



**WOMEN, ENVIRONMENTS
AND
SPIRITUALITY:**

**A STUDY OF WOMEN IN THE AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT
MOVEMENT**

by

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DEDICATION

To all those reweaving the web;
especially the hard working women of Earth.

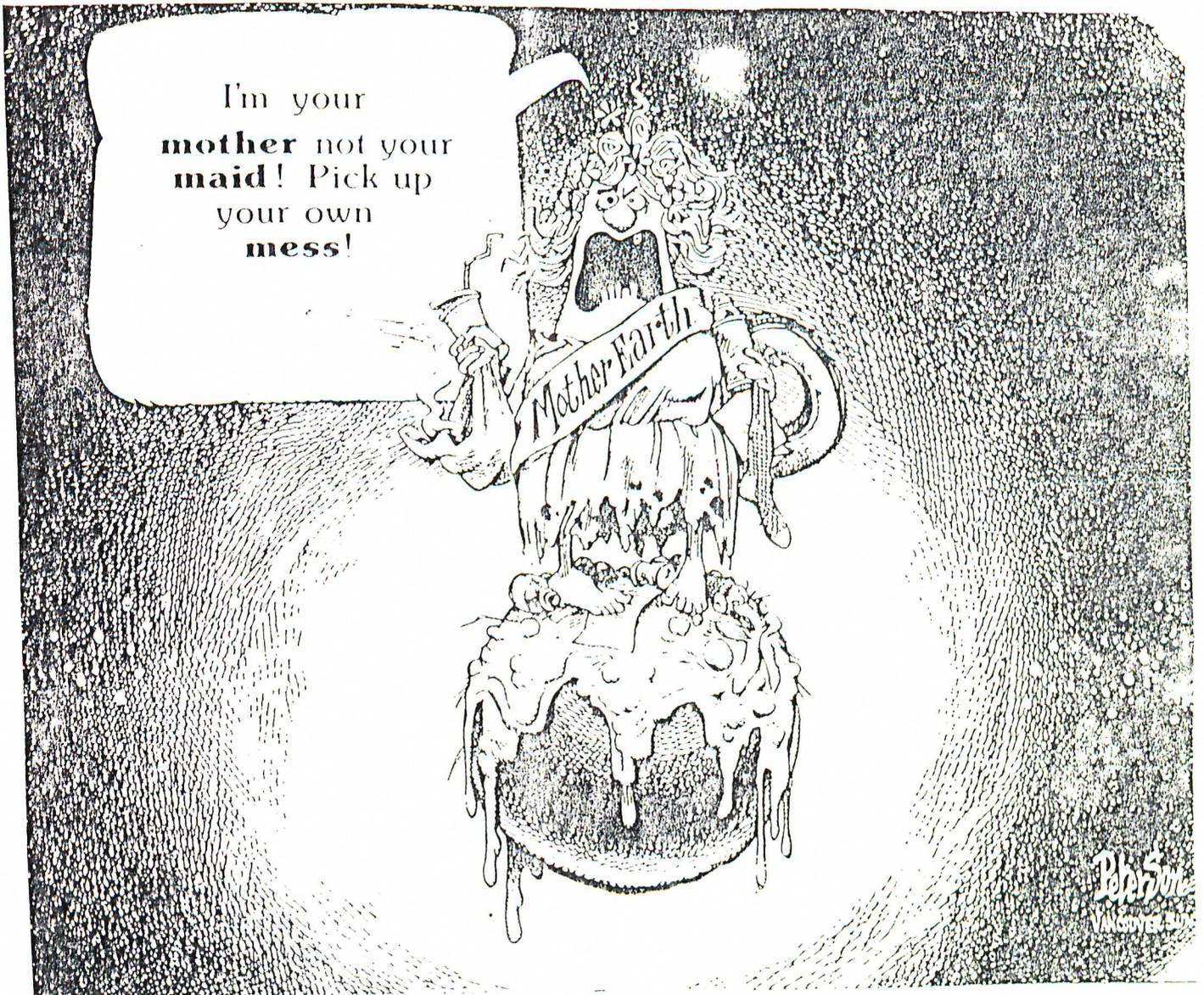


TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
TITLE PAGE	i
DEDICATION	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	v
ABSTRACT	vi
DECLARATION	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER 1. WHY WOMEN, ENVIRONMENTS AND SPIRITUALITY?	1
1 INTRODUCTION.....	2
1.1. BACKGROUND TO STUDY.....	2
1.2. ECOFEMINISM: A NEW SYNTHESIS	6
1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY.....	14
CHAPTER 2. ASCERTAINING WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS: THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	16
2.1 INTRODUCTION	17
2.2 THE INTERVIEW METHOD.	18
2.3 Q-ANALYSIS	22
2.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY METHODOLOGY	25
CHAPTER 3. HEARING WOMEN'S VOICES: RESULTS OF INTERVIEW.....	27
3.1 INTRODUCTION	28
3.2 PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEES.....	28
3.3 INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES.	31
3.4 INTERVIEWEES' VISION OF THE FUTURE.	36
3.4.1. INTRODUCTION	36
3.4.2. THE WOMEN'S VISION.....	36

