflection meeting. Despite marginalisation of love in social work (Banks, 2006), it was not difficult to recruit co-inquirers.

In the First Reflection meeting, co-inquirers and I developed a list of group values, including humility; open-mindedness; a safe space to disagree (recognising and celebrating difference and 'agree to disagree'); respect others' opinions; confidentiality (we won't name or identify other participants when discussing the research); sensitivity; focus on the point not the person; reasonableness; make sure everyone can participate; trust; and, awareness of group dynamics. We collaboratively developed a three-tiered approach to decision-making, with a preference for consensus decision-making followed by open vote and secret vote. We decided to have closed group boundaries, a flexible structure regarding actions and activities, and intended outcomes of personal transformation and information.

Our launching statement was 'Concepts of love, experiences of love in community work, and taking it forward', with four areas of consideration:

- how can we draw on love to enhance our community work?;

- how is the love ethic generated?;

- concrete examples of receiving and giving love; and,

- through stories, identify love in community work and use these examples to transform our work.

Our co-operative inquiry involved five full cycles of reflection and action, with actions conducted between the six reflection meetings. Each reflection meeting and action explored and generated knowledge through narrative, visual, performative, discursive and experiential arts-based methods including storytelling, diagrams, gift-giving and drawings. Methods and activities were democratically selected in each reflection meeting, by collaboratively designing an agenda to guide discussion and manage the large group. We used consensus decision-making with initial proposals followed by discussion, objections and counter-proposals to reach consensual positions. Disagreements were respectfully and collectively managed through the dialogical consensus approach, guided by our collaborative values. Most co-inquirers were also artists, musicians and poets, which possibly facilitated uptake of presentational methods.

Exploring love through story

As both interactive and interpretive products (Sandelowski, 1991), stories engender a participatory space, overcoming the need for traditional facilitation in democratic co-operative

inquiry circles. The storytelling method enables co-inquirers to engage in autoethnography to research the self within the inquiry topic and context (Holt, 2003; Reed-Danahay, 1997). For our First Action, community volunteer Michelle (volunteer, aged 40) suggested we use flexible media to record stories about the collaboratively selected theme of love given and love received. Storytelling was considered a safe method for co-inquirers to initially explore and share our perspectives of love, as we could ground conceptual explorations in lived experiences that were self-filtered.

Subsequently, we orally shared stories of love in the Second Reflection, and some co-inquirers had artwork, poems, notes and drawings to represent their narrative. Stories of love given and received considered relationships between family members, community organising, relationships between humans and animals, supporting children and volunteering. As we shared stories, we collectively identified characteristics of love within the narratives. While storytelling enabled us to make sense of our experiences of love, collaborative narrative analysis enabled sensemaking of the stories. Exploring both method and phenomena of story is a key aspect of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2007; Riessman, 1993) and reflects the 'meaning making' intention of qualitative research (Bailey and Tilley, 2002). The following table shares three co-inquirer stories of love given and love received and collaboratively identified characteristics of love, providing a basis for collective understanding of love in practice.

Table 7.2: Stories and characteristics of love

Story of love given and received	Characteristics of love	
Bill (volunteer, aged 73) gathered numerous donations to support a woman with a terminal illness.	Responding to request	Generosity
	Thoughtfulness	Selflessness
	Community / partnership	Kindness
	Action	Co-operation
Michelle (volunteer, aged 40) supported a woman who displayed forgiveness in her intimate relationship.	Reliability	Anger
	Turning up – presence	Grief
	Sacrifice	Justice
	Cost	Beauty
	Deserving	Moral dimension
	Mercy	
Katie (community worker, aged 25) organized a large community event.	Sleepless nights	Work purpose
	Expectations	Helping
	Involvement	Achievement
	Happiness	Feelings
	Commitment – emotional and time	Sense of place
		Reciprocity

The storytelling method assisted co-inquirers to broach the unusual topic of love in community work in an open and exploratory way. Importantly, Atkinson and Delamont (2006: 166) highlight that 'unreflective and uncritical use of narratives' may not be a route to the authentic self, and narratives require analytical examination as forms of social action and performances that create our reality. Our collective narrative analysis of characteristics of love through dialogue and critique supported us to rigorously deconstruct our performed stories. Additionally, subsequent systematic analysis through diagrams in the Second Action supported our intentional cyclical journey to generate collaborative knowledge and experience personal transformation (Heron, 1996). Our Second Action involved individual analysis of collaboratively identified characteristics of love from all our stories of love given and received. Each co-inquirer considered the meaning of the words and key elements of love that came through the stories, within a framework of interpersonal relationships and love in the community. We applied our own analytical approach to the list of characteristics and produced conceptual representations (mainly diagrams) to explain our analysis.

At the Third Reflection meeting, we shared our conceptual representations of characteristics of love derived from our stories of love. Lucy (community worker, aged 35) interpreted the characteristics of love with a picture of a tree with cycles of intentionality, investment, reciprocation/appreciation and a community of spirit (see Figure 7.1). Katie created a word diagram about a 'sense of place' (Figure 7.2). In contrast, Michelle depicted love as the intersection of 'paradox' and 'mystery', with the statement 'love is a gift given unconditionally in the hope of response, accepting risk of rejection'. She highlighted the paradox of love as both other- and self-serving, while Rachel (volunteer, aged 47) depicted love as honouring the divine in the self and the other. I interpreted the characteristics of love as action and feeling, embedded in processes of trusting relationships, reciprocity and connectedness, for the goals of justice, freedom and self-actualisation.

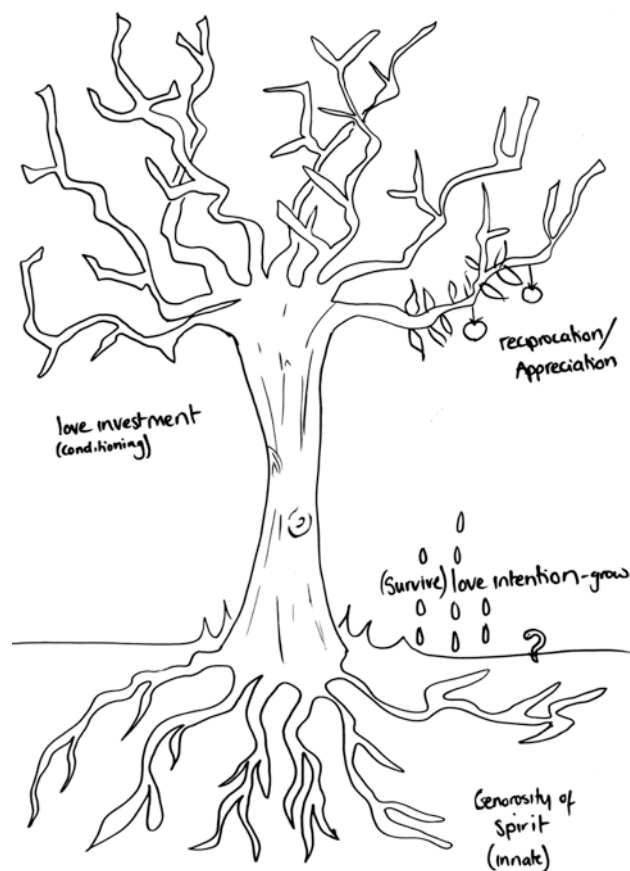Figure 7.1: Lucy's diagrammatical analysis of characteristics of love

Figure 7.2: Katie's diagrammatical analysis of characteristics of love

Individual narrative analyses through diagrams enabled co-inquirers to conceptualize the list of characteristics of love in accessible and creative ways. The diversity of diagrams stimulated rich discussion and we identified recurring themes such as love as cyclical, interactivity and interconnectedness. We chose to further analyse our diagrams through an embodied, performative method.

Embodied and performative methods: dialogical performance of love

Our co-operative inquiry used performative methods to both interpret and transform our community work practice, reflecting the dialogical imperative of FPAR (Freire, 1989). In the Third Reflection meeting, after sharing our conceptual diagrams from the Second Action, we interpreted our diagrammatical representations of characteristics of love through silent performative movement, a presentational form of analysis (Heron, 1996). We formed a circle and one-by-one expressed our bodily interpretation of the data through a physical connection to the person on our left, continuing for five rounds of the circle. Embodied, performative interpretations of love included hugging, touching someone's head, joining hands, bowing, giving a high five and dancing. The group became increasingly intimate and emotional as we continued around the circle; for example, Rachel expressed her love through wiping a tear from her eye and rubbing it on the next person's heart. Physical expressions of love evolved into a closed circle of shoulder massage (giving and receiving love simultaneously), trotting around the room and laughing. The method concluded with an intimate, circular reflection on the research process.

Leavy (2008) explains that meaning is constructed and multiplied during the transfer between performer and audience in performative methods. However, our approach diverged from traditional performance, as we did not involve an audience. Instead, in our circular inquiry format, we engaged in what I call *dialogical performance*, by giving and receiving interactive movement to interpret the data. We moved beyond the performer/audience dichotomy to construct meaning in embodied dialogue during interaction and relationship rather than transfer. Our performative method supported intimacy, connection and relationship building, and group members moved closer to a consensual framework of love-based community work.

Following the embodied movement method, group members reported they felt excited and challenged by our co-operative inquiry. Several stated their concept of community work had already transformed through the creative and exploratory process, with deeper understanding of their values as practitioners and lived experience of democratic decision-making. Others were excited about the growing group connectedness. Katie indicated she was still waiting for

her 'light-bulb moment' and the group assured her we were only midway through the co-operative inquiry process.

Our co-operative inquiry continued to engage in dialogical performance through our collaboratively developed Third Action to create a gift that expressed love for another group member. Physical gift exchange intended to support group members to embody the experience of giving and receiving love. At the Fourth Reflection meeting, each co-inquirer gave and received gifts we prepared during the week. Example gifts were a collection of story cards and reading an original story; a monologue with interactive bodily expression; a box of garlic and chocolate with a Bible verse from 1 Corinthians; homegrown vegetables; and a handmade leadlight owl. We exchanged gifts within a circle of dialogical performance, simultaneously giving, receiving and witnessing love.

The performative activity was followed by a group discussion about the experience of giving and receiving gifts of love. The discussion revealed that it was generally easier to give rather than receive, as this is how community workers are 'naturally wired'. We articulated that selfless gift-giving without expectation of reciprocity is love, while expecting a gift in return is not love. Building from this observation, the group recognized that power exists in relationships, but love involves openly acknowledging and sharing power through participatory and collective (rather than hierarchical) processes with openness, listening and relational/face-to-face work. As presentational and experiential knowledge, gift-giving enabled co-inquirers to express and explore emotion in relation to love. We chose to interpret our experience and discussion of gift-giving with a collaborative drawing, a visual method shared in the following section.

Collaborative drawing: a visual expression of love

Drawings are accessible and creative research methods that support holistic exploration, reflexivity and interpretation, reflecting the aims of critical arts-based research (Finley, 2008). Drawings featured throughout our research in individual and group formats. In the later stages of the co-operative inquiry, we collaboratively developed a large group drawing over two reflection meetings to gather and interpret data. In the Fourth Reflection meeting, we began a collective drawing to analyse our experiences of giving and receiving love through gift-giving. Through consensus decision-making, we decided to create a collective drawing of a tree to represent our emerging concept of love in community work.

The tree image was selected to reflect the cyclical and change-oriented process of love in community work. During our first session of co-operatively drawing this tree, we included some word labels to reflect love in community work. We navigated the tension between consensual and autonomous drawings by drawing a collective tree with individual inputs in the roots, trunk and branches, contributing our own creativity and insight to a collaborative image. The tree image was colourful and dynamic, and some inclusions of our collective interpretation of love were scars (labelled 'wounding – open to wonder'); leaves ('open communication – synthesis'); roots ('generosity of spirit'); and a trail of ants ('connectedness'). We concluded this meeting by developing our Fourth Action, regarding the 'taking it forward' component of our original launching statement. The Fourth Action involved applying our discussion and growing collective concepts of love by working through love in one specific instance of community work during the week, with journal reflection.

At the Fifth Reflection meeting, we individually shared stories of applying the group's collective concepts of love in community work practice. The group collaboratively analysed each story to identify key aspects of working through love and the storyteller drew these concepts onto the shared tree drawing. Lucy spoke about supporting service users with disabilities to give gifts to their carers and Bill reflected on meeting old friends at a convention. Michelle and Tim (volunteer, aged 39) shared stories of connecting to community members with whom they have ongoing conflict and Rachel outlined struggles with her partner and navigating sacrifice in community work. Linda (volunteer, aged 69) discussed using love-based compliments in a new group and Peter (community worker, aged 53) spoke about responding to a community group that did not repay a loan.

Several stories emphasized conflict and negotiating difference. In our collective analysis of each story, identified concepts to describe love in community work included going out on a limb; butterfly effect; sacrifice; forgiveness; play; hope; synergy; reciprocity; appreciation; enabling others to give love; non-exploitation; respect; learning; humility; resilience; joy; flexibility; bending with the wind; and openness. These were added to the tree drawing, assisting us to conceptualize love as a cyclical process and a complex construct of feeling, action and outcome. The following figure shares the final drawing of our collective tree.

Figure 7.3: Final collaborative drawing of love in community work

When satisfied that we had concluded our drawing, a brief reflection on the co-operative inquiry process highlighted that enriched relationships were a key outcome of the process. This led to the development of the Fifth Action (final action), to write a short paragraph about our personal transformation from participating in this research and ways to take the learning forward. At the Final Reflection meeting the following week, we shared individual statements of personal transformation from participating in the co-operative inquiry. A common reported

change was increased focus on relationships rather than tasks in community work. For example, Michelle stated,

> 'Love only has meaning in the context of a relationship. Love… is a gift that is offered unconditionally but always offered in the hope of a response. Alienation is what love seeks to overcome. Love's goal and reward is reconciliation and intimacy of close relationship'.

Several participants reported understanding the interconnectedness of all people and planet, embracing love as the binding force between all. Linda learned that while love is reciprocal, it does not require an immediate fair exchange, enabling love to be freely given without condition. She stated, 'selfless acts of love will multiply through the acts of others'. Bill identified a greater understanding of diversity in community work in Margaret River, stating, 'There's so many people out there giving'. Katie also learned that consensus decision-making is 'a lot more time efficient because it creates a group that wouldn't be drawn into conflict or power dynamics', and Linda agreed that our group 'formed solidarity in group decision-making'. Other reported changes included recognising the importance of respecting volunteers' time and commitment and having boundaries. Tim felt he did not gain much from the inquiry due to his minimal contribution.

We also reflected on the co-operative inquiry process and our methodological learnings. Everyone stressed the process was appropriate and useful. We appreciated the cycles of reflection and action and participatory presentational processes that enabled greater exploration, engagement, collaborative knowledge development and change. Linda explained she found the participatory approach frustrating at first, as she expected me as initiating researcher to have more control, but she soon became accustomed to democratic decision-making. All co-inquirers reported the timeframe and weekly time commitment was appropriate. The group concluded with simultaneous celebration and mourning of the end of our process.

The love ethic: a framework for community work practice

Heron (1996: 89) suggests that sensemaking within the presentational mode can lead to 'a rigour of expressive form, and a mastery of radical imaginal meaning'. Multiple presentational arts-based methods in this co-operative inquiry supported co-inquirers to explore, redefine and transform our perspectives and practice of community work, through continued sharing, reflexivity and collaborative knowledge development. Indeed, our co-operative inquiry

culminated in an innovative, practicable, holistic and transformative theory of love-based community work practice. This propositional framework was depicted in the collaborative drawing of Figure 7.3, and I share my observations of our collective knowledge, noting that co-inquirers may view the drawing differently.

My understanding of our collective analysis and interpretation of our co-operative inquiry data is that the love ethic is both a theoretical perspective and a tool for community work practice. Love is action for reciprocal wellbeing and equality, and holistically encompasses values, feeling, action and outcome. Community work through love is reflected in the metaphor of a tree. The roots, trunk, fruit and saplings of a tree represent the values, process, outcomes and cyclical nature of the love ethic in community work.

The *roots of a tree* represent values. The love ethic in community work has its roots in a heart and body of respect, underpinned by a commitment to equal rights of all beings. The love-based community worker has self-love, generosity of spirit, commitment and hope. We are consciously non-exploitative of people and planet. We understand that love is a choice to support and give to others with joy. The *tree trunk* represents the process of love-based community work. Based on values, love is a process of symbiosis between people and planet, building and appreciating connectedness. It involves actively and collectively transforming structures of inequality through open communication and seeking common ground with others. We are flexible as we bend with and listen to the wind in our participatory approach. Love-based community work involves sacrifice and going out on a limb, but we also know when to say 'no' and self-care. We may experience wounding due to challenges, but scars represent our growth, beauty and openness to wonder. Applying the love ethic is also playful and we experience joy. We may fall and make mistakes, but continuing to act through love reflects our learning, humility, resilience and willingness to transform. Forgiveness is the heart of the love ethic.

Fruit, foliage and flowers of a tree represent the intended outcomes of love-based community work. When we act through love, our community work encourages reconciliation. We support communities to acknowledge and appreciate transformation for equality, facilitating joy and wellbeing. *Tree saplings* that grow from seeds of the tree represent the cyclical nature of love. Acting through love pollinates other processes of love, enabling others to give and share love. This 'butterfly effect' enables reciprocal exchange of love. In summary, as an organic, flexible and cyclical framework of practice, the love ethic in community work reflects synthesis, symbiosis and synergy between people, planet and cosmos.

Conclusion

This co-operative inquiry used presentational knowing to generate propositional and practical knowledge for transformational community work. The research was informed by FPAR and presentational knowledge philosophies and theorized through the 'love ethic', bell hooks' (2000) radical feminist ontology that conceptualizes social change through reciprocal love. Our participatory research embodied nonviolent theory (Gandhi, 2005) by actualising values of safety, respect and sensitivity. Similarly, our inquiry reflected dialogical practice (Freire, 1989; Kelly and Sewell, 1988; Westoby and Dowling, 2013) through democratic decision-making, mutual trusting relationships and consciousness-raising of social injustice and privilege.

