

JOURNEYING TO AUTHENTIC SELF

A hermeneutic inquiry into one person's process of empowerment

by

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to the required standard

  
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## ABSTRACT

What does empowerment mean? How does one know when one is empowered? What information can we explicate from an individual's experience and description of their empowerment process? How might one person's empowerment process inform, energize, excite, and enlighten another's? Inspired by my interest in my own process as a counsellor, a woman, and a person, as well as my desire to facilitate the process of others, I began to research counsellor trainees' experience of becoming empowered. Engaging in a process of writings that eventually become the data in this research, I experience, document, investigate, disclose, and explore my journey to authentic self.

Using interpretive inquiry or hermeneutic research methods, I identify four interactive sub-processes: mastering, hearing internal voices, identifying locus of control, and choosing. Mastering refers to my ability to engage in a process of becoming able to do a thing. Hearing internal voices requires that I consciously attend to my internal cognitive and emotional expression. Identifying where my locus of control is situated, externally or internally, raises my awareness of my beliefs and determines my perceptions of personal power. Choosing, the fourth sub-process, is the action I take to exercise personal power internally and externally. It empowers me to shift my locus of control.

Engaging in my process of wild-writing enables me to clearly hear my internal voices, identify my dis-empowering and empowering belief systems. Identifying which belief system is operating offers me the opportunity to choose to resolve my issues, to choose to do what it takes to access my internal authority and wisdom. This can cause my dis-empowering belief system to fearfully struggle to regain control. Compassionately and assertively interacting with my dis-empowering beliefs, being willing to do what it takes to hear my internal authority, and calling on my Higher Power for help, resolves the internal conflict in favour of my empowering belief.

system My Higher Power, the intrinsic life force of the universe, the power that comes from within, is the energy source that helps me to overcome my disempowering beliefs

In this thesis I offer a new perspective on human issues, confirm other teachings and inner knowings, and invite you, the reader, to engage in your own relationship with this work I invite you to engage in your own relationship with your authentic self While this work is presented in an intellectual manner, I stay connected to the humanness of my experience I take an experiential, human, honest, and humble look at my own change process This work could increase, confirm, challenge, validate, and inspire your own thinking, awareness, and internal knowings It illustrates and normalizes a change process It talks about one person's intellectual knowing about the importance of doing it a little at a time and it models the doing of it a little at a time This thesis acknowledges and represents the turbulence of my empowerment process It depicts internal storms, the lack of clarity, moving through the storm to a place of calm and a return to order It is like a work of art It encourages you, the reader, to engage in your own relationship with the work Your reaction tells you something about your self It is no longer about me I hope it invites you in, encourages you to take your own risks, and sparks you to expand your horizons

Including the experience of doing the writing of this thesis, within the thesis, attracts different people to read it It provides an example for other researchers interested in doing qualitative research, specifically hermeneutic or interpretive inquiry It could acknowledge, validate, and encourage the experience of other counsellor trainees and other individuals engaged in their own empowerment process It challenges you, the reader, to engage in your own process of becoming personally empowered, to be authentic and to blossom in the very best way that you can

Examiners



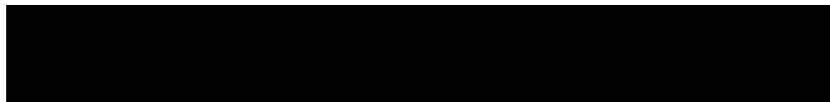
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## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to four angel/ friends whose outstanding contributions sustained, motivated, inspired, and stimulated many pivotal moments in my process

I dedicate this thesis to Jane Bradley Thanks for being a writer and encouraging me to write Your courageous and heroic efforts to claim your authentic self sparks my own process Thanks for many years of hearing, challenging, loving, inspiring, and understanding me Your enthusiastic, validating, humbling, and authentic feedback of my work is immensely appreciated In a sense, I have completed what you began so many years ago You paved the way I gratefully share this work with you

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Angel/ friends are the best

“ the power we sense in a seed, in the growth of a child, the power we feel writing, weaving, working, creating, making choices, has nothing to do with threats of annihilation. It has more to do with the root meaning of the word power, from the Latin, *podere* (to be able). It is the power that comes from within”  
 (Starhawk, 1988, p. 3)

## CHAPTER ONE

Chapter one begins with an introduction to this study about empowerment. Following the introduction, the background, impetus, purpose, goal, research question and definitions of terms used are discussed.

### Introduction

van Manen (1990) suggests that researchers choose a topic that can hold their interest. My interest is in the process of empowerment. How individuals empower themselves and/or become empowered. As a counsellor trainee, as a woman, as a person engaged in my process of empowerment, I have had many opportunities to reflect upon, and wonder about, this process. Lying in a field of budding daffodils wondering about my process.

I gazed -- and gazed -- but little thought

What wealth to me the show had brought

(Wordsworth in Davies, p. 121)

I considered the difference between my identity as a person and becoming empowered as a person. I wondered, "What does empowerment mean? How does one know when one is empowered? What is the difference between developing an identity and the empowerment process?" As the daffodil buds opened up, developing into brilliant shades of yellow in the warm spring air, I decided that perhaps empowerment is about choice, the ability to act for oneself. Identity is about who I am. Perhaps I need to know who I am in order to feel and be empowered. To feel empowered as a person is to have the internal power to make choice and to take the responsibility to act in my own best interest, with my own best integrity, to be the ever-changing best that I can be, to be who I am with integrity and authenticity, to respect my self and those I am in relationship with. No small accomplishment. Refreshed, I left the field of daffodils and set off on a quest for further enlightenment.

### Background

My interest is in the empowerment process, how individual's experience the process, and what meaning can be explicated from the experience. Much of the academic literature speaks of specific areas of the empowerment process or in objective terms about the individual's experience of his or her empowerment process. For instance, some researchers have focused on psychological concepts of empowerment (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1986, Gutierrez, 1990, Kieffer, 1984, Prilleltensky, 1994, Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). Some have begun to develop and test empowering interventions (Florin & Wandersman, 1990, Gutierrez, Parsons,

& Cox, 1998, Serrano-Garcia, 1984) Kieffer (1984), and Pretsby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich & Chavis (1990) have been gathering information about empowerment from groups of empowered individuals Rappaport (1987) began to develop an outline of assumptions about empowerment Prilleltensky (1994) and Gutierrez (1990) developed models of empowerment based on the concepts revealed in the academic literature Shields (1995) explicated a model of empowerment from her study of the experiences of middle-aged women Sawatsky, Jevne, and Clark (1994) outlined a prototype for empowerment from their research with counsellor trainees I choose to reflect upon the process of becoming empowered, to explore the concept of empowerment, to look at one experiential account of becoming empowered as a counsellor/ researcher, as a woman, as a person

#### Impetus For The Study

My awareness that I did not feel altogether empowered, my interest in the process of becoming empowered, and my desire to be helpful to others in their process, motivated this research As I began to work on this paper from my home, I sat gazing reflectively out at the healthy, happy, and empowered herd of equine, each horse moving freely, interacting with each other, grazing contentedly among the golden daffodils I became aware of the confusion within myself about where to begin I became aware of feeling overwhelmed, daunted by the task ahead I became aware of feeling dis-empowered to begin, of not knowing where to begin, of feeling alienated and alone in my confusion and of not knowing how to speak of it or move out of this

place As I reflected, Gloria Steinem's words came to mind "we teach what we need to learn and write what we need to know" (Steinem, 1992, p 6)

In time, a lot of time, the fog began to lift and I began to focus, writing about empowerment, finding my own way

### Purpose Of This Study

The original purpose of this study was to explore the significant experiences in the process of empowerment in which counsellor trainees engage I intended to examine personal journals kept by one group of graduate students in their first year of training as they developed and discovered their counsellor identity During the process of "doing" this research, it became apparent that something else was happening

It was like going to Disneyland, getting on the raft ride down the river (prepared to get a little wet), and discovering that somehow I was on the Magic Mountain roller coaster Zipping along Up, down, sideways, into the darkness of the tunnel Swooshing through the rapids, twisting, turning and then down the waterfall to the end A wild ride! My own writings about this experience and process were insistent, clamoring to be heard, to be explored What began as a process of analyzing counsellor trainees' personal journals, looking for themes of empowerment, morphed into writing about my process of empowerment The focus of this study shifted to exploring the significant experiences in the process of empowerment in which I engaged while doing research and writing a master's thesis on the empowerment process of counsellor trainees The focus shifted to exploring the empowerment

process in the broader context of becoming increasingly empowered as a person. It became apparent that the purpose of this study shifted to include the honouring of voice and personal knowledge. The purpose shifted to include identifying sub-processes of empowerment that I engaged in, as well as experiencing and analyzing my process as it unfolded. This study aims to focus on the experience and understanding of an individual's internal empowerment process, my own. Exploring and reflecting on my own lived experience of becoming empowered to do this research, and write this thesis, adds to the knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon. It also begins to give voice to individual experiences of empowerment. Through looking at the essence of my lived experience of this phenomenon, I hoped to begin to explicate information on how one woman, one person, transforms the threats of annihilation from the internalized oppression and transcends environmental influences to become empowered from within.

This information could be a helpful support for those involved in their own process of becoming empowered in both their personal and professional lives. Those interested in facilitating the empowerment of others could also benefit from this knowledge.

Writing about my experience in a way that facilitates the reader's ability to see, interact with, or have an experience of my process proved to be a challenging task. Empowerment occurs in small increments, repeatedly. In a sense, the empowerment process is like watching a soap opera. Sometimes an internal or external crisis occurs, speeding up the process. A character finds out their spouse is having an affair, becomes

seriously ill, is in a car crash or some other sudden crisis. However, mostly it takes a very long time for anything to happen, every day some small changes are revealed in the storyline. People exchange long looks that eventually turn into some kind of relationship that slowly evolve into crises. There are small increments of change, until suddenly, it seems, a shift occurs. Empowerment, like a soap opera, generally evolves slowly over time. The goals we accomplish can be so tiny we do not notice the small increments of change that are occurring to empower us. We also seem to need to repeat each small process, learning and relearning about a particular aspect of our self and our abilities over and over. We do not learn to print the first time we are shown. It requires our commitment. It requires that we do it over and over again, making tiny increments of change in our ability to print, until one day it seems that, suddenly, we can print. Given the nature of the repetitiveness of the empowerment process, writing about it in a way that offers a glimpse of the process may seem repetitive. However, when one looks closer, each small movement is a little different.

The goals of this research include gaining an understanding of the process of empowerment in moments, as well as the larger process. Unstructured, ten-minute writings, called “wild-writings”, became the data. Individually the wild-writings disclose pieces of the process, together the writings divulge a larger process. In order to hold the reader’s attention, and mine, the wild-writings have been carefully selected and edited for clarity. This process will be discussed later. While the bulk of the repetition has been eliminated, in order to be true to my experience, and goal, the writings continue to impart the repetitiveness of this process.

The goal remains constant and consistent The goal is to reveal my process, to tell a story that interests, informs, entertains, empowers, enlightens and inspires those interested in empowerment

### Definition Of Terms

The purpose of this section is to identify and clarify the meaning I have intended when using the following terms in this writing Some of these terms have more than one definition and may differ from some dictionary definitions

**Authenticity** connection to genuineness, my ability to be genuine

**Authority** personal agency and freewill influenced by and consists of external and internal authority

**External authority** the environmental authority that resides outside of myself, the authority of the structures within which I reside experience, knowledge, cultures and environments The influence of external authority can both dis-enhance and enhance my internal authority

**Internal authority** an internally connected place of integrity, compassion, wisdom, authenticity, and strength that empowers me to act in my own best interest, in self-enhancing and empowering ways

**Choice** the ability to exercise free will, personal agency

**Counsellor trainee** a person in the process of learning skills and knowledge that will increase their effectiveness in helping other people work through challenges encountered in life

**Dis-empowering belief system** a set of beliefs that dis-enhances who I truly am and threatens with annihilation the essence of who I am. It represents the internalized externally based rules, values, behaviours and beliefs of any dis-enhancing or oppressive conditioning that makes up my life experience. This belief system includes my ability to make dis-enhancing meaning about myself and how my world works, as well as any dis-empowering external authority I may encounter in my life experiences

**Empowering belief system** A belief system that I create from the information I receive from the empowering external influences, and my responses to the empowering external influences, of my life. It represents the internally based rules, values, behaviours and beliefs of the enhancing and affirming conditioning that make up my life experience. A belief system that enhances who I truly am, the essence of who I am, my internal authority

**Free-will** the ability and freedom that humans have to choose, to make choices for themselves. Humans have the ability to choose how to interact with outside influences (Bandura, 1986, Dweck, 1975)

Healthy people people who take responsibility for their own feelings, thoughts, attitudes, beliefs and behaviours

Higher Power God, Goddess, spiritual essence, the creative power of the universe, the healing power of the universe, the Creator, Great Spirit, Universal Wisdom, a power greater than my self, good orderly direction, my higher self, love, compassion and respect

Internal wisdom inner knowledge, intuition and experience

Lived experience direct experience of life lived, personally encountered, lived through observations, participations, and events that are the essence of life, the process of experiencing, observing, participating in the events and reality of one's life (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, van Manen, 1990)

Locus of Control reflects personality constructs of internally or externally based perceptions of personal power The location of an individual's locus of control affects perceptions of one's ability to have choice and personal power (Bandura, 1986, Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992)

Internal Locus of Control making choices relying more on one's internal processes, wisdom and authority (Bandura, 1986, Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992)

External Locus of Control making choices relying more on outside influences (Bandura, 1986, Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992)

Mastery the ability to complete tasks competently (Bandura, 1986, Garmezy, 1984, Seligman, 1990)

Motivation the process of causing a person to act, the encouragement or reward that acts as an impetus for a person to take action (Bandura, 1986, Dweck, 1975)

Oppression externally or internally based rules, beliefs, values and expectations that oppress, depress and suppress the essence of who one is

Internalized oppression rules, beliefs, values, expectations that I hold about myself and others that oppress, depress and suppress the essence of who I am, my spirit, myself

Externalized oppression cultural rules, beliefs, values, expectations that impact myself and others that oppress, depress and suppress the essence of who I am, my spirit, myself

Outcome expectation the expectation, or anticipation, that an individual's performance will produce the desired outcomes (Bandura, 1986)

**Personal agency** the ability and capacity to act, have choice, exert my own power and influence in life (Prilleltensky, 1994)

**Personal control** the ability to have personal influence, power, and authority to restrain, influence, guide, and manage the events of my life (Bandura, 1986)

**Personal journal** an account or record of reflections, events, ideas, and/or experiences kept regularly for private use In this study, the personal journal includes the written record of the experiences of the counsellor trainees in their first year of training that acted as a catalyst for my own wild-writings

**Power** the ability to do or act

**Process** a naturally occurring internal and/or external phenomenon of (generally gradual) changes that lead toward a specific result (Kegan, 1982, Webster, 1987)

**Resolving issues** the process of working through life experiences, events and trauma

**Self** the answer to the question “Who am I?” (Burns, 1979) The sense I have of who I am in all the diversity and multiplicity that my self includes The sense and understanding of who I am, ever in transition, fluid, changing, becoming My spirit

Self-determination my ability and choice to determine my own states or actions without external compulsion, my ability to make needed changes in my life (Bandura, 1986)

Self-efficacy refers to my beliefs about my power and ability to produce the desired or intended result, refers to the belief that I have the ability to control aspects of my life (Bandura, 1986)

Self-efficacy expectation the expectation that my efforts will result in the desired level of performance Self-efficacy affects my motivation (Bandura, 1986)

Self-esteem the regard, and value I have for myself, the opinion I hold of myself

Voice the expression of my experience, voice can utilize speech, writing, drama, art, music, dance In this thesis, different aspects of my voice are identified and expressed in the “wild-writings” as well as in the final writing of the thesis

Authentic voice speaks from the essence of who I am

Emotional voice expresses my emotions

Thinking voice expresses my thoughts

Wild-writing Goldberg (1990) suggests that we practice timed writing to get in touch with our “wild minds” in order to get past our stuckness, to get past our known responses to what we have to say, to get to what we have within us, deeper, on a

different level. It is important to determine an achievable goal when setting an amount of time for timed writings. I have called these wild-writings

Original wild-writings: the wild-writings that I wrote, using my computer, in the first three months of writing wildly for ten minutes that eventually became the data

### Assumptions

#### Assumptions About Empowerment

As my assumptions about an individual's empowerment process have influenced this research, I have attempted to make them explicit (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, van Manen, 1990). This process raises my own awareness while providing a glimpse of my underlying perspective and values (Osborne, 1990)

- 1 Empowerment is a process rather than a product
- 2 The process is more important than the product
- 3 The process is one of change, ongoing and continuous
- 4 It occurs on many levels - physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual
- 5 The process is linear, circular and it spirals
- 6 Engaging in the process of empowerment is empowering
- 7 Empowerment is about individuals
- 8 Empowerment is about groups
- 9 Context matters
- 10 Individual empowerment informs group empowerment
- 11 Group empowerment informs individual empowerment

12 Individual empowerment is a personal value and goal

13 Group empowerment is a personal value and goal

### Assumptions About Ways Of Knowing

My assumptions about ways of knowing impacts the manner in which I conduct research. Clarifying these assumptions helps me choose a research methodology that enables me to conduct my research in a personally authentic and ethical manner.

1 Experience occurs in context. The conditions or events that the experience occurs within help to explain the experience.

2 Context matters. The conditions, circumstances and environment in which we have our experience influences our experience.

3 Experience is a valid way of knowing.

4 An individual's description of his or her experience is a valid form of data.

5 To generate experiential data, an individual has to both have the experience and communicate the experience.

6 Each individual is unique and experiences her or his own reality.

7 Realities are multiple and changing.

8 Sharing one's experience can influence the knowing of another and the reverse is true.

Engaging in the process of uncovering/ discovering my own assumptions became a part of my empowerment process. It deepened my understanding of the experience. This was an ongoing process and continued during the entire study (Kirby & McKenna, 1989).

## Summary

Reflecting, I walk with my canine friends over the rolling fields that currently embrace the eclectic experience of a West Coast winter. As I adjust my coat against the sharp bite of the cold wind, I think of the daffodils and their process of becoming the very best daffodils that they can be. Nurtured by mother earth, the bulbs, encased in her soil, have been setting down a solid foundation of new roots to support them on the next phase of their journey. Nourished by the earth, the bulbs will soon be sending up fresh green shoots, gaining nourishment from the sun as the days grow longer and the sun brings increasing amounts of warmth to the earth.

In this first chapter, choosing to utilize a narrative writing style, I have discussed my interest in the process of empowerment, planted the study in personal experience and the academic literature, discussed the impetus, goal, research question, concepts, terms and purpose of this study.

My interest continues to be in the ongoing development of my own identity and empowerment as an individual and as a professional, as well as how I can facilitate the empowerment of others, individually and professionally. The focus of this research is on the identification and clarification of the process of empowerment that I engage in. My process of becoming aware of my internal power to make choices, to take risks, and to act in my own best interest as a person, as a counsellor with integrity and authenticity. The academic literature explores many aspects and concepts of empowerment from many perspectives. The perspective of the individual's experience has not been fully explored. This research is a part of that exploration. It can deepen

our understanding and act as a catalyst for further exploration of the process of empowerment

Honouring personal knowledge and voice proved to be an essential part of this research. In order to accurately represent the process undertaken by this researcher, the academic literature review, normally found in Chapter Two, is placed in Chapter Four. Chapter Two discusses the method and data collection for this study, rooting this research experientially and academically. Chapter Three blossoms into the experiential writings of this researcher and includes the presentation and analysis of the data. In order to maintain the purpose, focus and integrity of this research, the review of the academic literature has been integrated with the interpretations of the wild-writings in Chapter Four. Chapter Five contains the conclusion, implications of this research, future directions for research and final thoughts.

My hope is that the reader would have an experiential sense of my process, that my process would connect with the internal knowing of the reader. My hope is that the reading of this work would act as an inspiration and catalyst for the reader's own empowerment process. My hope is that the integration of the academic literature review and the wild-writings would broaden and deepen the awareness of the reader's own internal wisdom.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Methodology

#### Introduction

There are various methods or ways of investigating our world, of gathering knowledge and of making meaning or sense of our world. Deductive reasoning is served well by quantitative research. This approach is precise and internally consistent. Validity is determined by the deductive argument put forth. “Means-end rationality” is also a valid way to gather knowledge of our world. Means-end logic is the process used for understanding and analyzing outcome-directed research data. This approach requires “the ability to imagine and project outcomes that would result from the future selection of various action choices” (Polkinghorne, 1984, p. 425). Polkinghorne (1984) also states that “recognition and interpretation of meaningful expression” is another way of gathering knowledge of our world. This method is best served by qualitative research designs that “investigate the patterns and systems people use to construct and interpret their experience as meaningful” (Polkinghorne, 1984, p. 425). A qualitative approach was appropriate for this research investigating the experience of one woman’s process of empowerment. This chapter covers qualitative research methods, method plan, van Manen’s (1990) six interactive research activities, data collection, participant, and data analysis.

## Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methods are designed to increase our understanding of “ourselves, others, and the world” (Polkinghorne, 1991, p 108) Qualitative approaches are particularly appropriate for investigating and interpreting the meaning of the lived experience while exploring the phenomena in the context within which the phenomenon exists (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, Colaizzi, 1978, Jackson & Patton, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, Kvale, 1983, Patton, 1980, Polkinghorne, 1991, Tesch, 1990, van Manen, 1990, Wertz, 1983) The assumption is that the phenomenon, in this case, the human experience of the empowerment process, is significantly influenced by the context within which it occurs Qualitative research is descriptive “A good phenomenological description is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience -- is validated by lived experience and it validates lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p 27) The description is the data The data collected are not reduced to numerical symbols It is assumed that nothing is trivial in the data collected, “that everything has the potential of being a clue which might unlock a more comprehensive understanding of what is being studied” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p 28) As well as being concerned with context and description of the phenomenon, qualitative researchers are interested in the process involved rather than with the resulting products or outcomes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, van Manen, 1990) The present research explores the empowerment process as experienced by a female counsellor trainee /researcher during her process of doing research

Qualitative research requires that researchers inductively analyze the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The researcher engages in a process of bringing forward evidence from the data, observing the data, allowing the evidence to emerge from within the data. It is assumed that not enough is known to recognize all the important concerns before undertaking the research, and that undertaking the research allows the participants to disclose that which is important and meaningful. To the qualitative researcher, “participant perspectives”, the meaning that different participants make of their lives, are very important. The participant’s subjective reality is the focus of interpretive phenomenology. A person’s own description of her (or his) experience is important and valid data. It is important to the researcher that the findings reflect the participant’s experience and perspective as closely as possible (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, Colaizzi, 1978, Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, Jackson & Patton, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, Kvale, 1983, Patton, 1980, Polkinghorne, 1991, 1984, Tesch, 1990, van Manen, 1990, Wertz 1983). There are different types of qualitative research methods that allow for the investigation of a phenomenon within the context of its environment. I eventually realized that my research approach fit with interpretive inquiry or hermeneutic phenomenology.