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
3.5 INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION.....	38
3.6 SOURCES OF INSPIRATION AND SPIRITUALITY.....	42
3.7 SUMMARY	47
CHAPTER 4. GLIMPING THE DIVERSITY: CLUSTERS OF WOMEN ACCORDING TO THE SURVEY	48
4.1 PROFILE OF RESPONSE.....	49
4.1.1 GENERAL RESPONSE	49
4.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS	50
4.2 SURVEY ANALYSIS.....	51
4.2.1 INTRODUCTION	51
4.2.2 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONSES.....	53
4.3 CLUSTER ANALYSIS.	62
4.3.1 CLUSTER 1.....	62
4.3.2 CLUSTER 2.....	65
4.3.3 CLUSTER 3.....	69
4.3.4 CLUSTER 4.....	72
4.3.5 CLUSTER 5.....	77
4.3.6 CLUSTER 6.....	79
4.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS SURVEY METHODOLOGY	83
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS: WOMEN IN THE ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT, ECOFEMINISM AND THE FUTURE.....	86
APPENDIX 1: COVERING LETTER AND SURVEY FORMAT	96
BIBLIOGRAPHY	103

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1 Interview Schedule for Individuals

TABLE 2 Interview Schedule for Groups

TABLE 3 Frequency Distribution of Responses to Survey Statements on Perceptions of the Causes of Environmental Problems

TABLE 4 Frequency Distribution of Responses to Survey Statements on Women

TABLE 5 Frequency Distribution of Responses to Survey Statements on Spirituality

TABLE 6 Percentage Frequency Distribution of Response to Statement Variables within Cluster 1

TABLE 7 Percentage Frequency Distribution of Response to Statement Variables within Cluster 2

TABLE 8 Percentage Frequency Distribution of Response to Statement Variables within Cluster 3

TABLE 9 Percentage Frequency Distribution of Response to Statement Variables within Cluster 4

TABLE 10 Percentage Frequency Distribution of Response to Statement Variables within Cluster 5

LIST OF FIGURES.

FIGURE 1 Hierarchical Cluster Analysis

ABSTRACT

This study has explored the diversity that exists among women involved in the environment movement, their perceptions of environmental issues, their perceptions of women's role at this historic juncture, and their sources of inspiration and spirituality. It has explored to some degree the interconnection between these women's perceptions and those of ecofeminism.

Interviews were conducted with 30 women involved in a diversity of groups within the environment movement. A survey was then designed from statements women made in these interviews. This was sent to 215 women in the environment movement across Australia, to determine the diversity of perspectives, existing among women involved in the movement, concerning women, the environment and spirituality.

Results of interview, and analysis of the 142 surveys returned, revealed a diversity of feminist and ecofeminist perspectives, ranging from liberal feminist to radical separatist, a diversity of perspectives on causes of environmental problems, and divergent understandings and attitudes toward spirituality.

Ecofeminism advocates a politics of diversity. It is this perspective which is supported by the findings of this thesis. Ecofeminism as an emergent philosophy of women and the environment movement, needs to engage women in a process of dialogue so that the diversity of women's perspectives and analysis may be deepened and their contributions be actively inserted into the agenda for social and ecological change.

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that none of the material contained in this thesis has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the thesis. I consent to this thesis being made available for photocopying and loan, if applicable, and if the thesis is accepted for the award of the degree.

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CHAPTER 1.

WHY WOMEN, ENVIRONMENTS AND SPIRITUALITY?

What we see, we see
and seeing is changing....

Heartbeat of the pulsar
heart sweating through my body....

I have been standing all my life in the
direct path of a battery of signals
the most accurately transmitted most
untranslatable language in the universe
I am a galactic cloud so deep so invo-
luted that a light wave could take 15
years to travel through me And has
taken I am an instrument in the shape
of a woman trying to translate pulsations
into images for the relief of the body
and the reconstruction of the mind.

Adrienne Rich (1980).

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND TO STUDY

For peoples, generally, their story of the universe and the human role in the universe is their primary source of intelligibility and value. Only through this story of how the universe came to be in the beginning and how it came to be as it is, does a person come to appreciate the meaning of life or to derive the psychic energy needed to deal effectively with those crisis moments that occur in the life of the individual and in the life of society. Berry (1989, p.xi)

The earth is in crisis, a crisis of unique evolutionary proportion. It is a crisis focused in the aspect of the human being, for human being is the reflective consciousness of the earth, that being in whom the earth consciously reflects on and celebrates itself and through whom the current course of evolutionary history is being shaped and directed. Today the earth's evolution is intimately bound to the processes of human cultural evolution.

The earth crisis and the human crisis are ultimately situated in questions of human meaning and purpose in relationship to the larger story of the earth. What is the meaning and purpose of human being within the context of an evolving universe, within the complexity of the ecosystems of earth? These meanings are mediated by culture and expressed within its institutions.