The research generated practicable knowledge regarding the inquiry topic *and* the inquiry process. The co-operative inquiry supported the development of a conceptual framework of the love ethic for community work through presentational arts-based methods of storytelling, dialogical performance and conceptual drawings. These methods enabled co-inquirers to collaboratively and rigorously explore the research topic, while embodying values and processes of participation, democracy and dialogue. The research demonstrates that narrative, visual and performative methods can support co-inquirers to deeply inquire into a topic and produce innovative practical and propositional knowledge.

Our research suggests that storytelling in a participatory, non-hierarchical space enables groups to build trust, intimacy, affection and connection in the early developmental stages of a democratic process (Kelly and Sewell, 1988). Guided by values of reflexivity and respect, this method allocated equal importance to each story and co-inquirer, who was honoured as 'expert' when navigating analytical disagreements in collaborative analysis. Further, visual methods can support co-inquirers to produce and synthesize data, demonstrated in our collaborative drawing of our framework of love-based community work. Specifically, organic visual analysis supports an iterative and reflexive process that holistically embraces multiple knowledges and experiences (Weber, 2008).

Finally, this research highlights the transformative potential of presentational knowledge through performance. Methods such as interactive movement and gift-giving can support co-inquirers to deeply explore the research topic and experience personal transformation by transgressing social boundaries of touch and relationship. This reflects Riley and Scharff's (2013) finding that exploring experiential knowing shifts co-inquirers into a deeper, more critical space. Additionally, dialogical performance supports co-inquirers to make meaning by deliberately strengthening our consciousness through embodiment to transform our selves as

community workers. This reveals the 'emancipatory potential' of the performance event (Madison, 1998 cited in Leavy, 2008) as co-inquirers actualize the Freirean imperative of change *through* dialogue.

Importantly, a systematic co-operative inquiry using non-text based creative expression enables co-inquirers to democratically engage in all stages of research - design, data collection, analysis, interpretation and reporting. For qualitative researchers interested in applying the participatory research paradigm, our project illustrates the liberating potential of co-operative research that holistically embraces presentational, experiential, practical and propositional knowledges.

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The above journal article shares the proposed framework of practice for love-based community work from the Margaret River co-operative inquiry. Key features of this framework are:

- Love is action to change structures of inequality.

- Love is holistic and encompasses values, feeling, actions and outcomes.

- Love is rooted in values and human rights.

- Love in community work holistically involves love between people and between people and nature.

- Love is joyful and creative.

- Love-based community work is democratic and involves open communication and reconciliation.

- Love is cyclical.

7.1.2   Group's experience of the co-operative inquiry method

Similar to the methodological findings shared in Chapter 6, I share the following data as my perspective from the reflection meeting transcripts and my observations of the group's experience of the co-operative inquiry method in Margaret River.

Process

The Margaret River co-operative inquiry group members were very positive about the research process, highlighting the strength of the method for collaborative knowledge development. We articulated that we enjoyed and appreciated the action-reflection cycles as a means for building relationships, generating knowledge and personal transformation.

As an 'insider researcher', I found this group immediately warm and organic as I was conducting research in my own community with people I have known for many years and who

know and respect each other through belonging to a small community. I observed a high level of openness to vulnerability, connectedness and trust. One co-inquirer explained that he initially felt uncertain in the group due to his self-perceived lack of knowledge and experience, but through discussion and sharing of ideas, feelings and emotion, he and other group members were able to connect. Others also recognised that they built relationships through the process, including networking and celebrating differences in a non-judgemental way. One co-inquirer celebrated the process as an opportunity to 'acknowledge each other in community as community workers'; while another explained that the process built connections and solidarity. In particular, one co-inquirer expressed that she felt encouraged to know that other community workers practice from a place of love, giving her a sense of hope. Others also identified the importance of meeting with like-minded people.

Group members were also positive about the democratic consensus decision-making approach we adopted, which enabled us all to take responsibility for decision-making and experience solidarity. One participant explained that consensus-style decision-making is efficient and can support a group to avoid conflict or power dynamics over the long-term. Furthermore, she shared that participatory, democratic processes support equality and safety and ensure that everyone feels comfortable to contribute without judgement.

When forming the group, several co-inquirers emphasised the importance of disagreement and respectful chaos within the process to ensure their diverse worldviews were heard and encouraged. I observed that our diversity of opinions and experiences were nurtured, celebrated and critically analysed in a safe and empowering space. A co-inquirer recognised that a key factor that facilitated the positive process was that each co-inquirer was 'self-regulated', and the group also allowed each person to be themselves and share as they wanted. One co-inquirer described the co-operative inquiry meetings as 'my two hours of relief'. Co-inquirers also recognised that another factor that facilitated the process was the diversity of skills and knowledge within the group, which emerged organically and unprompted. As explained in the journal article above, this co-operative inquiry involved multiple forms of creative data collection and expression through tools such as drawing, physical actions, discussion and writing. As such, the process and findings were informative and transformative.

A key challenge in this co-operative inquiry process was time. At each meeting, we felt pressured by the two-hour timeframe to undertake the process of sharing and analysing the data from the previous action, interpreting the data and planning the following action. This led to some aspects feeling rushed or compromised and some feelings of tension. For example, in

the third reflection meeting, I felt a sense of methodological urgency that we needed some sort of synthesis/collective interpretation (outcome) to move the conversation onto our next stage. I expressed this to the group and they kindly encouraged me to trust process, highlighting that outcomes would emerge organically. It was humbling to be reminded of this key concept of participatory research and community work. At the final (sixth) reflection meeting, we discussed the time commitment (two hours per week for seven weeks) and co-inquirers acknowledged that although it would not be possible to sustain this commitment, the time commitment was appropriate for the confined period. Furthermore, the two-hour meeting length was considered necessary for the work we undertook.

Learning and transformation

As per the intention of our co-operative inquiry, co-inquirers experienced learning and transformation through our process. The group appeared to quickly understand the co-operative inquiry method, which enabled me to shift from my role as methodological guide to co-inquirer. I felt less anxious about the data and more engaged as a co-inquirer rather than facilitator. My empowered position quickly diminished as we collectively assumed responsibility for the group and process (a key goal of the co-operative inquiry method (Heron 1996)), and we collaboratively learned to identify, manage and challenge power imbalances between 'researcher' and 'subject', as well as the power relations occurring within and between participants. This assisted me to manage my 'insider researcher' position, as I evolved to being another co-inquirer in the group.

The transcript and observation data also suggest that co-inquirers experienced learning and transformation regarding community work practice. Several co-inquirers articulated that participating in the co-operative inquiry discussions and activities supported them to better understand the role of love in community work. In the third reflection meeting, we engaged in intimate reflection about the research process. Co-inquirers expressed that they felt very positive, excited and challenged by the co-operative inquiry. Several stated that their concept and understanding of community work had already radically transformed through the process. Others were excited about the growing connectedness and relationships within the group and their deepening understanding of their values as practitioners.

The final reflection meeting included comprehensive discussion about the co-operative inquiry process. Co-inquirers identified various personal transformations, including:

- A greater focus on relationships rather than task in our community work, recognising that we need to focus on people and that community work is about relationships, including relationships between people and relationships between people and nature. One co-inquirer stated, 'love only has meaning in relationships'.

- The importance of respecting volunteer time and commitment.

- New perceptions of love in community work and understanding love in action in community work.

- Understanding that while love is reciprocal, it does not require an immediate exchange of fairness, which enables love to be given freely and without condition.

- The realisation of the interconnectedness of all people and nature, and embracing love as the binding force between all.

- Recognising the importance of having boundaries and saying no, self-forgiveness and respecting each other's time.

- The importance of mindfulness in practice.

- Improved communication in the workplace.

- The importance of working in solidarity and in groups, including being open to difference and diversity.

One co-inquirer expressed that he did not really change through the process and he acknowledged that it was largely due to not putting in much energy or commitment to the project. However, most co-inquirers explained that, at the end of the process, they were actively applying our new knowledge in their work and noticed changes in their relationships, activities and sense of self.

7.2   Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the process and outcomes of the second co-operative inquiry in Margaret River, Australia. I shared a journal article I authored that was submitted, revised and resubmitted for publication in the journal *Qualitative Research,* entitled, 'A co-operative inquiry about love using narrative, performative and visual methods'. In this article, I discussed the research context, the experience of the co-operative inquiry through the systemised process and the research outcomes.

The Margaret River co-operative inquiry developed the launching statement, 'Concepts of love, experiences of love in community work and taking it forward'. With a six-week process that involved significant creative expression, the co-operative inquiry produced several key outcomes. Firstly, co-inquirers and I developed a collaborative framework of community work practice which shows that love is holistic, values-based action to change structures of inequality, encompassing love between people and between people and nature, through democratic, dialogical and reconciliatory processes that are cyclical. Secondly, the study shows the emancipatory and rigorous potential of arts-based, narrative and performative methods in co-operative research, and the importance of embracing emergent methods in participatory research. Thirdly, the findings indicate the strength of the co-operative inquiry method for collaborative knowledge development, building relationships and personal transformation as practitioners and individuals, while a key challenge is the time commitment required to appropriately undertake the method. Fourthly, group members experienced learning about the co-operative inquiry method and community work practice, enhancing their understanding of their values as practitioners.

In the next chapter, I share the process and findings of the third co-operative inquiry in Lobitos, Peru.

8 Findings: Lobitos case study

El amor fraternal es un sentimiento profundo que nos ayuda e impulsar a actuar y proporciona igualdad de derechos y deberes por el bienestar de los demás sin recibir nada a cambio [Love is a deep feeling that supports and motivates us to act for universal equality, rights and responsibilities to ensure the wellbeing of all, without receiving anything in exchange] (Lobitos co-operative inquiry).

In this chapter, I discuss the third case study in Lobitos, Peru. I share a submitted journal article entitled 'Love-based community work and the indigenous worldview of *buen vivir* in Peru'. This article considers the Latin American indigenous knowledge paradigm of *buen vivir* as an alternative to Western development theory, and examines a co-operative inquiry conducted in Lobitos, Peru that developed a localised framework of practice of love-based community work that enhances the *buen vivir* paradigm. Following this article, I share the findings regarding this group's experience of the co-operative inquiry method.

8.1 Research process and findings in Lobitos, Peru

The third case study site for this research was Lobitos, a coastal community located 1,115km north of Lima, the capital of Peru. Lobitos is predominantly an artisanal fishing village, with a rapidly emerging surf tourism industry (Godden 2012). At the most recent census in 2007, the population of Lobitos was 1,506 (INEI 2007). Our co-operative inquiry was conducted over four weeks in February 2014, with four co-inquirers (including me). The demographics of the co-inquirers from the Lobitos co-operative inquiry are outlined the following table, which shows that all four participants were community workers aged 26-40 years, with varying levels of education.

Table 8.1: Demographics of Lobitos co-inquirers

Participant demographic	Female	Male	Total
Group size	3	1	4
Number of organisations represented	3	1	4
Civil society role: community worker	3	1	4
Civil society role: volunteer	0	0	0
Civil society role: community member	0	0	0
Age: 18-25	0	0	0
Age: 26-40	3	1	4
Age: 41-55	0	0	0
Age: 56+	0	0	0
Highest education level: Primary	0	1	1
Highest education level: Secondary	0	0	0
Highest education level: Vocational	2	0	2
Highest education level: University	1	0	1

8.1.1 Journal article 5: Co-operative inquiry in Lobitos

The following journal article, submitted to the *British Journal of Social Work,* discusses the Lobitos co-operative inquiry within the context of a remerging paradigmatic trend of *buen vivir* in theory, practice and governance. *Buen vivir* is an indigenous worldview in Latin America that holistically embraces the rights of nature and the rights of people (Cortez 2011; Gudynas & Acosta 2011; Villalba 2013). It is an alternative to development and is integrated into the constitutions of the Republic of Ecuador (2008) and the Plurinational State of Bolivia (2009). Various activist groups in Latin America are leading the international movement for an alternative approach to neoliberal development, reflecting Latin American radical politics exemplified in Freirean dialogue (Freire 1989) and liberation theology (Gutierrez 1974). This paper considers how the ethic of love can be integrated into *buen vivir* discourse and how this holistic approach can be actualised in local community work.

Article: Love-based community work and the indigenous worldview of *buen vivir* in Peru

Journal: *British Journal of Social Work*

Publisher: Oxford University Press

Status: Submitted, under review.

Abstract

Buen vivir is an indigenous knowledge paradigm from Latin American that challenges dominant neoliberal development discourse. *Buen vivir* encapsulates a living equilibrium of human rights and the rights of nature, and engages a 'solidarity economy' emphasizing equities, equality and freedoms, social justice (productive and reproductive) and environmental justice. *Buen vivir* is a core value of the Constitutions of the Republic of Ecuador and the Plurinational State of Bolivia. However, most literature relating to *buen vivir* considers sustainable change at a systemic level, with limited focus on localised community work for sustainability. Furthermore, despite its relevance to progressive activism, 'love' is rarely considered in the *buen vivir* literature, nor social work, community work or international development literature more generally. This article shares the process and outcomes of participatory research conducted in Peru, whereby several community workers developed a love-based framework of community work practice. The framework suggests that love is values-based feeling and action that aims for a world of peace, happiness and prosperity by transforming social conditions for a system of equality through community work focused on participatory and democratic processes. The findings strengthen the *buen vivir* paradigm by providing a grassroots ethics approach to structural change for sustainability.

Introduction

'Development' is a hotly contested and deeply critiqued concept. It is often situated within neoliberal capitalist theory, although this is challenged by the emergence of alternative discourses of 'human development' (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2015) and 'sustainable development' (United Nations [UN], 1992). Development-centred language, policy and programming emanates throughout the UN, bilateral and multilateral donor bodies, governments, international aid organizations and media. The economic rationalist foundations of the development sector, within which social workers increasingly operate, are systemically evident. From practices such as numerical poverty indicators to outcomes-based evaluation, development is framed within the dominant paradigm of the globalised market economy.

While some organisations consistently highlight inequalities in the neoliberal global economic order (see Oxfam International, 2015), few powerful entities are sufficiently courageous to propose alternative systems to neoliberal capitalism. The development sector tinkers around the edges of the current capitalist project, trying to refine the system to enable equality, but few world leaders actively question the capitalist goal of economic growth. Indeed, even the international movement to develop and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is locked into a neoliberal paradigm that equates development with economic wealth (Women's

Major Group, 2014). Concerningly, in recent UN meetings, some conservative world leaders are questioning whether human rights are integral to development, indicating an ideological retreat (Sen and Mukherjee, 2014). This is met with considerable backlash from civil society groups, exemplified in a *Civil Society Red Flag* at the 58th Commission on the Status of Women in 2014 (Gestos et al., 2014).

Some criticise the global development movement, particularly in the Global South, as neo-colonial, oppressive and neoliberal (see Kothari, 2005 and Nederveen Pieterse, 2010 for analyses of development theory). In his seminal text *Development as Freedom,* Sen (2001) challenges the notion that development relies upon economic growth. He instead suggests that development is synonymous with freedom, identifying five types of freedoms: political freedoms (people have the opportunity to determine who governs and on what principles, and to scrutinise and criticise authorities and political parties); economic facilities (opportunities to utilise economic resources for the purpose of consumption, production or exchange); social opportunities (arrangements that society makes for systems such as education and health, which influence the individuals substantive freedom to live better); transparency guarantees (the need for openness that people expect; the freedom to deal with one another under guarantees of disclosure and lucidity); and protective securities (social safety net for preventing the affected population from being reduced to abject misery, or even starvation and death). These freedoms are incumbent on the removal of deprivations.

However, some activists, social movements and governments challenge dominant neoliberal discourse and systems by advocating sustainable *alternatives* to development. The concept of *buen vivir* is (re)gaining traction as a structural paradigm in Latin America, and is increasingly embraced internationally as a model for a new regime of development and a new way of living (Acosta, 2011). In 2008, the Republic of Ecuador ratified a new constitution promoting *buen vivir*, translated as 'good way of living', as a unique set of rights of people and nature. The Plurinational State of Bolivia uses a similar term in its 2009 Constitution, *vivir bien* (translated as 'wellbeing'), as an ethical framework guiding State policy and practice for sustainability and justice. The *buen vivir* discourse provides an ethical theory that challenges the divisiveness and inequality of neoliberalism. *Buen vivir* can support radical transformation of systems of inequality and oppression, but most literature considers structural transformation at national government and economic levels despite the importance of working towards *buen vivir* at individual, household and community levels.

In this article, I explore the opportunity to engage *buen vivir* as a practice framework for

grassroots activists, social workers and community workers working for a sustainable world. I begin with a review of the literature regarding *buen vivir* and the relevance of love to *buen vivir,* and discuss the importance of localised and practice-based approaches to participate in this (re)emergent discourse. I then share a love-based framework of sustainable community work practice that was developed in a co-operative inquiry with four community workers in Lobitos, a fishing village in northern Peru, which reflects many elements of *buen vivir*. This local practice framework can strengthen the *buen vivir* paradigm, whereby love can be a useful ethical component of *buen vivir* as a mutually reciprocal and relational core of local and structural change.

Literature relating to *buen vivir*

Alternative paradigms to mainstream development require a strong ethical stance. While the social work profession has a well-articulated framework of value and ethics (International Federation of Social Work [IFSW] 2012), Schwenke (2009 p. ix) argues that the international development sector lacks a 'common moral vocabulary', particularly due to the focus on economic development which can exclude political, psychological, spiritual and moral dimensions of society. She explains that development ethics consider political, economic and social processes, and the overarching goals of poverty alleviation, with norms such as 'human dignity, essential freedoms, social justice, peace, civic virtue, human flourishing, the common good, gender equality, safety and security, care and compassion, participation and inclusion' (2009 p. 8). There is a glaring need for practicable ethical frameworks that challenge power inequalities of the neoliberal development model and limitations of dominant Western constructions of 'sustainable' development within neoliberal capitalism (Vanhulst and Beling, 2014). *Buen vivir* is an ethical and values-based discourse that provides an alternative paradigm to development.