#### Interpretive Inquiry or Hermeneutic Phenomenological Research Method

The interpretive inquirer or hermeneutic phenomenological researcher seeks to study both the description of the lived experience of the phenomena and interpret the experience through the examination of some “text”. The researcher studies the person

in context, the person within the situation. Looking solely at either the situation or the person within the situation does not allow for the full meaning of the phenomena to emerge (Benner, 1994, Jackson & Patton, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, Kvale, 1983, van Manen, 1990, Wertz, 1983). Meaning is a result of the transaction between the individual and the context. van Manen (1990) describes lived life as being indubitably more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal. He suggests that phenomenological research aims to study the phenomena itself, the lived experience, the description of the lived experience. As we cannot actually reflect upon the experience until after we have lived the experience, phenomenological reflection is not “introspective but retrospective” (van Manen, 1990, p 10). A retrospective reflection looks upon a past phenomenon. It is a mindful, thoughtful study of the essences of what it means to be human. Phenomenological research seeks to understand the “meaningfulness of human experience as it is actually lived” (Barrell, Aanstoos, Arons, & Richards, 1987, p 446). It is a means to explicate meaning and insights that bring us in more direct contact with our world. It appeals to our common experience, constructing “an animating, evocative description” of our human activities, of our “actions, behaviors, intentions, and experiences” (van Manen, 1990, p 19). The purpose of this research was to construct an animating, evocative description of the empowerment process that this counsellor trainee/ researcher engaged in during the process of writing a thesis and becoming increasingly empowered as a counsellor and as a woman.

This research aims to reveal something essential about the nature of the human experience of becoming empowered, to reveal something essential about the process of becoming empowered. The exploration of the empowerment process took place through the interpretation of my wild-writings. Personal writings reflect the writer's interpretation of lived experience and offer rich data for an interpretive hermeneutic phenomenological approach.

van Manen (1990) suggests six interactive research activities as the methodical structure of phenomenological hermeneutic research and I utilized these as the foundation for this research.

(1) "Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world" (van Manen, 1990, p. 31). Picking a topic that can hold our interest and commitment is vitally important. It takes considerable time and commitment to mindfully and thoughtfully gather a full and rich description about a phenomena in an effort to interpret and explicate meaning about the phenomena. The notion of empowerment seriously interests me and commits me to the world.

(2) "Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it" (van Manen, 1990, p. 31). Rather than attempting to be objective, the researcher's subjectivity is part of the research. The researcher "stands in the fullness of life, in the midst of the world of living relations and shared situations [and] actively explores the category of lived experience in all its modalities and aspects" (van Manen, 1990, p. 32). This investigation of empowerment is grounded in my lived experience of my

empowerment process revealed while writing this thesis, rather than simply discussing the concept of empowerment

(3) “Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon” (van Manen, 1990, p 32) Rather than looking at what a phenomenon appears to be, the essence of the phenomenon is sought I looked for themes that render the empowerment process its special significance, for the essence of the experience, and for elements of the process that are important

(4) “Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting” (van Manen, 1990, p 32) While it is important to write up the research findings in a well constructed and thoughtful manner, this concept is about the “doing” of the research Describing the phenomenon means thoughtfully applying language in an effort to let “that which is being talked about be seen” (van Manen, 1990, p 33), to construct the essence of the lived experience of empowerment The art of writing and rewriting, in an effort to describe the phenomenon as it reveals itself, requires that I write down what first appears, as well as underlying themes, attempting to get at the essence

(5) “Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon” (van Manen, 1990, p 33) Inspired and moved by the phenomenon “in a full and human sense we will not settle for superficialities and falsities” (van Manen, 1990, p 33) Staying focused on the phenomenon of empowerment and reorienting my mind to that which is being revealed provided an environment for discovering the essence, the experience, the process of becoming empowered

(6) “Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole” (van Manen, 1990, p 33) After spending considerable time searching for themes, it is important to step back and look at the themes within the contextual whole. It is important to explore the possible interactions of the parts and their contribution to the whole of the phenomenon, to look at parts of the picture and then the whole picture.

van Manen (1990) suggests that these six research activities are important elements in interpretive hermeneutic phenomenological research. He also cautions that there are no guidelines that a researcher can follow blindly. Knowing that the meaning of the phenomena in question can remain elusive to systematic inquiry, the human science researcher depends more on “interpretive sensitivity, inventive thoughtfulness, scholarly tact, and writing talent” (van Manen, 1990, p 34) than on a systematic explication of meaning. These research activities are utilized in a flexible, interactive manner in an effort to help the researcher accomplish this task of gathering descriptive data and explicating meaning.

### Procedure

Having struggled in a sea of confusion for several years, I signed up for yet another course, this one was entitled “Re-writing research”. I was looking for a miracle. I found one.

Journal entry: Am taking the re-writing research class. Awesome!!! Have attained some focus. Keep it simple. What a concept. Empowerment - that is my interest. How can I apply the concept of empowerment to counsellor trainees? How can I find my voice without drowning in the sea of paper-mites (mites that make their home in paper) in the library? How come it took me *so long* to find this course?”

My procedure developed from conversations with classmates and professors during this course. It became apparent to me that I was feeling silenced by the paper-mites and the context. If I was going to complete this thesis I needed to find my voice. I needed to say something that was important to me, and, I needed to say it first without consulting the external authority, the academic literature. After a conversation with one of the professors, I had a plan. I struggled with the simplicity of it. In order to move forward I needed to let go of my unconscious assumption that if a piece of writing was going to be scholarly, then it would have to be complex, complicated and confusing. I thought of those daffodils: simple, serene and stunning, waving their glorious golden trumpets in the gentle spring breeze, “tossing their heads in a sprightly dance” (Wordsworth in Davies, 1975, p. 121).

My design included seven recurring and increasingly interactive steps. The experience of following this method plan resulted in a shift in my research focus.

### Finding My Way

“Experiencing the process is the best way to understand it” (Burns & Grove, 1987, p. 76). Finding my way to the data was indubitably a “wild ride.” I rode the rapids, careening around corners, feeling out of control. I became stuck in the mud of the river bank. Set off again, ending up on the rocks. I found myself in the dead calm of quiet waters, reflecting. Eventually, I found my way.

## Seven Steps Of My Design

### Step 1 Write wildly and often

Wild-writing, September 1996 What a concept!!! Write about anything that interests me Write wildly and often!!! I have been told this before in conversations with professors (Ober, 1996, Peavy, 1992), in conversations with other researchers (Dempsey, 1993, Kovar, 1993, Kimpson, 1993, Stewart, 1993), and in conversations with friends (Bradley, 1986 - 1998), Champion, 1995) I have read this in the academic research literature (Progoff, 1975, Staton, 1980, van Manen, 1990) I have read this in the other literature (Duerk, 1989, Goldberg, 1990, London, 1989, Steinam, 1992) While I have kept a journal (carefully fraught with rules, mainly unconscious rules) when my emotional distress has forced me to, I did not understand or “get” the significance of this until I was “forced” to do it in this class??? I wonder about this We start the class with ten minute writings Great modeling! Great learning! I get it!!! (Hopefully, I’ll keep it ) Writing wildly and often helps me develop my voice It helps me clarify my thoughts, beliefs, values, emotions I wonder what internal notion prevented me from doing this before? I wonder what it is that I am resisting have been resisting I’ll encourage my self to write wildly and often *I can do this!!!*

Write wildly and often means that you commit to sit down and write Timed writings Ten-minute timed writings Write about anything Write anywhere Write with anything, a pen, pencil, computer Use whatever is available to write with, whatever works for you Pick a topic that is of interest in that moment and write with abandon about it Keep your pen (whatever you are writing with) moving Write anything that comes to mind No editing No reading or judging it as you write or

even when you are done. File it away for your gentle and compassionate consideration later, much later. Trust in the process of writing. Doing this will free your mind, stimulate your creative juices, unleash your voice and find your wisdom. Go for it!

Having this skill modeled in class sparked my interest. It encouraged me to try it on my own. Using my computer, I wrote about my interest in empowerment and in the empowerment process of counsellor trainees. I wrote about my beliefs, my assumptions, about what was blocking me at any given moment. Writing wildly, with abandon, without thought to the product, accomplished what Goldberg (1990), Oberg (1996) and others, suggested it would. Writing helped me find the path to, gain glimpses of, and get into the process of, finding my “wild mind”. I called these writings “wild-writings”. This process enabled me to hear my voices and to write this thesis.

I wrote for days, weeks, months. I wrote until I thought I was done, then I wrote some more. I asked myself questions: What does empowerment mean? Why is it important in my life? Why is it important in the lives of others? What is it? How do institutions encourage or discourage empowerment? Where does it come from? What does it look like? I wrote until I had nothing more to say. I was surprised that this initially took three months. I did not read nor judge this writing. I saved it in my computer and did not make a hardcopy until much later. It didn't have to be scholarly, wise or useful. The only requirement of this writing was that it *be*

### Step 2 Read the counsellor trainee's journals

Having begun to hear and develop the connection to my authentic voice, I wanted to hear the voices of the group of counsellor trainees as reflected in their personal journals. I was continuing to follow my original plan. I wandered among the daffodils and over the hills with my canine friends, reflecting. I re-read the trainees' personal journals. I searched for meaning, for themes.

I read the journals and noticed empowerment themes such as choice, being able to, authenticity, voice, power-with. I maintained an open mind, listening for both my assumptions about what I was reading and to understand the recorded experience of the counsellor trainees. I read to hear, not the context of their experience, I wanted to hear what they were saying about their experiences of becoming empowered as counsellors.

### Step 3 Read my wild-writings and keep writing

After spending considerable time writing and reading the counsellor trainees' journals, it was time to read my wild-writings. I wondered about the essence of what I was experiencing. I read my wild-writings with empathy for the writer, myself. I attempted to understand my experience. I searched for empowerment themes. I looked for areas that I needed to write more about. I continued to practice writing wildly. I read my wild-writings. I slid gently into a sea of confusion. My brain felt fuzzy, unclear. Intuitively I knew that I was making progress.

#### Step 4 Visit the academic literature

Wild-writing, November 23, 1997 Empowerment is about flexibility  
 Seems redundant to say this however, rigidity in my beliefs about what is  
 scholarly and acceptable has kept me stuck for some time, years Some folks  
 need to consult the academic literature to spark their interests I didn't  
 Different kinds of research require different kinds of approaches Perhaps it is  
 a good idea to match one's research method to who one is How I view the  
 world influences how I will do research I needed to hear my voice first (no  
 small accomplishment) Others need to be sparked by the voices in the  
 academic literature And yet I *was* sparked by other academic voices Being  
 sparked by others is different from being lost in an avalanche of academic  
 literature I didn't want to be lost in an avalanche of academic literature I  
 was sparked by others and I wanted to hear my own voice before hearing the  
 voices of the academic literature Balance I have been placing greater  
 emphasis on the voices of others Perhaps the context within which I live and  
 learn has contributed to my learning to place greater emphasis on the voices of  
 others Hmmm Perhaps I will change this I am changing this I have been  
 changing this for years A process, a process of empowerment Perhaps I will  
 value my own voice and transcend my conditioning  
 Time to research the academic literature, reading information on empowerment,  
 counsellor trainees, qualitative research methods and journalling

### Step 5 Re-read my own writings

Once more with self-empathy and compassion I re-read the wild-writings looking for the essence of my own experience. I look for relevant writings for this thesis: assumptions, beliefs, and empowerment themes. Having consulted the academic literature, I read my wild-writings looking for a sense of connection, or disconnection, to the literature.

### Step 6 Re-read counsellor trainee's journals

I re-read the counsellor trainees' personal journals continuing to wonder about the essence of their experience. I read the journals with empathy. Words and phrases are beginning to stand out. I am beginning to get a sense of how and where the information in the academic literature and personal journals comes together.

### Step 7 Weave the voices

I continue to write wildly. The sea of confusion deepens, becomes more gray. I wonder how I am going to make sense of this. I reread my wild-writings and discover how much I know. Confused, I wonder how I can present the data. How will the essence of the empowerment process emerge? How will this merge and metamorph into a thesis? I trust the process is working. I can feel it.

Haltingly, I begin to write this thesis. Breaking new ground, learning how to write a thesis. Accepting the okayness of "not knowing" what I am doing. I reach stuck places and eventually become unstuck, often I need help. I set aside my wild-

writing and begin the review of the academic literature on empowerment. Entering the realm of empowerment literature, I attempt to understand the bigger picture of what the literature is presenting and become somewhat overwhelmed. I need to focus on the process of empowerment. Letting go of the internal rule that suggests that I have to include everything ever written about empowerment, I focus on individual empowerment. In time, I have a sense of what the chorus of voices in the academic literature is saying.

I need to experience the qualitative research method that I am using, I need to do it and then identify what it is that I am doing. I am doing interpretive hermeneutic phenomenological research. I re-visit the personal journals and my wild-writings. In an attempt to get at the essence of my process, I edit my original wild-writings. My goal is to have the reader experience my process of empowerment, my process of discovering my own personal power from within, of “becoming able” to write this thesis. I need to find a balance between appropriate self-disclosure and self-indulgently boring the reader. The editing continues. I want my voice to be heard. I reflect and go looking for the daffodils.

I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host of golden daffodils

(Wordsworth in Davies, 1975, p 121)

I re-visit my writings. I analyze the data and continued to write

## Journal entries

March 5, 1998 I slowly become aware that I am “stopped” Stopped because a part of me wants to pursue the notion that my wild-writings could be the data, part of me does not want to “abandon” the counsellor trainees’ journals, and part of me does not see how my wild-writings can be the data and is annoyed by the delay

March 8, 1998 I am beginning to understand how these wild-writings can be the data This morning my writings reveal that when I am feeling empowered the writing flows, it is not blocked by self-doubt or other dis-empowering and unresolved issues Over time the writings have become stronger, more sure, more empowered

March 8, 1998, later As I once again re-read the original wild-writings, an inner veil seems to lift and I become aware that my process of wild-writing both discusses the concepts of empowerment and reveals the process of empowerment that I am engaged in For some reason this seems like such a revelation (When I re-visited these writings, it is clear that I was aware of this before Amazing how this works The awareness clearly fled It felt like an enormous revelation here An enlightening moment!) Seems like I have immersed myself in the analysis in spite of my confusions about knowing how Dazed Again As I continue to write, I continue to become more connected with my self I continue to overcome past learning’s and I speak with increasing authenticity in a voice supported by the power that comes from within I become increasingly more connected to the essence of who I am, my spirit The writings speak of the concepts of empowerment *and* reveal the empowerment process that I engage in as I struggle to find my voice, to value my own inner knowings and to authentically write this thesis

Eventually, diverting from my original plan, I heed the inner and outer urgings to use my own writings as the experiential data for this project This agonizing decision requires more reflection I hike the hills and notice the snow-drops are budding, the daffodil bulbs are sending up their green shoots, it will not be long before they will be showing the very best daffodil flowers they can be It will not be long before I decide that this thesis is the best it can be, knowing that the process of analyzing the data could go on for decades The process of empowering my self, others and the context

within which we reside, will also go on for decades. The daffodil bulb will continue to remind me to keep it simple. Empowerment comes from within. Empowerment means to be able. The daffodil bulb shows its awesomeness of being able, of being empowered from within, as it transcends the elements of its environment to be the very best that it can be. Hopefully too, this thesis shows the awesomeness of being able, of being empowered from within, of transcending the elements of its environment to be the very best it can be.

### The Participant

The counsellor trainee/ researcher whose wild-writings were used in the final analysis of this research is myself, a female counselling student, in her late forties, in an on-campus university graduate program. The wild-writings were generated while engaged in the analysis of a sample of ten personal journals kept by graduate students in their first year of counsellor training. These personal journals acted as a catalyst for the wild-writings that reveal my experience of my empowerment process. I honour and thank these counsellor trainees for their very important contribution to this research.

### Data

Phenomenological research data is descriptive and commonly gathered by asking co-researchers or participants to respond to a research question or questions. The participants relay their personal experience through writing, by participating in an

interview or both (Barrell et al, 1987, Jackson & Patton, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, Kvale, 1983, van Manen, 1990, Wertz, 1983) In this study, a sample of self-reflective journals, that counsellor trainees were asked to keep as part of a course, acted as a catalyst for this researcher's wild-writings I engaged in a process of wildly writing, focusing on clarifying the process and concepts of empowerment These wild-writings ultimately became the research data Journal writing provides rich sources of data (Jackson & Patton, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, Kvale, 1983, van Manen, 1990, Wertz, 1983) from which themes can be extracted and meaning explicated As well, documenting one's experience through journal writing can facilitate understanding and growing self-awareness Promoting the use of reflective journal writing facilitates students' self-reflective practice and enhances their skills of critical inquiry and problem solving Proff (1975) suggests that "the intensive journal becomes the outer embodiment of our inner life our inner workshop, the place we go to do the creative shaping of our life" (p 297) Journal writing develops one's own voice and personal power It was therefore, an appropriate form of data for this research

### Analysis

Analysis is an ongoing process It began with the first reading of the wild-writings They were read and re-read utilizing reflection, patience, and intuition until important terms and themes began to emerge (Charmaz, 1995, Jackson & Patton, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c, Kvale, 1983, Rose, 1988, van Manen, 1990, Wertz, 1983) According to van Manen, the analysis process in interpretive hermeneutic

phenomenological research is “a process of insightful invention, discovery or disclosure -- grasping and formulating a thematic understanding” ( van Manen, 1990, p 79) I attempted to determine the thematic structures that reveal the experience in an effort to describe and understand the lived experience I thoughtfully approach the data wondering “What is going on here? What is this an example of? What is the essence How can I capture this [essence] by way of thematic reflection on the notion?” (van Manen, 1990, p 86)

#### Journal entries

March 8, 1998 As I sit down to explore the wild writings for themes and the process of empowerment, the veil that had earlier lifted, has slipped firmly back in place, preventing me from seeing what I had glimpsed earlier

March 9, 1998 having read my wild-writings for themes in a systematic manner, I see the overall theme is one of valuing my own voice, of honouring personal knowledge As I was doing this analysis, this information seemed to reveal itself to me as if for the first time It seemed like such a revelation ‘Wow, is that what I was doing when I thought I was merely clarifying and defining the concept of empowerment I was also *doing* empowerment’ I feel excited about this, also confused It has been important for me to hear, value and honour my own voice, my own knowledge first Confusion because, I know that I have been involved in my own empowerment process for years Confused because, with all the actions I have taken, this seems like new news to me Fascinating Its like playing peek-a-boo in my mind, only I don’t know that I am playing or what the rules are The veil seems to lift and drop as it pleases

I continue to read my wild-writings for process Asking questions like What is going on here? What are these wild-writings an example of? What do they reveal about the process of empowerment? (van Manen, 1990, Charmaz, 1995) I read in an effort to understand what they communicate about my process of empowerment I do this in a systematic manner I begin by reading one line at a time, asking myself the

same questions What is going on here? What am I talking about? Next I read one wild-writing at a time Again I asked what is going on here? What is the overall theme of this particular wild-writing? What is this an example of? What does this writing disclose about empowerment? What is the process involved in this writing? I type all the notes and float in the data, writing down what first appears Information floats in and out of my consciousness Underlying themes begin to declare themselves as I continue to explore the data In the final writing up of the analysis, I did not include the line by line analysis of the process because, having served its purpose of exposing four sub-processes, it had become redundant

This thesis is an experiential look into one woman's process of empowerment It becomes part of the growing experiential empowerment literature that includes the experiences of counsellor trainees, of individuals, and of women It brings the empowerment literature to life

It seems to me that becoming empowered as a person is like diving into a river I never know how fast the current is, how deep the water is, what lies around the next bend, where the rocks are hidden, how wild the rapids are, or when a veil of fog will obscure the view I rely on faith and trust in my abilities to be willing to go with the flow, navigate the rapids and ride the waves

## CHAPTER THREE

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

#### Data Selection

Selecting wild-writings to represent my process was a daunting task. From the original seventy-eight writings that occurred over a three month period, I have chosen writings that reveal particular themes, concepts, and/or sub-processes that are important to my process of empowerment. The wild-writings are a chronological record of unique insights and turning points that reveal the empowerment process. They communicate my process of moving from a place of being “unable to write”, to a place of being, “able to write”, in my authentic voice. All the wild-writings have been edited to improve clarity and to minimize redundancy. I have also punctuated sentences, added spaces between words, corrected spelling and added italics to highlight important concepts.

#### Presentation of Data

The titles for the individual wild-writings were selected to represent an important thematic concept revealed and to represent the uniqueness of the writing. Each selected wild-writing will be followed by an explication and discussion of four sub-processes that became apparent during the initial line by line analysis. These four sub-processes are mastering, hearing internal voices, identifying locus of control, and choosing.

Wild-writing, March 6, 1998

The task is to interpret the phenomenon in a manner that invites the reader to interact with the information, to engage in an ongoing discussion about the phenomena of empowerment. What makes this experience of empowerment what it is? To what extent is my experience a shared experience? My experience cannot be generalized to others, and yet my experience can inform others, just as the experience of others informs me. We can relate through our shared experiences. We share knowledge through shared experience. van Manen (1990) refers to the intersubjective or universal character of the experience. What is the universal character of empowerment? What concepts of empowerment do we have in common? You, the reader, will have your experience in relation to reading about my experience. Your answer to the question "What concepts of empowerment do we have in common?", will speak to the intersubjective or universal character of this research.

Several concepts of empowerment have been identified and discussed in my wild-writings. As an autobiographical interpretive inquiry, the analysis will be my interpretation of my process. The analysis will be grounded in the data. However, my process is continuous, I do not stay in one cognitive or emotional place. I cannot view my process objectively. As I continue to read and interact with the writings, I am prompted to think about the data in new ways. Part of my analysis will be ongoing as I continue the process of reading and interacting with the writings.

### Exploring Empowerment: What does it mean?

What do I need to say about empowerment? My process began fraught with internal rules, regulations and resistance about doing the writing, about setting my own

priorities, about fearing my own authentic voice. These writings present important concepts and processes of my experience of becoming empowered to write in my authentic voice. They offer a glimpse into my continuing journey to my authentic self.

### Diving Into My Process

When did this process begin? It seems appropriate to include here a brief synopsis of my experience as a graduate student prior to engaging in this series of wild-writings. It is no small task to overcome the debilitating effects of my dis-empowering belief system. I have been involved in the process of becoming aware, and letting go of my dis-empowering belief system, for years. I thought I had a solid understanding of what I was involved with. However, it is only in reflecting upon the concept of empowerment that I began to realize the stranglehold my dis-empowering belief system is capable of exerting over me.

I found myself considering how the concepts of empowerment and dis-empowerment applied to my experience of being a graduate student. In retrospect, I realize that I had spent the first two years of graduate school completing the required course work in spite of experiencing massive internal conflict. Conflict caused by my internal confusion about speaking with my authentic voice within a structure that seemed to consist of a maze of rigid rules. *I spent three years in a state* of mental and emotional confusion and eroding psychological and physical health. At times, my resistance to speaking with my authentic voice was overwhelming. Reflecting on this time, I realize that I was unable to go forward without confronting the old rules, rules

that I did not know I was living with I was stuck Stuck, unable to go forward with dis-empowering internalized rules Stuck, unconsciously afraid of my authenticity *Stuck, unaware of the ongoing internal conflict* I was in a state of dis-empowerment I eventually became aware of how my internal dis-empowerment had manifested physically I realized how physically unwell I had become I sought help from empowering external influences I made a commitment to myself to become physically well Within weeks I felt an empowering physical change in my body A few months later, a helpful external influence spoke enthusiastically with me about a writing research course, I signed up I made a commitment to make a decision about getting this thesis done I decided to have something written by the end of that course, to become unstuck, to resolve the enormous internal conflict in favour of my authentic self I made the choice to become increasingly “more real” In time, I felt an empowering change in my mind Reflecting upon this process reminds me of what the Skin Horse said to the Velveteen Rabbit about becoming real

The Skin Horse said “It’s a thing that happens to you  
 ‘Does it hurt?’ asked the Rabbit  
 ‘Sometimes,’ said the Skin Horse  
 ‘It doesn’t happen all at once You become It takes a long time  
 That’s why it doesn’t often happen to people who break easily, or  
 have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept Generally, by the  
 time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your  
 eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very  
 shabby (Williams, 1975, p 17)

Well I think I was real before, and I know that I am even “more real” now I still have my hair, my eyes are going, my joints are getting loose, my body a little shabby, I’m in my process of becoming real, becoming who I really am This thesis gives voice

to and reveals a part of my empowerment process, my process of valuing my self, of loving my self, as I become increasingly authentic, increasingly “more real”

### Diving Into The Analysis

When I was writing wildly I quite often wrote in the third person, unconsciously creating distance from my wisdom. Doing the analysis brought this to my attention. Claiming my words and wisdom as my own, I have chosen to write this thesis and do this analysis in the first person. Doing the analysis of the wild-writings exposed the repetition of my process. You may wonder at times if you are reading something that has been said before, perhaps more than once. I remind you that the empowerment process is repetitious and changes are made in small increments. Sometimes it seems like I am going over the same ground again, and again, however I am attempting to convey another piece of the process. Several elements of my empowerment process are revealed in these writings. I master the task of actually doing the writings, hear my internal voices, identify where my locus of control is situated, and make choices in spite of the resistance I encounter from my dis-empowering belief system. No small accomplishment. These sub-processes are disclosed over and over again as small increments of changes occur and I gain confidence. These sub-processes make up my larger process of becoming increasingly empowered to accomplish the task of authentically writing this thesis, claiming my wisdom and valuing my self.