Western culture has derived its meanings, and therefore its social and symbolic systems, largely from a context of Judeo-Christian religion, Greek philosophy, Neo-classical economics and scientific rationalism. These systems which mediate and express cultural meaning have legitimated humanity's separation from and dominion over nature. They and the institutions, which embody their perceptions of human meaning and

purpose, have brought us to this ecological precipice, a place in which we find ourselves confronting the potential closing down of the life systems of the earth.

The time has now come...when we will listen or we will die. The time has come to lower our voices, to cease imposing our mechanistic patterns on the biological processes of the earth, to resist the impulse to control, to command, to force, to oppress and to begin quite humbly to follow the guidance of the larger community on which all life depends. Our fulfillment is not in our isolated human grandeur, but in our intimacy with the larger earth community, for this is also the larger dimension of our being! Our human destiny is integral with the destiny of the earth.
Berry (1989, p.xiv)

The time has come to listen to the voices of the oppressed and marginalized, to those who have been controlled, commanded and forced by the machinations of society into silence, into perceptions of themselves as less than those who wield power, those who name and mediate meaning. Our very survival depends on the development of an intimacy with the larger earth community, but also on the liberation of the voices of all those denied place in the culture's processes of defining meaning.

Women have been systematically excluded from the enterprise of creating symbol systems, philosophies, science and law...they have been excluded from theory formation.
Lerner (1986, p.5.)

Hearing the voice of all those marginalized, and particularly of women, because it is different experience which holds different perception, has the power and potential to birth new meanings and therefore stimulate cultural change.

The contradiction between women's centrality and active role in creating society and their marginality in the meaning-giving process of interpretation and explanation has been a dynamic force causing women to struggle against their condition. When, in that process of struggle at certain historic moments, the contradictions in their relationship to society and to the historical process are brought into the consciousness of women, they are then correctly perceived and named as deprivations that women share as a group. This coming-into-consciousness of women becomes the dialectical force moving them into action to change their condition and to enter a new relationship to male-dominated society.

Lerner (1986, p.5.)

The ecological crisis is such a moment in history. Women are “coming-into-consciousness” and articulating their felt concerns over the value, meaning and symbolic systems of “male-dominated society”. Women are coming to voice their concerns over the treatment and oppression of women, other oppressed human groups and nature. They are recognizing that the male-defined values or meanings embodied within society and within cultural institutions (social, political, religious, economic, scientific) are dysfunctional and have led us to this point of social and ecological crisis. Women are calling for new structurings, new interpretations and explanations of human being and human meanings.

Fritjof Capra (1985, p. 10) in discussing Toynbee’s patterns of cultural evolution, suggests that in the process of cultural change that although:

... the cultural mainstream has become petrified by clinging to fixed ideas and rigid patterns of behaviour, creative minorities will appear on the scene and carry on the process of challenge and response. The dominant social institutions will refuse to hand over their leading roles to these new cultural forces, but they will inevitably go on to decline and disintegrate and the creative minorities may be able to transform some of the old elements into a new configuration.

Chaos theory also generates a vision of the potential creativity of unstable systems. Prigogine and Stengers (1988) have identified the presence of “innovators” in unstable systems which, if they multiply fast enough, may move the whole system to a new mode of functioning. As initial small fluctuations are amplified, critical “bifurcation points” or paths to possible systems transformation, open up. They apply this theory to the dynamics of social change.

An emerging body of thought, potentially a “creative minority” or “innovator”, which identifies the need to hear the voice of the oppressed, largely women and nature, to re-define human meaning and purpose and their social and cultural embodiments, is that of ecofeminism. In its critique and construction ecofeminism has the potential to ‘move the

whole system to a new mode of functioning', a new "intimacy with the larger earth community" (Berry, 1989, p. xiv).

In discussing "cultural transformation theory", Riane Eisler (1990, p. 150) brings together a body of research which suggests that periods of creativity and social progress in history have been marked by the rise of "feminine" values within the culture. Perhaps with the emergence of ecofeminism we see the possibilities of such a creative phase of transformation happening at this historical moment.

It is from this perception that the focus on women and environments in this thesis, is derived. The focus on spirituality is derived from the perception that spirituality is integral to the processes of constructing meaning, a sense of self in relation to ultimate meanings.

Anthropologists have noted that it is the functioning of every culture to answer three questions for its people: the individual's relationship to self; the individual's relationship to others and the individual's relationship to the universe (which can include the concept of transcendence).

Juanita Weaver (1982, p. 250.)

Spirituality then is about the relationship of a person's deepest self to all aspects of their life and to the deeper ground and mystery of all being, to the ultimate mystery of all that is. It structures relationships and commitments, a sense of self in relation to the world. This dialogue between personal meaning and ultimate mystery is a dynamic process, continually ongoing throughout life. It emerges at the cultural level in the symbolic constructs that a culture erects to embody collective perception of meaning. Religion is one example of this, capitalism another.