Buen vivir has been translated slightly differently in various publications to mean, 'the good way of living' (Republic of Ecuador, 2008), 'good living' (Acosta, 2011), 'living well' (Villalba, 2013) and 'harmonious coexistence' (Gudynas and Acosta, 2011), while *vivir bien* is used in the 2009 Bolivian Constitution, translated as 'wellbeing' (Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2009). More important than language or translation, however, are the diverse frameworks and applications of *buen vivir* (Gudynas, 2011) as an alternative vision and paradigm to 'the depleted development model and neoliberal period that has led to multiple interconnected global crises' (Villalba, 2013 pp. 1438-9).

At its core, *buen vivir* is a Latin American indigenous knowledge paradigm that encapsulates human rights and the rights of nature as living equilibrium between individuals and collectives, with society and with nature (Acosta, 2011). It is grounded in indigenous knowledges and traditions that have been marginalised by dominant development theory and practice (Gudynas and Acosta, 2011), including mainstream social work. The *buen vivir* paradigm brings together human rights and the rights of nature, a 'solidarity economy' emphasizing equities, equality and freedoms, social justice (productive and reproductive) and environmental justice, with a harmonious relationship between people and nature (Acosta, 2011). *Buen vivir* connects to theories of deep ecology (Naess, 1973) and ecofeminism (Shiva, 1989).

Constitutional recognition of buen vivir

In 2008, the Republic of Ecuador ratified a new Constitution that enshrined *sumak kawsay,* an indigenous Kichwa (Quechua) concept translated as *buen vivir* in Spanish. Article 2 of the Constitution asserts that the State has the duty to ensure various human rights to support *buen vivir,* including rights to water and food, healthy environment, information technology, culture and science, education, habitat and housing, health and labour and social security (Republic of Ecuador, 2008). Further to this, the Constitution frames *buen vivir* with the rights of nature (Pachamama or Mother Earth), including nature's right to integral respect for its existence and for maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes, and the State's duty to apply preventive and restrictive measures on activities that cause species extinction, ecosystem destruction and permanent alteration of natural cycles.

Buen vivir is operationalised in the Ecuadorian Constitution within an alternative development structure of 'the organized, sustainable and dynamic group of economic, political, socio-cultural and environmental systems which underpin the achievement of the good way of living [*sumak kawsay*]' (Republic of Ecuador, 2008 Article 275). The *buen vivir* development structure emphasises quality of life, rights, a 'fair, democratic, productive, mutually supportive and sustainable economic system based on the egalitarian distribution of the benefits of development and the means of production', and decent, stable employment. It aims to foster participation and social monitoring, restore and conserve nature and maintain a healthy and sustainable environment, guarantee national sovereignty, promote balanced, equitable land use planning, and protect and promote cultural diversity (Republic of Ecuador, 2008 Article 276). The Ecuadorian Constitution appears to deliberately challenge the neoliberal paradigm, with a proposed development regimen that envisions a new society based on 'equality, fraternity, solidarity, complementarity, equal access, participation, social control and

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responsibility. Its projection is towards a new social, political, economic, and nature-based mode of development that takes distance from capitalism and requires a major re-orienting from within' (Walsh, 2010 p. 19).

In 2009, the Plurinational State of Bolivia also ratified a new Constitution. Article 8 outlines the ethical principles of the State that comprise *vivir bien*, embracing the knowledge and Aymara language of Andean indigenous peoples, including '*ama qhilla, ama llulla, ama suwa* [do not be lazy, do not be a liar or a thief], *suma qamaña* [live well], *ñandereko* [live harmoniously], *teko kavi* [good life], *ivi maraei* [land without evil] and *qhapaj ñan* [noble path or life]'. Section II of Article 8 shows that the State is based on the values of 'unity, equality, inclusion, dignity, liberty, solidarity, reciprocity, respect, interdependence, harmony, transparency, equilibrium, equality of opportunity, social and gender equality in participation, common welfare, responsibility, social justice, distribution and redistribution of the social wealth and assets for well being' (Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2009).

Article 306 of the Constitution presents the country's plural economic model that enshrines *vivir bien*, emphasising co-operative economic organisation, principles of complementariness, reciprocity, solidarity, redistribution, equality, legal security, sustainability, equilibrium, justice and transparency, and the 'equitable redistribution of economic surplus in the social policies of health, education, culture, and the re-investment in productive economic development' (Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2009 Article 306). As an apparent challenge to dominant development theory, Article 313 also frames the elimination of poverty and social and economic exclusion within *vivir bien*, with goals of rights, fair production, distribution and redistribution of wealth, reduction of inequality of access to productive resources, reduction of regional inequalities, productive development of the industrialization of natural resources, and active public and community participation in the productive apparatus (Plurinational State of Bolivia, 2009 Article 313). In Bolivia, *vivir bien* is an ethical framework for paradigmatic and structural change.

Plural interpretations of buen vivir

As exemplified by these two Constitutions, there are plural interpretations of *buen vivir* amongst Latin American indigenous groups, governments, social movements and academics (Gudynas, 2011). Villalba (2013) highlights the ontological differences between indigenous conceptualisations of *buen vivir* (core concepts of nature, community, labour, consensus and democracy, spirituality and fundamental principles of reciprocity, complementarity and relationality), and emerging Western / *mestizo* constructs of *buen vivir*. Nevertheless, there are

similarities amongst the various knowledge constructions*, as identified by Gudynas (2011) and Villalba (2013). Firstly, it appears that *buen vivir* provides an alternative paradigm to development and rejects the lineal construction of development. Secondly, Western dichotomies that separate people and nature are discarded for harmonious relationships, extended communities and citizenship structures that reject domination and control. Thirdly, *buen vivir* is an ethical framework based on aesthetic, cultural, historical, environmental, spiritual *and* economic values within a 'cosmo-centric view' (Villalba, 2013). Fourthly, decolonization is integral, including decolonization of knowledge. Fifthly, *buen vivir* is not restricted to the material dimension, embracing feelings, affections, happiness, relationships and spirituality.

Gudynas and Acosta (2011) argue that *buen vivir* extends anthropocentric notions of the 'good life' and 'wellbeing' by transcending material consumption to affection and spirituality. *Buen vivir* focuses on the interconnectedness of economic, political, sociocultural and environmental spheres, along with the necessities, capacities and potentialities of human beings (Walsh, 2010 p. 16). The paradigm is 'an opportunity to build a society based on peaceful coexistence, in diversity and harmony with nature' (Acosta, 2011 p. 189). However, operationalizing *buen vivir* is challenging (Vanhulst and Beling, 2014). Both Ecuador and Bolivia fall short in executing this paradigm in policy decision-making and *buen vivir* risks becoming a discursive and functional tool (Walsh, 2010). Furthermore, although feminist analyses of *buen vivir* exist (Leon, 2008), (Leon, 2009), they are often marginal to dominant, gender-neutral discussions, despite congruencies between feminism and *buen vivir* (Cortez, 2011). Some authors also advocate localised rather than generalised approaches of *buen vivir* to human development (Torres and Acevedo, 2011). Despite these and other criticisms, *buen vivir* as a (re)emergent discourse provides an exciting paradigm for structural transformation to address the glaring inadequacies of neoliberal globalization that social workers attempt to transform (IFSW, International Association of Schools of Social Work [IASSW] and International Council of Social Welfare [ICSW] 2014).

The relevance of love to buen vivir

Love is a marginalised concept in international development, social work and community work (Edwards and Sen, 2000; Banks, 2006), purportedly due to the 'colonialist history of missionary 'benevolence'' (Butot, 2004 p. 9) and because love is considered a private emotion that contradicts rationalised professional practice (Morley and Ife, 2002). However, prominent activists such as Mahatma Gandhi (2005), Martin Luther King Jr. (1963; 1967) and Thich Nhat

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Hanh (1993) maintain that love is fundamental to lasting and nonviolent social change, a belief reinforced by Morley and Ife (2002) in their exploration of love of humanity in social work. In her comprehensive exploration of the love ethic, bell hooks (2000) argues that love is the antidote to structures of domination and inequality such as capitalism, patriarchy and racism. Furthermore, love is prominent in various activist theories in Latin America, including liberation theology (Guitierrez, 1974) and Freirian dialogue (Freire, 1989), in the process of freedom from oppression.

Love is terminologically complex (Arman and Rehnsfeldt, 2006). However, when viewed from the lens of activist literature as action and a choice (Fromm, 1957; hooks, 2000), love involves abandonment of self-interest (Bauman, 2003), co-operation (Mackay, 2013) and a commitment to equality (Hanh, 1993; King Jr., 1963). Yet there is very limited empirical literature that explores love within activism, community work, social work and international development. Butot's (2004) research with seven Canadian social workers found that love in social work is spirituality conceptualised as the intrinsic interconnection of all beings and of one's intrinsic wholeness, sacredness and value as an expression of the diversity of this interconnection. Love was understood as emancipatory, critical practice. In contrast, a community work study with women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds in the United Kingdom found that, 'love as a social ethic recognises that oppression instils self-hatred and love as the practice of freedom must therefore promote self-love among oppressed people' (Nelson, Dickinson, Beetham and Batsleer, 2000 p. 359). Finally, some studies with volunteer carers of people with HIV in South Africa and the United States found that love for community was a primary motivating factor for caring (Hudson and Robinson, 2001; Akintola, 2011; Naidu, 2011). This small collection of Western and English speaking-dominated research indicates a significant knowledge gap regarding love and social change.

Furthermore, love is rarely, if at all, discussed or researched in relation to *buen vivir.* This is despite suggestions that Andean indigenous epistemology is grounded in a loving and bi-directional relationship between people and Pachamama through *munay* (Quechua term for the love energy centre of the body) (Gordon, 2003; Apgar, Argumedo and Allen, 2009). *Munay* contrasts with the Western epistemological construct of human control and dominance over nature (Oakley, 2002). There is clearly opportunity to consider the under-explored relevance of love to grassroots community work, particularly in the Latin American context of the (re)emerging discourse of *buen vivir.* Localised research that engages love can enable us to further explore and build upon the *buen vivir* paradigm.

Research methodology

In February 2014, *change-oriented research* was conducted in Lobitos, Peru as part of an international study regarding the love ethic in international rural community work. *Change-oriented research* is a collaborative research process that 'aims to understand and transform social injustices through cycles of action and reflection, generating multiple and contextualised knowledges that empower participants to collectively take action for sustainable change' (Godden, under review). It is informed by a four-part epistemology of change that involves shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. *Change-oriented research* takes a cyclical and action-oriented approach to knowledge generation, incorporating participation, social justice and change, decentralisation of power, democracy, context and relationships. Traditionally, action research has not specifically focused on feminist analyses and gender relations (Reid and Frisby, 2008), but with a specific focus on structural inequality, *change-oriented research*, like feminist participatory action research, subverts traditional gendered power structures in research. Furthermore, *change-oriented research* engages with and is responsive to cultural context, in contrast to traditional development research approaches that accentuate the complexities of power, democracy and participation but tend to ignore culture (Holland and Campbell, 2005; Mikkelsen, 2005). *Change-oriented research* intends to critique the interplay between co-researchers and context, specifically the conditions in which problems arise and to which persons respond (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Within this research paradigm, my research engaged the co-operative inquiry method, supporting dialogical, culturally responsive and feminist research collaboration.

Co-operative inquiry is a form of 'participative, person-centred inquiry which does research with people not on them or about them. It breaks down the old paradigm separation between the roles of researcher and subject' (Heron, 1996 p. 19). Within this method, the initiating researcher joins with 'co-researchers' (not research participants or subjects) for a dialogical, systematic process to collaboratively inquire into a social problem through cycles of reflection and action. The co-operative inquiry process involves several stages (drawn from Heron 1996). *Stage 1* is the first reflection stage for inquirers to choose the inquiry topic, type of inquiry and develop a launching statement. Inquirers then plan the first action phase to explore an aspect of the topic and a method to record experiences during the first action. This stage also involves providing capacity strengthening in the co-operative inquiry method. *Stage 2* is the first action phase when inquirers explore in experience and action some aspect of the inquiry topic, apply a range of inquiry skills and record their experiential data. *Stage 3* involves full immersion in

Stage 2, with openness to experience. Inquirers may gain new awareness, lose their way and/or transcend the inquiry format. *Stage 4* is the second reflection stage, where inquirers share and make sense of the data from the first action phase and review and modify the inquiry topic. Co-inquirers then plan the second action phase to explore the same or different aspect of the topic and review methods of recording data. This stage can include reporting, collating and reviewing, making sense, reaching agreement and finding meaning. The *subsequent stages* continue the cyclical process of reflection and action, involving five to eight full cycles. The inquiry ends with a *major reflection phase* for pulling threads together, clarifying outcomes and deciding whether to write a co-operative report. It is a celebration of bonding and a mourning of ending.

Within the co-operative inquiry process, cycles of reflection and action allow for ongoing reflexivity by all co-inquirers (Heron, 1996), enabling co-researchers to

> 'bring attention to not only the conditions of action at the level of intersubjectively shared lifeworlds, but also the effects on action manifest as constraints and enablements upon others and so not necessary amenable to immediate understanding within the particularity of our lives' (May, 2011 p. 86).

Co-operative inquiry can therefore be both personally and structurally transformative.

Research context and sample

This study was conducted in Lobitos, a remote coastal community located 1,115 km north of Lima, the capital of Peru. The population of Lobitos is 1,506 (Instituto Nacional de Estadistica e Informacion [INEI], 2007). The community's main economic industries are artisanal fishing, surf tourism and the municipal government (Godden, 2013). To recruit co-researchers, a local organisation invited community workers, volunteers and community members to participate in the study, and interested people contacted me to express their willingness to participate. No selection criteria excluded interested participants. Our co-operative inquiry involved four participants (including me), comprising three women and one man, representing two local organisations working on youth access to education and local governance. All four participants were employed community workers. Ethics approval was granted by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee and all participants gave written consent.

Research process and findings

Our four-week co-operative inquiry involved five cycles of reflection and action, within three two-hour meetings and one four-hour meeting. Both the process and the outcomes of our co-

operative inquiry provide insight into the theory and practice of an alternative knowledge paradigm in grassroots community work, which I share from my perspective. Honouring the ethics of the co-operative inquiry method, I do not speak on behalf of my co-researchers. They gave me permission to share my understanding of our experience and our collaboratively generated knowledge.

Developing our group structure

The paradigm of *buen vivir* promotes participatory and democratic decision-making processes. Our group actualised this approach in the First Reflection Meeting, which involves an introduction to the co-operative inquiry process and collaborative decision-making about the inquiry structure, topic and intended outcomes. We discussed a number of ethical challenges that may arise in participatory research, because, as Manzo and Brightbill (2007) explain, the values associated with participation, and the unique characteristics of action research, do not necessarily fit with traditional research practice. Possible challenges included ensuring confidentiality and anonymity; managing factions; making the research useful; sharing control over the research; engaging ordinary people in potentially controversial social action; and the risk of revealing survival strategies to oppressors (Stoecker 2005; Manzo and Brightbill, 2007). We developed collaborative research ethics strategies to mitigate risks and heighten collective ownership of the process and findings. Reflecting the ethics of *buen vivir,* our group values included:

- Respect

- Confidence

- Punctuality

- Sincerity

- Honesty

- Group responsibility

- Self criticism

- Reach an agreement / solution

- Know how to listen

- Know how to speak orderly – wait for your turn.

These values reflect a relationship-centred approach to community work, challenging the hierarchical nature of neoliberal development.

Furthermore, our collaboratively developed group structure also reflected the dialogical impetus of *buen vivir.* We decided to use consensus decision-making, involving debate and searching for mutual agreement. Our group structure was flexible, with open boundaries to welcome other community members to participate. We decided the intended outcomes of our co-operative inquiry were personal and community transformation through strengthening personal knowledge, developing a personal plan for action and sharing knowledge with the community. The group chose to focus on the launching statement, *Como practicar y difundir el amor fraternal en el trabajo comunitario?* [How do we practice and share love in our community work?]. The First Reflection meeting concluded with the development of the First Action.

Self-reflections on love

As discussed, *buen vivir* embraces diverse and holistic values beyond neoliberal preferences of consumption and the free market. The First Action of our co-operative inquiry involved personal self-reflection of our community work practice to engage with our personal and professional values and explore our personal understanding of love. In journals, we individually recorded responses to the following collaboratively formed questions: How do you feel in your job? What do you desire to improve in your life? What do you understand by love? How do you transmit love? Our individual responses were shared and collated in the Second Reflection meeting. Love was understood as a 'deep feeling that helps me give to others in everything I do'; desire; a 'feeling that motivates us to act'; essence; actions such as helping, teaching, valuing and forgiving; and giving without expecting in return. We described giving love as 'proving to others'; trust; support; helping others; listening to others' problems; and, spreading good spirit.

Collaborative analysis of the shared data supported us to develop the foundation of a definition of love:

> *El amor fraternal es un sentimiento profundo que nos impulsar a actuar por el bien estar de los demás sin recibir nada a cambio* [Love is a deep feeling that motivates us to act for the wellbeing of others without expecting anything in return].

We used this as a frame of reference for our Second Action, which involved recording a story/example of applying our concept of love.

Love in action

An important and emerging aspect of the *buen vivir* discourse is integrating the conceptual paradigm with localised practice. In our co-operative inquiry, we shifted from theoretical considerations of love to knowledge development through practice, using action-reflection processes to collaboratively construct our knowledge. In the Third Reflection meeting, we developed a process for sharing our stories from the Second Action through drawing, embracing narrative and arts-based research tools (Abma, 1998; Cole and Knowles, 2008). Our stories shared acts of love such as interaction, being at ease with each other, trying to solve problems, dialogue, being calm, caring and giving importance to others' problems, being open and removing pride. One co-researcher explained that he experienced love through visiting the beach with his family, observing nature and 'seeing things differently' (see figure below) while another co-researcher located love in trusting relationship with others. A third co-researcher identified the connection between self-love and love for others.

Figure 8.1: Co-researcher drawing of experience of love

We analysed the data by comparing our stories to other experiences that were not mindfully actions of love and reflecting on each story through the lens of our definition of love. During the collective reflection, we explored the process of working through love, discussing actions of love, dismantling concepts such as *bienestar* [wellbeing] and critiquing each concept of the definition. We further developed our definition of love:

El amor fraternal es un sentimiento profundo que nos ayuda e impulsar a actuar por el bien estar de los demás sin recibir nada a cambio [Love is a deep feeling that helps and motivates us to act for the wellbeing of others without expecting anything in return].