In this section, fourteen of my wild-writings are documented and analyzed individually. They are presented as follows:

1	Date	Wild-writing	Title
(a)		Introduction to wild-writing,	(i) Mastering,
(b)		Actual wild-writing,	(ii) Hearing Internal Voices,
A		The Four Sub-processes	(iii) Identifying Locus of Control,
(i)			(iv) Choosing

I continue to invite you, the reader, to interact with my process and engage in your own experience of journeying toward your authentic self.

1 January 3, 1997 Wild-writing "Struggle to begin"

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

The following writing is included because it is my first "official" wild-writing. Originally this writing appeared on the page as a blur of words, creatively spelled. In order to accomplish my goal, I typed as fast as I could, seemingly in an effort to outrun the din of the internal and external distractions that threatened to silence me. This writing does not adequately disclose the tremendous emotional discomfort, the anxiety, fear and terror, that I experienced as a result of my choice to write in spite of the interfering rules and distractions.

(ii) Actual wild-writing

All right, here I am for the first of my ten minute writings about empowerment. what will I write. *can't think of anything to say*. distractions: fire, dinner, dog barking, phone ringing, people coming. *mind scattered, confused*. how to focus. empowerment. elusive. write.

*keep writing keep going* feel distracted door opens a rule pops into my mind I can't set my own priorities someone else's needs are more important than mine whose rule is this I need to make my own rule I CAN set my own priorities waiting to be interrupted fearing the interruption *feeling anxious hear in my head* what I am doing is not important enough to override what another wants what nonsense is this this is all contrived in my head based on past rules that someone else decreed and unresolved issues knowing this does not make the anxiety go away as I *struggle to write* I notice that this program automatically changes my I to I what if I want it to be small has my choice been taken away by this computer like my choice to set my own priorities has been taken away by my conditioning I *claim back my right to choose* this is empowerment this is such a struggle I feel confused a different kind of confused like time has taken on a different dimension something has changed in any case *I have met my goal* to write for ten minutes and so self congratulations are in order and I choose how to type my I

## A The Four Sub-processes

### (a) Mastering

My commitment to mastering the goal of *physically writing down* whatever is in my head (“keep writing keep going”) in the form of a wild-writing, without obeying dis-empowering rules begins this empowerment process *Doing it empowers me to act* and moves me from a place of physical dis-empowerment, a place where I “can’t think of anything to say” It moves me to an internal place where “*I CAN set my own priorities*” The “doing” of an attainable goal, writing for ten-minutes, facilitates my

sense of personal power and reinforces my attempts to continue to master attainable goals. My ability to continue to engage in the process of mastering the task of doing this writing, in spite of the terror, is a testimony to the courage, commitment and determination it takes to hear and honour my authentic self. It does not happen easily. Doing it reveals my internal voices.

### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

Cognitive and emotional aspects of both my dis-empowered and empowered belief systems are unveiled. Disobeying the rules of my dis-empowering belief system acts as a catalyst to turn up the volume on the voices of my dis-empowering belief system exposing my internal conflict. Hearing my internal voices raises my awareness of the ongoing anxiety, fear, terror, panic and confusion that result in my inability to act and master tasks that enhance my life. The self-negating belief system, my internalized oppression, voices thoughts that create doubt in my abilities (“What I am doing is not important enough”), and feelings of fear and anxiety about mastering the unfamiliar task of doing the writing. My self-enhancing belief system encourages me to move through the self-doubt and anxiety stating “I CAN set my own priorities”. My self-enhancing belief system also expresses support for the physical action of writing, affirming and acknowledging the completion of the task (“self-congratulations are in order”), as well as challenging my internalized oppression (“This is all contrived in my head based on past rules”) and exercising personal agency (“I claim back my right to choose”).

It is important to become aware of, and listen to, my internal voices. Hearing my internal voices helps me identify where my locus of control is situated.

(c) Identifying Locus of Control

The choice to write for ten minutes, to once again risk self annihilation, is made by the essence of who I am, my spiritual self, my internal locus of control. Physically doing the writing acts as a catalyst to reveal my internalized oppression, my dis-empowering conditioning, my internalized external locus of control that suggests that “I can’t think of anything to say”. Continuing to do the writing in spite of my internal distress, and the distractions, results in my continuing to hear a voice from my internalized external locus of control stating that “someone else’s needs are more important than mine. I cannot set my own priorities”. Obeying the beliefs and rules of my dis-empowering belief system requires that I annihilate my authentic self, that I situate my locus of control externally. The internalized external locus of control of the dis-empowering belief system continues to struggle for domination throughout this writing. However the choice of my authentic self continues to govern my behaviour as I continue to do the actual writing. Listening to all aspects of my internal dialogue expressing the conflict, rather than turning away from or denying any part of my internal dialogue, increases my awareness of my belief systems and where my locus of control is situated. This awareness facilitates my ability to make conscious choices.

(d) Choosing

In order to make this choice to write, I need to be aware that I have options. The awareness of my resistance to writing has been developing for some time. On this day I make a conscious choice to do the physical act of writing no matter what attempts are made to stop me. I make a choice to write without judgement for ten minutes. Doing the physical act of writing challenges my internalized oppression, once again raising my awareness and providing me with increased options and therefore increased choices. I choose to let go of the internalized oppression, resolving the internal conflict in favour of my original thought, which was to write. This choice empowers me. I choose to hear, honour and live by my internal locus of control, my internal authority. Choice gives me the authority to act in my own best interests.

The technology of the computer challenges my ability to choose how I type. In this instance, it serves as a metaphor for environmental influences, the external locus of control. The computer program is wired to automatically change I to it. Making a choice that is different from the computer programming, the environmental influences, requires courage, commitment, focus, and determination. My commitment to the process, and my choice to do it differently, shifts the locus of control to my internal authority and is a choice made by my internal authority.

I can shift between a self-negating voice to a self-elevating or encouraging voice. I choose which voice to ultimately listen to. I choose which voice will represent me, will speak for me. The expression of my authentic voice is facilitated when I choose to shift my locus of control to my internal authority.

Making the choice to keep writing and to actually accomplish this first writing goal, overcomes my internal fears and resistance as I successfully master the task of doing this first ten-minute writing. Recognizing that the power to choose which belief system that I will “obey” resides within myself is disclosed in this courageous process of “doing it” in spite of the terror of the dis-empowering belief system. An empowering moment has occurred. I have gathered new information about myself and “Information Is Empowering”

2 January 4, 1997 Wild-writing “Information Is Empowering”

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

Having successfully resolved the “struggle to begin” in favour of my internal authority, I face the challenge of activating the voice of my new technology -- e-mail. I have chosen and condensed this writing to highlight the unique theme, “Information is Empowering”, as succinctly as possible. On this day, feeling empowered by the successful completion of my writing on the previous day, I do this writing fueled by my empowered belief system. There is no evidence of internal conflict. My frustrations at not being able to communicate with the university via e-mail are met with empowering statements.

(ii) Actual wild-writing

Empowerment is about having the ability to accomplish tasks, to set goals and achieve them, sometimes the achieving of the goal takes longer than planned for. It's taken me three days and still haven't found the magic formula to get me talking via computer with U Vic. Information is empowering. If *one knows how to* do something, one

is *empowered by that knowledge*, whether or not one actually does the thing

## A The Four Sub-Processes

### (a) Mastering

This writing addresses my struggle to master the task of connecting to the university via e-mail. I master this day's writing task without struggling with distractions. In this case, buoyed by my success of writing on the previous day, I am able to hear the voices of my empowered belief system.

### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

In a reflective encouraging voice, my empowered belief system expresses my inner wisdom that "Information is empowering." I reassuringly state that "sometimes the goal takes longer than planned for" and that "having the ability to accomplish tasks" is empowering. My dis-empowering belief system is quiet. I hear and respond to the voice of my empowering belief system, my internal authority.

### (c) Identifying Locus of Control

Learning to trust my ability to ask for and receive helpful information from external sources empowers. This writing communicates my internal wisdom trusting and accepting that I have the ability to seek needed knowledge. When I see myself as having the internal power or agency to act on my own behalf in gathering needed information, I make choices from a place of internal authority.

(d) Choosing

I make a choice to gather information and to stay committed to the process of gathering the information. Choosing to hear and trust my empowering belief system in the previous wild-writing enables me to continue to trust in my empowering belief system in this writing. The heroic choice that was made during the previous writing continues to inspire confidence and strength. It encourages my self to continue to resolve my internal struggles in favour of my internal locus of control. “Self Encouragement” is an important part of my empowerment process.

3 January 18, 1997 Wild-writing “Self-encouragement”

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

Self-encouragement facilitates the resolution of my internal conflicts in favour of empowerment. Developing the skill of self-encouragement facilitates the letting go of my dis-empowering belief system. It facilitates a shift to my internal authority. It encourages me to trust in my empowering belief system. Encouraging my self to challenge my conditioning results in my growing awareness of self-inhibiting beliefs. My awareness of dis-empowering expectations creates an opportunity to choose to exercise my ability to challenge them. It facilitates my ability to resolve internal conflicts in favour of my internal authority.

(ii) Actual wild-writing

I feel *stumped by my thoughts*. I am in danger of not having a coherent thought in my head so *type the incoherent thoughts*. Empowerment is allowing and *encouraging one's thoughts to flow onto the page and not interrupting them or judging them*. Each

thought leads somewhere and learning to allow, engage and encourage this process is empowering I feel empowered because I *continue to type* my thoughts into this computer *without editing* some may even end up in that thesis I have *accomplished something* I know not what a *growing awareness* that I expect myself to write fully formed coherent paragraphs that will appear on this page as a thesis without the need of editing or further reflection clearly this will prove my brilliance my ability to be scholarly whatever does that mean Empowerment is not about brilliance or scholarliness it is about authenticity and the ability to choose It is about the ability to live life authentically and to make personal choices that empower To view my process as important and worthy of my attention to sort out that which is useful to hold on to and what to let go of is about choice and feels empowering

## A The Four Sub-Processes

### (a) Mastering

Like the writing on January 3, 1997, physically doing the task of writing raises my awareness of feeling dis-empowered (stumped by my thoughts) and of my internal struggle However, mastering the task of physically doing this writing facilitates the shift from my dis-empowering belief system (dis-empowering thoughts - no thoughts ) to my empowering belief system (thoughts) The doing of it makes known more of my thoughts that are dis-empowering This creates an opportunity for me to let go of the dis-empowering thoughts and choose self-empowering ones Mastering the physical act of doing the writing continues to facilitate mastering the continuing process of increasing my self-awareness

Sometimes “doing it,” no matter what the task, is what it takes for me to become empowered. “Doing it” exposes the hidden rules that keep me stuck. “Doing it” overcomes my internalized oppressive self-doubt. Doing any physical act which enhances my self and accomplishes my goals, empowers me.

Many times I have been empowered when I “just do it.” Take for example painting. I have always wanted to paint, draw, colour, make images happen in some way on some kind of surface. Somehow I internalized the belief that I was not talented, submerged that belief, and did not consider using paint to express myself. My painting voice, like my writing voice, was silenced by the external influence which I had internalized. Several years ago, a supportive external influence encouraged me to “just do it” for fun. Talent was irrelevant. “Doing it” divulges hidden rules that keep my painting, and writing, voice silenced. Encouraging my self to keep “Doing it” overcomes and transforms my internalized self-doubt and gives me confidence to keep doing it. I no longer worry about any talent that I may or may not have. I paint for me, without expectation that any external influence will appreciate what I do. I do not paint like anyone else. Sometimes external influences express their appreciation for what I paint. Sometimes they express their appreciation for what I write.

#### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

My doubt (“stumped by my thoughts”) that results from my dis-empowering belief system is expressed. The dawning awareness of my self-negating internal thinking voice (“in danger of not having a coherent thought”) identifies the source

of my doubt and the resulting internal conflict around my ability to accomplish the task. My empowering belief system is heard encouraging my physical being to keep writing (“so type the incoherent thoughts”) expressing my authentic wisdom (“empowerment is allowing and encouraging”). The emotions facilitated by my empowering belief system, my feelings of empowerment (“I feel empowered because ”) and irritation (“Whatever does that mean”) at the internalized oppressive expectation (“I expect myself to ”) are voiced. An encouraging internal voice of my empowering belief system acknowledges the accomplishment (“I have accomplished something”). My empowered belief system states the rebuttal to my dis-empowering expectation (“Empowerment is not about brilliance or scholarliness it is about authenticity ”) and is connected to my emotionally empowered voice. My confidence and compassion are not explicitly voiced, however, I can sense the underlying emotional connection in the writing. The awareness of my ongoing internal conflict is manifest in the expression of the importance of my process (“to sort out that which is useful to hold on to and what to let go of ”).

The empowering belief system speaks of being myself, accepting my personal strengths and limitations, of setting my own expectations and goals, and of doing so at my own pace. This claims my internal power and wisdom to speak my truth.

In order to hear the internal wisdom of my empowering belief system, I need to be open to hearing and questioning the authority of the different voices of my internal dialogue. I need to be willing to engage in the internal conflicts that arise when I question my internal dialogue, when I question the validity of my dis-empowering self-

talk of internalized oppression. The expectation that I will write fully formed coherent paragraphs is based on my past experience. Understanding past experiences, and traumas, that have shaped my thoughts, beliefs, and behaviours, along with, being willing to hear, acknowledge and grieve them, facilitates my ability to care for myself and transform my internalized oppression. I need to be willing to do the self-exploration involved in transforming my internal voices of oppression into internal voices of authority.

(c) Identifying Locus of Control

The voices of my dis-empowering belief system resounding in my head identify that my locus of control is situated externally. Identifying my locus of control as my internalized oppression facilitates my ability to shift it, to challenge it, and to resolve past issues. Resolving my past issues in favour of my internal authority, transforms my dis-empowering belief system. It encourages me to listen to the empowered voices of my internal authority and wisdom. Shifting from the external to my internal authority empowers, respects and honours me. It is my choice.

(d) Choosing

My choice and commitment to value my process as “important and worthy” supports my self-enhancing choice to “continue to type”. It enables my self to give voice to my thoughts. This choice esteems the thoughts of my self. Choosing to allow and encourage my thoughts to flow onto the page increases my awareness of what I

am thinking and facilitates my ability to choose between self-negating and self-enhancing thoughts. Choosing to hear my dis-empowering belief system reveals my inner conflict. Choosing to resolve the conflict in favour of my self-enhancing belief system facilitates my feelings of empowerment and increases my trust in my self-enhancing choices. As I increasingly trust my choices, I become more able to make choices.

Becoming aware of my options and taking the risk to make a choice engages me in my life experiences. Making self-enhancing choices bolsters my self-esteem and facilitates the transformation of a piece of my internalized oppression. Self-enhancing choices require that I consider myself, that I consider my needs, wants and desires when I make choices. Self-negating choices do not take into account my needs, wants and desires and are made from my dis-empowering belief system. Considering myself enables me to make choices that are increasingly self-enhancing in all areas of my life. It is up to me to choose. I either choose from my dis-empowering belief system or I choose from my empowering belief system.

My ability to access my empowering belief system's encouraging self-talk and to set attainable expectations and goals, increases my feelings of empowerment. Self-doubt dis-empowers. It blocks my ability to access my power from within. It is my power from within, my personal agency, that enables me to interact with and effect change upon my environment. I have been well trained to consider others, personal power is manifested when I make choices that consider my self. When I access my power from within, "I can do it"

4 January 21, 1997 Wild-writing "I can do it!"

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

Exuding excitement and energy, this writing voices the internal dialogue of my empowering belief system around my having accomplished a task. Celebration of my accomplishments is an important aspect of my empowerment process. On this day it took me several hours to accomplish my goal of empowering myself to communicate with my computer in order to make the @ sign. I was thrilled with my accomplishment. This writing appears in its original length. Taking the time to acknowledge, congratulate, and experience my successes encourages me to continue to take risks and accomplish even greater deeds.

(ii) Actual wild-writing

@@@ I can do it! @@@ I CAN DO IT!!! @@@ I can make the @@@ sign so I am now empowered to communicate with the world. It took perseverance, commitment, the ability to ask for help and new knowledge to persuade my computer to speak American English to communicate with the rest of the world.

Empowerment is mastery, knowing that one has personal influence and control over what happens in our world. Empowerment is being able to type. Empowering folks is about facilitating their process to a place where they can say 'I CAN DO THIS'. It is about folks having confidence in their abilities. Empowerment is viewing things from a supportive stance, from an encouraging stance. Right now I need to take my self and canine friends for a hearty hike to clear the brain and arteries and to empower my soul and their canine souls.

## A The Four Sub-Processes

### (a) Mastering

Mastery is being able to accomplish a goal. This process began in a previous writing January 4, 1997, about gathering knowledge. Here the previously gathered knowledge facilitates my ability to “do it” now, to make the @ sign. It combines two smaller processes, the process of gathering the knowledge and the use of the knowledge to “do it”. Both processes are about mastery. “It took perseverance, commitment, the ability to ask for help and new knowledge” to engage in mastering internal blocks that resist the gathering of information, and mastering external blocks to the gathering of information.

Celebrating my accomplishments includes my feelings of satisfaction and gratitude. Self-satisfaction and gratitude reinforce my willingness to take risks to accomplish another goal. Remembering to acknowledge, emotionally connect with, and celebrate my accomplishments reinforces my ability to “do it” again. My ability to master tasks is accomplished in small increments. It requires that I hear my internal voices.

### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

My thought (“I can do this”) comes from my empowering belief system. My empowering belief system continues to be the energy behind my voice as I speak from a place of internal wisdom and authority about empowerment. It fuels the expression of my emotions, expressing feelings of energy, enthusiasm and excitement about my

accomplishment My inner dialogue acknowledges the actual doing of it (“I can do it”), celebrates the doing of it (“I CAN DO IT!!!”), and reflects upon what contributed to being able to do it

Giving voice to my experience deepens my understanding of my experience and offers it to others to inspire them Giving voice to my experience can happen in any number of ways Writing a thesis gives voice to my experience of exploring the issue of empowerment, of doing the research This wild-writing gives voice to my excitement and celebration of an accomplishment Journal writing, painting, sculpting, meditating and singing are some other ways I can give voice to my experiences When I give voice to my experiences, I acknowledge and emotionally connect with them as part of who I am Using my empowering voice to celebrate my victories acknowledges and emotionally connects me to my internal locus of control

### (c) Identifying Locus of Control

Speaking from the place of my internal authority, showing my ability to acknowledge my self, to celebrate my accomplishment and to reflect in a mindful way upon my experience claims my internal authority as my locus of control This is the essence of Spirit, of who I am Internalized oppression interferes with the expression of my Spirit, of who I really am Taking risks to become aware of, let go of, and transform my internalized oppression, puts me in touch with the essence of who I am It shifts the authority from external to internal, connecting me with my higher self, my Higher Power

(d) Choosing

I choose to make the @ sign, to do the writing and to celebrate the accomplishment of making the @ sign I choose to end the writing and to take a hike in order to “clear the brain and arteries and to empower my soul” Choosing to gather information that enables me to master the task of making the @ sign supports my growing sense of empowerment Making empowering choices, and celebrating them, enables me to strengthen my connection to my spirit, my internal authority When I am willing to become self-aware, drink lots of water, eat healthy food, exercise my muscles, play, laugh and be present with myself, I make empowering choices for myself When I make empowering choices, I experience empowering moments, and I am inspired to do it again Making empowering choices requires that I willingly engage in conflict resolution

5 January 26, 1997 Wild-writing “Avoiding Conflict”(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

Resolving my internal conflicts, gathering information to transcend environmental dis-enhancing influences, practicing self-encouragement, gratitude, and the celebration of my accomplishments are all aspects of empowerment that help me shift the locus of control This clear, confident, self-reflective writing discusses the resolution of issues as important to my personal empowerment Furthermore, this passage engages in the process of resolving one of my ongoing issues of avoiding conflict

## (ii) Actual wild-writing

Perhaps identifying what dis-empowers folks would be useful. *Unresolved issues* become internalized oppression. We often make meaning out of events that occur during our childhood and then develop our own rules to live by based on the meaning we have made of our experiences. As I struggle to find my voice, to speak my wisdom, I am continually becoming aware of rules I have made that dis-empower me to speak authentically. *Unresolved issues. One of these resolving issues is that I too often worry about what others may think, say or do in response to what I say.* I am not referring to the times that I have a healthy consideration and empathy for others. I am talking about the times *when I allow what others think of me to become my business.* Empowerment is about an *internal locus of control.* Too often I have relied more on outside influences when making personal choices and decisions. I have *worried too much about whether my 'being' will upset others or create conflict.* *I have been silenced* by this focus on the external authority. The internalized oppression has suppressed and depressed my authentic voice. This silencing has not been utter and complete. Internally the pressure builds up when I do not speak my truth. Eventually another *part of me will speak out anyway*, quite often in a way that does seem to affect others adversely, doing just what I fear, *creating conflict* or upsetting others in a way that disrespects. It is because I erroneously attempt to avoid the conflict, because of perceptions that speaking my truth can manifest conflict, that I attempt to silence my authentic voice. This is an error based on internalized oppression, the defensive expectation that I will be in danger if there is conflict. The erroneous belief that conflict is life-threatening interferes with the truth that conflict is a normal part of human existence and conflict resolution a necessary and life-enhancing event. The internalized

oppression of unresolved issues around conflict result in the suppression of the energy of my voice. Suppressed energy builds up and *will eventually explode. This explosion disrespects and creates unhelpful, negating conflict. If I speak authentically, accepting the consequences of speaking my truth, being willing to engage in authentic life-enriching conflict, trusting in a power greater than myself to work with me, then I will be speaking respectfully.*

## A The Four Sub-Processes

### (a) Mastering

Unresolved issues interfere with my ability to master the tasks of resolving conflict resulting in some kind of disrespectful explosion or implosion. Mastering the task of resolving these issues that dis-able me from respectfully engaging in conflict, facilitates my ability to respectfully resolve conflict. Successfully resolving conflict requires my willingness and includes my ability to master the tasks of recognizing, acknowledging, being with, letting go of, and transforming my thoughts, feelings and attitudes. Mastering the tasks of resolving my issues facilitates my connection to internal wisdom and authority enabling me to hear the voices of my empowering belief system.

### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

The curious, self-reflective voice of my empowering belief system, my internal authority can be heard, without opposition, evaluating the process of resolving issues that have previously interfered with my ability to hear my authentic voice. Its voices

my wisdom about unresolved issues which prevent me from speaking authentically (“ I too often worry about what others think”) It talks about resolving the issue as part of my process of gaining the ability to speak respectfully and authentically, to my self and to others This reflective voice of my empowering belief system names the voice that “speaks anyway” creating the feared conflict It is important for me to acknowledge that when my voice “explodes” it is a voice representing my dis-empowering belief system I need to take responsibility for my actions Being under the influence of my internalized oppression dis-respects myself and others I need to make amends whenever it is helpful to do so Taking personal responsibility will prevent the exploding dis-respectful voice of my internalized oppression to gain further airtime This is a process and is accomplished in increments Most often I need to overcome pieces of my internalized oppression I have to identify and transform the pieces one by one It is my commitment to this practice that facilitates the shift to my internal authority While this writing talks about different voices, the voice speaking in this wild-writing is my authentic, reflective voice of internal wisdom

As I transform and transcend my oppression, I give voice to the internal wisdom that respects both myself and others This is a continuous process I built the brick wall of internalized oppression in increments and I overcome it in increments I dismantle the wall, brick by brick I could be giving voice to internalized oppression in one moment and then access my internal wisdom in the next moment I have access to my voice of internal wisdom to some degree, the trick is to hear it, recognize it and strengthen my connection to it No small accomplishment Wildly writing, talking

with others, singing, painting, dancing, meditating, and playing are ways that can help me hear, recognize, express, develop and transform my internal oppressive voices and shift my locus of control

(c) Identifying Locus of Control

Reflecting upon what gets in the way of my internal authority reveals that layers of unresolved issues “Rules that I have made that dis-empower me to speak authentically” that result in my relying on an external locus of control I “worry about what others think” which dis-empowers me Resolving my issues about personal authority transforms my internalized oppression and results in shifting to my internal locus of control My ability to hear my own internal wisdom, to know that I can handle conflict and that there are no right answers, increases my ability to make empowering choices

(c) Choosing

No interference is heard from my dis-empowering belief system, no choice to interfere with my authentic authority is made My internal authority makes the choice to do this writing When I make a choice from a place of internal authority, I transcend dis-empowering influences and act from a place of my integrity and wisdom My empowering belief system discusses my choosing to resolve previously unresolved issues in an effort to “find my voice” I make a choice to become aware of the “rules” and beliefs that have overruled my authentic voice With the growing awareness of my

unresolved issues comes my choice to resolve my issues. I can choose to acknowledge and let go of the erroneous rules, to modify them or to keep them in use for some more time.

I have the ability to choose to become willing to become aware of unresolved issues, to become aware of underlying values, beliefs, thoughts, feelings and attitudes that influence my behaviour. When I share a household with others, issues around toothpaste, toiletpaper and towel hanging invariably arise. I squeeze the toothpaste tube from the end, others squeeze it from the middle. I do not mind which way the toilet paper is hung, others do, I just like the person who finishes the roll to replace it with a new one. I also like the towels folded lengthwise, it makes more sense to me, others fold them crosswise or on the diagonal. I can choose to look at my own responses to how others squeeze the toothpaste, hang the toilet paper and fold the towels. I can choose to utilize these daily tasks of living to become aware of my underlying values, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, and attitudes that influence my behavioural responses to my roommates. I can become aware of unresolved issues that are triggered by these daily tasks of living and become willing to resolve those issues. Resolving these issues increases my awareness of my options and I am enabled to make increasingly empowered choices in my daily life. Resolving these issues includes dealing with my arrogance.

6 January 27, 1997 Wild-writing "Arrogance"

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

The wild-writings continue to give voice to different aspects of my empowerment. The process of empowerment moves at its own pace. I have chosen this writing to expose the concept of arrogance. It has been edited for length. The process of developing my voice clearly challenges the internalized oppression and requires a shift in the locus of control. It requires that I let go of the dis-empowering arrogance of undervaluing my own authority.

(ii) Actual wild-writing

Empowerment is about an internal locus of control. Folks *need to shift the balance*. We need to consider our own internal wisdom when living our lives and making our choices. We need to maintain a questioning, self-reflective, self-exploring attitude of curiosity about who we are and what we do in relation to other folks in the community. *Empowerment is about valuing one's own decisions and choices while remaining open to feedback from others*. Sometimes folks undervalue their own input and overvalue the input of others. Sometimes they overvalue their own input and undervalue the input of others. Either position is about arrogance. One is about power under, the other about power over. *It is an arrogance not to consider our own internal wisdom when living our lives and making our choices*. The goal of empowerment is to experience our personal power that comes from within. Power-with, power with ourselves and with others.

## A The Four Sub-Processes

### (a) Mastering

Mastering the task of experiencing my own power that comes from within requires that I master the task of letting go of arrogance. When I place too much value on my own input, or the input of others, I am treating myself and others with arrogance. I am treating myself and others with contempt. I am contemptuous of myself when I place too much value on the input from others. I am contemptuous of others when I devalue their input. Mastering the task of letting go of arrogance and contempt requires that I value input from all sources, that I value my own input, as well as the input of others.

### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

The confident tones of my voice are heard, fueled by my empowering belief system. I am gaining confidence in the expression of my internal knowledge, authority and wisdom. As I become increasingly aware of my internal wisdom, I become increasingly more able to voice it. I become more sure of myself, of my way. Transforming my internalized oppression connects me to my internal wisdom and empowers me to speak authentically from an internally situated locus of control.

(c) Identifying Locus Of Control

The need to balance the information or feedback from external authority with my own internal wisdom and authority is divulged. My need to live my life from my internal locus of control is discussed in this writing, and this writing is part of my process of living my life with internal authority.

I develop my internal authority when I develop a relationship with myself, when I look at the issues that oppress my Spirit and when I resolve those issues. When I develop a self-enhancing relationship with myself, I develop a mutually enhancing relationship with others. When I am connected with my internal authority, I become empowered from within. I balance the feedback from external sources with my own internal wisdom and my internal authority makes my choices.

(d) Choosing

Choosing to “value [my] own decisions and choices while remaining open to feedback from others”, my willingness to be aware of when I am undervaluing or overvaluing my self, or others, is my choice to transform my arrogance and contempt. Sometimes this choice is relatively easy, sometimes the power of the internalized oppression threatens to overwhelm me. Choosing to ask for and receive help from my Higher Power, often in the form of helpful other people, facilitates my ability to walk through the pain of my internalized oppression and to let go of my arrogance and contempt with grace.

Letting go of my arrogance and contempt enables me to consider my self in relation to the other when making decisions (“Power with, power with ourselves and others”) It suggests an interdependence I respect and consider my own needs, wants, desires, as well as, the needs, wants, and desires of the other people, the other beings, in my life Letting go of arrogance is one of my “guiding principles of empowerment”

7 January 30, 1997 Wild-writing “Guiding Principles Of Empowerment”

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

My internal conflicts continue in spite of my successes in mastering the task of writing However, each time I resolve an internal conflict in favour of my internal authority, I become more encouraged and empowered to more quickly transform the internal voices of my dis-empowering belief system This writing appears in its original length The conflict is quickly resolved resulting in the expression of my guiding principles of empowerment The choice and commitment to myself to keep writing transforms my self doubt and internalized oppression My writing flows

(ii) Actual wild-writing

Empowerment *feels too big to talk about* What is empowerment? Empowerment is a blank space in my mind as I *struggle for words* to say what I want to say *to find my own voice* Empowerment is the ability to act authentically in the moment, it is about choices, the *ability to choose*, the ability to say 'yes' and mean it and to say 'no' and mean it Empowerment is about people acting in an authentic way in their world It is about *'power with' rather than 'power over'* Power over dis-empowers both the person who

believes they have the power over and the person who believes that they have less power Empowerment is *letting go* of the illusions of power that 'power over' fosters Empowerment is letting go and 'letting goddess' Empowerment is *not knowing the answers and trusting* that there are answers Empowerment is *valuing input* from various sources Empowerment is the ability to *be responsible, the ability to respond authentically* Empowerment is about *having an experience, opinion, belief, thought that is different from others and accepting that being different is an awesome gift* - a chance to re-examine our own opinions, beliefs and values Empowerment is the ability to learn from others without negating self and to teach others without negating self or others Empowerment is recognizing that sometimes we behave in ways, do things that, upon reflection, we would rather not have done and *humbly admit our mistakes* and move forward Empowerment is about *egalitarian principles of treating each other with respect and honouring our differing views of the world* Empowerment is about speaking out against injustice when we see it happening Empowerment is about *picking our battles* Empowerment is about *speaking our truth* when it is the most uncomfortable to do so Empowerment is about treating our world with respect and honouring the gifts that we receive from it Empowerment is about *gratitude* Being grateful for the gifts we receive in our interactions with our environment Practicing an attitude of gratitude means that we focus on the parts of the gifts for which we can feel most grateful and we learn to be grateful for the other parts too Gratitude cures resentment and energizes us to transform that which we choose to transform

## A The Four Sub-Processes

### (a) Mastering

Through writing I continue to master the task of connecting to my empowering belief system. My dis-empowering belief system is like a brick wall. Each brick is made of some rigid belief that I developed in response to external dis-empowering experiences in a misguided effort to protect my authentic self. Continuing to do the writing continues to master the task of dismantling, removing and/or transforming the bricks of this oppressive wall.

### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

My dis-empowering belief system voices my thought that empowerment “feels too big to talk about”, facilitating my self-negating emotion of self-doubt. My choice to keep writing results in my empowered internal thinking voice responding with a focusing question “What is empowerment?” This supports the authentic voice of my empowering belief system to answer the question expressing guiding principles of empowerment.

Sometimes my internal voice for empowerment speaks softly and requires my commitment to listen for it. I need to promise myself that I will take the time to find that quiet place inside where the voice of my spirit can be heard. I need to hear it above the environmental noise. I need to be willing to hear it above the frightened, terrified noise of my internalized oppression. As a child, that noise became part of the belief system I created in an effort to keep me safe and to make sense of my world. It influenced where my locus of control is situated.

(c) Identifying Locus Of Control

Staying committed to the writing results in a shift to my internal authority. My writing flows, my thoughts tumble out. My struggle to overcome my doubt transforms it. The shift to my internal locus of control is once again successful, my internal conflict resolves in favour of my empowering belief system.

Hearing the “noise” of my own internalized oppression allows me to notice the disconnection from my internal authority and where my locus of control is situated and offers me an opportunity to make a choice to shift it.

(d) Choosing

My internal conflict, the power struggle, at the beginning of this writing is about who is going to make the choice, the voice of my empowered belief system, or the voice of my dis-empowering belief system. My internal authority chooses to stay committed to the goal of doing the writing no matter what happens. Making this self-enhancing choice to continue to “do it”, to keep writing, transcends my internalized oppression. My willingness and choice to hear the noise I encounter, to question its authority and to transform it into self-enhancing self-talk increases my ability to make self-enhancing choices on a regular basis.

My interactions with external influences act as catalysts activating internal conflict and creating opportunities for me to make choices. It is up to me to choose. I have the authority to choose which part of me is going to make my choices. I decide if I will make my choices from a place of internal authority or succumb to the internalized

oppression I decide to become aware of the thoughts I am thinking I decide to become willing to change my mind, to heal my past traumas and to claim my internal authority I choose to become willing to do what it takes to transform my dis-empowering belief system I choose to get to know myself and to act from a place of internal authority Sometimes I may choose to stay entrenched in my dis-empowering belief system Either way, it is my choice Making “responsible choice” empowers me to make increasingly responsible choices

### 8 February 5, 1997 Wild-writing “Responsible Choice”

#### (i) Introduction to the wild-writing

The ongoing process of shifting my locus of control and developing my authentic voice requires that I have the ability to make responsible choice Creating helpful, supportive beliefs, along with an “atmosphere of acceptance” facilitates the lowering of my defense mechanisms Arrogance, denial, and lack of awareness affect my ability to be open to feedback and to make responsible choices

#### (ii) Actual wild-writing

Empowerment is important because it is about *choice* If we are empowered to make choices, to have choice, then we are empowered to be all that we can be It is a process *We become empowered and increasingly empowered when we make choices and deal responsibly with the results of our choices* It doesn't matter what choice is made It matters that the choice is actually made and that there is a willingness and commitment to learn from the consequences of making that choice It isn't as important that our choices are the 'best' ones *Making the choice itself is empowering Learning from the choice is also empowering* It is important that we have a free ability to make choices, real choices It is important that we learn from our

choices We need to evaluate and make choices about our choices This increases our ability to respond, to make choices that are increasingly empowering Empowerment is about beginning to recognize and accept who we are and what we are becoming Self-acceptance allows us choice If we can *accept who we are, then we have choice around who we are becoming* I guess we need to *be able to self-reflect* upon who we are and decide if that works for us, what works and what we would like to change In an *atmosphere of acceptance* we can do that with lowered defenses If we fear non-acceptance, or attack, then we will keep our defenses up In counsellor training, if we can accept who we are, and where we are, as counsellors, then we can more readily accept feedback for our consideration Another piece of this is that if we are in denial about what we are actually doing and/or if we arrogantly believe that what we do is the right way, then we are not open to feedback we are also not open to being aware of how we are helpful, or not, with the other We all come with our own baggage We have different bags full of life events that have shaped our thoughts, beliefs, and actions, we have different traumas that we have made meaning from, and of, and that contribute to the formation of our thoughts, beliefs, values, theories We need to explore this in an effort to *uncover, discover, recover who we are* With acceptance (what is- is, what was- was) of our baggage, we can learn what we need to learn and transform the rest We can *let go of that which is no longer helpful and keep the rest* We can construct ideas, values, beliefs, and theories that empower us The idea of *self-exploration* works best as an *on-going tool for empowerment* if we *accept who we are with compassion*, rather than look for ways that we don't measure up Resolving issues about my worth and how I measure up, requires the help of my Higher Power The intrinsic view of my self worth and value has

been distressed, disturbed and distorted. There is an ongoing discussion and struggle between the voices of the internalized oppression and the voices of internal wisdom about my self-worth and value and the importance of treating my self with acceptance and compassion. Calling on my Higher Power, The Creator, The Healing Power of the Universe helps me with the acceptance and the letting go.

### A. The Four Sub-Processes

#### (a) Mastering

Mastering the tasks of self-reflection, of increasing my awareness of my thoughts, beliefs and values, of developing my own wisdom, of making my choices, of asking for help and of letting go are illustrated here. The importance of mastering my ability to make choices, along with my ability to reflect upon those choices, is part of my process. The discussion in this writing is about mastering the task of engaging in my process, of my ongoing compassionate, self-exploration to become aware of, accept and transform my unresolved issues, “my baggage”, and to learn from my past and current choices. The suggestion is made from my empowering belief system that mastering the task of “calling on my Higher Power” facilitates my mastering of the task of acceptance and letting go.

#### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

The energy behind this self-reflective passage is an expression of my internal wisdom, my authentic voice. My ideas are clearly expressed, in a straight forward

respectful tone from an internal place of connection to my knowledge, feelings and Spirit. Connecting to my internal place of wisdom requires that I silence the environmental noise, as well as the noise of my dis-empowering belief system. My willingness to enlist the help of my Higher Power to resolve my internalized oppression, strengthens my connection to my internal authority and helps me shift my locus of control.

(c) Identifying Locus of Control

Self-enhancing spiritual behaviours such as self-acceptance, self-reflection, forgiveness, letting go, and compassionate self-exploration are part of my empowering belief system, my internal locus of control. Making responsible choices requires that I become willing to make choices with internal authority.

(d) Choosing

Sometimes I will make choices from my dis-empowering belief system. Becoming willing to act from a place of internal authority enables me to take responsibility for all of my choices. Making responsible choices requires that I am willing to learn from the consequences of my choices. I evaluate my choices and choose how I will respond in the future. I ask for feedback from others and consider the impact of my choices upon others. I am willing to engage in my process of compassionate self-acceptance in order to know who I am and increase my choices about who I am becoming. When I am making responsible choices I enlist the help of my Higher Power. I access my

Higher Power through prayer and meditation in various ways I gather together with others to share experience, strengths and hope Attending sacred places of personal spiritual significance such as churches, sweat lodges, ceremonial gatherings, support groups, Reiki groups, natural settings, the horse barn and my favourite chair are other ways I increase my conscious contact with my Higher Power Connecting with my Higher Power transforms my internalized oppression, shifts my locus of control and helps me find my voice

9 February 14, 1997 Wild-writing "Finding My Voice"

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

The ongoing commitment to first hearing and then speaking in my own voice began many years ago In the process of writing wildly, I am able to use my slowly developing self-awareness to make sense of a particular time when I had not connected to my internal authority when writing a paper I identified the importance, to me, of hearing the voice of my empowering belief system over the fearful voices of my dis-empowering belief system I chose this writing because it identifies more of my internal blocks that have previously kept me stuck, blocks that I was able to reflect upon with new awareness, knowledge and internal power in the process of this writing The wild-writings are becoming longer and deeper as the connection to my own internal wisdom grows, as I turn up the volume on the voices of my empowered belief system This denotes movement and progress

## (ii) Actual wild-writing

Empowerment is being *stuck for a moment* and *trusting in the process* enough to know that one can *become unstuck* in the process of writing by *keeping the pen moving* or in this case my fingers moving. *The goal is the process - not the product. Keeping the fingers moving is empowering because it keeps me engaged in the process and that is where I have been stuck.* Seemingly unable to become engaged in the process of writing. Stuck because I had some idea that I wanted to do this in a scholarly way that was/is a mystery to me. And I am aware that what I think of as scholarly writing, seems boring, unalive somehow, and I wanted to write something interesting - at least to me. And I'm becoming aware that I seem to think that those who have written interesting theses, have somehow gotten away with something that I won't be able to get away with. Interesting self-negating thought. I had this problem in a theories class. I wanted to write my own thoughts, ideas, values etc and the course required that I integrate that with teachings of folks like Freud, Ellis, Beck etc. *Now I am aware that my voice can be strengthened by the voices of others, however, first I needed to hear my own voice. I know that I needed to discover/ uncover/ recover my ideas. I needed to know what I was thinking, that I was thinking. I needed to hear the unresolved issues that silenced me and find my voice. Focusing on external ideas interfered with my ability to hear myself think.* Upon reflection I realize that I needed to write a theories paper developing my own ideas. I needed to be encouraged to find my own ideas about my personal theory before I tried to sort out the theories in the literature. I am aware that it would have been difficult for me to hear the encouragement to explore my own ideas because of experiences in my formative years and the meaning I constructed from these experiences. Unresolved issues. I found

myself in a position of not trusting the internal authority of my self and not trusting the external authority. I found myself 'obeying' the rules, not sure if I was 'obeying' the rules from the past or the present expectations of the external authority. Past experience set me up to distrust the external authority of the teachers because I experienced untrustworthy teachers. This internalized oppression kept me from transcending the environment. I needed first to transform this internalized oppression. I needed to find my internal wisdom, my authentic voice. If the institution needed me to write a research paper based on the ideas of other folks, I needed to do that after I had written down my ideas. *I have struggled for years to figure out how to do this, to attain personal authority, personal agency and to hear myself first.* I have put the product before the process, my process. This is not empowering. Writing a personal theories paper based on my process, my ideas, would have started me on the path of developing my own theory. The second step would have been to write a research paper, then maybe I would have been ready to write an integrated personal theory / research paper. I ended up writing a paper that was neither my ideas nor a quality research paper. I found the process frustrating. *I allowed unresolved issues and the external environment to silence me.* these ten minute writings that sometimes expand in time seem to address this issue of feeling silenced. I write whatever is in my head rather than what my head thinks I SHOULD be writing in order to finish the product. I wonder what it would be like to write a theories paper based on the process of ten minute writings??? *To be encouraged to do ten minute writings and write whatever is in one's head /heart rather than what is in the literature.* Somehow the skeptical students, the ones like me who thought there must be a RIGHT way to do this, need to be convinced, assured that the Right way is to explore one's own idea's

no matter what those ideas are. The worry about getting an acceptable grade silenced me. Amidst the focus on grades, the focus on the product, my voice remained lost. It is the process that holds the most value for me and yet I remained caught in the habit of relying on outside influences when making a personal choice about how to write a theories paper. I guess I wanted to be encouraged to find my own voice rather than focusing on regurgitating what others have said. I'm aware that I may not have been able to hear the encouragement, or been able to trust that it was genuine. Eventually, perhaps a balance of valuing my own voice as well as the voice's of others could be attained, however, I found that too difficult at the time.

#### A. The Four Sub-Processes

##### (a) Mastering

Mastering the tasks of self-reflection, self exploration, self-analysis, and learning from my past experience in order to make changes in my current experience are practiced in this writing. I am mastering the task of evaluating my past experiences and making a conscious choice about how I will "do it" this time. I discuss mastering the task of becoming "unstuck in the process of writing", while actually engaging in mastering the tasks of becoming "unstuck". Mastering the task of writing about my previous experience facilitates my ability to master of the task of writing on this day. Mastering the task of writing on this day promotes my ability to master the task of writing in my future. Mastering the tasks of writing, self-reflection, and self-analysis encourages my growing awareness of what silences me.

Mastery is not finite. When I engage in the mastering of the task of learning from my past experiences, and master the task of consciously making choices in the present moment, I engage in my ongoing process of mastering the task of becoming increasingly empowered. I engage in my ongoing process of hearing my internal voices.

(b) Hearing Internal Voices

My empowering belief system empowers my self-reflective authentic voice to explore and develop my internal wisdom. My feelings of frustration about how I approached a previous paper in a university class, and how it might have been done differently, are expressed. Speaking about my experience in a curious, exploratory, self-reflective manner uses my authentic voice to resolve one of my previously unresolved issues, thereby strengthening the connection to the voices for my empowering belief system.

I needed mentorship, guidance and help. Sometimes I do not know how, or whom, to ask for help and guidance. My empowering belief system identifies my solution, "I needed more encouragement to find my own voice." It suggests that I might not be able to hear the encouragement, and moves on to the awareness that a balance between my own voice and the voices of others could be "eventually attained." My acknowledgment that this balance was too difficult to attain at the time ends this writing and identifies my struggle with my locus of control.

(c) Identifying Locus Of Control

Engaged in my process of shifting the authority from external to internal influences, this writing identifies a previous paper as an example of how I had been struggling with the issue of writing from a place of my internal authority. This struggle is being resolved through my commitment to doing the wild-writings and this thesis. This is an ongoing process. It happens in increments. Making the choice to write from a place my of internal wisdom requires that I hear my internal authority and choose from the place of my internal locus of control.

I become conscious of my judgment / belief about scholarly writing (“seems boring, unalive somehow”). My inner resistance to writing to please the external authority (“stuck”) facilitates my awareness that I “wanted to write something interesting”, and another awareness of my judgment that “those who have written interesting theses have somehow gotten away with something”. My stuckness was in part my resistance to adhering to the criteria of these underlying dis-empowering beliefs.

My acknowledgement that it would have been difficult for me to hear any encouragement from an empowering external authority because of my prior experiences (“unresolved issues”) is stated. My internalized oppression of “not trusting” either my internal or the external authority and obeying “rules” from an unidentified source within my dis-empowering belief system becomes known. This information increases my awareness of the need to transform my unresolved issues in order to shift my locus of control.

When I engage in an internal conflict, I know that my dis-empowering belief system can be transformed. It will be transformed if I intend it to be, if I choose it to be, if I enlist the help of my Higher Power. When I make choices to engage in the process, to enlist the needed help, to do what it takes to connect with my internal authority and wisdom, I transform a piece of my internalized oppression. I put an end to my internal power struggle and choose my internal authority as my locus of control.