Carol Christ, in an essay entitled *Why Women Need the Goddess* (1982, p. 72), discusses the importance of religious symbols and ritual in human life. She quotes anthropologist Clifford Geertz to show how religious symbols

shape a cultural ethos, defining the deepest values of a society and the persons in it:

Symbols have both psychological and political effects, because they create the inner conditions (deep seated attitudes and feelings) that lead people to feel comfortable with or to accept social and political arrangements that correspond to the symbol system...[Importantly] a symbol functions on levels of the psyche other than the rational. Geertz (quoted by Christ 1982, p.72)

The question in times of crisis then becomes: what are the guiding images, symbols, metaphors and myths which are operating or can operate within culture on a deep level to effect social and cultural transformation? How do we change our ways of being in relation to one another and to the Earth? How do we change the social systems which are socially and ecologically destructive, if not through a deep transformation of consciousness and through fundamental conceptual changes to the cultural symbols that mediate and express meaning? What are the new images arising, particularly within the experience of those who have traditionally been without power, without voice, those who have been denied place within the "meaning-giving process" (Lerner 1986, p. 5) of symbol and system construction? How do we as a culture move into new relationships and new intimacy with the unvoiced and with the earth community?

1.2. ECOFEMINISM: A NEW SYNTHESIS

A new synthesis of spiritual, personal and political, envisioning new relationships within the total life community of the earth, is happening within ecofeminism. Kate Sandilands (1991, p.90) explains where this emerging synthesis of ecofeminism is being derived and its inherent tensions:

In theories, in individual transformations and in collective actions, links between women's struggles and environmental issues are coming into focus, are being constructed from and into a variety of practices surrounding social and ecological liberation. As in any process of coalition-building, these connections are fraught with tension: different feminisms collide with diverse ecological sensibilities in a wide range of social and political contexts.

Ecofeminism is an emerging philosophy of the women and environment movement. It attempts to unify ecological and feminist theory and praxis. It is not simply a single unified view of the world, but a discursive web, rich in its diversity and promise. Some central threads characterizing the webbing are an understanding that the exploitation of nature and the domination of women are linked and that the nature of this linkage lies in the patriarchal conception and construction of the world. Further, ecofeminism would argue that feminism needs ecological theory, as ecological theory needs feminism, to deepen both analyses so that the shaping of new realities is not gender-biased, does not reinforce existing oppressions and is inclusive of environmental concerns.

Ecofeminists are birthing their articulations from within different grounds: environmentalism, philosophy, theology/thealogy, socio-political critique, to name just a few. This gives rise to what Kate Sandilands (1991) has termed a "polyvocal array"; broad coalitions of thought, understandings and utterings that reflect an ecological diversity, interconnected yet individuated.

The term ecofeminism was coined in 1974 by French author Franscoise d'Eaubonne in a paper entitled *Le Féminisme ou la mort'*. Spretnak (1990, p. 5) identifies ecofeminism as arising from within radical or cultural feminism, which holds that:

identifying the dynamics — largely fear and resentment — behind the dominance of male over female, is the key to comprehending every expression of patriarchal culture with its hierarchical, militaristic, mechanistic, industrialist forms.

Common positions can be identified in ecofeminism, aggregating around a number of basic themes. The greatest proportion of ecofeminists would identify hierarchical dualism as one of the basic causes of the oppression of women and nature, i.e., the splitting of reality into antagonistic opposites, which are then constituted into a hierarchy which justifies a logic of domination. A second group of ecofeminists locate the basis of the problem for women and nature in the rise of mechanistic science, with its machine metaphor and building block view of the world replacing an organic model of nature, in which nature was seen as a living being, often nurturing mother. Then there are those that hold that biologically, psychologically and socially constructed difference between women and men has provided a basis for the masculine domination of women and nature; those that find origins in the destruction of Goddess religions and matrifocal egalitarian culture, by the rampaging hordes of Indo-European warrior tribes who swept into Western Europe around 5000 BC; and those that see that it is not that simple, that women and nature have been devalued in Western thought, but that a complex of social and historical factors have interacted to construct our view of women and nature.

Hierarchical dualism in its splitting of reality into antagonistic opposites (mind-body, spirit-mind, male-female, reason-emotion, thought-intuition, self-other, culture-nature immaterial spirit-spiritless matter) and in its elevation of the masculine half of the dichotomy, has alienated the contributions of women and nature. It has institutionalized domination and the masculine way of seeing, being, knowing and valuing in our personal relations and in our social, political and religious structures. Healing the wounds of this dualism is one of the major projects of ecofeminism. Yenestra King (1989, p. 24) for example, says:

... that although the nature-culture dualism is a product of culture, we can nonetheless consciously choose not to sever the women-nature connection by joining

male culture. Rather we can use it as a vantage point for creating a different kind of culture and politics that would integrate intuitive, spiritual, and rational forms of knowledge, embracing both science and magic insofar as they enable us to transform the nature-culture distinction and to envision a free and ecological society.

The political programme of ecofeminism can therefore be said to be a radical restructuring of human being and of the human enterprise, a transformation of social structures to embody feminist ideals and ecological perspectives, a new relatedness to earth which is not based on manipulation and control, but which reflects a recognition that we are part of nature and need to live in dynamic reciprocity to it. Social ecology provides something of the political programme of this vision. Yenestra King (1989, p. 23), for example, advocates the creation of "harmonious, diverse and decentralized communities" living in ecological relationship to the earth.