We also interpreted various elements of our definition. *Actuar* [act] means: help, dialogue, reflect, feel, want, advice and accompany. *Bienestar* [wellbeing] means: be at ease, peace, happiness, prosperity and wish for the best. *Amor* [love] includes: love of family, love of nature, love of others and self-love.

When discussing love as a model of practice to enable *bienestar*, we recognised we had not properly identified the social conditions / social system necessary for wellbeing – congruent with structural transformation promoted by *buen vivir.* Therefore, our Third Action involved conversations with others to explore a community of equality and developing a definition of equality.

Theory of practice of love in community work

Buen vivir promotes a holistic justice platform based on universal rights of people and nature. Similarly, during the Fourth Reflection meeting, my co-researchers and I shared our concepts of equality from the Third Action. Our collective analysis identified key concepts of the social conditions in a *comunidad de igualdad* [community of equality] that are required for *bienestar* [wellbeing]:

- Conformity of one with another;

- Equal rights, duties and opportunities;

- No discrimination (religion, gender, class, ability, sexual orientation, race etc.);

- Mutual agreement amongst all the population that everybody has the same rights (benefits and equal treatment to all);

- United in the decision to do something that can benefit everybody;

- No corruption;

- No violence and power differences;

- Interconnection;

- Respect for nature; and,

- Sustainability.

Our concept of wellbeing was more holistic than limited Western constructs of human wellbeing promoted in dominant development models. Our discussion led to further expansion of our definition of love and a clearer understanding of the social conditions that we aim for in our community work to achieve universal wellbeing. Bringing together information from our previous reflection meetings, we outlined our Theory of Change or model of practice for love-based community work, as outlined in the following figure.

Figure 8.2: Practice framework of love in community work

Love

Love is a deep feeling that helps us and motivates us to act and provide equal rights and duties for the wellbeing of others without receiving anything in return. This includes:

- Love of family
- Love of nature
- Love of others
- Self love

Community work through love

- Ensure conditions of equality in the workplace.
- Act by:
  - helping
  - dialoguing
  - reflecting
  - feeling
  - wanting
  - advising
  - accompanying
- Create programs that promote equality
- Start with one's self - be an example, be humble, serve others
- Speak on behalf of others for justice
- Help to train others
- Raise awareness
- Motivate people to participate and boost their self-esteem
- Feel satisfied when people feel sure of themselves and have a voice

Social system of equality

We want to create a social system of equality. Equality means conformity between one and the other, and equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities.

In this system:

- There is no discrimination (religion, gender, class, ability, sexual orientation, race etc)
- There is a mutual agreement with all the population that everybody has the same rights (benefits, equal rights to all)
- There is unity and decision to create something that benefits all
- No corruption
- No violence and power differences
- There is interconnection
- There is respect for nature
- There is sustainability

Wellbeing

The social system of equality results in wellbeing, which means:

- tranquillity
- peace
- happiness
- prosperity
- wish the best for others
- security

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After discursively finalising our model of practice, we visually articulated it with a collaborative drawing that featured symbols such as people descending stairs towards equality, birds (nature) and a circle of united people, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 8.3: Collaborative drawing of love-based community work
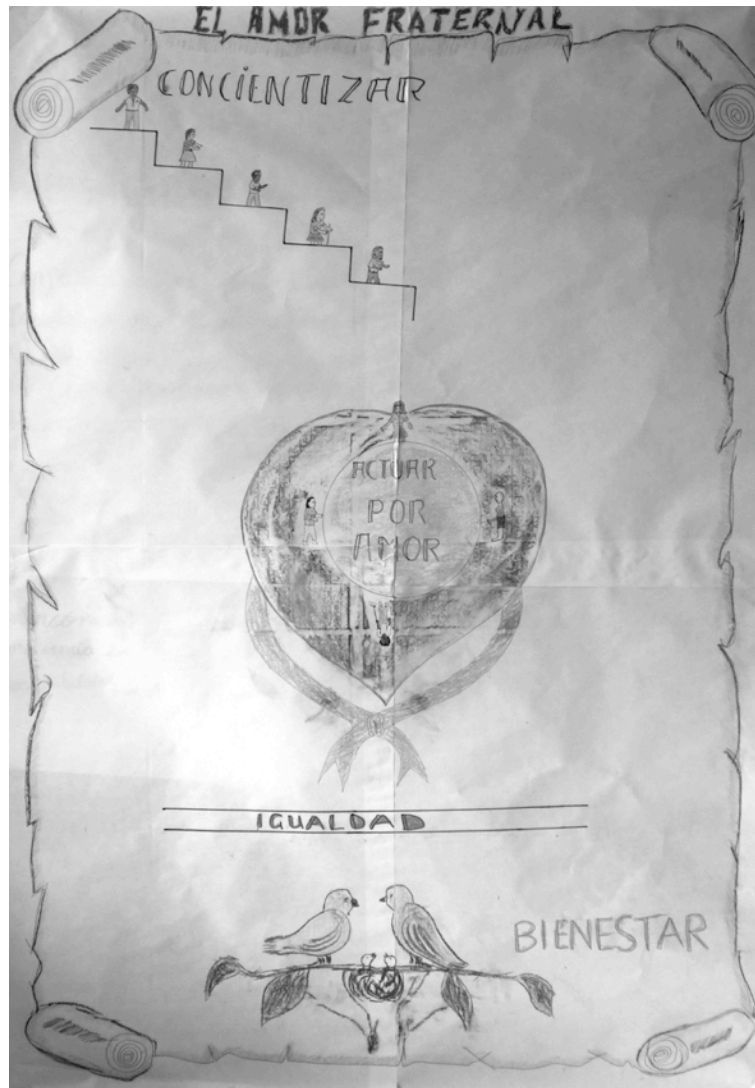
[Translation of key terms: *El amor fraternal* - neighbourly love; *concientizar* - consciousness-raising; *actuar por amor* - act through love; *igualdad* - equality; and, *bienestar* – wellbeing].

Discussion

As discussed, *buen vivir* responds to post-developmentalism, and reinforces cultural identity while promoting alternatives to Western modernity (Gudynas, 2011). The practice framework emerging from the Lobitos co-operative inquiry shows that, unlike neoliberal development approaches, the ultimate aim of love-based community work is universal wellbeing, which involves peace, tranquillity, happiness, prosperity and hope. In order to

achieve wellbeing, we must transform social conditions for a system of equality: a society of rights of people and planet, non-discrimination, shared power, non-violence, interconnection and sustainability. Societal transformation is achieved through working through love, which involves fair work conditions, being an example, advocacy, programs that promote equality, capacity building and consciousness-raising. The foundation of this framework is our collaborative definition of love:

> *El amor fraternal es un sentimiento profundo que nos ayuda e impulsar a actuar y proporciona igualdad de derechos y deberes por el bienestar de los demás sin recibir nada a cambio* [Love is a deep feeling that helps us and motivates us to act and provide equal rights and duties for the wellbeing of others without receiving anything in return].

In this framework, rights of people and nature, community connectedness and universal wellbeing are privileged over the neoliberal priority of economic growth.

Our co-operative framework of love-based community work practice is a useful addition to the *buen vivir* movement. It demonstrates how grassroots activists, social workers and community workers can engage with the values and ethics of *buen vivir* in localised practice. It also reflects indigenous constructions of Pachamama and the interconnected and bi-directional relationships between people and between people and nature. As Goulet (1997 p. 1170) states, 'solidarity with the planet of which we human agents are the responsible stewards, and with future generations, is the ethical key to achieving a development at once human and sustainable'.

As activists, social workers, community workers and social movements engage in the global crisis of climate change perpetuated by dominant neoliberalism, we require theories that guide sustainable change at individual, household, community and structural levels. The love-based practice framework from Lobitos provides a collaborative and democratic approach to sustainable change at the local and structural levels, embracing practicable participatory processes such as awareness-raising, skill-sharing and equality-focussed programs to support positive structural transformation. Importantly, this framework, and the broader *buen vivir* discourse, emphasises ethics, values and relationships as the foundation for sustainable change. This research suggests that love can be more greatly integrated in the ethical framework of the re-emergent epistemology of *buen vivir.* A combination of *buen vivir* and love provides a grounded challenge to dominant neoliberal development discourse. However, activists, social workers and progressive world leaders

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must engage in further work to promote such alternative development paradigms at local and structural levels, particularly in this pivotal moment of developing and implementing the SDGs.

Civil society statements in the international process to develop the SDGs show that the principles demonstrated in our localised love-based approach to *buen vivir* are alien to the global mainstream. At the 8th SDG Open Working Group (OWG) meeting, a Women's Major Group representative stated,

> 'The Women's Major Group is strongly concerned that many of the proposed targets for the Sustainable Development Goals do not adequately address the structural, gendered and power inequalities due to the current neoliberal, extractivist and exclusive development model. We challenge the unquestioned call for "economic growth", and reiterate our stance that this terminology must be replaced with "sustainable development". Sustainable development requires a radical paradigm shift regarding the current growth model, and we cannot expect transformational change if we continue a "business as usual" approach to our current economic and ecological systems' (Reyes, 2014 pp. 2-3).

Despite the OWG Chairs calling for an ambitious Post-2015 agenda for sustainable development, Reyes' statement indicates that neoliberalism has prevailed. Alternative paradigms to dominant development are marginalised, in spite of persistent pleas from grassroots civil society organisations and peak social work bodies (IFSW, IASSW and ICSW, 2014). Activists, social workers and community workers must persist in usurping the corporatised global development agenda.

Importantly, I do not necessarily promote *buen vivir* as a sustainability panacea for structural transformation for every country and community. As Walsh (2010) argues, attempts to globalise this paradigm could emulate colonial developmentalism. I recognise global cultural complexities and the importance of localized change approaches. However, *buen vivir* is a fresh discourse that supports the global community to think outside the dominant neoliberal paradigm. By prompting us to consider alternative sustainable systems (as opposed to ways to refine our current system), *buen vivir* is revolutionary. Furthermore, as demonstrated in this research in Lobitos, a combination of *buen vivir* and love may provide a theoretical and practicable framework for grassroots activists, community workers and social workers to work for sustainable structural change using democratic, participatory and relationship-oriented processes.

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The above article shares the Lobitos co-operative inquiry's proposed framework of love-based community work practice, which includes the following features:

- Love is feeling and action.

- Love is based on values such as the rights of people and nature, nonviolence and non-discrimination.

- Love-based action aims for a world of peace, tranquillity, happiness, prosperity and hope.

- Love involves transforming social conditions for a system of equality.

- Community work through love involves participatory, democratic and fair processes that reflect knowledge sharing and consciousness-raising.

- Sustainability is a cornerstone of love.

The key aspects of the frameworks of practice from the three co-operative inquiries have been integrated into a proposed community work theory entitled *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change.* This theory is presented in Chapter 9, the Discussion chapter of this thesis.

8.1.2 Group's experience of the co-operative inquiry method

Process

The Lobitos co-inquirers were very supportive of the participatory co-operative inquiry process, stating it was enjoyable and interesting and we enthusiastically embraced the challenges and complexity of participatory knowledge development. Co-inquirers explained that they were very happy with the process and outcome of this co-operative inquiry. They articulated that the group quickly developed new relationships and a high level of trust, evidenced in a refreshingly safe space for speaking from the heart, critical thinking and celebrating different opinions. Some stated that they felt confident to share ideas, listen and analyse information, which one co-inquirer believed supported self-reflection and his self-esteem. Co-inquirers did not criticise each other and, as one female co-inquirer stated, 'we [were] conscious of our values and we respect each other's opinions'. Initially, the group did not engage in much debate, as members tended to agree with each other fairly easily. However, this evolved into a space whereby members dialogically reinforced each other's ideas and built from them by developing ideas and concepts together.

The group used democratic processes such as consensus decision-making, which co-inquirers believed supported us to be equals. The participatory format and process was considered effective, particularly as 'we are all learning and we are all teaching' (male co-inquirer). Co-inquirers noted that sometimes they did not understand where we were heading until we arrived. This was difficult and sometimes frustrating, but at the conclusion of the co-operative inquiry process we were satisfied with our final outcome. One member mentioned that the 'chaos' of the process was somewhat unsettling at the outset, but she trusted the process and was satisfied with our conclusion. Group members expressed that the organic and fluid nature of the process was enjoyable and appropriate.

Co-inquirers explained that it was complicated and difficult to arrive at an adequate definition of love, but the cyclical process of reflection and action greatly enabled us. One participant felt that although she practiced love daily, it was not structured or well thought-out. Our emergent theory thus gave her a framework and process to actualise love in her

work in the community and, further, to support consciousness-raising in the community about integrating love in community work practice. Several other comments highlighted that the process supported us to be reflexive and mindful while working with and relating to others. Co-inquirers explained that the cyclical process of reflection and action enabled us to understand love in practice, beginning with ourselves and expanding our thinking further. The process we undertook required us to begin with self-reflection and then support consciousness-raising in the community.

The Lobitos co-operative inquiry was structured somewhat differently to the previous co-operative inquiries, with a smaller group size (four people) and a shorter time period (three weeks). We conducted this inquiry over five cycles of reflection and action, and due to time constraints we concluded the final two cycles in one half-day meeting. Participants felt that this was very effective and efficient as it enabled a safe space for debate, deep discussion and less interruption to the flow of our work. Furthermore, the small group size enabled intimate relationships, high participation and deep and interactive discussion and activities, and we were able to move more quickly through the process, supporting us to creatively develop a radical model of practice. The small group size also assisted group members to form deeper connections and contribute more equally. However, I observed that the small group size meant that the group was somewhat limited in perspective, possibly exacerbated by pre-existing personal and working relationships between most group members. Additionally, I observed that when individual participation flailed due to lethargy or distraction, it affected the whole group.

Learning and transformation

As the group intended, this co-operative inquiry was a transformative learning experience for co-inquirers and me. Co-inquirers highlighted that the co-operative inquiry was a process for deepening our existing knowledge, gaining experience, learning and teaching. One co-inquirer explained that the cyclical process is the best way to learn, through applying theory and conceptual learning in practice with ongoing dialogue, reflection and action. Partway through the inquiry, co-inquirers expressed that they were pleased with the depth of learning and our closer connections to conduct this work together.

The data suggest that we learned about democratic group processes, including processes for sharing and analysing stories which can be applied in our families and communities. During the research, group members consistently articulated that the co-operative inquiry process and learning directly assisted our own practice and engagement with family and the

community through promoting mindful practice and reflexivity. Co-inquirers explained that our democratic consensus decision-making style supported a group of equality, which highlighted the importance of dialogue and reflection when preparing community-based action in our organisations. Co-inquirers also explained that they learned a lot about themselves and their work through this inquiry. They felt more comfortable with participatory research processes, particularly data analysis, and they felt they had a framework of reference for their work and social engagement.

Throughout the co-operative inquiry, group members explained that they applied our theory and learning in their work, families and daily lives, including sharing concepts and practice with colleagues. One co-inquirer committed to applying concepts of equality and wellbeing in her work and sharing this ethical impetus with her colleagues to strengthen their capacity and enhance their self-esteem. Regarding taking our work forward, co-inquirers decided to integrate our new knowledge in personal practice, which may involve sharing it with the community in the future 'to help others'. Co-inquirers expressed that they felt more confident to share their knowledge with the community.

8.2   Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the process and outcomes of the third co-operative inquiry in Lobitos, Peru. I shared a journal article I authored that is currently under review in the *British Journal of Social Work,* entitled 'Love-based community work and the indigenous worldview of *buen vivir* in Peru'. In this article, I discussed the re-emerging indigenous paradigm of *buen vivir* in Latin America and the relevance of love to enhance this worldview.

The Lobitos co-operative inquiry was guided by the launching statement, 'How do we practice and share love in our community work?'. Our four-week process considered the themes of self-reflections of love, love in action, community of equality and a theory of practice. Through this process we defined love as, *'…* a deep feeling that supports and motivates us to act for universal equality, rights and responsibilities to ensure the wellbeing of all, without receiving anything in exchange'. The key outcome of this co-operative was a lineal theory of change (depicted in a visual framework and a collaborative drawing) of community work practice which shows that love is values-based feeling and action that aims for a world of peace, happiness and prosperity by transforming social conditions for a system of equality through community work focused on participatory and democratic processes.

The findings also indicate that the co-operative inquiry process supported co-inquirers to establish new relationships and develop new knowledge. Positive aspects of the process included consensus decision-making and the systematic approach to developing theoretical knowledge to guide personal practice. The process and outcomes may have been limited, however, by the small group size. Co-inquirers experienced learning and transformation regarding our own personal practice, strategies for engaging through love with family and the community and participatory research processes.

In the next chapter, I discuss the findings that emerged from this research in relation to the literature and I propose a meta-theory that combines the frameworks of love-based community work practice developed by the three co-operative inquiry groups.

9   Discussion

Love is relationship-based action for equality, rights and interconnected flourishing of people and nature. Love is a conscious choice and a process of unconditional, other-centred giving (Godden under review(f)).

In this chapter I discuss the research findings in relation to the literature to identify key learnings from this research. I analyse the data and literature regarding definitions of love and I suggest a definition. I then discuss how activists, community workers and social workers can work through love to transform structural inequality and I propose a theory of practice that emerged from the research, *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change.* I present a journal article entitled 'The Love Ethic for Transformational Change: A radical theory of sustainability', submitted to the *International Journal of Sustainability in Economic, Social and Cultural Context*. This article also discusses strategies and possible challenges for applying this theory in practice. I then discuss key learnings regarding implementing the *change-oriented research* methodological paradigm.

9.1   Introduction

This research considers two key questions: What is love in international rural community work? and, How can love transform structural inequality? In Chapters 6, 7 and 8 I discussed the findings and process for each of the three co-operative inquiries I initiated for this research study. Each individual case study represents part of my complete research study. As discussed, each co-operative inquiry involved grassroots community workers, volunteers, activists and community members who explored love in community work to collaboratively develop a practice framework for love-based community work. The data and outcomes from each co-operative inquiry were analysed collaboratively throughout the inquiry process (as outlined in the previous three chapters) and, honouring the co-operative inquiry tradition, I will not engage in further analysis or interpretation of our data (Heron 1996). In this chapter, however, I respond to the two research questions by analysing the outcomes of the case study co-operative inquiries with information that emerged from the literature review.