(d) Choosing

My choice to do, and master the doing of the wild-writings is essentially my choice to engage in the process of resolving this internal conflict in favour of my empowering belief system. My choice to explore one of my previous experiences of inner conflict, is part of my current process of making a choice to do this research and write this thesis in a different way than I have written previously. This exploration is part of my process of understanding what happened before and choosing to do it differently this time. The result is the transformation of the internalized oppression that had previously silenced my authentic voice. Choosing to learn from my past choices takes care of my self.

10 February 18, 1998 Wild-writing "Self Care - What Really Matters"

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

Taking care of my self, considering myself when I make choices about my life, is an important aspect of my empowerment. The following writing begins to explore the idea of self-care and its importance to my empowerment process.

## (ii) Actual wild-writing

Empowerment is *knowing one can take care of one's self*  
 Taking care of one's self is *knowing what really matters to one in*  
 life, being well paid and/or well provided for - economic security,  
*trusting one's own judgment, trusting in the creative power of the*  
*universe, one's higher power, God* Taking care of one's self means  
 being unafraid to make mistakes and not worrying about what others  
 think about one's self, about having/ developing/ using one's own  
 voice, is knowing that life cannot be viewed through lenses of black  
 and white - it comes in shades of gray *Taking care of one's self*  
*results in a centeredness - an inner harmony, a strong connection to*  
*the essence of one's self, one's higher power* Taking care of one's  
 self empowers one to ask for help when one needs it and to take care  
 of others Empowerment is about naming what we see going on  
 around us, it is trusting oneself, *being clear with one's self and*  
*recognizing when one is unclear and trusting that one can become*  
*clear* Empowerment is going to the chiropractor when my back  
 hurts Empowerment is a quiet place to work Empowerment is  
 doing a five minute writing because I chose to

A The Four Sub-Processes(a) Mastering

Knowing that I can take care of myself requires my willingness to master taking  
 risks, to connect with my Higher Power and to make mistakes I choose to master the  
 task of taking care of myself on several levels I master the task of caring for myself  
 emotionally when I acknowledge, feel, be with, accept and let go of my emotions  
 When I do not worry "about what others think" and when I am "listening to myself", I

am mastering the task of taking care of my self, of thinking and choosing, on an intellectual level. Physically, I master the task of going “to the Chiropractor” when my back hurts, when I take care of my physical needs. Doing what I need to do in order to connect with my “Higher Power” masters the task of taking care of my spiritual needs and empowers me to master the task of taking care of my other needs. When I choose to master the task of self-care, I engage in the process of mastering the task of being who I really am.

(b) Hearing Internal Voices

My empowered belief system fuels this discussion about “having /developing/ using [my] own voice”, and, my authentic voice is heard. It talks about the need to have/develop/hear and use my own voice in order to “ask for help”, “[name] what I see”, and “be clear with [my] self. Hearing my authentic voice increases my ability to identify my needs and take care of my self.

(c) Identifying Locus Of Control

My empowered belief system, my internal authority, speaks about the importance of “being centered”. My connection to my “Higher Power” is my connection to my internal authority which “results in a centeredness - an inner harmony”. I am centered in my power from within, in “harmony with” my internal authority and wisdom when I take care of myself.

(d) Choosing

The importance of making a choice to take care of myself is discussed. My ability to choose to take risks, to make mistakes, reveals my choice to learn, grow and change. Taking care of myself involves considering myself when making any choice, I put myself in my picture.

A political discussion (“Empowerment is about naming what we see going on around us”) states a personal value, naming what is going on around me encourages me to make choices about confronting my internal and external oppression. This notion links political action to my own internal wisdom (“trusting one’s self”) suggesting that the choices I make in my personal politics have as much integrity as I have personally developed. This brings into focus the notion that I need to take responsibility for trusting myself and for choosing to speak up. I take responsibility when I “Question Authority”

11 February 21, 1997, Wild-writing “Question Authority”

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

Connecting with my higher self, respecting myself and others, encourages me to question authority and to choose my battles. My beliefs in the empowering concept of choosing where to spend my energy, the importance of questioning the authority of my internalized rules and beliefs, as well as the rules and beliefs of the external influence, contribute to my decision to include this complete writing. This energized writing, in my reflective, authentic voice, engages in a mindful self-exploration of my issue of internal and external oppression and questioning authority.

## (ii) Actual wild-writing

*Empowerment is knowing our limitations* It can feel scary because being self-empowered means relying on one's own authority rather than safely following the rules that someone else has developed It means accepting the responsibility of our actions It means taking risks This does not mean we don't follow the rules of our society, it means we question authority We think about the rules and decide for our selves, it means we *sometimes mindfully choose to follow the rules and sometimes we mindfully choose not to* We need to question authority - on whose authority were the rules made? Who benefits from these rules? Would it be useful to challenge any of the rules? Does the rule enhance my life and the lives of others? Are the rules empowering? How much energy do I have and where do I want to spend it? What do I think is most important for me to challenge in this moment? Are these internal rules? External rules? Internalized oppression? External oppression? What do I have the energy and courage to address? What am I driven to address? *I learn how to pick my battles and choose where to spend my energy* Empowerment is writing without pressure to do it right, say the right thing, be intelligent and brilliant, spell correctly, empowerment is writing in a way that breaks and changes the dis-empowering rules, for me, mainly unconscious rules that are coming into my consciousness as I engage in this process Empowerment is living without pressure to do it right, say the right thing, be intelligent and brilliant, empowerment is living in a way that mindfully breaks the rules that dis-empower Empowerment is *having the courage to put it out* and look at it later It is the ability to let my mind tell my fingers what to do without the *concrete wall of 'shoulds' that keep me stuck* Even my personal journal is fraught with rules Empowerment is a process

## A The Four Sub-Processes

### (a) Mastering

Mastering the task of questioning authority requires that I master the task of taking risks to develop my authentic voice. It is important for me to remember that when I am questioning the authority of my internal (or external) influences that I do it with respect. I respectfully hear my internal voices in order to gain a full understanding of what they are expressing.

### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

My reflective, authentic voice speaks from my empowered belief system, identifying what empowers my voice. “empowerment is writing without pressure to do it right, say the right thing, be intelligent and brilliant, spell correctly” Writing from my internal place that “breaks and changes the dis-empowering rules” raises my awareness of the “mainly unconscious rules that are coming into my consciousness as I engage in this process” My dis-empowering belief system, my internalized oppression, my “concrete wall of shoulds” suggests that I *should* always write something “intelligent and brilliant” as defined by some external authority whose motivation may be suspect. With my internal revelation of this expectation comes my understanding and awareness of the futility of that expectation. My dis-empowering belief system does not have the ability to speak intelligently or brilliantly.

The brilliance of my empowered belief system is dulled by the “concrete wall of shoulds”, of my dis-empowering belief system. I need to start speaking from where I

am at, in order to shift my internal self to a more self-enhancing place. Wild-writings help me do that. I need to voice my oppression in some way in order to let it go and uncover, discover, and recover what treasure lies buried beneath, the intelligence and brilliance of my internal authority, my authentic self.

(c) Identifying Locus Of Control

My internal authority discusses the empowering concept of claiming my internal power to question the authority of the rules I live by (“Who benefits from the rules?”) I ask several provocative questions designed to help me take personal responsibility for the rules that influence my life. The questions can help me decide which rules to keep, which to let go of, and which rules to change.

Questioning authority begins with my internal process of self-exploration about how the internal and external rules are working for me. If it is a rule that I have made up in response to my own internalized oppression, I can question the authority of the rule. I can make a different rule that will enhance my being. If the rule comes from the external, I can question the source of the rule to discover its intent and purpose. I can access my internal authority and power to choose to accept the rule or make an effort to change it. If I do not think that the rule is in the best interest of my self, the group or the community, I can talk about it with others in an effort to spark a group effort to change it. If the group thinks they would like to maintain the status quo, I can choose to make a conscious objection. I can choose to uphold my own internal principles, my politics, and take a stand.

My grade eight French teacher took a stand. She objected to what she saw happening in my school. Her willingness to follow the voice of her internal authority changed the direction of the school. Her willingness to take a risk and consciously object to the dis-empowering behaviours resulted in a change. She “Questioned Authority”. She questioned the authority of those who were making the rules in that school. It took another year before those adults who were behaving in dis-empowering ways miraculously disappeared. Unfortunately, so did she, but not before we said thanks and good-bye. I cannot recall her name, however, I do recall the way I felt when I was in her classroom. Her job was to teach us French, a seemingly hopeless task considering the environment of the school, she creatively taught us how to sing in French. She listened to her voice of internal authority. We loved her. She respected us. She empowered us. Her creative and courageous behaviour in the classroom, and in taking her stand behind the scenes, taught me something valuable. I did not know it then. She modeled integrity and taught me the value of speaking from a place of integrity. She taught me that we are all political. My politics come from my integrity. If I am connected to my internal authority and wisdom, my politics will be empowering. If I make my choices from my dis-empowering belief system, my politics will be dis-empowering. I get to choose. I get to choose if, when, where, why, and how I take a stand. My politics do not require that I belong to a political party, they simply require that I choose to act and take action from a place of my personal integrity.

(d) Choosing

Exploring the notion of relying on my internal authority when making my choices means that I examine my internal belief systems. I examine the rules that I live by. I question both external and internal authority, when making my choices about the “rules”, as well as the expectations that I live by. Questioning authority when making my choices means that I have the right and responsibility to choose to act from a place of internal integrity. Questioning Authority is part of my ongoing struggle to hear my authentic voice.

12 February 26, 1997 Wild-writing, “Struggle To Find Voice”

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

Having discussed my ability to question authority, I continue the struggle to hear my authentic voice. My ability to trust my own authority facilitates the expression of my authentic voice. This writing has been edited and included because it exemplifies part of my process to speak from a place of my internal authority, while resolving the interfering internal oppression.

(ii) Actual wild-writing

*I have struggled to find my own voice, to value my own input - as the most important input- rather than valuing external input as the most important input. I have struggled to rely on my own internal authority when making choices, to rely on my own internal wisdom, to find my own internal authority and wisdom. Too often I have not highly regarded my own input. I have worked and continue to work at finding a balance between the information that comes to me from 'out there' and the information that comes from the 'inside'*

Sometimes the information from 'out there' rings true for me internally - awesome, a validation of my own knowing. Sometimes I don't agree with the information that I receive from out there - an opportunity to define, re-define and refine my own thinking. An opportunity to stick with my knowing or to develop a new knowing based on the new information *received*. Sometimes the information triggers me emotionally and can be difficult to work with, to find balance with. This emotional charge is a cue that helps me work through unresolved issues, increases my integrity and authenticity and puts me in touch with my internal wisdom and my authentic voice.

## A The Four Sub-Processes

### (a) Mastering

The discussion in this writing speaks of the importance of being in my process, and, is engaged in the fluid process of my mastering the task of looking deeper within myself. Speaking from a place of my own internal wisdom, this writing exhibits my process of mastering the task of writing, of self-reflection, and of self-exploration. It speaks about mastering the task of evaluating externally received information as “an opportunity to define, redefine and refine my own thinking”. In order to do that I need to be willing to hear my internal voices.

### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

This writing illustrates my process of “finding” my voice. It identifies some of the issues that have drowned out my authentic voice (“too often I have not highly regarded my own input”) and my commitment to resolving those issues (“I have

worked and continue to work at finding a balance between the information ”) My unresolved issues need to be heard, explored and resolved when “information triggers me emotionally” in order to regain my balance Each time I work through a block of internalized oppression, I increase my integrity My authentic voice gains strength I shift my locus of control

(c) Identifying Locus of Control

My ongoing struggle to listen to, and value, my own wisdom and input is exposed in this writing It talks about, and engages in, the process of resolving issues that interfere with my ability to hear and value my internal authority Issues that interfere with my ability to choose

(d) Choosing

Reflected in this writing is my continuing choice to value my own knowledge and wisdom My choice not to “highly [regard] my own input” was made long ago in a mis-guided effort to survive It was likely a useful and productive choice at that time It became internalized oppression and suppressed my own internal authority, knowledge and voice Choosing to become aware of my previous choice gives me the option of choosing again In this writing, I both talk about this and do it

Choosing again requires my willingness to choose to engage with the fear of my internalized oppression It requires my willingness to choose to explore my fears through the various skills of journal writing, prayer, meditation, healing circles, and

other spiritually healing ceremonies. When I have used various substances such as alcohol, chocolate, sugar, nicotine, caffeine and food as a way of dealing with my fears, I have been choosing to connect with my internalized oppression. Choosing again means that I am willing to engage in my journey of self-exploration to hear my authentic voice. It means that I am willing to engage with and explore my stuckness.

13 March 3, 1997 Wild-writing, "Stuck - Again"

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

My process of empowerment moves slowly. In each of these selected wild-writings another increment of my empowerment process has been unveiled. This next writing, edited for length, has been included as a reminder that the process is not linear. Once again I am stuck. However, I move more quickly, and with greater ease, from my stuck place. My final statement reveals an awareness that I had become unstuck with my sense of humour intact. My process involves my moving from an internal place of "not being able to write", to, "actually doing the writing".

(ii) Actual wild-writing

I seem to have *lost my motivation to write. I feel down.* What is this about? I only need to write because it feels empowering, it unsticks me, helps me clarify my thoughts. I don't have to expect anything from my writing - just that I will write. What kind of expectations do I have of myself? that I will 'do it right' and because I don't know what 'right' looks like, I am stuck. Just for this moment I shall *choose to stay stuck.* I will write again later.

Later Wild-writing *Need to move out of this place, feel stuck.*  
*What are the attributes of empowerment?* respect, power-with,

autonomy, interdependence, authenticity, knowledge - information,  
 choice - having the ability, freedom and knowledge to choose, to  
 think one's thoughts, see what one sees, hear what one hears, feel  
 what one feels, smell what one smells, like what one likes, live the  
 way one chooses, choose one's own friends *Hmmmm I guess I  
 got unstuck*

## A The Four Sub-Process

### (a) Mastering

My experience of an internal block interferes with the mastery of my writing  
 (“seem to have lost my motivation to write I feel down”) My curious inquiry (“what  
 kind of expectations do I have of myself”) includes the acknowledgment of my  
 underlying expectations that are perhaps causing my feelings that interfere with my  
 ability to master the task of writing My internal authentic voice masters the task of  
 asking “What are the aspects of empowerment?”, utilizing a question as a tool to  
 become unstuck This shows that I have at least one skill to assist me in mastering the  
 process of becoming unstuck It illustrates my ability to master the task of making  
 empowering choices

This writing also shows how I am mastering the task of becoming more accepting  
 of my process It shows that being “stuck” is okay too, and that I can help myself  
 move from that stuck place when I listen to my encouraging internal voices

(b) Hearing Internal Voices

I acknowledge that “I seem to have lost my motivation to write” and feel “downed” This statement raises my conscious awareness that my dis-empowered belief system is operating, that “stuck” is back My empowered belief system encourages me to stay with my stuckness for a period of time I become unstuck by asking a focusing question (“What are the attributes of empowerment”) My authentic voice is heard asking the focusing question and encouraging me “to write because it feels empowering” My feelings of being stuck dissipate Once again I have identified and shifted my locus of control

(c) Identifying Locus Of Control

My dis-empowering belief system (“expectation that I will ‘do it right’”) creates my writer’s block (“stuck”) I shift to my internal authority by asking the empowering question that results in a discussion about some attributes of empowerment

As a counsellor, as woman, and as a person, I continue to look to the external authority for knowledge and guidance Sometimes I forget to balance the knowledge and guidance I receive from the external influence with my internal knowings Sometimes I am blocked from my internal knowings by my dis-empowering belief system I can become stuck, or stay stuck, in overvaluing the external authority and undervaluing my internal authority When I shift this block, I can rely on my own inner knowing to let me know when I am empowered as a counsellor, as a woman and as a person I can develop my own informed and developing list of attributes that

empower me I can engage in activities that encourage me to achieve a balance between the knowledge and guidance from the internal and external authority Activities such as keeping a daily list of things I feel grateful for, things I have accomplished, successes, daily journaling, talking with helpful others, reading helpful books, prayer and meditation enable me to create and maintain a strong internal connection with my internal locus of control and my Higher Power A strong internal connection to my internal locus of control and Higher Power increases my awareness of my options and enables me to make self-enhancing choices

(d) Choosing

I make choices to do the writing, to explore what my stuckness is about, to stay stuck and to become unstuck Making choice, my need to exercise my choices in a variety of ways, is discussed in this writing It also reveals my process of making choices I make choices about how I see, feel, hear, think, and perceive Sometimes I forget the extent of my choices When I raise my awareness of my choices on all levels, I become increasingly empowered My choice to accept and stay with my feelings of dis-empowerment (“Just for this moment I shall choose to stay stuck”), could be seen as an empowering action It is my choice that empowers me to stay in my feelings of dis-empowerment, empowers me to stay in my process, to stay stuck It is an empowering action if I choose to stay stuck in an effort to find out what my stuckness can tell me, rather than using some mood altering substance or action to alter my stuck feelings It is an empowering action to choose to stay stuck in an effort

to find out what I am thinking Acknowledging that “I am the thinker of my thoughts” is part of my process

14 March 20, 1997 Wild-writing “I Am The Thinker Of My Thoughts”

(i) Introduction to the wild-writing

While this writing, edited for length, once again conveys my ability to become stuck, it also imparts my ability to become unstuck with greater ease and clarity It reveals the progress in my ability to move through my stuckness My increased ability to move past my stuck places is due in part to my acceptance of the notion that I have choice about, and am responsible for, the thoughts I think

(ii) Actual wild-writing

I can hear some *critic in my head berating me* for what I have done and not done *Enough already Critical thoughts are dis-empowering Let them dissipate into the air as I refocus on empowerment Choice* - I have a choice about how/what I think and how I act *I am the thinker of my thoughts*

What do folks need from their mentors to feel empowered? Encouragement, freedom to act and discuss the action in a supportive, encouraging, authentic manner, stimulation of one's own thoughts, beliefs, values in a way that facilitates a development of self-identity and one's own voice, knowledge /information that acknowledges that they already have their own valuable knowledge and information and encouragement to become aware of their own information and be open to change what they think they know - flexibility, *the right and responsibility to change one's mind* A supportive structured learning environment, a structure to help focus and keep the learning focused, a structure flexible enough to go with the flow of the learning

## A The Four Sub-Processes

### (a) Mastering

Mastering the task of doing the wild-writing on this day results in mastering the task of identifying an internal conflict, resolving the conflict and mastering the task of refocusing this writing. Mastering the task of silencing my critical self-talk (“Enough already”), and of choosing to refocus my writing, enables me to gain confidence in my continued ability to transform my critical self-talk.

My mastering the skill of asking a focusing question (“What do folks need from their mentors to feel empowered?”) results in my exploration of specific ideas. This question results in my creation of an incomplete list of ideas or concepts (“encouragement freedom to act stimulation knowledge flexibility”) that might be helpful for mentors to develop and integrate into empowering behaviours. As I gain mastery in the skills of hearing my internal voices, I can move more quickly through my unresolved issues, resolving them and connecting to my internal wisdom and authority. This writing is essentially about mastering the task of hearing my internal voices.

### (b) Hearing Internal Voices

Critical self-talk is fueled by unresolved issues of my dis-empowering belief system, my internalized oppression and will not go away without some ongoing encouragement from the voices of my empowered belief system. I can dis-empower

my internalized oppression, by identifying when it is operating, hearing it, deciding how much time to give it, transforming it and letting it go

My dis-empowering belief system voices my self-negating thoughts (“berating me”) My empowering belief system responds, setting an internal boundary, stating “enough already” It voices my self-enhancing refocusing question (“What do folks need ”) This refocusing question facilitates the ensuing discussion about the importance of developing my voice and internal wisdom, “stimulation of one’s thoughts, beliefs development of self-identity one’s own voice knowledge” Once again my writing both talks about the concepts important to the process and engages in my process

This writing exhibits my ongoing process of developing my authentic voice and connection to my internal wisdom and authority

### (c) Identifying Locus Of Control

Critical self-talk identifies my locus of control as external My ongoing practice of choosing to listen to my self-enhancing messages facilitates my expedient shift from my dis-empowering, internalized oppression to my internal authority, a shift in my locus of control My voice for my empowering belief system, my internal wisdom begins to express itself This writing suggests that if I am connected to my internal authority, then I am “open to change [and have] the right and responsibility to change [my] mind” I have the right and responsibility to choose

(d) Choosing

The concept of my having choice (“ I have a choice”) and making my choice (“Enough already”) is discussed in this writing. It reveals my choices to let go of my internalized oppression and to ask a question to refocus me on empowerment. This is essentially my choice to shift my internal experience, my choice to claim my personal power and responsibility (“I have a choice about how/ what I think and how I act”)

Claiming my responsibility and ability to make my choices involves my willingness to let go of my victimhood, my internalized oppression, my dis-empowering beliefs. Choosing to claim my power requires that I give up the notion that I am powerless, let go of martyrdom, and take responsibility for my thoughts, feelings and actions.

As a mentor, I take personal responsibility when I encourage, support, stimulate, and value the work of the other. If I fail to do this, I act in dis-empowering ways.

End Of Wild-Writings

This glimpse of my “wild ride” is over. My ability to engage in my process of writing, unhampered by external rules and the academic literature, was a necessary part of my empowerment process. Without it there would not have been a finished product. This process of doing the wild-writing was my first step toward the doing of this research. Once I was engaged in the process of wild-writing, it was time to think about how to proceed with this research project. It was time to find out what the papermites have been eager to show me as they introduced me to the chorus of voices in the academic literature. The voices that helped me define, describe, and decide on

my choice of research method. It was time to write the first two chapters of this paper before engaging in the analysis of the wild-writings. Upon completion of the first two chapters I began the ongoing analysis of the wild-writings. Eventually it was time to seek out and review the chorus of voices in the academic literature that would add to the following discussion about empowerment.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Literature Review Integrating With The Chorus Of Voices In The Academic

#### Literature

#### Introduction

The academic literature review honours the voices of others who have gone before, it symbolizes external wisdom and influence. It can add different dimensions, aspects and elements to the discussion, giving support to my voice or challenging my findings. This research project required that I hear my own voice and wisdom before interacting with the voices of others. In order to honour, validate and be true to the essence of this work, I have placed the literature review after my own writings, integrating the chorus of voices with my own wisdom and experience.