Ecofeminist philosophers, Karen Warren (1990) and Val Plumwood (1990), have articulated a position of transformative ecofeminism which is based in the recognition and rejection of "the dualistic and oppositional construction of the nature/culture or nature/human distinction" (Plumwood 1990, p. 24). Their central argument is that:

Both women and men need to find a way of being in the world which does not depend on the exploitation, exclusion and devaluation of the sphere of the feminine and of nature, both within and without the human self.

Plumwood (1990, p. 24)

Warren (1990, p. 143) develops an argument for the ecofeminization of feminism and the feminization of environmental ethics:

Feminism must embrace ecological feminism if it is to end the domination of women because the domination of women is conceptually and historically linked to the domination of nature.

Further, unless environmental ethics takes account of how dualism with its logic of domination has acted to legitimate the domination of women and nature, it is in danger of perpetuating that oppression.

Plumwood and Warren, along with other ecofeminist philosophers, are concerned to construct new ways of being, seeing, knowing and valuing. An ecofeminist ontology affirms that the fundamental category of being is relation, not substance. That is, we are constituted by our relations. We are interdependent being within an interconnected web of relation. Ecofeminist epistemology holds that we know not by rationalized objectification of reality, but from within, from having a feeling for the organism, a form of connected knowing, an intersubjectivity. In an ecofeminist ethic, value is determined from within and from within relationship. Moral responsibility is derived from a sense of our relatedness to other beings and the larger earth community and not from a simple adherence to some objectified universal code (Hallen 1991; Warren 1990). An Australian ecofeminist philosopher, Freya Matthews (1991) notes that:

Nature for ecofeminists is a community of related but distinct individuals. We are related to Nature as to members of a common family, to whom the proper attitude is one of consideration and care, born of an empathetic understanding made possible by our common origins or our mutually defining relations.

This position is distinct from that of Deep Ecology, which a number of ecofeminists reject because it fails, in its masculine articulations, to appreciate difference and diversity. Freya Matthews (1991) in an ecofeminist critique of Deep Ecology, suggests that:

[our] mode of relation should be by way of open-minded and attentive encounter rather than an abstract metaphysical preconceptualization which sees ourselves as one with nature.

Joanna Macy (1989, p.203) reflects this change of focus, an ecofeminist reappropriation of Deep Ecology, in suggesting that feelings of co-extensiveness with nature do not eclipse "the distinctiveness of one's individual experience", saying that "integration and differentiation go hand in hand".

For our sakes and the sake of all beings, we are called to discover our true nature, co-extensive with all life in this planet. We are called to break { the prison

we have made for ourselves, turn the key of that isolation cell and walk into the world as into our own heart, coming home to the full reach of our being, home to our power, home to our ecological self.

Some women are highly critical of ecofeminism as an emerging philosophy of women and environment, accusing it of social and political naivety in its "seductively simple [analysis of] power and subordination, [whereby the domination of women and nature is seen to] originate within male consciousness" (Prentice 1988, p. 9). The contention seems to lie within an essentialist branding of ecofeminism. While a small group of ecofeminists would identify with an essentialist position, that is that women possess a privileged position by virtue of their identification with nature, the majority of ecofeminists would actually reject that position. The recognition of socially constructed difference, structured into social relations and institutions is paramount to the arguments of the majority of ecofeminists.

Sandilands (1991, p. 95), argues that ecofeminism has to embrace more fully an analysis of nature as a social construction. She writes:

a fundamental problem with ecofeminism lies in its failure to problematize "nature" itself as a social product. ... We can never "know" nature apart from culture. ... The project of feminist ecology ... needs to be located squarely in the terrain of the social, but including nature as a part of social relations.

Jo Vallentine, the West Australian Senator for Nuclear Disarmament, in an address to a conference of W.A. Greens in July 1991 stated:

Many of us may be aware that the current ecological revolution is much deeper than a change in the way we do things as a species. It is also a massive spiritual re-awakening — an acknowledgement of the spirit, the power within, which each of us can tap into, coupled with the utmost respect for all life forms.

This re-emergence of the spiritual as a component of "revolution" is seen by ecofeminists as another component of healing the wounds of dualism. "Our word spirit", says Susan Griffin (1989, p. 7) "rises in our imagination above the Earth as if we believed that holiness exists in inverse proportion to gravity". Much emphasis is being placed, by ecofeminists on reuniting

spirit and matter, asserting the integral wholeness of all of nature, but here too exists myriad diversity. Earth based spirituality, Women's spirituality and Goddess spirituality sit alongside the articulations of Christian theologians in the anthologies of ecofeminism.

"Spirituality is an intrinsic dimension of human consciousness and is not separate from the body", says Charlene Spretnak (1989, p. 127). Rosemary Radford Reuther (1989, p. 145) adds that consciousness is "the most intense and complex form of inwardness of material energy itself". Ecofeminist spirituality affirms spirit and body, that our bodies with all their emotive, spiritual, sexual, sensual and imaginative power are a celebration of matter become conscious.