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9.2   Defining love

The first question considered in this study is, 'What is love in international rural community work?'. A key aspect of responding to this question is defining love. hooks (2000) emphasises the importance of a definition as an imaginal starting point to guide our journey to love. Furthermore, she argues that a societal lack of a definition of love enables social constructs of gender roles to go unchallenged. In this regard, this research involves definitions of love to initiate dialogue and exploration of love, with openness to critique and further conceptual development.

The three co-operative inquiries proposed various constructions of love. The Liquica co-operative inquiry defined love as '… actions that we show through a variety of ways so that other people feel freedom, democracy, tolerance, alive, adaptation, unity and happiness'. The Margaret River group did not develop a collaborative definition of love, but my understanding of our framework of love-based community work practice is that love is a values-based, participatory process of interconnectedness of people and nature to transform structures of inequality for reconciliation, joy and wellbeing. The Lobitos co-operative inquiry defined love as '… a deep feeling that supports and motivates us to act for universal equality, rights and responsibilities to ensure the wellbeing of all, without receiving anything in exchange'.

Elements of these definitions connect to numerous findings in my literature review. The co-operative inquiries reflect general consensus in the reviewed literature that love is action (Bauman 2003; Fromm 1957; Gaita 1999; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2000; hooks 2000; Kahane 2010; Mackay 2013; Nasr 2002; Peck 1987; de la Torre 2004). While feelings and emotion may contribute to or inform the experience of love (as suggested by the Lobitos group), the co-operative inquiry definitions emphasise that love is activated in deliberative behaviour, indicating that love is a choice (Fromm 1957; hooks 2000). With words such as 'equality', 'freedom' and 'rights', the definitions also reinforce suggestions that love is action for social justice by transforming structures of inequality (Butot 2004; Freire 1989; Gaita 1999; Gandhi 2005; hooks 2000; King Jr. 1963; Somerville 2011; de la Torre 2004). Additionally, the co-operative inquiry definitions emphasise that love as action for social justice has the outcome of 'happiness', 'wellbeing' and 'joy'. This aligns with literature regarding love as nonviolence in the pursuit of universal flourishing (Gandhi 2005; Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2000; Tolstoy 1970).

The co-operative inquiry definitions also suggest that love involves connectedness between people and between people and nature, with phrases such as 'other people', 'all' and 'people and nature'. These words also imply the universality of love (hooks 2000; King Jr. 1963), particularly the notion of 'common humanity' (Gaita 1999). The relationship orientation of love is also evident in the Golden Rule, the foundation of other-regarding love, which emphasises co-operation (Bauman 2003; Mackay 2013) and neighbourliness without discernment or discrimination (Gaita 1999; Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2000; King Jr. 1963; Li 1994; Templeton 1999). Indeed, the Lobitos definition specifically suggests that love is unconditional, through acting 'without receiving anything in exchange'. Several theorists also agree that love is unconditional (Fromm 1957; Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2000) although hooks (2000) does not, perhaps invoking a feminist mechanism to ensure women are not exploited in the process of loving (see also Andolsen 1981). Finally, the Margaret River and Lobitos groups specifically emphasised love between people and nature, referring to the interconnected relationship also promoted by spiritual, ecofeminist and indigenous writers (Acosta 2011; Daly 1990; Graham 1998; Hanh 1993; Hawthorne 2002; Kingsley et al. 2009; Kirmayer 2009 et al.; Rose 1999).

Drawing from the co-operative inquiry definitions and the literature, I propose the following definition of love:

> *Love is relationship-based action for equality, rights and interconnected flourishing of people and nature. Love is a conscious choice and a process of unconditional, other-centred giving.*

My definition reflects the interconnected nature of love (including the I-Thou relationship of responsibility and commitment (Buber 1970)), love as action (giving) and a choice and love as a process for equality, universal rights and the wellbeing of people and nature. My definition also engages the spiritual and interdependent relationship between people and nature, implying an ecological systems approach that is largely ignored by hooks. I include other-centeredness to employ the notion of sacrifice advocated by nonviolence and dialogical theorists and reflected in Mackay's (2013) philosophy of living life for others. Other-centeredness was also recognised by the co-operative inquiries. I do, however, acknowledge the importance of self-love when we apply this definition within my proposed framework of *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change,* and I also suggest that the one-loving experiences reciprocity of love through the interconnected network of people and nature.

All three co-operative inquiries recognised various forms of love, such as self-love, intimate partner love, familial love, collegial love, community love, environmental love, love for humanity and spiritual love. Despite the contextual focus on community work, the co-operative inquiry definitions and frameworks emphasise that love encompasses all these variations, reflecting Fromm's (1957) stance of love as an orientation to all. Therefore, although not specifically mentioned, my proposed definition holistically embraces various forms of love.

The first research question, What is love in international rural community work?, also specifically considers love in the practice context. I respond to this in the following section.

9.3   Love in practice: The Love Ethic for Transformational Change

The first research question explores love in the context of international rural community work. The second research question is, How can love transform structural inequality? Several components of my thesis provide information about how love through international rural community work can transform structural inequality. In the introductory chapter, I analysed global structures of inequality of neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation. In addition to the literature regarding love as action and an ethic, I reviewed various theoretical approaches of love as an ethic of action for equality, including hooks' love ethic (2000), nonviolence (Fernandes 2003; Gandhi 1957; 2005; Hanh 1993; Kelly & Sewell 1988; The King Centre 2015; King Jr. 1967a; Thoreau 1849; Tolstoy 1970), Somerville's 'beloved community' approach (2011), social work through the love of humanity (Morley & Ife 2002), dialogical approaches (Freire 1989; Kelly & Sewell 1988; Westoby & Dowling 2013) and power and love (Kahane 2010; King Jr. 1967a). Additionally, I considered empirical research regarding love in practice in social work, community work, nursing and education (Butot 2004; 2007; Fitzgerald & van Hooft 2000; Horsfall 2008; Nelson et al. 2000; Wong 2004). Finally, and most importantly, I conducted participatory research with community workers, volunteers, activists and community members to collaboratively develop frameworks of practice of love-based community work, with collective analysis of process and outcomes.

I combined the three community work models that emerged from the co-operative inquiries with relevant literature to develop a theory of practice for love-based community work, entitled *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* (also described as *The Love Ethic*)*.* The theory outlines the values, process, outcomes and reciprocal nature of love as an ethic of

action for activists, community workers and social workers to collaboratively transform structures of inequality and injustice. This theory and the strategies and challenges for applying *The Love Ethic* in practice are documented in a journal article shared below.

9.3.1 Journal article 6: The Love Ethic for Transformational Change

The following journal article, entitled 'The Love Ethic for Transformational Change: A radical theory of sustainability', is currently under review in the *International Journal of Sustainability in Economic, Social and Cultural Context*. This article begins with a discussion of the foundational theories for *The Love Ethic,* namely hooks' radical feminism (2000), dialogue (Freire 1989), nonviolence (Gandhi 2005; Hanh 1993; King Jr. 1963) and the interconnectedness of people and nature (Acosta 2011; Hawthorne 2002; Kingsley et al. 2009; Shiva 1989). I briefly share the outcomes of the co-operative inquiries and then comprehensively outline *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* as a theory of practice for structural change that emerged from the research. I also discuss some strategies for implementing *The Love Ethic* and challenges that may be experienced when working through this theoretical lens.

Article title: The Love Ethic for Transformational Change: A radical theory for sustainability

Journal: *International Journal of Sustainability in Economic, Social and Cultural Context*

Publisher: Common Ground Publishing

Status: Submitted, under review

Abstract: Grassroots community workers, volunteers and activists are key foundations of the international movement for sustainability. In a global context of uncertainty and increasing inequality, grassroots community movements actively critique and challenge structures of neoliberalism, patriarchy and racism in our collective quest for an alternative, sustainable world. "The Love Ethic for Transformational Change" is a radical new theory of practice for community work and social movements, and is grounded in bell hooks' love-based framework of radical feminism, Freirean dialogue, nonviolent teachings of activists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Thich Nhat Hanh, and the interconnectedness of people and nature. It was collaboratively developed through participatory change-oriented research with rural community workers and volunteers in Timor-Leste, Australia and Peru. As a co-operative model of practice, love-based community work has four main

features: it is based on values and universal rights of humans and nature; it promotes participatory, democratic and gender transformative community work processes that intertwine people and planet and actively challenge structures of power and inequality; it aims for structural change that enables universal wellbeing for people and planet; and love-based action is reciprocal and cyclical. "The Love Ethic for Transformational Change" provides a pathway for sustainability and equality.

Introduction

Greed, fear and power are the greatest impediments to environmental, social, cultural and economic sustainability. In an era of deepening inequality, neo-colonialism and pervasive neoliberalism, dominant social systems actively nurture greed for wealth and "success", which encourages over-consumption, materialism, waste, competition and fear of potential threats to our personal survival, which encourages protectionism and selfishness. In the Global North in particular, mainstream government and corporate ideologies do not foster communalism, collective responsibility or interconnected relationships between people and planet. Neoliberalism is integrated in policy and practice through propagation and nurturance of free market principles, deregulation and protection of corporations, skewed taxation and austerity measures that reduce public expenditure to meet the rights of people and nature, and exploitation of finite resources (Kenny 2006). As a result, humans experience individualisation, our sense of community is threatened and other-centeredness is diminished, because "human solidarity is the first casualty of the triumphs of the consumer market" (Bauman 2003, 76). Under neoliberalism, we knowingly destroy our planet, entrench wealth inequality and poverty and practice violence, negatively impacting our loved ones, other humans, non-human species, our habitat and ourselves.

Despite these human-induced crises, biologists Maturana and Verden-Zoller (2008) argue that the origin of humanness is not competition and aggression but love and mutual trust. They evidence this with our evolutionary history of parental care for children, human propensity for sensual and tender affection, friendship, sexuality, human co-operation and ethical concerns. They argue that Western patriarchy diverted humans from our biological foundation through pastoralisation, shifting from interdependent co-existence between humans and animals to human control of animals and land. Human competition and aggression are not natural, but are political and cultural constructs that underlie current systems of oppression, domination and inequality. Maturana and Verden-Zoller's hypothesis suggests that humans have the innate capacity to practice love to transform our world. This

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is reiterated by His Holiness the Dalai Lama (1996, 51), who states, "… basic human nature is more disposed toward compassion and affection. Basic human nature is gentle, not aggressive or violent". Mackay (2013, 189) also reflects this stance:

> "We are born with the necessary equipment to live an unselfish life revealed most clearly in altruism, but also revealed in our capacity to love our children (and sometimes other people's children) unconditionally, to listen attentively to someone's story when there are a million other things we'd rather be doing, to work harmoniously with colleagues we don't especially like, to perform spontaneous acts of kindness to strangers, to change our plans in order to help someone out, to love the unlovely."

Inequitable systems of patriarchy, racism, capitalism and environmental exploitation are human-made constructs and, as bell hooks (2000) suggests, their antidote is love. She argues that through love we can build a world of equality. Sustainability is the holistic system necessary for equality, driven by a progressive people's movement.

Unfortunately, the people's movement itself is a victim of pervasive neoliberalism. Community development, once a radical challenge to patronising welfare models of social change, is "increasingly influenced and co-opted by a modernist, soulless, rational philosophy - reducing it to a shallow technique for 'solving community problems'" (Westoby and Dowling 2013, back cover). Social movements develop in response to, and are affected by, the neoliberal project that invades every facet of our social, economic, cultural and ecological systems. Community development, social work and activism are not immune to these influences, and increased managerialism, short-term outcome-orientation and hierarchical decision-making in these sectors disenfranchise communities from transforming our world (Kenny 2006).

A prominent manifestation of neoliberalism and economic rationalism in social movements and related professions (including social work) is distaste for love. Although individually many people involved in social movements may identify love as our motivation (or even *modus operandi),* our collective movement has generally discarded and avoided critical reflection and inclusion of love within our vocabulary, theory and practice (Morley and Ife 2002). Love-focussed writers such as hooks are lone voices in social movement literature, and few social change organisations willingly promote love as a value or practice approach. As a result, love is generally taboo in the lecture theatres of academia, in the corridors of government and civil society organisations and in the circles of activist

collectives. I argue, however, that sustainable global change for equality and universal wellbeing is dependent upon and grounded in love. As an antidote to greed and competition, love is collectivist action to transform systems of inequality and power and achieve a world of peace, sustainability and universal wellbeing.

In this paper, I present *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* (also described as *The Love Ethic)*, a theory of love-based practice for community workers, social workers, activists and changemakers. I begin by discussing the key theoretical foundations of *The Love Ethic*, namely radical feminist perspectives of love, dialogue, nonviolence and interconnectedness of people and nature. I then share the process and outcomes of change-oriented research I initiated in Timor-Leste, Australia and Peru to co-operatively develop a theory of love-based community work practice. The third section presents *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change*, and I then discuss the practicable application and challenges of this model in local and global movements. This paper is deliberately provocative. It invites discussion to rigorously explore the relevance and appropriateness of love in social movements, and provides a practicable ethical basis for people who desire a transformed world.

Theoretical foundations of love and structural transformation

The proposed *Love Ethic for Transformational Change* is grounded on four main theories: bell hooks' love-centred radical feminism, nonviolence, Freirean dialogue and interconnectedness of people and nature*.*

Love-centred radical feminism

Academic, philosophical, spiritual and popular literature theorises love as an emotion (Lewis, Amini and Lannon 2011), a verb (Fromm 1957; hooks 2000; Bauman 2003), spirituality (Tolstoy 1970; hooks 2000), all-encompassing (Fromm 1957; King Jr., 1967; Tolstoy 1970), connection (Fromm 1957), dialogue (Freire 1989), compassion (His Holiness the Dalai Lama 2000), nonviolence (King Jr., 1963; Tolstoy 1970; Hanh 1993; Gandhi 2005) and revealing one's full humanity (Gaita 1999). Specifically, Bauman argues that love is making "an 'other' into a quite definite 'someone'" (2003, 20). In contrast, Gaita (1999) identifies love as knowing and recognising the full humanity of another. Mackay (2013, 207) argues that "a good life is a loving life", which involves taking other people seriously, respecting them and acknowledging their desire for proper recognition. Fromm (1957) also identifies love as action and maintains that the crux of love is giving, not receiving.

Scholars suggest that love encompasses trust, commitment, care, respect, knowledge, responsibility, compassion, giving, nonviolence, justice, forgiveness and altruism (Fromm 1957; King Jr. 1963; Tolstoy 1970; Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama 1996; hooks 2000; Gandhi 2005). Although love is an orientation to all (Fromm 1957), there are many forms of love: self-love; *eros* (romantic/erotic love); *storge* (parental love; love between parents and offspring); intergenerational love; *philia* (love between friends); love for clients; love for colleagues; community love; *agape* (neighbourly/brotherly love; love for humanity; other-regarding love); environmental love; and love for the Divine (Fromm 1957; Gandhi 1957; Lewis 1960; King Jr. 1963; Andolsen 1981; Caldicott 1992; Hanh 1993; His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1996; Gaita 1999; Templeton 1999; hooks 2000; Bauman 2003; Butot 2004, 2007; Barker and Payne 2006; Rose 2008).

Nestled within this diverse literature, bell hooks' seminal works highlight the emancipatory potential of love to transform systems of domination of patriarchy, racism and capitalism (hooks 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003). hooks (2000) maintains that love is an action and a choice, with characteristics of care, affection, recognition, respect, commitment and trust, and love requires honest and open communication, forgiveness and giving. hooks uses Peck's (1978, 85) definition of love: "The will to extend one's self for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth". Building on this definition, hooks stresses that love is a choice rather than instinctive. Love as an action and a choice automatically assumes accountability and responsibility:

> "If we were constantly remembering that love is as love does, we would not use the word in a manner that devalues and degrades its meaning. When we are loving we openly and honestly express care, affection, responsibility, respect, commitment and trust." (hooks 2000, 13-14)

hooks strengthens the myriad of philosophies of love with her radical feminist lens, positioning love as an antidote to power. Although the relationship between love and power is considered by King Jr. (1963) and Kahane (2010), hooks provides a feminist lens to the gender-blind literature. In particular, she maintains that love is impossible within systems of inequitable power where one group of individuals dominate another, such as men dominating women and children.

hooks presents love as a theory of practice. Love challenges constructions of power and build communities of communalism and connectedness over material advancement. hooks says that individuals and communities with love as a foundation are joyous and fulfilled, and

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ethical living assists relationships to nurture our spiritual growth. When we act unethically, we diminish our spirits and dehumanise others. She asserts, "when small communities organise their lives around a love ethic, every aspect of daily life can be affirming for everyone" (hooks 2000, 99). In a practical sense, love involves working with individuals we respect; committing to give all to our relationships; and "embracing a global vision wherein we see our lives and our fate as intimately connected to those of everyone else on the planet" (hooks 2000, 87-88). Although hooks' practice of love has limited scope (for example, love for humanity and love for nature are not included), her framework provides a strong foundation for non-patriarchal activism, reinforcing Mackay's stance that love is "the most powerful, creative and fruitful force for good in the world" (2013, 128).

Nonviolence

Various spiritual and activist leaders provide critical insight into nonviolence, a philosophy that guides peaceful civil disobedience for revolutionary change. It is grounded in the belief of moral responsibility of citizens to peacefully challenge aggression and violence perpetuated by oppressive governments and other powerful entities, through giving the self for others (Thoreau 1849). Importantly, nonviolence counteracts all forms of violence and hatred, with abstention from exploitation (Gandhi 2005). Nonviolent activists such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Thich Nhat Hanh stress that love is the core of nonviolence.