Academic research on empowerment has focused on several areas: identifying psychological elements of the empowerment process (Gutierrez, 1990, Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye, 1995, Kieffer, 1984, Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988), developing and testing empowering interventions (Florin & Wandersman, 1990, Serrano-Garcia, 1984, Simmons & Parsons, 1983), studying groups of empowered individuals (Kieffer, 1984, Florin & Wandersman, 1990, Pretsby, Wandersman, Florin, Rich & Chavis, 1990, Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988), and exploring how empowerment theory and practice come together (Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye, 1995, Gutierrez, Parsons, & Cox, 1998, Zimmerman, 1990b). Some researchers are looking at the individual's experience of becoming empowered. Sawatsky, Jevne & Clark (1994) explored the experiential process of becoming empowered with a group

of counsellor trainees Shields (1995) has researched women's experience of empowerment

A broad definition of empowerment includes the notion of empowering people to have choice and influence on individual, community and political levels This chapter integrates the wisdom of my wild-writings with a review of the academic literature, the chorus of voices who have preceded mine The chorus of voices that validate, challenge, honour and provide a larger, broader, deeper, fuller picture of the concept of empowerment It includes (a) various definitions of empowerment, (b) different aspects, constructs, theory and concepts of psychological and individual empowerment, (c) individual behavioural constructs that influence empowerment, and (d) several descriptions of the process of empowerment

### Defining Empowerment

Some authors have suggested that empowerment refers to a groups ability to increase political power (Fagan, 1979) Others suggest that it is an individual's feelings of increased power and ability to take action without any structural changes in their environment (Pernell, 1985, Pinderhughes, 1983, Simmons & Parsons, 1983) Many others are exploring the ways that these two approaches interact (Gutierrez, 1990, Rappaport, 1985, 1986, Zimmerman, 1990b, Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988)

Academic literature speaks to the notion of psychological empowerment as a process of change which occurs on individual, interpersonal and political levels working together to support individuals increasing ability to control their own lives This empowerment process includes actions that work to empower those who are

oppressed by various factors. The empowerment process works toward individuals, and groups, developing a sense of their own personal power, their ability to influence other individuals and groups, and to work with others to change social structures (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, Gutierrez, 1990, Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye, 1995, Gutierrez, Parsons & Cox, 1998, Hall, 1992, Keiffer, 1984, Prilleltensky, 1994, Rappaport, 1981, 1985, 1987, Zimmerman, 1988, 1990a, Zimmerman, Israel, Schultz & Checkoway, 1992, Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). My own thoughts and writings support the findings of the above writers. Empowerment is having the ability to communicate with the rest of the world, “knowing that one has personal influence and control over what happens in the world” (Wild-writing, January 21, p 54). It is about the “ability to live one’s life authentically and to make personal choices that empower” (Wild-writing, January 18, p 48), the ability to share “power with rather than power over” (Wild-writing, January 30, p 65), the ability to have one’s own authority, facilitating others to have their own authority to [question] authority” (Wild-writing, February 21, p 81). The notion of empowerment includes the concepts of personal power, internal authority, the ability to make empowering, authentic choices, to influence other individuals and groups, to work in various ways to change social structures, thereby empowering other individuals, oppressed groups and communities.

Some researchers write about policies, strategies and actions that intervene with an intention to increase the ability of individuals to have a greater degree of control over their lives (Gutierrez, 1990, Gutierrez, Delois, & GlenMaye, 1995, Gutierrez,

Parsons & Cox, 1998, Rappaport, 1981, 1986, 1987, Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988) This concept of empowerment speaks to both an “individual determination over one's own life and democratic participation in the life of one's community” (Rappaport, 1987, p 129) Empowerment conveys both an attention and concern with political power, legal rights, and social influence, as well as, an individual's psychological sense of personal control A multilevel construct, it applies to neighbourhoods, organizations and individual citizens It is also a psychological, spiritual, organizational, sociological, political and economic construct Empowerment implies the study of people in context, and refers to “becoming able, or allowed to do some unspecified thing” (Rappaport, 1987, p 129) “Our interests in racial and economic justice, in legal rights as well as human needs, in health care and educational justice, in competence as well as in a sense of community are all captured by the idea of empowerment” (Rappaport, 1987,p 130) Zimmerman (1988) states “Empowerment is a construct that links individual strengths and competencies, natural helping systems, and proactive behaviors to matters of social policy and social change It is thought to be a process by which individuals gain mastery or control over their lives and democratic participation in the life of their community” (p 726) It is culturally defined and involves an interaction between individuals and the context within which they reside

Hall (1992) refers to the concept of empowerment as

“the invitation to live fully and to become the person one wants to be

Choosing to be one's real self and choosing to develop one's

potential are synonymous with the choice to be empowered  
Empowerment has many phases, and choosing actions that  
constructively build one's resources is one aspect of an overall  
empowerment that must be continuous in order to be effective The  
choice to be empowered implies the choice to act constructively and  
cooperatively with others” (p 23)

My wild-writings talk about the importance of responsible choice, power-with  
others, political integrity, personal internal authority, the ability to accomplish tasks,  
becoming authentic, developing personal potential and voice They also reveal a part  
of one woman's process of empowerment The choice to become empowered speaks  
to the choice to become internally empowered and connected to internal authority in  
spite of external influences

People experience their lives within the context of their community In this study,  
I engaged in a series of writings, sparked by my interactions with the written  
experiences of counsellor trainees The counsellor trainees had kept a personal  
journal within the context of their university counsellor training Empowerment  
includes the concept of mastering, becoming able to do a thing, competence As a  
researcher in this study, I am involved in mastering specific research skills I am  
becoming able and competent to utilize research skills and techniques in order to  
become able to write this thesis As a counsellor trainee, I am becoming increasingly  
able to listen and respond in helpful and empowering ways As a woman I am  
becoming increasingly more able to make responsible choices, value personal

knowledge, and connect with my internal authority and voice, in order to live my life in an increasingly authentic and empowered manner

Empowerment has been discussed above as the ability to have choice in the details of one's life, to have a greater degree of control in one's life, to have a sense of internal authority and ability to make things happen in the community. As a researcher, I exercise choice around areas of interest, research methodology, style, content, and how much time I devote to the research. As a counsellor, I exercise choice around my counselling theory and practice. As an individual, I exercise choice by setting attainable goals, choosing which belief system I will honour, who I will interact with, and which rules I will follow. The link between personal competence and willingness to take action and act constructively with others speaks to the choice to utilize my growing skills to take action in both my personal and professional life. Empowerment includes the concept of choosing to become all that I can be, to develop my full potential, and to be my full and real self in all my complexities. The wild-writings show my process of empowerment involving the four sub-processes of mastering, identifying locus of control, hearing internal voices, and choosing to develop my full potential and self.

Having discussed some possible definitions of empowerment, it is time to turn to the psychological concepts of empowerment.

### Psychological Concepts of Empowerment

The psychological concept of empowerment is multi-faceted, it includes cognitive, personality and motivational aspects. Psychological empowerment can be thought of as “the connection between a sense of personal competence, a desire for, and a willingness to take action in the public domain” (Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988, p 725). “Empowerment is about having the ability to accomplish tasks” (Wild-writing, January 4, p 46), and to rely on our “own authority rather than safely following the rules that someone else has developed. We question authority. We sometimes mindfully choose to follow the rules and sometimes we mindfully choose not to” (Wild-writing, February 21, p 81). Cognitive aspects are reflected in Bandura’s (1977, 1982, 1986) self-efficacy theory which suggests that one’s expectations of one’s abilities and capabilities have an effect on the outcome. For Bandura (1986), empowerment refers to the process that enhances an individual’s self-efficacy belief. Empowerment is about having confidence in one’s ability, it is being “stuck for a moment and trusting in the process enough to know that one can become unstuck” (Wild-writing, February 14, p 73).

The notion of internal /external locus of control reflects the personality constructs of personal power (Bandura, 1986, McWhirter, 1991, Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992). Internal locus of control refers to the notion that an individual relies more on their internal processes, an internal authority or personal agency, when making choices in life. External locus of control refers to the notion that an individual relies more on outside influences when making personal decisions. My process of resolving issues

around identifying and shifting my locus of control dominate the wild-writings  
 Clearly the notion of relying on an internal authority when making choices is an  
 important part of my empowerment process

External efficacy refers to the belief that political systems respond to efforts to  
 change them Internal efficacy refers to the belief that individuals have the necessary  
 skills to influence and change the political systems (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988)  
 An individual “living in a way that mindfully breaks the rules that dis-empower”, and  
 exercises the ability to question authority (Wild-writing, February 21, p 82) requires  
 external and internal efficacy in order to feel empowered to take action

Psychological empowerment includes a sense of personal competence and  
 connection to others It includes self-efficacy, internal authority and a need for self-  
 determination In the next section the focus will be on concepts that empower  
 individuals

### Individual Empowerment

Linking individual empowerment to the context in which the individual resides,  
 Prilleltensky (1994) states that "attempts to increase perceptions of control will have  
 different effects depending on whether the individuals live under relatively empowering  
 or disempowering conditions" (p 369) Individuals experience different perceptions of  
 control as well as different degrees of empowering structures, rules, and conditions  
 The distractions and self-negating internalized rules that were revealed in some of my  
 wild-writings exemplify the results of my experience of dis-empowering conditions

However, my ability to eventually overcome the distractions and self-negating rules suggests that I have also experienced empowering conditions. For example, when I sat down to do my first wild-writing, I was stuck, and yet I was involved in my process of becoming unstuck. I was committed to doing the writing no matter what it took. In order to make the choice to accomplish this task, I needed to have had some experience in my life where I had successfully accomplished a difficult task. I needed to have experienced helpful external influences and empowering conditions. The re-writing research class was an empowering environmental condition, a helpful external influence which provided supportive information, modeled skills, and generally acted as a catalyst in my empowerment process of writing from a place of internal authority.

Issues of control and empowerment at the individual level suggest that task mastery and control experiences at an early age result in a long-lasting impact upon an individual's ability to feel and act empowered (Chess & Thomas, 1984, Rolf, Masten, Cicchetti, Neuchterlein, & Weintraub, 1990). Cowen (1991) states that the "rooting of life competencies may be the single most important precondition for the young child's development of an early phenomenological sense of empowerment and having control over one's fate" (p 406). The literature suggests that the development of psychosocial resilience is directly related to a sense of personal mastery (Garmezy, 1984, Rutter, 1987, Seligman, 1990, Zimmerman, 1990a). "I can do it. Empowerment is mastery, knowing one has personal influence and control over what happens in our world. It is about folks having confidence in their abilities" (Wild-writing, January 21, 1997, p 54).

Seligman (1990) suggests that an 'optimistic explanatory style' increases an individual's ability to take assertive action in the face of adversities. These individuals explain challenging events in their lives in terms of specific, external and temporary causes. He also suggests that the opposite is true. Those who attribute failure to "personal, permanent and pervasive" (p 135) conditions are less likely to take action. If the conditions of children's life changes and they succeed in their ability to experience personal control, to exercise free will and to have choice in their life, children learn that they have personal power to act in their own interests. If not, the seeds of hopelessness are planted and they will need to experience events that facilitate the development of free will or agency (Seligman, 1990)

Prilleltensky (1994) suggests that "experiences of control act as buffers against future adversities" (p 364). Perceptions of control contribute to people's health, motor and intellectual performance, emotional well-being, capacity to make desired behavioural changes, and ability to cope with stress (Lord & Farlow, 1990). The paradox of being competent and able to gather information, to accomplish tasks, and to make choices in one moment, and being frozen in a state of learned helplessness in the next, is revealed in my writings. This paradox repeats itself many times throughout the writings. For example, in the first wild-writing on January 3, 1997, a deep level of conditioning interferes with my ability to act in my own best interests. I am stuck, clearly disconnected from my empowering belief system. And yet, paradoxically, it is my empowering belief system that encourages me to write. My empowering belief system that is the energy behind my ability to master the writing down of the dis-

empowering internal and external distractions. The act of doing the writing strengthens my connection to my empowering belief system, to my internal authority.

According to Hall (1992), individual empowerment is directly related to one's awareness of one's choices in any situation, at any time. The most important choice is the choice to be fully one's self. The choice to be fully one's self "necessitates letting go of false images and the effort to please other people. Being a true and real self means that all hypocrisies must go, only the facts of who a woman is can remain" (Hall, 1992, p 23). While Hall is talking about women, I believe these ideas hold true for all people who want to become empowered. Hall talks about the need to clarify beliefs and values, the need to make a deliberate effort to know one's self.

"Being a self necessitates being sufficiently free neither to conform to nor rebel against others' expectations. Empowerment is synonymous with the growth and maturation of self. The more women remain centered in self, the more effectively they will be able to take charge of their lives in all situations. When a woman acts from her true and real self, her behavior is much more effective than when she has no clear source of her actions. To the extent that a woman is empowered, that woman will have a strong self. Self is the base from which all her actions flow, and the source of her deepest and most meaningful values" (Hall, 1992, p 24).

The wild-writings demonstrate a deliberate effort to know my self. "We have different bags full of life events that have shaped our thoughts, beliefs, and actions, we have

different traumas that we have made meaning from, and of, and that contribute to the formation of our thoughts, beliefs, values, and theories. We need to explore this in an effort to uncover, discover, recover who we are. With acceptance (what is-is, what was-was) of our baggage, we can learn what we need to learn and transform the rest. We can construct ideas, values, beliefs, and theories that empower us” (Wild-writing, February 5, 1997, p 70). This wild-writing contains a discussion about compassionate self-exploration and is a part of my ongoing process of becoming “sufficiently free neither to conform to nor rebel against other’s expectations” (Hall, 1992, p 24).

Attributes that Hall (1992) directly relates to empowerment include an individual’s perceptions of control, psychosocial resilience, willingness to clarify beliefs and values, and the willingness to act from one’s own authentic self. These aspects of empowerment are discussed in the wild-writings. The wild-writing on February 14, 1997, suggests that it is important to become increasingly more self-aware and grounded in my own authority as it exhibits a part of my process of becoming increasingly self-aware and grounded in my own internal authority.

Another aspect of empowerment discussed in the wild-writings is the notion of accepting “who we are with compassion” (Wild-writing, February 5, 1997, p 70) and the ability to question authority and to act from a place of individual integrity “relying on one’s own authority. accepting responsibility for our actions. questioning authority - on whose authority were these rules made. and to make my own choices, [choosing] where to spend [my] energy” (Wild-writing, February 21, 1997, p 81). Zimmerman and Rappaport (1988), suggest that the individual experience of

empowerment is expected to include a combination of self-acceptance and self-confidence, social and political understanding, and the ability to play an “assertive role in controlling resources and decisions in one's community" (p 726) My ability to accept personal responsibility, to gather knowledge, to question authority, and to make choices based on my internal knowledge and authority increases and facilitates my ability to influence decisions that impact my community

The empowerment of individuals is a relational and motivational construct Burke (1986) speaks to the power dynamics within a society/ community/ institution, suggesting that to empower implies the delegating of authority or granting of power An individual's relationship to others has an influence upon his or her sense of empowerment The need to have empowering external influences to respond in helpful, enhancing ways is argued in my wild-writings and the result of experiencing the helpful external influences is shown “I wanted to be encouraged to find my own voice” (Wild-writing, February 14, 1997, p 73), to have mentors who responded in an “encouraging, authentic manner” stimulating the development of my “own thoughts, beliefs, values in a way that facilitates “the development of my own identity and voice” (Wild-writing, March 20, 1997, p 93)

Empowerment as a motivational construct speaks to the notion that individuals have a intrinsic need for self-determination or power, and are frustrated when that power need is not met (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, Deci, 1975, Prilleltensky, 1994) The wild-writings disclose my drive to connect to my personal power and my feelings of frustration when my need to connect with my personal power is thwarted “I have

struggled for years to figure out how to attain personal authority, personal agency and to hear myself first. I found the process frustrating” (Wild-writing, February 14, 1997, p 73) “I have struggled to rely on my own internal authority and wisdom” (Wild-writing, February 26, p 86) Individuals are motivated to meet the need for personal power. This occurs when individuals perceive that they can cope with the social and physical demands of the environment. (Conger & Kanungo, 1988) Bandura (1977, 1982, 1986) refers to this as a belief in personal self-efficacy, a belief in one’s ability to act and accomplish the task.

Conger & Kanungo (1988) suggest that any technique or strategy that fosters, encourages and strengthens this self-efficacy belief will result in individuals’ feeling more empowered. It follows that any strategy that weakens the individuals’ self-efficacy belief will increase the individual’s feelings of powerlessness. My personal belief in my ability to accomplish tasks is revealed, along with the part of me who doubted that I had anything to say. “I feel stumped by my thoughts. I am in danger of not having a coherent thought in my head. So type the incoherent thoughts empowerment is allowing and encouraging one’s thoughts to flow onto the page” (Wild-writing, January 18, 1997, p 48) This writing accomplished the task of meeting my ten-minute writing goal, of hearing my internal authority urging me to keep writing, of documenting the doubt of my dis-empowering belief system and moving past it. It met my need to claim personal power. My belief in my ability, my self-determination, and my need to claim personal power were driving forces empowering

me to accomplish the small tasks, as well as the larger task of doing, and completing, this research project

Bandura (1986) states that the expectation that one's effort will result in a desired level of performance, and that one's performance will produce desired outcomes, affect an individual's motivation to increase her/his effort. He refers to the former as the self-efficacy expectation and the latter as the outcome expectation. Empowered individuals develop a 'can do' attitude, a sense of personal mastery. Empowered individuals have strengthened their self-efficacy expectation, however, outcome expectations may not have changed (Bandura, 1977, 1982, 1986). On one hand, my wild-writings reveal a strong 'can do' attitude and ability. On the other, they communicate the struggle to act from a place of internal authority and to give voice to my authentic thoughts and feelings. The writings also show my process of resolving the internal conflict in favour of my personal agency. "I seem to have lost my motivation to write. I feel downed. What is this about? I only need to write because it feels empowering, it unsticks me, helps me clarify my thoughts. Just for this moment I shall choose to stay stuck. later need to move out of this place, feel stuck. What are the attributes of empowerment? respect, power-with, autonomy." (Wild-writing, March 3, 1997, p 89)

Different elements of individual empowerment have been discussed. It has been suggested that the empowerment of individuals is contextual. Empowerment involves a willingness to know oneself, to clarify beliefs and values, to choose to develop one's "real" self and full potential as a individual, to take action, and to act with others. The

wild-writings disclose the paradox of my own empowerment process. The complexity of my conditioning and ability to act in my own best interests from a place of internal authority is also unveiled. The next section will explore individual behavioural constructs that influence empowerment.

#### Individual behavioural constructs that influence empowerment

Four sources of empowerment practices for individuals were identified by Bandura (1977,1986) – enactive attainment, vicarious experience, verbal persuasion, and emotional arousal state. Enactive attainment is about one’s mastery experience. When doing a task, initial success experiences, along with skills training, increase one’s internal feelings of competence (Bandura, 1977, 1986, Conger & Kanungo, 1988).

Vicarious experience refers to observing similar others doing the task successfully. The effects of modeling, of observing similar others doing any task, can significantly impact efficacy expectation (Bandura, 1977, 1986, Conger & Kanungo, 1988). My wild-writings exhibit the empowering effects of having the skill of wild-writing modeled by a professor in a university classroom.

Verbal persuasion can be defined as words of encouragement. According to Bandura (1986), "people who are persuaded verbally that they possess the capabilities to master given tasks are likely to mobilize greater sustained effort" (p 400). The concept and effects of self-encouragement are considered in my wild-writing on January 18, 1997, “type the incoherent thoughts – empowerment is allowing and

encouraging one's thoughts to flow onto the page and not interrupting or judging them" (p 48)

Emotional arousal state refers to the notion that self-efficacy expectations can be influenced by intense emotions such as depression, fear, anxiety, joy, excitement, confidence, etc. Strong aversive emotional arousal can lessen feelings of competence, while feelings such as excitement and confidence can increase competence (Bandura, 1977, 1986, Conger & Kanungo, 1988). My feelings of excitement about accomplishing a task are exposed in my wild-writing on January 21, 1997 as I exclaim in celebration that "I CAN do it" (p 54). This emotional excitement adds to my feelings of empowerment and encourages me to keep doing it. An example of aversive emotional arousal occurs in my wild-writing on March 3, 1997 when I am once again stuck and "have lost my motivation to write. I feel down" (p 89).

The manner in which people judge their capabilities and competence mediates the relationship between knowledge and action (Bandura, 1982, 1986). If a person engages in self-negating or self-defeating thoughts, their ability to behave optimally is defeated. If a person thinks in a self-affirming, self-enhancing manner, they increase their sense of self-efficacy and move toward optimal behaviour. As Bandura states "some uncertainty has preparatory benefits. Uncertainty about one's ability to complete the task is different than fundamental doubts about one's abilities to acquire the skills and knowledge to successfully complete the task (Bandura, 1982, 1986, Conger & Kanungo, 1988). My wild writings propose that "Information is empowering. If one knows how to do something, one is empowered by that

knowledge, whether or not one actually does the thing” (Wild-writing, January 4, 1997, p 46) The overall process revealed in the writings includes my identification of some of my self-negating or self-defeating thoughts, “I hear some critic in my head berating me for what I have done and not done” (p 92) and exercising personal choice about “how/ what I think and how I act” (Wild-writing, March 20, 1997, p 93)

My emotional reactions, judgments, and thought patterns, both during the actual doing of the task of wild-writing, and the anticipation of the task, impact upon my ability to confidently and competently proceed Several of the wild-writings represent this process as I experience distress as a result of my self-negating thoughts Bandura suggests that individuals impair their own performance with thoughts and judgments that dwell upon personal deficiencies, either real or imagined, past or present Self-negating thoughts and judgments dwelling on the potential difficulties, imagining them larger, more imposing than reality and thinking about ways one is not proficient, create stress This self-negating thought pattern and stress results in a concern over mistakes and failures rather than on developing creative ways on how best to proceed On the other hand, people who have “a strong sense of efficacy deploy their attention and effort to the demands of the situation and are spurred to greater effort by obstacles” (Bandura, 1982, p 123) Increases in coping efficacy are most effectively attained through mastery An individual’s mastery of a task exceeds emotive, persuasive, and vicarious influences in creating vigorous percepts of self-efficacy” (Bandura, 1982, 1986, Congo & Kanungo, 1988) My ability to master the task of writing, of making my computer work, and of resolving personal issues, as described in my wild-writings,

support this notion. People who lack confidence in their own personal power and abilities need external support. They also need to make a personal commitment to their process. Making a commitment to develop skills and tools for self-supportive, self-affirming behaviours and personal self-development (Bandura, 1982, 1986) increases confidence. Supportive external influences made it possible for me to master the many tasks involved in accomplishing the completion of this project in an personally authentic manner. Supportive external influences enhance my ability to engage in my process of empowerment. The next section will discuss the process of empowerment.