Goddess spirituality holds that all forms are one, continually renewed in the cyclic rhythms of birth, maturation and death. It honours union and process, and sees the Goddess as immanent in our lives and world, all being a part of her (Spretnak 1989).

Women's spirituality celebrates women's elemental power, particularly those moments in a woman's life "wherein she gains experiential knowledge in a powerful body/mind union of the holistic truths of spirituality" (Spretnak 1989, p. 129). Spretnak, (1989, p. 129) also cites women's sexual experience as a case in point where the post-orgasmic mind state of women is quite different to that which men describe as *le petit mort* (the little death): "The free floating, non-discriminatory sense of oneness that females experience could more accurately be called *le petit satori* (the little glimpse of enlightenment)". She (1989, p.131) goes on to say:

Watch your mind. Trust your body knowledge. Feel your natural tendencies toward multilayered perception, empathy, compassion, unity and harmony. Feel the elemental source of our power. Discard the patriarchal patterns of alienation, fear, enmity, aggression and destruction. The authentic female mind is our salvation.

Earth based spirituality also affirms the cyclic processes of nature (birth, growth, death, decay and regeneration) as integral to spiritual experience. The essentialist position of women's spirituality, that is, privileging women's experience, is broadened within a vision of the world as a living being, ritual and political action being directed to preserve the life of the Earth and build community around it. The core beliefs of Earth-based spirituality surround the concepts of immanence, diversity and interconnection.

The earth's body itself is the terrain of our spiritual growth and development which comes through our contact with the fulness of life inherent in the Earth ... Each of us is part of the creative being who is the universe herself ... We can become agents of ... transformation and bring a new world to birth.

Starhawk (1989, p. 178,p. 184)

Christian women theologians, Rosemary Radford Reuther (1989), Elizabeth Dodson Gray (1988) and Sallie McFague (1989), are attempting to evolve a non-dualistic, non-hierarchical theology that "converts our minds", our distinctive consciousness to "nature's logic of ecological harmony" (Reuther 1989, p.149). Rosemary Radford Reuther (1989, p.145) proposes a view of God/ess, imaged as both male and female, as the primal Matrix, the ground of being, new being, neither "stifling immanence nor rootless transcendence". Sallie McFague (1989) identifies the metaphorical nature of all theology, that all descriptors are always approximations of the absolute mystery. She proposes that we trial new metaphors to stimulate the development of ecological consciousness, namely consciousness of the earth as God's body, God as lover, friend, mother.

What these women are attempting is a new synthesis. They recognize that our old metaphors, our old ways of imaging the mystery of all that is, of naming our meanings and socially constructing them has lead us to the brink of ecological destruction. That women have largely been excluded from the processes of creating the major structures of Western society, its

philosophies and religions, science and technology, its social and political systems, means that these structures are constructions of the masculine psyche and only reflect one aspect of reality - masculine priorities and ways of being, knowing and valuing. The time is ripe for women to assert the difference and diversity of their positions, to image new ways of being in relation, new ways of knowing and valuing from experience, and to insert these into a new restructuring of the human enterprise. As Patsy Halen (1987, p. 123) states:

We need a reversal of mainstream malestream values and the triumph of feminism, a revolution in economic priorities and a steady-state economy, a peace force for a just and sustainable society, a social force for voluntary simplicity and collective action for the ecological reconstruction of society. We need to overcome our dichotomies and to discover our deep sources, our springs.

Ecofeminism is a multiplicity of sometimes converging, sometimes diverging perspectives. It is an emerging philosophy, one which needs to interact with the lived experience of women engaged in environmental activity.

1.3 AIMS OF THE STUDY

This thesis seeks to research the perspectives and perceptions of women involved in the environment movement in Australia on the themes of women, the environment and spirituality. How much these perspectives converge with those of ecofeminism, as the emergent philosophy of the women and environment movement, may be glimpsed through studying the accounts of women on these three themes. Further resolution or definition of ecofeminism's importance to women, can only be determined by interaction of the philosophy with the lived experience of these women.

This thesis is a first step in understanding the variety of women involved in work for the environment; their perceptions of environmental problems and the cause of these; their perceptions of women's role at this time of history; and their perceptions of spirituality, that is, the images and metaphors which symbolize and give meaning to their lives, and further guide their actions for social change.

Women and their efforts at this time of ecological and social crisis, of systems failure and instability, may represent those crucial "creative minorities" of Capra's (1985), or the "innovators" of chaos theory who through their presence and action hold the potential to "move the whole system to a new mode of functioning" (Prigogine and Stengers 1988). Just what is the experience of women in the Australian environment movement?

CHAPTER 2.