Nonviolent theory maintains that we love the oppressor, including the enemy and those who hate us (Gandhi 1957; King Jr. 1963; Tolstoy 1970; Hanh 1993). Love, in this respect, involves kindness, with a commitment to raising the consciousness of the oppressor, through action led by conscience of a common humanity (King Jr. 1963; Tolstoy 1970). Nonviolence involves sacrifice and selflessness, including the risk of persecution (Thoreau 1849; Tolstoy 1970; Hanh 1993). Fernandes (2003) argues that self-suffering is a source of empowerment and transformation.

In order to bring about positive social change, nonviolence requires activism not pacifism (Gandhi 2005). As a process rather than a dogma (Hanh 1993), nonviolent activism may involve peaceful rebellion, resistance, civil disobedience and protest. Importantly, such activities are only nonviolent if they are conducted through and maintained by a lens of love (Tolstoy 1970). It is argued that nonviolence is both an ethical *and* a spiritual process (King Jr. 1963; Hanh 1993), as the "spiritualisation of suffering" (Fernandes 2003, 73) through

rejecting retribution and focussing on love, compassion and forgiveness. Nonviolent activists thus demonstrate and exemplify love to oppressive regimes (Hanh 1993).

Freirean dialogue

While theories of love and nonviolence provide an ethical and spiritual foundation for activism for equality, Paulo Freire's construct of *dialogue* provides a useful process for love-based community organising. Centred on egalitarian relationships and consciousness-raising, dialogue supports non-hierarchical sharing and co-operative knowledge development for social change using multiple forms of expression (Freire 1989). Participatory Action Research strongly reflects Freirean philosophy (Ozanne and Saatcoiglu 2008). Freire (1989, 77-78) strongly identifies dialogue as love:

> "Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a profound love for the world and for men (sic). The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible, if it is not infused with love. Love is at the same time a foundation of dialogue and dialogue itself. It is thus necessarily the task of responsible Subjects and cannot exist in a relation of domination. Domination reveals the pathology of love: sadism in the domination and masochism in the dominated. Because love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to other men (sic)."

Freire disregards the notion of love as emotion or sentiment, expressing that love is a necessary element of social transformation to alter structures of oppression and inequality, strengthening hooks' feminist commitment to love and transformation of power.

Dialogue involves democratic decision-making, mutuality, trust and consciousness-raising (Kelly and Sewell 1988; Freire 1989; Westoby and Dowling 2009). In particular, dialogical processes encapsulate authentic participation. This involves genuinely aiming for practice that reflects the highest rung of Arnstein's (1969) *Ladder of Participation*, namely "citizen control", also depicted as "self-mobilisation" in Pretty and colleagues' (1995) *Seven Stages of Participation* and "entrusted control" in Davidson's (1998) *Wheel of Participation*. The ethical imperative of authentic participation cannot be underestimated, as Schwenke (2009, 48) states,

> "If all human beings are regarded as equally dignified and valuable, all human beings within a society ought to be empowered to participate in the critical decisions that

affect them, decisions that limit or create opportunities and freedoms for each to flourish."

Dialogical processes therefore reject hierarchical structures for genuine and committed participation that transfers and transforms inequitable forms of power and control.

Interconnectedness of people and nature

In contrast to the exploitative imperative of neoliberalism, systems thinkers provide an alternative knowledge paradigm regarding the interconnected relationship between humans and nature. Practiced for millennia by indigenous peoples, philosophies of interconnectedness support relational responsibility. A key approach to interconnected relationships between humans and nature is *buen vivir,* which means 'the good way of living'. *Buen vivir* is a Latin American indigenous knowledge paradigm that prioritises equilibrium between the rights of humans and the rights of nature (Acosta 2011), and is a cornerstone of the Constitutions of the Republic of Ecuador and Plurinational State of Bolivia. As an alternative to the dominant neoliberal development regime (Gudynas 2011), *buen vivir* is an ethical framework that balances aesthetic, cultural, historical, environmental, spiritual *and* economic values (Villalba 2013). *Buen vivir* supports a harmonious relationship between people and nature through structures such as an economy of solidarity, social and environmental justice, decolonisation and transcending the material dimension to spirituality and affection (Acosta 2011; Gudynas 2011; Villalba 2013). This reflects Australian indigenous spirituality that positions humans in a symbiotic relationship with natural systems, rather than control over nature (Graham 1998; Rose 1999; Kingsley et al. 2009).

The interconnectedness advocated by *buen vivir* is reflected in Wadsworth's (2010, 20) concept of living systems, which are "processual systems" that achieve "dynamic stability (or dynamically balancing) in constantly reassessed relationship to regularly changing contexts propelled by intentional purposes, sufficiently fuelled, energised and resources". Wadsworth suggests that humans exist in dynamic, interdependent systems and we are influenced by, and influence, all features of these systems: "In a living system everything is connected, even though the parts may be separately organ-ised (sic) and not be obviously aware of each other's existence" (33). Living systems theory recognises that all organisms are interconnected and interdependent and systems have feedback loops that enable response and adaptation to stimuli (Wadsworth 2010). In this regard, anthropocentric constructs such

as neoliberalism, with human priority and dominance over ecological systems, ignore the complexity of living systems.

Theories of deep ecology (Naess 1973) and permaculture (Mollison 2013) also show that intentional actions for interconnected wellbeing for all organisms within our living systems enable sustainability and equality. Given that competition is entrenched in the Western political psyche, indigenous worldviews such as *buen vivir* are crucial in guiding humans towards an alternative, symbiotic relationship with nature. The paradigm of interconnectedness suggests that conscious acts of love can inspire, multiply and, ultimately, transform systems of inequality.

Co-operative development of The Love Ethic for Transformational Change

The proposed *Love Ethic for Transformational Change* is informed by participatory research guided by the *change-oriented research* paradigm (Godden 2015(a)), a methodological approach informed by a four-part epistemology of transformational change that includes shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity. Research considered love in community work with twenty-two community workers, volunteers and activists (fifteen women, seven men) within three rural communities of Liquica, Timor Leste, Margaret River, Australia and Lobitos, Peru. Previous papers that I authored provide in-depth analysis of the process and findings of each case study (see Godden 2015(b), 2015(c) and 2015(d)). In this section, I describe the participatory research process and collective knowledge we generated regarding love in community work practice, positioning our proposed theory as a collaborative project.

The research considered two general questions: What is love in international rural community work? and, How can love transform structural inequality? In each site, I initiated a co-operative inquiry with up to ten community workers, activists, volunteers and community members to explore love in our practice. Co-operative inquiry is a participatory research process whereby a group of co-researchers engage in systematic cycles of action and reflection to inquire into a collaboratively developed research topic (Heron 1996). As Reason (1988, 6) explains, the essence of co-operative inquiry is "an aware and self-critical movement between experience and reflection which goes through several cycles as ideas, practice, and experience are systematically honed and refined". Co-researchers and I used non-hierarchical democratic processes to develop our research topic, group values, structure and approach. Through cycles of action and reflection, we explored a selected theme outside the group and recorded data through writing, drawing or other creative

forms and shared our findings with the group at the following meeting. We collaboratively analysed and interpreted the data, culminating in a collaborative drawing that reflected our consensual theory of love-based community work. As the initiating researcher, my role involved methodologically supporting my co-researchers. Each co-operative inquiry group used creative, narrative, performative, discursive and visual tools, as per the method's intent (Heron 1996).

The first co-operative inquiry was held in Liquica, Timor-Leste, a coastal community of 20,938 people located 35km west of Dili, the nation's capital. Nine co-researchers and I collaboratively developed the launching statement, *Aproximasaun domin hatudu ba komunidade liu husi serbisu no hahalo*k [The ways that love is expressed to the community through work and actions]. Our six-week co-operative inquiry process considered the themes: what is love?; love in the family; love in the community; expressions of love; and working through love. This led to the eventual formation of a definition and collective model of love-based community work. We defined love as follows:

> "*Domin mak hanesan hahalok nebe ita hatudu liu husi manera oi-oin hodi ema seluk bele sente ho diak: liberdade, demokrasia, toleransia, moris, adaptasaun, unidade no felisidade*" [Love is actions that we show through a variety of ways so that other people feel freedom, democracy, tolerance, alive, adaptation, unity and happiness].

As I explain in another paper (Godden 2015(b)), we articulated love in community work in a collaborative drawing of a tree, whereby the tree roots represent love as action and the tree trunk and branches are love-based processes of *demokrasia* [democracy], *unidade* [unity], *paciencia* [patience], *serbisu hamutuk* [working together], *rona malu* [listening to each other], *fiar malu* [trusting each other] and *respeita* [respect]. The fruits of the tree are the results of this process, namely *felicidade* [happiness]. As fruit and leaves fall from the tree, love enables *liberdade* [freedom] and grows new tree saplings, the *jerasaun foun* [new generation] of trees, showing the cyclical and ongoing nature of love.

The second co-operative inquiry was held in Margaret River, Australia, a coastal community with 6,550 people. Also over a six-week process, nine co-researchers and I explored the collaboratively developed launching statement, *Concepts of love, experiences of love in community work, and taking it forward*. Our organic, democratic process explored the following themes: how can we draw on love to enhance our community work?; how is the love ethic generated?; concrete examples of receiving and giving love; and, through stories, identify love in community work and use these examples to transform our work.

The group did not develop a collaborative definition of love, but collectively made a drawing to represent our theory of practice. Similar to the Liquica co-operative inquiry, the Margaret River group expressed love in community work as a tree. As I have outlined elsewhere (Godden 2015(c)), our picture showed that tree roots represent the values of the love ethic, such as respect, equal rights, self-love, generosity of spirit, hope and non-exploitation. The tree trunk represents the process of the love ethic, with symbiotic connectedness between people and nature, transforming structures of inequality, open communication, flexibility, participatory and democratic approach, sacrifice, humility and forgiveness. Fruit, foliage and flowers of the tree represent our intended outcomes of love-based community work, including reconciliation, structural transformation, joy and wellbeing. Tree saplings reflect the cyclical and reciprocal nature of love, as action through love enables others to give and share love.

The third co-operative inquiry was held in Lobitos, Peru, a coastal community of 1,506 people. This co-operative inquiry involved four co-researchers, and our collaboratively developed launching statement was, *Como practicar y difundir el amor fraternal en el trabajo comunitario?* [How do we practice and share love in our community work?]. Our four-week process considered the themes of self-reflections of love; love in action; community of equality; and, a theory of practice. As I have written in a previous paper (Godden 2015(d)), our group defined love as follows:

> "*El amor fraternal es un sentimiento profundo que nos ayuda e impulsar a actuar y proporciona igualdad de derechos y deberes por el bienestar de los demás sin recibir nada a cambio*" [Love is a deep feeling that supports and motivates us to act for universal equality, rights and responsibilities to ensure the wellbeing of all, without receiving anything in exchange].

The group's collaborative practice framework of love-based community work was depicted in a lineal theory of change and a collaborative drawing. We explained that, founded in our definition of love, community work through love involves fair work conditions, being an example, advocacy, programs that promote equality, capacity building and consciousness-raising. This encourages societal transformation for a system of equality, which involves a society of rights of people and planet, non-discrimination, shared power, nonviolence, interconnection and sustainability. Such a system provides *bienestar* [wellbeing], which involves peace, tranquillity, happiness, prosperity and hope.

The process and outcomes of these three case studies, combined with theories discussed earlier, informed a theoretical framework for social changemakers I name *The Love Ethic for Transformation Change*.

The Love Ethic for Transformational Change: a theory of practice for changemakers

The Love Ethic for Transformational Change (also described as *The Love Ethic)* is grounded in theories of feminism, dialogue, nonviolence and interconnectedness. Based on reviewed literature and our research findings, I define love as follows:
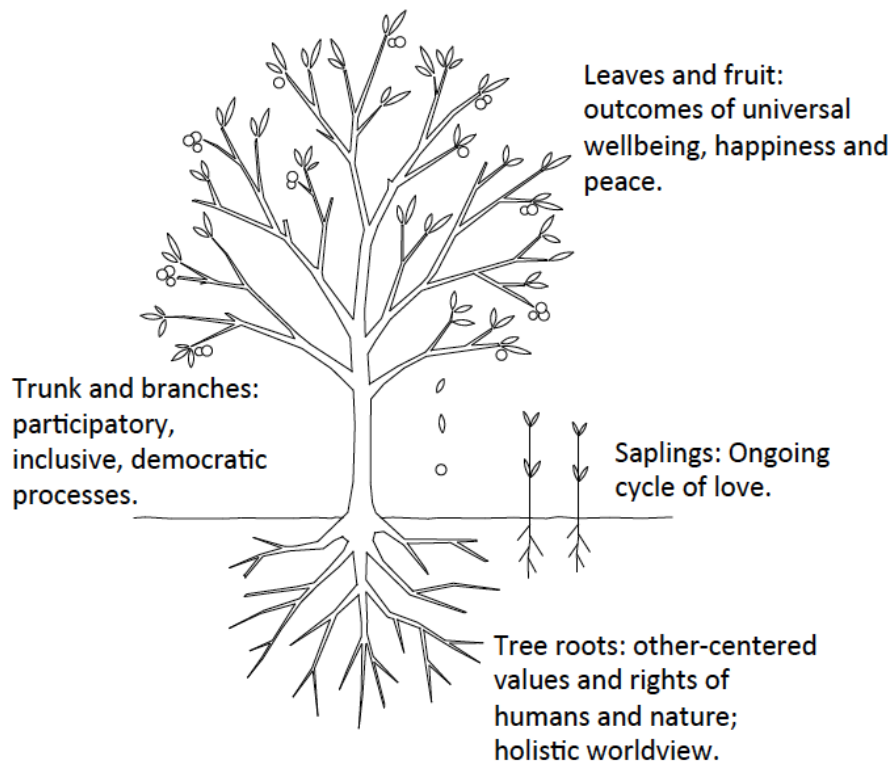
> *Love is relationship-based action for equality, rights and interconnected flourishing of people and nature. Love is a conscious choice and a process of unconditional, other-centred giving.*

The Love Ethic for Transformational Change holistically includes love for self, intimate partners, families, friends, communities, colleagues, humanity, nature and spiritual love. It is based on the premise that by loving others, our own spiritual wellbeing is nurtured. *The Love Ethic* has four main features:

- It is based on values and universal rights of humans and nature.
- It promotes participatory, democratic and gender transformative community work processes that intertwine people and planet and actively challenges structures of power and inequality.
- It aims for structural change that enables universal wellbeing for people and planet.
- Love-based action is reciprocal and cyclical.

This section presents this theory within the framework of a tree.

Figure 9.1: *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* framework

Leaves and fruit: outcomes of universal wellbeing, happiness and peace.

Trunk and branches: participatory, inclusive, democratic processes.

Saplings: Ongoing cycle of love.

Tree roots: other-centered values and rights of humans and nature; holistic worldview.

Values of The Love Ethic for Transformational Change

The roots of the tree represent the values of *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change.* Changemakers who embody *The Love Ethic* embrace values-based practice. The first key value of *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* is commitment to and respect of the rights of people (current and future generations) and the rights of nature. The breadth of human rights is informed by international instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. These international instruments highlight that all people are free and equal in dignity and rights, all people have inherent equal worth, all people have the right to be free from discrimination and all people have duties to others. *The Love Ethic* embraces love as the process for achieving equality.

Further to this, *The Love Ethic* values the rights of nature, reflecting the interconnectedness between people and planet. Along with the *buen vivir* literature*, The Love Ethic* is informed by *the Universal Declaration of Rights of Mother Earth*, established at the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth (2010). This declaration highlights that Mother Earth is a living being with inherent rights such as the

right to life and to exist, the right to maintain its identity and integrity as a distinct, self-regulating and interrelated being, and the right to elements such as clean air, water and integral health. The declaration also outlines the obligations of humans (and States and public and private institutions), including the responsibility to respect and live in harmony with Mother Earth. *The Love Ethic* embodies the interconnected relationship between people and nature, recognising that humans are among countless species that co-exist in interdependent ecosystems. It embraces a holistic worldview that celebrates indigenous spirituality and knowledges. Humans are responsible to significantly decrease our ecological impact and support our global and local systems to exist in perpetuity for all species.

Building from a culture of rights, another key value of *The Love Ethic* is justice. Inequality, discrimination and sexism manifest within societal and economic structures that prioritise power and profits over people and planet. In contrast, *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* embraces a radical paradigm that critiques existing structural inequalities and supports us to pursue systemic transformation for a global order of fairness, rights and equality. For changemakers, *The Love Ethic* involves a personal and ethical commitment to recognise and challenge privilege and inequality and embody conscious love-centred action for structural change in solidarity with marginalised peoples.

The Love Ethic for Transformational Change also has a core principle of nonviolence: a deliberate commitment to honour the inherent worth of others (people and nature) and intentionally not harm others in the pursuit of justice. *The Love Ethic* recognises that individuals and communities are disempowered by structures of inequality and we collectively recognise, challenge and transform these systems through nonviolent processes that reflect the culture of justice and integrity we aim for. Nonviolence also involves forgiveness of the self and others – a generosity of spirit that gives and forgives with humble self-awareness and other-centeredness.

An important value in *The Love Ethic* is hope; a belief that an alternative world is possible and that equality and peace are achievable. Hope supports collective and intergenerational solidarity and commitment to long-lasting change, and provides inspiration. Finally, *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* celebrates the spiritual relationship between people, planet and cosmos. It embraces multiple spiritual interpretations and meaning-making and encourages mindful interconnectedness.

Process of The Love Ethic for Transformational Change

The trunk and branches of the tree represent the process of practicing *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change*. The fundamental core of *The Love Ethic* is embodying equality, which involves being aware of our individual privilege and power and our responsibility to actively share privilege and power. It requires us to be continually reflexive of our ethics and our power and transform our attitudes, language and behaviours to reflect the world of equality we strive for. This includes recognising and transforming patriarchal gender relations.

In order to practice equality, we give time, energy and effort to build relationships with the people we work with, interact with and oppose. Reflecting nonviolence, respectful relationships based on *The Love Ethic* have honesty, patience, trust, forgiveness and open communication. Love-based relationships do not require that we necessarily like each other, but rather that we acknowledge and honour each other's humanity and inherent worth. This is especially important with people whose values and behaviours we oppose. *The Love Ethic* involves loving and forgiving others who do not love us. It also involves feeling with others and empathically honouring their needs, desires and dignity. We actively practice reconciliation by acknowledging, honouring and standing in solidarity with marginalised peoples and nature to challenge oppression, colonisation, exploitation and structural inequality.