### Process of Empowerment

In describing a circular model of empowerment, Prilleltensky (1994) emphasizes main elements of empowerment highlighted in the literature. These elements were identified as agents/stakeholders, processes and values. Agents/stakeholders refers to the individuals, groups and communities involved. Processes speaks to the when, where and how of empowerment. The values of empowerment are guided by, and concerned with three principal moral values: self-determination, distributive justice, and collaborative and democratic participation. Self-determination pertains to the individual's ability to make desired changes in one's life with ease and confidence (Olsen, 1978, Rappaport, 1981, 1986, 1987, Rawls, 1972). Distributive justice speaks to the negotiation of fair allocation of resources "where advocacy, social and political action are called for" (Prilleltensky, 1994, p 360). Collaborative and democratic

participation refers to the idea that individuals impacted by decisions made on their behalf need to be part of that decision making process (Prilleltensky, 1994, Rappaport, 1981, 1986, 1987)

The wild-writings allude to elements of empowerment as identified by Prilleltensky. Elements such as the influence of culture, self-determination, and collaborative and democratic participation within one's community. While the focus in the wild-writing is on individual empowerment, the impact of culture is revealed, along with the importance of interdependence, power with others. "I notice that this program automatically changes my I to I. What if I want it to be small. Has my choice been taken away by this computer. Like my choice to set my own priorities has been taken away by my conditioning" (Wild-writing, January 3, 1997, p 41). This writing acts as a metaphor for the impact of culture. The culture has created technology that is sometimes experienced as dis-empowering. The culture conditions us in many ways, some of which we can experience as dis-empowering. Having the ability to gather information about our environment, including technology, facilitates our ability to make empowering choices. The notion of questioning the authority of the rules of our culture could be seen as part of the process of my collaborative and democratic participation in my community. "We think about the rules and decide for ourselves. Sometimes we mindfully follow the rules [of our society] and sometimes we mindfully choose not to. We need to question authority. Who benefits from these rules? Does the rule enhance my life and the lives of others?" (Wild-writing, February 21, 1997, p 81). Self-determination, the ability to make choices that impact

favourably on my life, along with an exploration of personal values, “We need to be able to self-reflect upon who we are and decide if that works for us, what works and what we would like to change” (Wild-writing, February 5, 1997, p 69) impact on our ability to interact with our culture and to question authority

Gutierrez (1990) conceptualized the empowerment change process as consisting of at least four sub-processes increasing self-efficacy, developing a critical consciousness, developing skills, and involvement with similar others

The first sub-process of change involves increasing self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982) Much of the literature refers to self-efficacy beliefs However, other authors describe similar changes in terms such as developing a sense of personal strength or power, increasing an individual’s ability to act, strengthening ego functioning, developing client initiative, developing a sense of mastery (Garvin, 1985, Gutierrez, 1990, Pinderhughes, 1989, Zimmerman, 1990a) My wild-writings disclose my process of developing an increased sense of self-efficacy, an increased sense of my personal power, an increased sense of my ability to act, to write, to voice my authentic opinions, and an increased sense of my ability to master a task For example “I can hear some critic in my head berating me for what I have done and not done Enough already Critical thoughts are dis-empowering Let them dissipate into the air as I refocus on empowerment Choice - I have choice about how/ what I think and how I act I am the thinker of my thoughts” (Wild-writing, March 20, 1997, p 92)

The second sub-process of change involves developing a critical consciousness This refers to the ongoing, growing understanding of how group and individual

experiences are affected by political structures (Friere, 1973, Gutierrez, 1990, Kieffer, 1984) A sense of personal responsibility, reduction of self-blame and identifying with similar others are three components of critical consciousness The effects of political structures is represented in my wild-writings in ways that my past experiences have been influenced by the political structures of my schooling and environment My wild-writings both illustrate the importance of the components of developing critical consciousness and record my process of naming some of the events of the past without self-blame, while taking responsibility for my choices and actions “Unresolved issues too often I have relied more on outside influences when making personal choices I hear the feedback from outside in a mindful way and hear [my] own internal wisdom in order to make responsible, respectful empowered choices about [my] life, in order to treat [my]self and others with respect” (Wild-writing, January 26, 1997, p 57)

Developing skills is the third sub-process of Gutierrez’ description of the empowerment process The development of skilled individuals is an important link in the process of empowerment on all levels Individuals who participate in community groups which facilitate and encourage the development of skills are developing their own personal resources These resources enable them to be more powerful on individual, interpersonal, or political levels (Gutierrez, 1990, Gutierrez, DeLois, GlenMaye, 1995, Gutierrez, Parsons, & Cox, 1998, Florin & Wandersman, 1990, Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988, Pretsby, et al, 1990) Participating in the community of graduate school, and exploring my process of doing research and writing a thesis,

has certainly helped me develop my own personal resources, increasing my personal empowerment on all levels

Involvement with similar others is the fourth and final sub-process in Gutierrez' concept of the empowerment change process. Volunteer organizations, self-help groups and other groups of people who get together to provide mutual aid, concrete assistance and /or emotional support, facilitate the empowerment of both the individuals within these groups and of the groups themselves. This contact with others sharing a similar challenge, status, political focus, interest, and/or other characteristic can occur in a formal or informal setting and is most useful when a focus on mutual assistance and support is present (Chessler & Chesney, 1988, Garvin, 1985, Gutierrez, 1990, Gutierrez, DeLois, GlenMaye, 1995, Gutierrez, Parsons, & Cox, 1998, Kieffer, 1984, Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988). While it was not discussed specifically in the wild-writings, my involvement with support groups of various types has been an integral part of my empowerment process. My ability to seek mutually supportive groups of people to interact with supports my individual decisions to make self-enhancing and mutually respectful choices.

The process of empowerment does not occur in a linear series of stages. The sub-processes of empowerment often occur simultaneously, facilitating the growth and progress of each sub-process. For example feelings of self-worth are enhanced as skills are developed, critical consciousness is increased with interactions with similar others. Personal experience, the counsellor trainee journals, my own writings and the academic literature suggest that empowerment is not an end product, or a specific

state, it is a process. It is a way of interacting with the world, a lifelong growth and change process (Friere, 1973, Gutierrez, 1990, Gutierrez, DeLois, & GlenMaye, 1995, Kieffer, 1984, Rappaport, 1987, Zimmerman, 1990b). My personal empowerment as revealed in the wild-writings speaks to the interactiveness of different sub-processes. I identify the mastering of a task, hearing my internal voices, identifying my locus of control and making responsible choices as four key and interactive sub-processes of my personal empowerment process.

Sheilds (1995) suggests that the empowerment process is “multifaceted”. She describes three themes identified by the women in her study: “development of an internal sense of self, the ability to take action based on [the] internal sense of self, and a salient theme of connectedness” (p. 15).

1. The development of an internal sense of self refers to a core sense of self and has four basic components: “claiming pieces of [personal] identity, the development of self-value, the development of self-acceptance and the development of trust in terms of self-knowledge” (Sheilds, 1995, p. 23). My process of the continuing development of an internal sense of self is unveiled in my writings. They exhibit the concepts that Sheilds has explicated in her study:

(a) Claiming pieces of identity includes acknowledging and integrating past personal history, gender roles, and sexuality. It is culturally connected and depends upon life circumstances, upbringing, and personal perceptions. Claiming pieces of identity may not be supported by society or other family members. Sheilds (1995) found that “the more divergent or nonnormative the piece of identity was from societal

and family norms, the more difficult it was” (p 24) to claim that piece of identity. In the writing on January 3, 1997, I claim back my “right to set my own priorities” (p 41). My heroic struggle to reclaim this piece of my identity is both revealed and discussed. My upbringing, personal perceptions and circumstances facilitated my disconnection from pieces of my identity that I am reclaiming in the process of doing these writings.

(b) The development of self value is the second component in the development of an internal sense of self. Shields (1995) reports that the women in her study became aware that they valued themselves and the things around them more. The women stated that before they felt empowered, they might allow others to treat them badly and not do anything about it. They did not value themselves. Now they value what they do, their time, thoughts, and self. In my wild-writings, my process of writing down my thoughts without judgement, reclaiming my right to set my own priorities, doing the writing before interacting with the academic literature, and encouraging my self to hear my internal voices in order to transform them, values my self and increases my ability to value others. “To view my process as important and worthy of my attention” (Wild-writing January 18, 1997, p 48)

(c) The third identified component of an internal sense of self is the development of self-acceptance. The women in Shields (1995) study describe self-acceptance as “accepting who I am and what I have done” (p 24). Aspects of self-forgiveness, liking oneself and having a sense who I am, “a sense of well being” (p 24) are included in the development of self-acceptance. “Empowerment is about beginning to recognize and

accept who we are and who we are becoming. Self-acceptance allows us choice. If we accept who we are then we have choice around who we are becoming” (Wild-writing, February 5, 1997, p 69)

(d) The development of trust in terms of self-knowledge is the final identified component in the development of an internal sense of self. This refers to the “perception of the sense of self as being real, valid, and truthful regardless of external expectations” (Sheilds, 1995, p 25). The women spoke of developing trust in their internal knowledge and “taking control of one’s life and trusting one’s judgement to make decisions over and above other people”(p 25). Trusting in one’s intuition is an integral part of this process. This “sense of intuition comes from the internal sense of self and may be contrary to what is desirable of societal or familial norms” (p 25). Sheilds reports that these women use their intuition more and differently. They trust it more. My experience and writings confirm this. “Empowerment is about an internal locus of control. We need to consider our own internal wisdom when living our lives and making our choices” (Wild-writing January 27, 1997, p 62)

2. An internal sense of self, and trust in that internal sense of self empowers one to take action. The second theme identified by Sheilds (1995) is “the ability to take action and to participate in life. Within this theme, several components emerged as critical: the ability to have voice, the ability to take positive risks based on the internal sense of self, the development of a sense of competence including specific skills and abilities, and the emergence of refined thinking and learning patterns” (p 26). My process of hearing my internal voices and expressing them, of taking positive risks

initiated by and that enhance my internal sense of self, my developing skills and competence, as well as my refined thinking and learning patterns are displayed in the wild-writings

(a) The concept of voice refers to one's ability to communicate to perceive, identify and give voice to feelings and thoughts without conforming to social expectations My wild-writings communicate my process of hearing my internal voices and expressing them, of strengthening my connection to my authentic voice, of giving voice to my feelings and thoughts without conforming to social expectations

(b) One's ability to take risks based on an internal sense of self refers to the type of risks that these women undertook (Sheilds, 1995) They moved away from taking self-destructive risks and toward taking risks that involved taking action from an internal sense of self Risks that enhanced their internal sense of self and their lives The risk-taking demonstrated in my wild-writings enhances my internal sense of self

(c) The development of a sense of competence including specific skills and abilities is a third component of taking action from an internal sense of self Shields (1995) reports that the women "developed different skills and abilities that enabled them to have more choices and to have control of the choices in which they participated" (p 27) Skills that increased their competence in communicating, assertiveness, speaking, decision making, introspective analysis, self-care, setting limits, nurturing themselves, physical activities, community involvement, advocacy groups, and becoming politically active are some of the skills that the women reported as contributing to their sense of competence and aided their ability to take action from

an internal sense of self Engaging in my process of wild-writing increases my sense of competence as the process develops specific skills that enable me to take action from an internal sense of self

(d) The final aspect of the movement to take action from an internal sense of self is the emergence of refined thinking and learning patterns Shields (1995) found that the critical thinking capabilities of the women continued to expand throughout their lives, that these “skills became more finely tuned and occurred on a deeper level” (p 28) The women suggested that they were increasingly able to be objective, “to sort of step back from things and look without reacting” (p 28) This ability to be objective, “to step back”, is directly related to being able to “gain perspective, perceive choices, and make decisions to move to action” (p 28) The increased ability to step back and gain perspective broadened the women’s understanding that life includes grey areas where the answers are not clear With this understanding the women experienced greater clarity when thinking about situations and taking action Once again my process of doing the wild-writings facilitates my development of thinking, and learning, skills that help me gain a broader perspective of who I am and enable me to take action from an internal sense of self

3 The final theme Shields (1995) identifies in her study of women is connectedness This connectedness occurs on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level Intrapersonal connectedness refers to the “tie between all parts of the internal self as well as the ability to take congruent action” (p 29) Interpersonal connectedness speaks to the woman’s responsibility and commitment in relationships with other

people, including her relationships on a community level and with her history. My wild-writings echo this theme of connectedness focusing on the intrapersonal connectedness which increases my ability to connect interpersonally.

(a) Intrapersonal connectedness speaks to the increase in the women's commitment to themselves, they are less likely to compromise themselves, less likely to focus on someone else's desires at the expense of their own. This increase in commitment to self results in a healthier balance, a healthier balance between the needs of oneself and the needs of others. My wild-writings engage in the ongoing process of intrapersonal connectedness as I become aware of different aspects of my self and belief systems and engage in my process of taking self-enhancing action to make self-enhancing changes. Taking care of my self means "being unafraid to make mistakes and not worrying about what others think about [my] self, about having/ developing/ using [my] own voice. Taking care of [my] self results in a centeredness -- an inner harmony, a strong connection to the essence of [my] self (Wild-Writing, February 18, 1997, p 78). Stewart (1995), in her research on self-nurturance with women, suggests that the women found self-nurturance to be empowering. It precipitated personal growth and "helped them deal with daily turmoil" (p 68). The women in her study suggested that self-nurturance "gives us back our self and provides us with resources to give to others" (p 68). Self-care is an integral part of developing trust in one's self and facilitates greater intrapersonal connectedness.

(b) Shields reports that, with increased intrapersonal connectedness, the women achieved a healthier balance with interpersonal connectedness. They felt connected on

a historical and community level but not at the expense of their internal selves. This connectedness involved the idea that the “personal is political and the political is personal” (Sheilds, 1995, p 32). These women were involved in their communities in personal or professional ways - taking action. As my process of doing the writing, connecting to my internal sense of self continues I become more connected to the community of other researchers, other counsellors, other women, and other people. The wild-writing on February 21, 1997 suggests that to question authority is to take action from an internal sense of self, to question the authority of the internal or external rules that we live by. To question authority is to take political action. It means that “we think about the rules and decide for our selves, it means we sometimes mindfully choose to follow the rules and sometimes we mindfully choose not to. Empowerment is living without pressure to do it right, say the right thing.” (p 81)

Keen (1994) suggests that “the path to personal freedom involves two long and terrifying steps. Step one. Question authority. Step two. Overthrow authority” (P 101). He suggests that to question authority means that we must “leave the security of the groupmind, venture out into the quaking ground of personal doubt, and issue this declaration of independence. Henceforth my experience of life will be the jury, my mind and heart the judges, that will determine what is true and sacred. I am the author and authority in my own life (p 101). My wild-writings begin with my declaration that “I can set my own priorities” (p 41). I engage in the process of claiming my own internal authority and making choices that enhance my self. I claim my right and responsibility to be the “author and authority in my own life”

My wild-writings focus on the sub-processes of mastering, hearing internal voices, identifying locus of control and choosing. Shields discusses these processes using different terms, however, her findings echo my experience.

Sawatsky, Jevne, & Clark (1994) researched the experiences of counsellor trainees (in this case, doctoral students in the final stages of their training) and developed a cyclical model of empowerment, naming it "Becoming Empowered". This model involves four recurring themes that are fluid, overlapping and interactive. The four themes are experiencing dissonance, responding to dissonance, relating to supervision, and feeling empowered.

1 Experiencing dissonance refers to an individual's "recognizing gaps in skills, knowledge and experience and experiencing emotional turmoil" (Sawatsky et al, 1994, p 181). In the wild-writing on January 3, 1997, I experienced internal emotional turmoil and dissonance as I started to do the writing. My self-doubts that result from my belief that "I can't set my own priorities", my doubts that I cannot do the writing, were in conflict with my desire to do the writing, thus creating dissonance.

2 "Responding to dissonance: acquiring new skills, information and experience, changing attitudes, defining capabilities and limits, withdrawing from further risk" (Sawatsky et al, 1994, p 181). I responded to the dissonance in the January 3, 1997 wild-writing, by staying in my chair and continuing to type my thoughts and feelings into the computer thereby acquiring, or at least beginning to acquire, new skills, information and experience. Doing the writing contributed to my changing attitude about setting my own priorities, capabilities and limits. I was able to do the writing. I

withdrew from further emotional risk when I stopped writing after ten-minutes, giving myself time to integrate this new experience

3 “Relating to supervision assessing the safeness of the supervisory climate, using the supervisor and supervisory process as a model, feeling affirmed, responding to challenge and expectation, becoming one’s own supervisor” (Sawatsky et al, 1994, p 181) I felt affirmed by my external supervision Responding to the challenge and expectation I claimed my ability to act as my own supervisor I act as my own supervisor when I encourage myself to keep writing, when I affirm myself for responding to my internal challenge and expectation to write for ten-minutes

4 “Feeling empowered changing perspectives, trusting in self, integration (Clarifying) personal and professional self, accessing other resources, developing self-reflection, experiencing increased competence, feeling satisfied with new skills, feeling a sense of autonomy, having a place as a professional, inviting collegiality, learning as an ongoing process” (Sawatsky et al, 1994, p 181) Accomplishing my goal results in my feelings of satisfaction and increased empowerment My perspectives about myself begin to change, I set my own priority, I meet my goal Meeting my goal in spite of the internal and external distractions increases my trust in myself, my feelings of competence and confidence Increased confidence and competence increases my sense of autonomy and professionalism I invite collegiality and embrace the ongoing process of learning

Looking at the process that the group of wild-writings disclosed, I can see my experience of dissonance (struggle to write in my authentic voice), my responses to

dissonance (keep writing in spite of the distractions), how I acted as my own supervisor (ongoing self-encouragement and affirmations), and my increased feelings of empowerment that are revealed in my increasingly empowered writings. This is an example of how this circular four stage model fits with my experience.

While Sawatsky (1994) and colleagues explicated this process from the experiences of counsellor trainees, it is also a process of empowerment for individuals. It is a process that empowers counsellors, and individuals, to be the best that they can be.

The academic literature attends to some elements of empowerment that were not illustrated in the wild-writings. For example, the literature suggests, and I agree, that the complications of social, political, economic and other unpredictable variables require attention if we are to successfully move into a full scale empowerment process for individuals and communities. However, in order to pay attention to these other factors, we need to be individually empowered to act. In order to be able to question authority, we need to claim our personal power. Here's the paradox: dis-empowering conditions can impede an individual's empowerment process, an individual needs to be empowered in order to change dis-empowering conditions.

This research project adds an experiential account to the academic literature. It brings to life the concepts discussed in the literature and offers an experiential model that could encourage, inspire, motivate and facilitate the empowerment process of other individuals and counsellor trainees.

In summary, this section has explored several descriptions of the empowerment process involving individuals, groups and communities. The process unveiled by my wild-writings, supports the discussions of the writers cited. However, the paradox of my ability to be both empowered and dis-empowered depending upon the context, conditions and influences of my life has not been discussed by the above researchers.

### Summary

The empowerment perspective relates the ability to feel in control, and to have control, as being linked to one's personal, interpersonal, and political power. In order to have control, individuals must have the resources and ability to express and act upon their goals and desires. Illusions of control and self-blame interfere with processes which allow people to more effectively develop empowering skills. Several models of the empowerment process were discussed in this exploration of the concept.

Several components of empowerment have been considered in an effort to clarify the concept in terms of empowering individuals and counsellor trainees. Becoming self-aware, choosing to be one's authentic self, and developing one's full potential, are seen to be important parts of the empowerment process.

My wild-writings reveal my process of becoming self-aware, connecting to my authentic self, and developing my full potential. My process occurs within the context of my involvement with helpful supportive groups in the community where I reside. It occurs within the context of my involvement with role models in the academic community. My experience echoes and adds to the above discussions.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The Conclusion

This research project offers a glimpse into the empowerment process of a woman in her late forties attending university as a counsellor trainee and writing her master's thesis

#### The Big Picture

The wild writings both individually and collectively exhibit my increasing ability to master tasks and make self-enhancing choices. They unveil the development of my authentic voice, the growing connection to my internal authority, and the uncovering, discovering and recovering of my internal wisdom. The writings both reveal my process of empowerment and talk about empowerment concepts. The analysis of the individual wild-writings has identified and discussed four sub-processes, this section includes a brief look at how the sub-processes fit into the bigger picture, the wild-writings as a whole. It identifies ways that my personal empowerment process impacts upon my development as a counsellor.

The four sub-processes of mastering, identifying locus of control, hearing internal voices, and choosing are presented followed by a discussion of the process, how the sub-processes interact. Recommendations for future research, as well as implications for counsellor education, for counsellor trainees, and for individuals are considered. This chapter ends with a synopsis of my process, my final thoughts.

## The Four Sub-Processes

### 1 Mastering

Mastery of tasks can occur on a continuum from a dis-empowered place to an empowered place within me. Mastery occurs within different aspects of empowerment. On a physical level, when I actually do the writing, I master the task of being able to do the actual writing. On an emotional level, I continue to master the task of being able to feel, stay with, acknowledge and let go of the emotions that accompany the task of experiencing dissonance, resolving my issues and celebrating my accomplishments. The mastering of a task on a cognitive level is exemplified when I am able to gather and process knowledge that influences how I live my life and make my choices. Examples of mastering tasks on a cognitive level while doing this research include gathering information in order to use technology and research the academic literature. Spiritual mastery occurs in the moments when I am able and willing to connect with, as well as, do, feel, and be from the very essence of my being. It occurs when I am willing to humbly ask for and receive help from the place of my internal authority. Mastery begins to occur at a dis-empowered moment when I choose to make a change. It happens when each part of the change is made. Upon completion of the mastery of one empowering task, another task of empowerment reveals itself.

As a counsellor trainee, mastering the tasks that increase my helpfulness also takes place on different levels. Mastering the basic helping skills of being able to listen, and physically respond, is the beginning of my empowerment process as a

counsellor trainee Emotionally connecting with my clients requires my willingness to be able to feel, stay with, acknowledge, and let go of the emotions that accompany the tasks of hearing clients in the process of resolving their issues and celebrating their accomplishments Mastering the task of hearing the clients express the thoughts of their dis-empowering and empowering belief systems, along with mastering the task of offering supportive, self-enhancing cognitive feedback increases my helpfulness as a counsellor on a cognitive level Integrating skills, listening with my being, and hearing intuitively from an internal place of cognitive and emotional connection, facilitates my ability to hear what my clients may not be able to hear themselves express Raising my awareness of self facilitates my ability to hear my clients rather than my own internal chatterings Self-examination helps me move my human ego out of the way It facilitates the ongoing mastery of allowing my Higher Power to work through me It expands my ability to hear in an increasingly helpful manner Mastering tasks, “doing it”, can help me identify where my locus of control is situated

## 2 Identifying Locus Of Control

My ability to identify where my locus of control is situated increases my options It enables me to access personal power, to make choices, to manage my own life, to be in touch with, and use, inner knowledge and wisdom It refers to my ability, as a person, as a woman, as a counsellor, to consider my self when responding to environmental influences It helps me to consider environmental influences in relation to my own inner wisdom when making choices about my actions or beliefs

The wild-writings both talk about and reveal the necessity of shifting my locus of control from external to internal. As a counsellor trainee, becoming increasingly connected to my internal knowledge, authority and voice facilitates my ability to act in increasingly authentic and helpful ways. This means taking the time, in conversations with my clients, to hear my internal knowledge, to access my internal authority in order to respond in my authentic voice. Taking the time, to center my self and to connect with my internal authority, increases my ability to be present with my clients. It means that I am willing to hear my internal voices.

### 3 Hearing Internal Voices

Voice refers to my ability to express my self from either my dis-empowering belief system or my empowering belief system.

My voice seems to consist of several parts. A cognitive or thinking part of my voice talks about concepts, beliefs and thoughts. The emotional aspect of my voice is aware of, and speaks from, and of, my emotions. A spiritual aspect of my voice encourages and speaks from a place of connectedness, it encompasses cognitive and emotional voice.

My belief systems are the energy behind the expression of my voice. My dis-empowering belief system expresses my experience of past dis-empowering experiences and trauma. While the intent is to keep me safe from re-experiencing the pain of previous experiences, it speaks from an internal place of fear, terror, rage,

erroneous or incomplete information, and rigid thinking. It sets me up to recreate the disturbing, distressing and distracting trauma's of my past.

My empowering belief system expresses my empowering experiences of my past and present. It speaks from a place of internal knowledge and intuition. It encompasses the whole range of my knowledge and emotions. My empowering belief system has the ability to take care of myself in increasingly healthy ways. It increases my ability to be fully conscious in the present moment, it increases my ability to feel safe. The voice of my empowered belief system becomes increasingly more confident and clear as I resolve issues that have overruled my authentic voice.

Authentic voice refers to my voice that speaks mindfully from my own internal wisdom. Knowing what I think and feel and resolving my internalized oppression, puts me in touch with my authentic voice. Developing my authentic voice involves choice, courage, commitment and my willingness to resolve internalized oppressive conditioning. When I am working through my issues, and have not yet developed and connected to my authentic voice, I could be speaking in as an authentic voice as I am able. I need to be willing to hear what I am saying internally and externally in order to identify and make choices about my internal or voiced beliefs, values, thoughts, and choices. I need to be willing to do what it takes to turn down the volume on the voices of my dis-empowering belief system and turn up the volume of my authentic voice. Developing my connection to my authentic voice is a process not a product. It is a life-long process.

As a counsellor trainee, my ability to express myself in increasingly authentic and empowering ways is essential. My willingness to engage in my process of being present with myself increases my ability to be present with my clients. It increases my ability to use my voice in an increasingly authentic and empowering manner. It allows me to model healthy, self-enhancing, empowering behaviours in my interactions with my clients. Hearing my internal voices increases my self-awareness resulting in my increased ability to choose.