ASCERTAINING WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS:
 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*It's an oldfashioned, an outrageous thing
 to believe one has a "destiny"*

*- a thought often peculiar to those
 who possess privilege -*

*but there is something else: the faith
 of those despised and endangered*

*that they are not merely the sum
 of damages done to them:*

*have kept beyond violence the knowledge
 arranged in patterns like kente-cloth*

*unexpected as in batik
 recurrent as bitter herbs and unleavened bread*

*of being a connective link
 in a long, continuous way*

*of ordering hunger, weather, death desire
 and the nearness of chaos.*

Adrienne Rich (1981)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Feminist research processes affirm the importance of women's experience in the interpretation and construction of social meanings. Stanley and Wise (1989, p. 53) for example, note that "the traditional male emphasis has been on objectifying experience and so 'getting away from' the personal into some transcendental realm of 'knowledge and truth' ". They (1989, p. 53) go on to say: "for feminists the key consequence of this is that it denies validity to women's understandings of women's experience because they are 'merely' subjective, rooted in the particular".

The methodology adopted by this study affirms women's naming of their experience. It affirms the feminist tenet that the 'personal is political', that:

Our 'inner selves' — the way we think and feel about and how we define ourselves — are connected in an active and reciprocal way with the larger social and political structures and processes in the context of which they are constructed.

Kitzinger (1987, p. 31)

The research process therefore was defined in order to tap into the reflective process of women's self-definition, into the processes of women's namings of social realities and meanings. It is also based on a recognition that meaning-making and the construction of a person's world-view, is a continuous process. Our "inner self" interacts within a relational field and context (environmental, social and political). We are constantly creating a stability of identity, yet one which is dynamic, never arriving, never constrained nor defined by any one way of being.

The research method was therefore designed to interact with the dynamism of this self-definitional process. It aimed to locate in this particular time-space, the diversity of women's experience, perceptions and namings.

The research process was also constructed on a belief that the process should not be exploitative and that the women participating in the study, and not merely the researcher, should gain in some way from the experience. In the interactive section of the research my role was chiefly that of facilitating the reflective definitional process. I was not the traditional objective researcher, gathering and crunching information into rigorous categories of my own creation.

The research method was carried out in two parts. The first being a series of interviews; the second a survey designed around a Q-sort methodology, a technique of cluster analysis.

2.2 THE INTERVIEW METHOD.

Interviews were conducted with 30 women, either singly (as in a one to one interview) or within a group context. The latter was undertaken where a group already existed and had developed within itself a level of relationship and comfort in communication across group members.

Key informants were chosen for interview in order to reflect a diversity of response. Women interviewed were from the Mawson Graduate Centre for Environmental Studies; the Women and Environmental Action Group; Australian Conservation Foundation; Wilderness Society; The Last Resort Group campaigning on Wilpena; a Mothers' group gathered around local school involvement; Green politics; and from within the Public Service.

The interviews were conducted in a relaxed manner. The aim was to facilitate dialogue, so a rigid question-answer interview format was rejected. Where people were unknown to me, time was spent establishing a rapport. All of the women were asked to respond to the same set of questions. These are listed in Table 1. The order of questioning was often altered according to the direction of the exchange, as the intent was to encourage a relaxed dialogue around ideas and issues important to the interviewee. Where greater exchange on an issue seemed possible or necessary for the sake of clarity and common understanding, the interviewee's words were fed back to her in the form of a question in order that she might extend her thinking on the question under consideration. This was done in order to ensure an objectivity in the process so that the ideas of the woman being interviewed would be expounded, not those of the interviewer, and to ensure that the interviewee's words would not be construed toward 'what the interviewer wanted to hear'. A number of women commented that they in fact would have preferred it to be more of a two way exchange of ideas, a participant/observer situation, so that their own feelings and ideas could have been extended and developed through the mutuality of the exchange process.

The schedule of questions to be covered was not shared with individuals prior to the interview, as I felt this might inhibit the relaxed flow of ideas. The women however were given an indication of the direction and content, the overall purpose of the interview, in the pre-interview stage.

With the two group interviews, however, it was felt that some prior reflection was mandatory for effective exchange. A schedule of questions (Table 2) was provided to group members at least a week prior to the

TABLE 1. INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INDIVIDUALS.

What is your perception of the basis of the environmental problem?

Where are you coming from in your commitment to the environment/environmental activity/activism?

What is your vision of a future society?

How does being a woman affect your environmental vision, action, commitment, involvement in groups etc.? What do you think women have to offer the environment movement, or this moment of history?

What other networks are you actively linked to/involved in?

What are your sources of vision, energy, hope, commitment ? Do these have a spiritual dimension? Are you making any particular linkages between spirituality and ecological/environmental issues?

TABLE 2. GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Locate yourself perceptually within the group. How long has the group been together? Why was the group formed? How long have you been part of the group? What group actions have you been a part of? Think/locate your feelings on your role and relationship to/within the group? Can you draw an image of the group/yourself in relation to the group?

Why are you involved in a Women and Environments group? What do you feel women have to offer at this point of history?

What is your vision of a future society? How is this vision shared by the group? How is the group committed to working toward this - personally/politically?

What issues has the group discussed/made a response to - personally/collectively? For you/the group are the how and what of political action linked in any way?

What other networks are you actively linked to? Do the issues /actions of these networks interact?