Practicing equality through love involves participatory processes for structural change. Practitioners applying *The Love Ethic* support citizen collectives to self-organise to address issues they identify in ways that are most effective for them. This is a grassroots change process where power rests in communities, not in the hands of corporates, governments, media moguls and the wealthy elite. Love-centred changemakers are deliberate about transforming hierarchical leadership structures to stand in solidarity with marginalised peoples, encouraging and supporting them to claim power and agency. Our work may involve enabling access to information, sharing skills and knowledge, providing values-based advice when requested, strengthening the capacity of citizen collectives to self-empower to bring about change and undertaking nonviolent direct action. We work in partnership with marginalised groups to speak out and name injustice and promote an alternative vision for our world.

Importantly, love-centred participatory processes deliberatively promote equality, through encouraging inclusivity and diversity, promoting democracy, ensuring safety for marginalised peoples and, in particular, promoting and supporting equality between women

and men. Participatory processes may integrate affirmative action approaches to share power, provide special opportunities for marginalised peoples and challenge entrenched structural inequality. Practical examples may include providing resources so people with caring responsibilities can participate, rotating facilitators to challenge hierarchical structures, sharing workloads and democratising communication through open forums.

Love-centred participatory processes that embody equality embrace dialogue – safe and nurturing communication processes for people to connect, interact, share and collaboratively build knowledge through our common humanity. Using love-centred tools such as nonviolent communication, consensus decision-making and critical reflexivity, *The Love Ethic* encourages reciprocal consciousness-raising by encouraging active listening. We use dialogue to collaboratively share, learn and prepare our change approaches. Importantly, when we embrace *The Love Ethic,* we do not speak on behalf of others but support them to speak for themselves. *The Love Ethic* also involves nurturing and celebrating the interdependent relationship between people and planet. We acknowledge and respect the rights of nature throughout our work, we consciously find ways to 'step lightly' on the Earth and we seek opportunities to personally and collectively enjoy nature.

In practice, *The Love Ethic* is playful, joyful, invigorating and challenging. We celebrate collective and individual emotional and cultural expression and we embrace safe humour as a tool for connection. We practice nurturing communication to recognise, share and transform our emotions for positive change and self-actualisation. We take risks and challenge societal, economic, cultural and environmental norms that oppress and exploit people and planet and do so knowing that personal difficulties may result. We propose, promote and embody radical transformation of inequitable structures and systems and exemplify the world we hope for.

The Love Ethic supports us to unconditionally give within our own boundaries and capacity. At times we may serve others, we may make sacrifices, we may "go out on a limb", but *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* requires that we also honour our own needs, desires and values. To manage our energy, compassion and spirit, the process of working through love is holistic - we acknowledge various experiences and forms of love and we integrate them all in our community work practice.

Intended outcomes of The Love Ethic for Transformational Change

The leaves, flowers and fruit of the tree represent our intended outcomes from applying *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change*. Changemakers working through *The Love Ethic*

want to collaboratively bring about radical change to enable a world of universal wellbeing, freedom, happiness, joy, peace, tranquillity, safety and flourishing of people and planet.

In order to achieve this radical new world order, we apply *The Love Ethic* to create a system of equality, whereby all people have equal rights, duties, opportunities and outcomes. In our love-based global system of equality, there is no discrimination based on any distinguishing feature of difference. All people mutually commit to and embody rights of people and rights of nature, with a collaborative vision of social, economic, environmental and cultural structures that sustainably benefit all. People and planet are consciously interconnected. In this new world order, there is no violence, no corruption and no inequality of power. All people are genuinely motivated by a desire for universal flourishing.

Reciprocal and cyclical nature of The Love Ethic for Transformational Change

The small saplings growing from the seeds of the fully-grown tree represent the reciprocal, cyclical and ongoing nature of love. When changemakers work through love, we inspire, motivate and propagate others to love. The "butterfly effect" of love-based action for structural transformation is experienced and exchanged beyond our knowledge and imagination.

Implementing The Love Ethic for Transformational Change

The Love Ethic for Transformational Change is a framework of practice for activists, community workers and social workers aiming to transform structural inequality. It is liberating for practitioners and communities as an ethical and political theory to guide action and decision-making. Importantly, *The Love Ethic* is not about tinkering at the edges of existing disempowering systems, policy and programming – it involves radical, structural change that transforms all structures of inequality such as patriarchy, racism, capitalism, religious fundamentalism, homophobia and environmental exploitation.

   The Love Ethic for Transformational Change is a holistic approach that extends from the relationship between community workers and community members to all forms of love, acknowledging that professionals are embedded in various relationships and that social work ethics transcend private and public spheres (Morley and Ife 2002; Banks 2006). In this regard, applying *The Love Ethic* requires community workers to engage in many forms of love, which are all relevant to our work as practitioners and our identity as relationship-oriented humans. I outline various strategies for community workers to apply *The Love Ethic:*

Self-love: In order to love others, we must love ourselves. Self-love involves knowing ourselves, trying to exemplify *The Love Ethic* in our personal attitudes and behaviours and being kind to ourselves. We identify and honour our boundaries and practice self-care. This may require us to take time off, to say "no" and to prioritise our tasks and focus. Through ongoing reflexivity, we recognise our mistakes, but embrace our learning, humility, resilience and willingness to transform. We forgive ourselves, celebrate our scars and stay open to wonder and opportunity.

Intimate partner love: We love our intimate partners by ensuring we have time and energy for our romantic relationships and commit to relationships that are equal, nonviolent and honest. This includes conscious reflexivity to generate gender equal attitudes, roles and norms in relationship.

Family love: We love our family and friends by collaboratively defining and developing strategies for a balance between the various aspects of our lives. We consciously share the burden of unpaid domestic and care labour to support gender justice in our family. We also help develop workplaces, organisations and public institutions that celebrate children's rights and we are flexible to caring responsibilities.

Love for colleagues: We love our colleagues by ensuring fair workplace conditions that engender equality and rights. We build healthy relationships with our colleagues based on open communication, teamwork, a collective purpose and mutual respect. We develop open, safe spaces to share skills and knowledge to support individual and collective growth. We support gender equal unionisation to enable advocacy for workers' rights and practice egalitarian management to dismantle systems of workplace hierarchy.

Love for community: We love our communities by supporting participative and empowering community initiatives that aim for equality, and working collaboratively to strengthen connectedness and the rights of people and nature. This includes supporting local small businesses, strengthening local organisations, encouraging community participation in government decision-making and supporting marginalised peoples to advocate for their rights. We privilege egalitarian spaces of dialogue, recognise power imbalances and actively work to share power. This involves constantly checking our privilege and relinquishing and sharing power to support others to be heard and be involved. We are flexible and responsive to the needs and priorities of our communities, while maintaining our core values and commitment to equality and reconciliation. Importantly, love for community focuses on processes, not outcomes, and works for transformational change

through relationships. In this regard, community workers are not experts, but privileged people with a responsibility to support others to actively pursue their individual and collective rights.

Love for nature: We love nature by nurturing our symbiotic, interdependent relationship with the planet. We recognise that we co-exist in ecosystems. Our responsibility as community workers is not just for our human communities but our ecological communities. We recognise our carbon and environmental footprint and develop and implement strategies to significantly mitigate our impact. *The Love Ethic* involves advocating effective environmental policies and programs at the individual, household, community, national and international levels. Love for nature also involves spending time in natural spaces and building relationships of spiritual connection with fauna and flora.

Love for humanity: We love humanity by embracing a global consciousness and recognising global connectedness and the interdependence of a common humanity. This involves being informed of local and global issues, connecting local activism to global movements and being aware of diversity and difference without *othering*. We position ourselves as active global citizens in the worldwide radical movement for change through solidarity. Love for humanity involves understanding that every action has consequence for others and therefore we critically, thoughtfully and ethically consider all actions and behaviours, whether small (such as purchasing coffee) or large (conflict between states). Our joy comes from knowing that marginalised peoples claim their voices, power and rights and that nature is flourishing.

Spiritual love: Spiritual love involves recognising, celebrating and connecting with the cosmic unknown. It is acknowledging that humans, nature and the cosmos are interconnected and that humanity belongs to a much greater story than our own existence. Spiritual love involves respecting egalitarian spiritual traditions and honouring that spiritual meaning-making is a common human process. We also privilege indigenous worldviews, including the spiritual relationship between indigenous peoples and land. Approaches of spiritual love may include prayer, meditation, engaging with nature, rest, or simply supporting others to participate in egalitarian and empowering spiritual practices. Spiritual love does not mean that we condone structural inequality within and between religious institutions.

These suggested strategies of love show the broad-reaching implications of *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change*, beyond the traditional realm of an organisational setting

to the lived experience of humans in context. In particular, *The Love Ethic* involves understanding the interconnectedness of all beings and actions and recognizing that individual and collective action has both an impact and a response. Our love-based actions eventually result in reciprocated love back towards us through the global and all-encompassing cycle of love. In sum, love begets love.

Challenges in applying *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change*

The Love Ethic for Transformational Change is unashamedly ambitious and I identify a number of challenges in applying this theory in practice. While these challenges do not negate the importance or relevance of this approach, they do highlight the complexities of revolutionary theory. In this section, I outline key challenges and propose approaches to address these challenges in practice.

As an ethical theory of practice, *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* requires us to recognise and challenge existing structures of inequality and injustice and work collaboratively with others to transform the current status quo of social and economic systems. The key limitation of *The Love Ethic* is the predominance of neoliberalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation in our society, and the immense difficulties for individuals to usurp these ideologies. A pragmatic approach to systemic change is likely to prevail when individual passion, motivation and energy is tapped. In this regard, the most important aspect of *The Love Ethic* as a theory of practice is forming coalitions and partnerships of solidarity with like-minded people who are also committed to this ethical approach. While the individual can never bring about transformational change, the collective can. The power of nonviolent social movements to peacefully initiate change is evident throughout human history, such as ending the Vietnam War, the African-American civil rights movements and the Arab Spring (Chenoweth and Stephen 2011). However, activist collectives may experience diverse perspectives, conflict and moral dilemmas when developing and implementing strategies to protest inequality and injustice. Dilemmas may consider the legitimate right to protest, messaging and tactics of civil disobedience. When working through *The Love Ethic,* collectives can use the framework's values and process to guide respectful, gender equal dialogue and decision-making to mediate conflict. Using a consensus approach with extensive planning, informed by principles of nonviolence, activists can explore multiple perspectives to determine an appropriate response. Importantly, when working through *The Love Ethic,* we must continually focus on values and ethics, relationships and process, not outcomes.

Another challenge of applying *The Love Ethic* is the likelihood of draconian response from powerful governments, corporations and individuals when activists engage in nonviolent direct action (NDVA) to challenge structures of inequality. Current social and economic structures are based on patriarchal neoliberal ideology that serves the interests of the elite (Hawthorne 2002; Oakley 2002). History has shown us that governments led by the elite will use policy, law and violence to quell activism. For example, at the time of writing, the activist community in Western Australia was protesting proposed laws that will see activists jailed for 24 months or fined AU$24,000 for blocking 'legal activity' by using lock-on devices (Parliament of Western Australia 2015). This was met with outrage by civil society and the legal fraternity, as the law is considered a hyperbolic response to growing community dissatisfaction with neoliberal governance (Conservation Council of Western Australia 2015).

However, despite the imposition of legal and violent responses to activism, *The Love Ethic* must prevail. We must be prepared to collectively use NVDA and civil disobedience to challenge unjust laws, whatever the consequence (Thoreau 1849). Just as well-organised NVDA supported by a broad community campaign stopped the construction of a large-scale LNG (liquefied natural gas) project on sacred Aboriginal country at James Price Point in northern Western Australia (The Wilderness Society 2015), it too can stop future projects and decisions that undermine the rights of people and nature. Klein (2014) demonstrates the power and necessity of *Blockadia* (nonviolent resistance) in transforming inequitable structures. In an era of significant uncertainty and threat of catastrophic crisis, *Blockadia* conducted with love is vital in our collective quest for change. Furthermore, as Thoreau (1849) and Tolstoy (1970) emphasise, and Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi so powerfully demonstrated, *Blockadia* may result in imprisonment for people who protest injustice. However, with time, energy and burgeoning social movements, history has shown that the State eventually relinquishes its power.

Building from this is the significant challenge for individuals and collectives to resist engaging with violence instead of nonviolence to bring about desired change. Chenoweth and Stephen (2011) highlight that nonviolent resistance has been far more effective in stimulating revolutionary change than violent uprisings, with longer and more sustained impacts. However, for people who are impatient and frustrated, such as some Tibetan people who disagree with His Holiness the Dalai Lama's negotiation approach to establish freedom for Tibet, violent protest may be utilised (Barnett 2009). Several activists and authors caution against counteracting violence with violence, emphasizing personal, long-

term and intergenerational impacts from committing violence to transform structural inequality (Hanh 1993; hooks 2000; Gandhi 2005). An example of this is the state of Timor-Leste – after gaining independence in 2002 following decades of guerrilla resistance against the Indonesian military, the nation continues to struggle with high rates of men's violence against women, street and gang violence and institutional violence from police and government (Timor-Leste Armed Violence Assessment 2009). The "un-learning" of violence is an ongoing issue for the Timorese people. Although significantly difficult in our punitive society, *The Love Ethic* emphasises restorative rather than retributive justice.

A further challenge when applying *The Love Ethic* is managing pessimism. While anger is an important tool to motivate action, it is dangerous when it consumes activists through pessimism and cynicism. In his recent autobiography, former Australian Greens leader and lifelong environmental and social justice activist Bob Brown (2014) explains that he held significant pessimism in his youth, which led to depression and helplessness. He highlights the importance of optimism as the "key ingredient for any human endeavour" (ix). Optimism stimulates us to shift from dwelling on issues to actively trying to address them. In doing so, we energise, collectivise and actualise the world we want.

Importantly, as imperfect human beings, we are likely to experience some failures in our attempts to bring about a world of equality and universal wellbeing. However, the living systems cyclical process of action and reflection (Wadsworth 2010) reminds us that change is not lineal. We continuously plan, act, observe and reflect to collaboratively create the change we aim for. In this process, we must be grounded in our values and the rights of humans and nature to inform consensus decision-making. Neoliberal power will try to distract us, but a cyclical approach that embraces collective action and reflection will support us to ultimately achieve equality.

Finally, I highlight the importance of self-care and self-love when living by *The Love Ethic.* As discussed earlier, self-love is a vital component of *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change,* just as self-care and boundaries are tenets of the social work profession. "Compassion fatigue" is often discussed within social work, whereby indirect exposure to trauma may result in significant emotional, cognitive and behavioural changes in the clinician and reduced capacity to effectively practice (Bride, Radey and Fidgley 2007). Various strategies assist us in practising self-love when living by *The Love Ethic,* including participating in safe, encouraging and supportive relationships with intimate partners, family members and friends and ensuring professional and emotional support from mentors,

supervisors and colleagues (Lloyd, King and Chenoweth 2002); engaging in non-discriminatory humour (Moran 2002); establishing boundaries and saying 'no' to avoid burnout; institutionalizing recreational activities in organisations, collectives and families; and, engaging with nature (Barton and Pretty 2010; Cervinka, Roderer and Hefler 2012).

While not exhaustive, these suggestions assist practitioners to confront challenges that arise when working through *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change.*

Conclusion

This paper presented *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change*, a practice framework of love for changemakers. In a global context of uncertainty and increasing inequality, *The Love Ethic* supports social movements, social workers and community workers to collectively, actively and practicably critique and challenge structures of neoliberalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation in our collective quest for an alternative, sustainable world.

The Love Ethic for Transformational Change is peaceful revolution for a new world order. It is an organic, flexible and cyclical practice approach that celebrates and strengthens the symbiosis between people, planet and cosmos. *The Love Ethic* is intentionally utopian, unapologetically ambitious and hopeful. It rests on the assumption that individuals, households, groups, communities, nations and the globe have the power to collectively transcend current systems of inequality and embody a brave new world order. For changemakers, activists, community workers and peaceful revolutionists, *The Love Ethic* provides a framework of values that inform our attitudes and behaviours, a process for collaborative action and goals to guide us.

The spirit and intelligence of humans and nature have the revolutionary potential to create an alternative world of equality and justice. As Arundhati Roy (2003) reminds us, "Another world is not only possible, she's on her way. And on a quiet day, if you listen very carefully, you can hear her breathing."

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9.4   Applying change-oriented research in practice

This research explored the love ethic in international rural community work within the
participatory knowledge paradigm. The study involved deep, organic and dynamic

methodological development. Drawing from an epistemology of change that involves shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity, I developed a methodological approach entitled *change-oriented research* to support communities to actively bring about social transformation through the research process. This paradigm was actualised through the co-operative inquiry method, involving various narrative, performative and visual tools to creatively explore the research topic.

The research findings discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8 suggest several learnings regarding applying *change-oriented research* in practice. Across the three case studies, co-inquirers and I were positive about the selected co-operative inquiry method. The data show that the research process was empowering and rigorous, as it supported us to collaboratively develop new knowledge that was relevant to our work and co-inquirers also learned new skills and information. Furthermore, we developed new friendships and networks and built trust with colleagues, strengthening local connections and solidarity. Importantly, the process also supported co-inquirers to experience personal and professional transformation. These findings reflect the principles of King Jr.'s 'beloved community' - a world where people 'bond on the basis of shared humanness' (hooks 2003, p. 35).

The data suggest that there are several aspects of the *change-oriented research* process that facilitate the aforementioned outcomes. Firstly, a clear facilitating factor is the methodological focus on participation, democracy and inclusivity. Strategies include consensus-style decision-making, collaborative values and ethics that emphasise equality and collective responsibility for decision-making about every aspect of the inquiry process and findings. *Change-oriented research* deliberately acknowledges and transfers power imbalances to support a safe inquiry space that nurtures inclusion and participation. It involves commitment to authentically conduct participatory research that reflects 'global concerns with rights and voice, community development perspectives, and developments in qualitative inquiry' (Nind 2011, p. 350). This study attempted to rigorously and collaboratively develop a theory of practice with community workers in a non-hierarchical and transformational process, reflecting a 'decolonisation' of academia (Denzin & Giardina 2009, p. 15). The findings suggest that it is indeed possible to collectively generate knowledge using a consensus-driven, democratised process.