#### 4 Choosing

Choosing refers to my ability to select from the options available. When I make an empowering choice, an option is selected that enhances my spirit, the essence of myself. I choose how I think, act, respond, and look. I choose how I represent myself in the world.

Unhealed internalized oppression is passed on from generation to generation. As we know better, we do better. Generational trauma stops when someone makes a choice to transform and transcend it (Belsky, 1993, Middleton-Moz, 1992). While I was at the mercy of both empowering and dis-empowering external influences and external power as a child, it is my responsibility as an adult to become willing to become aware of, acknowledge, grieve, and let go of any dis-empowering internalized oppression and keep the empowering internalized messages. Resolving issues requires that I choose to engage in the process. This process requires commitment, faith, hope,

and trust. It requires a spiritual presence (Peck, 1978). I choose on all levels: physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual.

As a counsellor trainee, I also choose on all levels. I need to make clear choices about how I will do the physical act of counselling. I decide what cognitive theories I integrate as my own, how I will choose to deal with my own emotional reactions and responses, and, how I will engage with my Higher Power. I need to make clear choices about who I can and will work with. I need to become increasingly aware of the choices I make when working with a client, how I will interact, what internal voice I listen to. I choose how I will resolve ethical dilemmas, who I will choose to consult with. I choose to engage in my ongoing process of empowerment.

#### Process: How The Sub-Processes Interact

It is difficult to discuss the sub-processes as separate from the larger process. The process flows, is fluid, flexible and often frightening. I can courageously speak in my authentic voice and find my self in a process of transforming internalized oppression and transcending the environment, wondering "Who said that? How did I get into this conflict? How do I get out?" I could master a task, thereby developing authentic voice. Or, I could perhaps discover my internal oppression and transform it, in an effort to hear my authentic voice and master a task. I could ask the question: Which comes first: mastering, hearing internal voices, identifying locus of control or choosing? Which comes first: the daffodil flower, the bulb, or the seed? This thesis has evolved. Mastering tasks develops internal knowledge, authority and voice.

Choosing facilitates mastering, hearing internal voices, and identifying locus of control  
Hearing my internal voices results in mastering, choosing and shifting my locus of control to my internal authority

The process shifts around. One moment I feel empowered, in the next moment I feel dis-empowered. While I may be in various states of denial and distress during the times when I am feeling, for example, dis-connected from my spirit, it is important to note that spirit is not dis-connected from me. I am dis-connected from spirit. My willingness to ask for and receive help begins to reconnect my self on a spiritual level, and on all levels. This decision to ask for and receive help, voices my choice to become empowered. My decision to become empowered sets in motion the process that moves me from a place of feeling dis-empowered, to doing the work of becoming empowered, and then to a place of feeling increasingly more empowered. The journey of remembering to stay connected to spirit, is the journey to my authentic self. I have wrestled with, and continue to wrestle with, the internalized oppression, in order to remember to stay connected to my internal authority. I strive to speak in an authentic voice and continue to master tasks, including writing papers, while engaged in my process of becoming increasingly empowered to speak authentically from a place of my internal authority.

As a child, in the process of developing my sense of self, I was at the mercy of external influences. I needed healthy parents, teachers, relatives, mentors, friends to take care of me and to align my self with. When the majority of messages from my external authority were healthy, I internalized self-enhancing messages. When the

messages were unhealthy and oppressive, I internalized that oppression. As children we are at the mercy of external influences. We learn to make choices about ourselves based on what we experience (Middelton-Moz, 1992, Miller, 1990, 1991). At elementary and high school I was at the mercy of external influences that I frequently experienced as dis-empowering. At home, my parents did the best that they knew how. The unhealed internalized oppression of their parents was passed on to them. Upon reflection I can see how they attempted to change some of the external influences that they had experienced as dis-empowering. However, as is the case when the internalized oppression has not been healed, they passed it on. No one is to blame here. Our parents, school teachers and other external influences teach us what they know, they usually are doing the very best that they can. Most often people have good intentions, however, when we act out of our own internalized oppression, we pass it on. We pass it on if we haven't transformed our own internalized oppression because we do not know how to do it differently (Middelton-Moz, 1992, Miller, 1990, 1991). The external influences in my life did the best they could with what they knew, in the moments when they knew better, they did better.

Most of us have had both experiences to some degree. As babies and toddlers we need healthy adults to love us, care for us, make decisions for us and facilitate the development of our sense of personal agency (Case, 1991, Kagan, J., Kearsley, R., & Zelazo, P., 1978, Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979, Lewis, 1993, Kaler & Kopp, 1990). As children we need healthy adults to begin to teach us how to make healthy decisions. We need help to further develop our sense of personal agency and a healthy self-

esteem Healthy pre-schoolers have a high sense of personal worth and healthy adults contribute to the development of healthy self esteem ( Dweck, 1975, Dweck & Leggett, 1988) As teen-agers we need healthy adults to help us re-examine the rules we live by and to continue the development of our own inner authority As young adults we still need a healthy connection to elders in order to continue the healthy development of our own internal authority and wisdom (Smolack, 1993, Vernon, 1990) If we do not make these developmental shifts as we grow up, we attribute more power and importance to the external authority than is healthy ( Miller, 1990, 1991, Middleton-Moz, 1992)

If we haven't developed empowering skills while growing up, it is unlikely that we will develop them as adults without some kind of intervention, some kind of self-enhancing, empowering external influence Learned helplessness takes away our intrinsic drive to self-empower (Masten, Best & Garmezy, 1990, Seligman, 1990) There are degrees of learned helplessness Sometimes nothing can interfere with my doing what I decide to do Other times I freeze inside, am unable to speak for myself or to act in my own best interest In those situations, I believe that I do not have the internal power that I need to act in my own best interest, to make self-enhancing choices This is an erroneous belief Writing this thesis confronts some of my behaviours, emotions, rules and beliefs about my perceived helplessness When I sat down to do my first ten-minute writing I felt frozen, unable to act The accumulation of many previous years of personal work, of building trust within myself, facilitates my self-determination to keep going, to break free of my self-doubt Continuing to write

with commitment, self-compassion and acceptance of my writing, encourages my inner self to trust that I can do this. It encourages me to trust that I can do this without being annihilated from either internal or external sources. Doing the writing facilitates the transformation of this piece of my learned helplessness.

The early writings talk about setting a goal, challenging my old conditioning, experiencing doubt, not being able to write, struggle, making a choice, accomplishing the goal and moving through the stuckness of past conditioning to a place of transforming the dis-empowering condition, to “being able to do it”, to a place of empowerment. Setting a goal and choosing to do it -- in spite of the conditioning or outer influences -- transforms my conditioning and transcends the environment. Becoming aware of my old dis-empowering learnings offers an opportunity for me to choose to change a belief. Externalizing the problem in the environment acts as a metaphor, raising the conscious awareness of my internal conflict. Mastering a goal increases empowerment and self-affirmation re-inforces the new learning. The writings disclose my ongoing process of empowerment, my process of uncovering, discovering and recovering the essence of who I truly am.

As a counsellor trainee, engaging in the process of examining my values, beliefs, thoughts, emotions, and experiences that motivate my behaviour impacts upon my ability to facilitate my clients' self-exploration. Increasing my own self-awareness facilitates my ability to have choice in my professional life. Resolving personal issues increases my authenticity, which increases my ability to act responsibly and ethically with my clients. My willingness to engage compassionately in my process encourages

me to examine my professional behaviour. Clearly I am human and will not achieve perfection. It is my willingness to engage in my humanness, to know myself, to raise my self-awareness, that increases my willingness to engage in ethical practices. I will make mistakes. My willingness to be honest with myself and take personal responsibility increases my chances of learning from my mistakes and of making fewer mistakes. As a counsellor trainee, learning to engage in the empowering process of self-examination increases my potential to act ethically.

Mastering, hearing my internal voices, identifying my locus of control, and choosing responsibly are integral parts of my empowerment process. This process is fluid, flexible and often frightening. It takes courage, commitment and compassion. My process, as a person, as a woman, as a counsellor, is ongoing and continuous.

#### Recommendations For Future Research

Empowerment is an ongoing process. It is an individual process, and yet, we share similar experiences. In order to gain a clearer understanding of how similar and unique the process of empowerment can be, it would be useful to encourage many age groups to write wildly and discuss what the empowerment process means to them. Like Sheehy (1995) suggests, I suspect that as each decade passes we engage in a different set of issues that require our attention. Issues that we are challenged to transform and transcend. I also suspect that there is an evolution of empowerment of the human species. We get to choose our future. Do we choose to empower our individual selves and our species? Or do we choose to commit soul murder. Do we

commit soul murder by choosing self-negating beliefs and behaviours that annihilate our individual selves and our species. As I am talking about recommendations, I recommend that we choose empowerment.

Each sub-process that I have identified could be studied further, in greater depth with more participants. Adding experiential accounts of mastering, locus of control, internal voices and choosing could bring depth to the empowerment information already available.

Knowledge is empowering, the more we know about empowerment and what we are doing to dis-empower ourselves and others, the greater the likelihood that we can make conscious choices to transform our internalized and externalized oppression. In order to gather more information, researchers could interact with co-researchers from different age cohorts in an effort to establish what their process of empowerment and dis-empowerment entails. Researchers have begun to look at hierarchy and its effects on people, particularly women and minorities. We have not looked closely enough at the illusion of power that patriarchy promotes. We have not looked closely enough at the reasons that we fail to empower our selves and each other.

Studies examining the disconnection of the soulfulness of the human species would be a useful contribution to the knowledge base of what dis-empowers us. Spirituality has not been wholeheartedly embraced in the world of academics. However, the efforts of the academic world to move away from the spiritual nature of the human species disconnects us from our power source. It avoids the issue of doing needed research in a difficult area. Certainly some institutions do study theology and

have faculties of religious studies. This is important and useful. It is important, useful, and empowering to connect to our soulfulness, our spirituality, our heart and mind in all areas of research. This disconnection of soulfulness, of heart from mind, results in further dis-empowerment of our species. More research could be done to further develop a more complete picture of the empowerment process. Research taking into account different genders, age cohorts, the effects of media on empowerment, and the relationship people have with food, alcohol, drugs, and other substances that are used to foster an illusion of feeling better. The effects of poverty, individual and cultural trauma, dis-ease, racism, ageism, misogamy, the media on individual and collective empowerment could also be examined.

#### Implications for Counsellor Education

As a counsellor trainee, I recommend that the experience of counsellor trainees continue to be explored. The counsellor trainees' experience of their process could inform other trainees as well as their supervisors and professors. The focus in training institutions is often on the academic learning. I wonder what might be done differently to encourage and value the internal processes of self-exploration in a way that makes a difference in the ability and confidence of trainees upon completion of their program.

I think it would be a good idea to study the experience of counsellor trainees to find out what impedes and facilitates their progress. How about studying counsellor trainees who go out into the community as counsellors and find out what they

encounter and how well they are prepared to deal effectively with the real world?

Knowing what works and what does not gives us the opportunity to make changes

Encouraging and empowering individual counsellor trainees to engage in their own process of self-exploration facilitates their continued ability to engage in their process. Counsellors will bump up against complexities in their professional life that need to be dealt with. It is much easier to engage in the conflicts of life when I know where I stand internally and when I am able to continue to explore where I stand internally, even as I learn, grow, and change.

Utilizing the idea of wild-writings in school, college, and university classrooms could unleash a blizzard of creativity. Students could be encouraged to find their voice and develop their connection to their internal wisdom. They could become encouraged to engage in their empowerment process.

#### Implications For Counsellor Trainees

Hopefully this research will encourage, and perhaps inspire, others to engage in their own empowerment process. Engaging in our empowerment process encourages us to be healthy counsellors who will take care of our selves. It encourages us to not engage in behaviours that will cause harm to our selves or to others. If we are trained to listen to our intuition, to know what is happening in our internal world, to resolve our issues, we will decrease our likelihood of engaging in activities that negate our selves. If we negate our selves when helping others we do not teach them appropriate boundaries. When we practice what we preach, when we walk our talk, we model

healthy behaviour (unless of course, what we are walking and talking about is unhealthy) When we engage willingly in our mistakes, when we take personal responsibility, we model healthy human behaviour My own experience and behaviours could have an impact on how others approach their own process I need to take personal responsibility for setting healthy boundaries, behaving ethically, and creating a healthy life experience for myself

This research could raise the awareness of professors, students and training institutions on the importance of considering process in their programs It could serve as a model to inspire their continued self-exploration

#### Implications For Others

All kinds of people could use the knowledge of timed wild-writing to spark the development of their voice and their empowerment process Setting small manageable writing goals certainly helped me to accomplish the larger goal of hearing and expressing my authentic voice Timed writings facilitated my accomplishment of the larger writing goals and continue to engage me in my empowerment process This process could be of benefit to others Timed writings help me get unstuck and could help others get unstuck as well We all experience some degree of internalized oppression that keeps from accessing our internal authority Timed writings can help us identify and transform these stuck spots

Knowing the importance of having healthy adults to act as mentors can encourage us to be healthy adults We can choose to be mentors, teachers, parents, friends,

counsellors and people who engage in our own empowerment process. We can choose to model empowering behaviours to others. Knowing the importance of having healthy people in our lives could encourage us to seek out healthy people. It could encourage our clients, students, friends, and children to seek out healthy people in their lives. It is just possible that a growing number of people choosing to be empowered and healthy, choosing to re-connect to their spirit, could change the direction of our cultural evolution. Choosing to reconnect to internal authority, one's Higher Power, the essence of spirit, can accomplish great things.

### Final Thoughts

What have I learned about myself in this process of doing this research and writing this thesis? I have begun to understand that I can write. Some of what I write may be useful only to me. Some of what I write could be useful to others. In the final days of writing and re-writing this thesis, it has begun to grow legs and walk out of my life, it has taken on a life of its own. I find myself talking to a colleague, friend, or client, and hear a voice come out of my mouth offering them my thesis to read. It is not my conscious intention to have this happen. Consciously I had hoped to have it finished (perhaps even perfectly edited) before I let it go out into the world to stand on its own. This process continues to be fluid, flexible and often frightening. When this thesis leaves my hands, a part of me wants to claw it back, and yet I cannot. Some people have read it and found it to be less than what they had hoped for, or expected. Others have found it to be interesting, inspiring, and enlightening. Either way, it is like

a work of art. The readers' reaction to my writings tell the reader something about his/her self. It is no longer about me. I am letting go of my deep attachment to this work. It has served me well. I have become increasingly more empowered, more authentic, more able, more connected to my internal authority and my soulfulness. I can feel my deep grief as I come to the end of this writing. I can also feel my excitement about moving on to the next phase, whatever that may turn out to be. Letting go is part of my process. Letting go is easier when I trust in my Higher Power. Letting go is easier when I know that I am not alone. Doing this research and writing this thesis has increased my connectedness to my self. It has increased my connection to others in my life. I am grateful.

When I began to consider doing the research for my master's thesis, I began with the desire to do research about the empowerment of women. I was unable to begin, dis-empowered to begin. I decided I was too close to the topic. I shifted my focus to the empowerment of counsellor trainees. Funny how my Higher Power works. I have done what I first set out to do, I have come full circle, like the daffodil bulb.

I have increased my understanding of the daffodil bulb and its importance in my life. General knowledge of the daffodil bulb suggests that it lacks the ability to make choice, that it does not share the human ability to make choice, that it does not have free will. Perhaps this is so. However, when everyone thought the world was flat, the North American Indians inhabited the North America that allegedly did not exist. I have come to acknowledge that perhaps we do not know enough about the intrinsic life force of the universe to comment with great assurance that a daffodil bulb cannot

think It does not appear to be able to think, it does not appear to have free will I do not know However, I do know that the daffodil does speak to me metaphorically

For oft, when on my couch I lie  
 In vacant or in pensive mood,  
 They flash upon my inward eye  
 Which is the bliss of solitude,  
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
 and dances with the daffodils

(Wordsworth in Davies, p 121)

The daffodil bulb reminds me that I can not explain the intrinsic power of the universe  
 It reminds me to trust in my ability to grow and change with the seasons of my life  
 Daffodils remind me to find humour, dance, and search for joy They remind me to  
 trust in my Higher Power, to keep it simple Daffodils **Just Do It''''**

During the winter of this writing, mother nature has been providing the daffodil bulbs with torrential rains, blustering winds, and swirling, icy sleet, turning their warm blanket of soil into an oozing mass of cold mud Like humans, daffodils can overcome adverse conditions Masses of oozing mud does not stop the daffodils from continuing to patiently sink their roots deeper into this ever-changing structure that embraces them, trusting that a power greater than a bulb will restore them to stability

The daffodil bulb nestles in a wet, winter bed, doing what needs to be done, unfettered by the activities of the other daffodil bulbs While each bulb prefers to grow in the company of other bulbs, each bulb, empowered from within, engages in its own process to be the very best daffodil bulb possible Each bulb is empowered from within, by the intrinsic life force of the universe, to express itself authentically, to

produce the most beautiful bloom it can. Each bulb relies on the water, soil, and sun to nourish and sustain its internal life force. Nurtured by the elements, each bulb will display its own glorious, authentic, and individual bloom while joining with a community of bulbs all displaying their own individual, glorious and authentic blooms heralding the arrival of spring. Each bulb engages in this circular process, year after year, in a continuous cycle. For now the bulb grows quietly, developing its roots, gathering its strength, engaged in its process of becoming the very best daffodil bulb possible, engaged in its process of producing the very best bloom imaginable.

Like the daffodil bulb, I needed to set down my roots. While I needed the support of others, to grow in the company of others. I needed to engage in my own process. I too am empowered from within by the intrinsic life force of the universe. I am empowered from within to express myself authentically, to produce the most beautiful expression of myself that I can. I needed to root this research in my own experience, my experience is an expression of myself. Like the daffodil bulb, this research could keep developing in a circular manner, year after year, growing bigger, developing new bulbs of research activities, in a continuously growing field full of bulbs of information. The daffodil blossom announces to the world a changing process. The completion of this thesis announces a changing process. Solidly rooting this work in my own experience, it blossomed into the very best thesis that it could be, standing gloriously in the field with other research voices on empowerment. Hopefully this work will inspire, challenge, and empower you, the reader, to engage fully in your own empowerment process and blossom in the very best way that you can.

## Epilogue

The writing is done, or at least done enough to set a date for the defense. The word “defense” is about defending, resisting attack, justifying. It brings to my mind a confrontive or combative event, a potentially unpleasant experience, I have heard about some of those unpleasant experiences. Apparently, in some oral examinations the examinee is required to *defend* their work. In some cases, the examiners ask questions, or make comments, intended to catch the defendee off guard. Perhaps the intent is to see how well the defendee justifies the work and resists the attack. I remember the experience of being a small child and having teachers standing over me asking “Why did you do this?” or stating “This is wrong. Do it over.” I did not know then how to resist the attack. I did not understand the rules. I intend to understand the rules now. I intend to have a different experience. I intend to follow my own rules. I choose to think of my *defense* as an oral examination, a chance to discuss and explore my work. I intend the oral examination of this thesis to be a celebration, an affirming, pleasant, and empowering experience. Thankfully the external authority, representing the University of Victoria, had the integrity to challenge my work before the oral examination. They have worked with me, challenged me, and helped me to accomplish the best job that I could in the time allotted. They have given me great feedback. They have questioned, queried, and discussed this work for many months before suggesting that it was time to set a date for the defense. It is time to set a date and *celebrate* the result of all our hard work.

Having made the decision to create an affirming, pleasant, and empowering experience, I supported my intention by taking action. I invited some supportive people to participate as members of the audience. I requested that some bring their drums. We set the stage. The rest was out of my hands. I let go.

My goal in writing this thesis was to reveal my process, to tell a story that interests, informs, entertains, empowers, enlightens, and inspires those interested in empowerment. I saw the oral examination as an opportunity to bring my work to life.

I planned to go into my oral examination feeling connected. I intended my mind, body, and spirit to operate as one. I intended to be authentic in my presentation and to experience the result of my work. My dis-empowering belief system had other plans. I arrived late, flustered, and off center. Thankfully, I was not the last to arrive. I struggled internally to regain my connection to my authentic self. My drumming friends began to drum softly as my committee took the required action to locate the missing examiner. The drumming calmed us as we waited to begin. The drumming helped create an incredible energy and atmosphere. My friends and colleagues helped create an incredible energy and atmosphere. I regained my connection, my empowering belief system triumphed. We decided to delay the start time of the examination. I took the opportunity to meet and greet my friends and colleagues. I was enjoying myself already!

Eventually we were all present and ready to begin. I had a prepared statement, however, I wanted to speak mindfully from my heart. I wanted my authentic self to be in charge. I let go of my presentation, trusting that I could say what I needed to say. I did. The external authority, representing the University of Victoria, had clearly

read my work and taken it seriously. They added their incredible energy to the experience. They mindfully commented and asked questions that I experienced as validating and collegial. I could feel my self transforming as I heard the comments and questions. I could feel my confidence increasing as I felt my self reflect upon their questions, and as I heard my self answer. I would have loved to continue the experience. It was empowering. Their questions and comments interested, informed, entertained, empowered, enlightened, and inspired me. They took an active role in my transformation. I was energized. What I intellectually knew to be true about my work absorbed into the very core of my being. I could feel it absorbing. Incredible. The oral examination ended long before I tired of the experience.

I, along with the audience, was asked to adjourn to the corridor. We waited for the external authority to come to consensus about the results of the oral examination. As we waited, I was delighted to hear the audience participants expressing their gratitude and pleasure. The audience (friends and colleagues) expressed their energy and excitement about how stimulating it was to be a part of the event. They found the experience to be personally empowering. I was electrified. *I am electrified.* They were thrilled to have been present. Not only did I accomplish my goal in the thesis itself, we accomplished the goal in the oral examination. Incredible. Authenticity. It was, and continues to be, a gift for me to hear how this work impacts on the audience, on the reader. I was awestruck that I really did what I meant to do. I am awestruck, I did it. I wrote a thesis in my authentic voice on a subject that interests me. And, I enjoyed an incredible celebration of my work. I am awestruck that I really did what I meant to do. Many years of personal work resulted in an incredible, validating,

transforming experience I get it Some people have received my gift as I intended  
 Awesome!!!

Not only were people reading my work and finding it helpful, empowering, and inspiring, we duplicated the process during the oral examination We are an awesome group of individuals, counsellors, and scholars Thank each of you for your incredible contribution

My heart is full of gratitude I am grateful to the Power greater than myself that was tangibly in the room I am grateful to those people who brought it with them, for those people whom called on their own version of a Higher Power Gratitude is the highest vibration of energy

With gratitude I thank those extraordinary audience members who took the time to participate in my oral examination Your supportive, loving energy was palpable You helped create a truly awesome experience I thank you all Jane, Karen, Janet, Judith, Jeannie, Marna, Jennifer, Kim, Rene, Marjorie, Hannah, and Lynne I thank those audience members who expressed that they were with us in spirit, especially Laura, Paul, Les, Elaine, Pat, Pauline, Joan, Susan, Alexander, John, Jim, Sharon, Marla, Jill, Rick, Ellie, Anita, Val, Wendell, Leslie, Julie, and Lorrie I am grateful to the representatives of the external authority, those folks who represented the scholarliness of the University of Victoria Thank-you Yvonne, Sheila, Wanda, Anne, and Marie for interacting with my work so carefully, for demonstrating your interest in my work, for asking such interesting, inspiring, and validating questions

Thankyou all, we created the most marvelous celebration of my work I am grateful!

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