Secondly, our study shows that the systematic cyclical process of reflection and action supports co-inquirers to deeply and reflexively engage with social issues, with ongoing development and testing of theory in practice. Along with knowledge development, the

cyclical process assists with personal reflexivity (T. May 2011), group strengthening and building individual confidence. It also supports co-inquirers to debate and consider various elements of the research topic and, in doing so, reach a consensual position. Inherent in the cyclical approach is a trust of process and collaboratively embracing the 'chaos' of the organic and fluid process (Heron 1996).

Thirdly, it is evident that *change-oriented research* requires trusting relationships between co-inquirers. In all three case studies, relationships supported by our collaborative ethics and values strategies, as outlined in Chapter 5. Importantly, collaboratively developed values provide a point of reference to manage discussion, difference and conflict. They also support co-inquirers to ensure a safe and empowering space, to be vulnerable and to share emotions. My personal experience also shows that when initiating research as an 'insider researcher' (Asselin 2003; Dwyer & Buckle 2009; Kanuha 2000) in my own community, the process of building trust and relationships is enhanced. Furthermore, the evidence suggests that trusting relationships in a democratic and non-hierarchical and reflexive space support critical discussion that is empowering.

Building from this, our research highlights a fourth learning, that critical discussion is fundamental to *change-oriented research*. As the Margaret River co-operative inquiry demonstrates, critical discussion enables co-inquirers to connect. Critical discussion also enhances the rigour of the research process and the collaborative knowledge. Importantly, the data suggest that critical discussion is itself an evolving process and relies upon trust, relationships and safety (Stringer 2007). All three co-operative inquiries began with some hesitation about critical discussion, debate and disagreement, and co-inquirers initially tended to agree with each other. There may be several explanations for this, such as cultural norms regarding respect and pride, low levels of trust and relationship in the group, gender relations and imbalances of power and *groupthink* (Janis 1972). However, with time, increased comfort and participation and deliberate focus on validity procedures, all three groups had increased diversity and disagreement in our discussions. This was also assisted by the sense of chaos within the groups, an aspect inherent to co-operative inquiry (Heron 1996) and *change-oriented research* more generally. Furthermore, co-inquirers built from each other's ideas through a method I term 'developmental dialogue', a dialogical process whereby people develop ideas and concepts together through critical discussion.

Fifthly, the use of creative and expressive methods, such as performance, art, storytelling and discussion, supports *change-oriented research* to celebrate and include various forms of

knowledge. In this regard, *change-oriented research* is holistic and does not privilege certain forms of knowledge. It challenges the potential for intellectual elitism by celebrating diversity of knowledge and, in doing so, provides a methodology that is useful and effective for research with culturally and linguistically diverse peoples, indigenous peoples and marginalised groups (Denzin & Levin 2007). In the Margaret River case study, it was particularly evident that diversity of skills and knowledge in the group also enhance the research outcomes, through individuals challenging co-inquirers to engage in strategies and approaches they were not accustomed to, such as bodily movement or collaborative drawing.

Finally, *change-oriented research* focuses on the theoretical *and* the practical. The data show that co-inquirers connected these areas by building a knowledge base, personal confidence and solidarity with others to actualise love in our community work. The findings indicate that initiating researchers can join co-inquirers in a mutual quest for knowledge, while identifying and challenging entrenched power imbalances.

The study also highlights some difficulties with the *change-oriented research* approach. Such an approach requires a considerable time commitment by the initiating researcher and co-inquirers. While the format of a two-hour meeting once weekly for six weeks was considered appropriate by the Liquica and Margaret River groups, we were constantly stretched for time to adequately implement the relevant aspects of the co-operative inquiry. The format in Lobitos, with a much smaller group of four people and longer and more frequent meetings appeared to enable more dialogue and collaboration, although the small group size did limit diversity of perspective.

A further challenge is the co-operative model itself. In all three co-operative inquiries, co-inquirers required significant support to understand *change-oriented research* and engage in this alternative approach to group work and research. For some co-inquirers, particularly those who were accustomed to and comfortable in hierarchical structures, it took some time to adapt to the participatory and democratic nature of the methodology. However, with time and experience, the method was greatly effective and transformative for co-inquirers. When co-inquirers grasped the cyclical process of the co-operative inquiry they found it more enjoyable and engaging.

Finally, multi-cultural and multi-language research presents significant challenges, including cultural learning and language translation. Given the dialogical (Freire 1989) focus of this methodology, language challenges were particularly evident, especially in Liquica, requiring

patience and respectful reflexivity from all co-inquirers. As initiating researcher, I found myself most methodologically comfortable in the Margaret River co-operative inquiry. I felt that the group quickly grasped the methodology, possibly due to several factors: high levels of participant skill, education and initiative; no need for language translation; we bonded quickly due to pre-existing relationships; and, we were all engaged in reflexive community work practice. I felt very trusting that the group could engage with and lead this process, due to their understanding of the method, lack of language challenges and possibility some ethnocentrism on my behalf as I was working with my 'safe' community compared to the 'unknown' and 'somewhat known' communities of Liquica and Lobitos. Nonetheless, my methodological comfort in my own community is reinforced by Kelly and Sewell's (1988) suggestion that community work based on Gandhian nonviolence principles should be conducted in our own community.

Despite some challenges, the research suggests that *change-oriented research* is an empowering methodological paradigm and process that can support co-inquirers to collaboratively inquire into and transform a social problem, building solidarity and community connectedness. It reflects the principles and process of *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change,* indicating that *change-oriented research* is a useful strategy for love-based community work.

9.5   Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the findings that emerged from the research I undertook in Liquica, Margaret River and Lobitos. Along with the discussion sections of journal articles for each case study I shared in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, in this chapter I analysed the research findings in relation to the literature and discussed their implications for practice in social movements, community work and social work. I considered three areas: defining love; *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change;* and, applying *change-oriented research* in practice.

Building from the co-operative inquiry outcomes and the literature, I proposed that love is '…relationship-based action for equality, rights and interconnected flourishing of people and nature. Love is a conscious choice and a process of unconditional, other-centred giving'. My definition reflects the general trend across the literature and data that love is action, a choice and a process for achieving social justice and universal wellbeing. I also suggest the universality and unconditionality of love, founded on interconnectedness and relationship.

I also proposed a theory of practice for love-based community work, entitled *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change*. Depicted as a tree, *The Love Ethic* has four features: it is values-based and emphasises the universal rights of humans and nature; it promotes community work processes that are participatory, democratic and gender transformative to actively transform structural inequality; it aims for universal wellbeing for people and planet; and, it recognises the reciprocal and cyclical nature of love. This proposed theory aligns with a key objective of the AASW, to 'advocate for the pursuit of social justice and changes to social structures and policies in order to promote social inclusion and redress social disadvantage' (AASW 2015).

In practice, *The Love Ethic* integrates various forms of love, with strategies such as self-care, forgiveness, nonviolent relationships, fair workplace conditions, dialogue, mitigating our environmental impact, embracing a global consciousness and privileging indigenous spiritual worldviews. Challenges with applying *The Love Ethic* include the need for collective solidarity and partnership, the likelihood of draconian response from governments and the elite, resisting violence, managing pessimism and the importance of self-care.

Finally, in this chapter I also discussed the research findings regarding applying the methodological paradigm of *change-oriented research* in practice. This research paradigm was empowering for co-inquirers and me, supporting the development of new knowledge, personal transformation and solidarity. Factors that facilitated these outcomes include the participatory and democratic approach, cycles of action and reflection in the organic and fluid process, trusting relationships, critical discussion and creative and expressive methods. *Change-oriented research* is an important tool for changemakers who engage with *The Love Ethic.*

In the following concluding chapter, I summarise my research, discussing the research journey and implications for social work practice. I also identify opportunities for further research to build upon the emerging knowledge regarding love-based community work.

10 Conclusion

We can transgress, but not transcend, the limits of our being; we can exceed given ways of being, but only when we recognise that we always accede to another, limited way of being. When we acknowledge that we neither comprehend nor manifest the infinite possibilities of being – when every azure bell is a 'nonpositive affirmation' – our transgression of limits opens us to the limitless (Orlie 1997, p. 6).

In this concluding chapter, I summarise the research journey, the implications of the research for activism, community work and social work practice and discuss opportunities for future research and action. I also reflect on my experience of researching this personally transformative research topic.

10.1 Summary of research journey

This research considered two key questions: What is love in international rural community work? and, How can love transform structural inequality? It responded to a global research context and problem of inequality and injustice perpetuated by dominant systems of neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation. The research was an attempt to understand and engage with love as an ethic and tool for emancipatory practice. My comprehensive literature review, conducted through the lens of hooks' (2000) love ethic, found that although there exists a fairly large body of theoretical and spiritual work about love, we have very limited empirical research regarding love in social work and community work, or the health and welfare professions and social movements in general. Furthermore, the social work sector has very limited exploration of love as an ethic and mode of practice.

In this regard, my research is a deliberate attempt to begin to fill this glaring void in social work theory and practice, and challenge the apparent stigma of love within the profession. I initiated a *change-oriented research* process with community workers, volunteers, activists and community members in the rural communities of Liquica (Timor-Leste), Margaret River (Australia) and Lobitos (Peru) to explore love in our practice and generate a framework of love-based community work practice. Some limitations of the study include the small sample size and short timeframe in each case study site, which inhibits generalizability (although

this is not an aim of participatory research), the discursive complexities of love (particularly with multi-lingual research), my relative inexperience with the co-operative inquiry method and my personal bias and privilege. These limitations were mitigated by the participatory and democratic methodological values and process, ongoing collective and personal reflexivity and strong collaboratively developed ethical strategies. The research culminated in a radical theory of practice entitled *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change,* which can support activists, community workers, social workers and social movements to work through love for a new world order of justice, sustainability and equality.

10.2 Love: the antidote to structural inequality

Our current world order is dominated by violent structures of neoliberal capitalism, patriarchy, racism and environmental exploitation (IFSW, IASSW & ICSW 2012). These structures perpetuate inequality of rights, capabilities and power at global, local, household and individual levels, marginalising, amongst others, people in poverty, women and girls, people of colour, indigenous peoples and nature. Activists, communities, community workers and social workers are at the frontline of social movements that aim to challenge these inequitable systems to actualise peace, equality and universal wellbeing of people and planet. The size, scope and reach of social movements are growing exponentially - yet we can be disempowered and fragmented by the very systems we aim to transform. As such, it is vital that organised activists are guided by an ethical theory of action to inform our practice, build solidarity and support the sustainability of social movements. I believe that love can be the foundation of a radical paradigm for change.

Love is vital for changemakers. As hooks (2000) and other theorists argue (Butot 2004; Freire 1989; Gandhi 2005; Hanh 1993; King Jr. 1963; Morley & Ife 2002; Somerville 2011; Westoby & Dowling 2013), and the research data from this study reinforce, love is a grounded, radical and empowering ethic for systemic transformation. As the biological foundation of humanness, love is vital for human co-existence and connectedness between people and nature. Maturana & Verden-Zoller's (2008) ecosystems model suggests that love challenges structures of hierarchy and control, as human co-operation requires positive and reinforcing connections to enable universal flourishing of people and planet. Love is nonviolence, a commitment to non-harmfulness of the other, including our opponent, in the pursuit of justice (Fernandes 2003; Gandhi 1957; 2005; Hanh 1993; King Jr. 1963; 1967a; Tolstoy 1970). Love is dialogue, a respectful, democratic process of consciousness-raising to understand and challenge structures of oppression (Freire 1989; Kelly & Sewell 1988; Westoby &

Dowling 2013). Love is solidarity between people and between people and nature in the actualisation of our hope for a new world order (Acosta 2011; Hanh 1993; Hawthorne 2002; Kingsley et al. 2009; Oakley 2002; Shiva 1989).

Drawing from the outcomes of this co-operative research study, I propose *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* as a provocative theory of practice for people who work collectively for a transformed world. *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* is a radical paradigm shift for activists, community workers, social workers and others who are committed to systemic change. Building from the literature and research outcomes, I define love as relationship-based action for equality, rights and interconnected flourishing of people and nature. Love is a conscious choice and a process of unconditional, other-centred giving. As a holistic theory, *The Love Ethic* involves the various forms of love we experience, including love for self, intimate partners, families, friends, communities, colleagues, humanity, nature and spiritual love.

The Love Ethic is based on values, including the universal rights of humans and nature; the interconnectedness of people and nature; justice; nonviolence; forgiveness; hope; and a spiritual relationship between people, planet and cosmos. *The Love Ethic* promotes an awareness of privilege and embodying equality to actively share power through reflexive practice. *The Love Ethic* involves a commitment to nonviolent, respectful relationships with honesty, patience, trust, forgiveness and open and nurturing communication. We stand in solidarity with marginalised peoples and nature to transform oppression, colonisation, exploitation and structural inequality. We embrace participatory processes for structural change (such as *change-oriented research),* supporting grassroots citizen collectives. We use democratic, dialogical and gender transformative community work processes that intertwine people and planet and actively challenge structures of power and inequality. Importantly, *The Love Ethic* involves appreciation and commitment to an interdependent relationship between people and nature through constant recognition and integration of the rights of nature in our activities.

When we work through *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change,* we aim for outcomes of structural transformation. We hope for a world of universal wellbeing, freedom, happiness, joy, peace, tranquillity, safety and flourishing of people and planet. In order to achieve this new world order, we apply *The Love Ethic* to create a system of equality, non-discrimination and rights of people and nature, with no violence, no corruption and no inequality of power. All people are genuinely motivated by a desire for universal flourishing. Changemakers who

apply *The Love Ethic* inspire, motivate and encourage others to love through a living systems process of reflection and action. Love-based action is thus reciprocal, cyclical and ongoing.

Importantly, the participatory knowledge paradigm that cultivated *The Love Ethic* embraces the dynamism and holism of ecological systems theory (Wadsworth 2010). As such, activists, community workers, social workers and academics committed to *The Love Ethic* embrace methodological approaches that reflect our ethical position. *Change-oriented research* is informed by an epistemology of change that involves shared power, participation, action and contextual reflexivity to support community members to collaboratively inquire into social justice issues through cycles of action and reflection. This study highlights that co-operative research with colleagues as co-inquirers can generate new knowledge and action for change. Furthermore, creative and expressive tools such as art, storytelling, performance and dialogue assists groups to be innovative and holistic in their inquiry. *Change-oriented research* is thus an important strategy to transform structural inequality through love.

10.3 Opportunities for future research and action

The Love Ethic for Transformational Change is a collaboratively developed theory of community work practice. Although this knowledge paradigm was generated through cyclical reflection and action cycles within each co-operative inquiry, it is, as yet, untested beyond this research project. In this regard, the key opportunity stemming from this research is further *change-oriented research* that involves working with community workers, activist collectives and organisations to apply this theory in practice. Reflecting the *change-oriented research* imperative, such studies would involve both research and action, whereby community workers apply the theory in localised practice contexts to collaboratively refine and enhance the theory. This would strengthen the rigour and participatory nature of this theory of practice.

Future research regarding *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* could consider:

- The individual experience of learning and engaging with *The Love Ethic* as a mode of living and professional practice, including the impacts on health and wellbeing, family, identity and community.

- The collective experience of applying *The Love Ethic,* including identifying and developing processes that nurture and limit the practice of *The Love Ethic.* This includes managing conflict and navigating moral dilemmas regarding the legitimate

right to protest. This would support us to better understand and develop organisational systems that reflect and integrate *The Love Ethic.*

- The experience and learnings of specific activist campaigns that are deliberately informed by and implemented through *The Love Ethic.*

- The experience of policy makers who actively engage with *The Love Ethic* in the participatory development, advocacy and implementation of policy making.

- The perspective of neoliberal and patriarchal leaders and advocates when confronted with the theory and practice of *The Love Ethic*, and their response to this ideology and paradigm.

These potential research studies could evolve the philosophy of *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change* as an ethic and approach for structural change.

10.4 Final reflections

In this thesis, I explored love as an alternative paradigm for action to transform structures of inequality and injustice. This was no easy feat and my research and proposed theory of practice, *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change,* belong to a nascent phase of my life-long journey as an activist for structural change. This doctoral journey was significantly transformative for me as a woman, activist, grassroots community worker and researcher. The research occurred alongside (and was often informed by) my engagement in numerous feminist and environmental activist collectives, protests, non-government organisations and other grassroots community research in Australia and internationally. To that end, I experienced continuous and reflexive cycles of reflection and action across my personal, professional and academic experiences as I researched, developed and implemented *The Love Ethic* in partnership with twenty-one co-inquirers in Liquica, Margaret River and Lobitos.

The original knowledge produced through this research is collaboratively owned, reflecting the imperative of *change-oriented research* and the principles of feminist participatory action research. I am the initiating researcher who is privileged with the opportunity, capacity and responsibility to synthesise and share my experience and perspectives of our research regarding love in community work practice. However, while this doctoral thesis and published journal articles will provide me with academic opportunities, my greater priority is the utility and effectiveness of *The Love Ethic* for social movements, community workers and

social workers who are committed to a radical new world order. Thus, this research project has been energizing, motivating and deeply moving.

The opening quote of this Conclusion chapter, from philosopher Melissa Orlie, highlights the importance of transcending our limits in our quest for a better world. This research process and final theory of practice was deliberately ambitious, provocative and hopeful. Aided by reflexive practice, co-inquirers and I deliberately challenged opportunities for pragmatism and efficiency. Our resultant theory of practice, *The Love Ethic for Transformational Change,* is radical, ambitious and, to some extent, utopian. In providing a collaboratively developed blueprint and vision for an alternative world, *The Love Ethic* offers community workers, social workers and activists an ethical theory of action through solidarity that legitimises and actualises our hopes and optimism for equality, justice, peace and sustainability.

In our world of uncertainty and growing inequality, we *must* believe that love will find a way.

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