How does the group organize itself? Is responsibility for coordination, facilitation, action shared or delegated? Are decisions made by consensus or majority vote? How are conflicts resolved? Can/do people opt out (for a time/altogether) if they don't agree with a political action/decision?

What are the personal/collective sources/wellsprings of inspiration/energy/hope/vision/commitment? Is there a spiritual dimension to your commitment? Do you use any rituals etc. to empower your vision and action?

group's meeting. A process of bringing together the reflected upon insights, through a meditative drawing process, (i.e., where women reflected on the thoughts and responses they had to the question schedule and then represented their thoughts and feelings to the group using drawing as a medium). This process was used at the beginning of each group's meeting.

Each woman was given the opportunity to share her reflections without dialogue or comment, except in the instance of assisting someone to expand on an idea that had been expressed. This was held to be important as it enabled each woman to express her own ideas and feelings without the modifications induced by open-ended dialogue. A listening and supportive environment was established through this process which facilitated sharing and the mutuality of the exchange. In this way the group was able to directly benefit from the processes of sharing and exchange as well as the interviewer.

All of the interviews were taped and later transcribed to ensure the accuracy of information gained in interview. The data was then analysed in order to gather an understanding of the spectrum and diversity of opinion on the issues canvassed. Similarities and differences began to emerge and it was on the basis of these that a survey using the Q-sort or cluster analysis method was devised, in order to survey the spectrum which exists within the broader environment network across Australia.

2.3 Q-ANALYSIS

... the first emancipatory mathematics in the human sciences. To see yourself, to be aware of oneself, in a geometry that forbids and allows, induces emancipatory self-reflection, that raises the question of how the geometries might be changed.

Goold (1980, p. 196)

The technique of Q-analysis was chosen to survey, within the larger environment network, women's diversity; existing similarities and difference, and relationships among streams of thought. Q-methodology is designed to reveal structure and relations. That is, it identifies groupings which exist, relationships within these groups and between groups (Gould 1980, 1982). In setting up a statement within the context of a Q- survey, respondents are asked to indicate upon a continuum simply whether a statement "is like me" or if it "is not me at all" (Kitzinger 1987, p. 79). Q-methodology is essentially a means of eliciting and operationalizing subjectivities (Kitzinger 1987, p. 79).

Not only does it allow a description of structure that is rooted in actual observation - a description that refuses to crush the data with inappropriate and constrained mathematical forms - but it also raises the possibilities of changing the structures themselves.

Gould (1982, p. 98)

Q-methodology was used in this study to describe the loose structure knitting together the beliefs, values and perceptions of women within the environment movement, within a dynamic of relationship. It attempts to allow women to speak for themselves. It aims to coalesce groupings of like-minded women around similarities of thought and perception while revealing difference within a group and among groups. It clusters the women (respondents), according to the similarity of their overall responses, unlike other methods which cluster variables:

Q-analysis 'lets the data speak for themselves' and is concerned to explore ...structure, not tear apart a geometry of connective tissue to stuff the pieces in little partitioned boxes to satisfy, what one distinguished virologist has termed "the potty training of the observer".

Gould (1982, p.99)

The methodology is designed to identify what it is that women in the environment movement think about causes of our environmental problems, about women's, and to a lesser extent, men's involvement in

causes and solutions, and about how spirituality connects with this. What is the "connective tissue" that unites women's endeavour in the movement, and further, "what goals and what values will inform the choices that create the connective tissue to the future we want"? (Gould 1982, p. 97).

Information gained in interview provided the raw material for the survey. Material was analysed in order to obtain the full diversity of opinion which was then represented in the survey format. Actual statements of interview were utilized. The survey format is contained in Appendix 1. Women were asked to record their responses to the statements by indicating on a scale (+5 strongly agree, to -5 strongly disagree) how they felt about a statement. A direction was given to record zero if any ambivalence was felt toward the statement; or if they were unsure about what the statement was saying; or about how they felt about the statement itself. A comment section was also included at the end of the survey for those who felt that their opinion was not represented, and for those who wished to record their discontent with the process.

A total of 215 survey sheets were distributed. Names were gathered from

- a) the mailing list of women involved in the *'Women and Ecologically Sustainable Development'* survey undertaken In 1991 by Val Browne and Meg Switzer;
- b) *Conserve* magazine, a publication of the Women and Environment Section of the Department of Environment and Conservation, Victoria;
- c) a list of women who expressed interest in a Women and Environment network at Ecopolitics IV Conference, Adelaide, 1989;
- d) women Environmental Studies' students at the Mawson Graduate Centre for Environmental Studies, Adelaide University; and

e) women in the State Public Service and local conservation groups. The survey was sent also to all of those who had been previously interviewed.

2.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Language and interpretation are key and immediate questions which arise in the application and interpretation of any survey, but more particularly in this instance where a diversity of concepts and language is employed to cover a topic of such breadth and depth.

Language is a 'web', it is a network of relationships that ... holds together a multiple of meanings that — like fish caught in a net — would otherwise swim apart.

Martin Seymour-Smith (quoted by Gould 1982, p. 84)

And yet if we do not grapple with language and meaning we have no shared basis of understanding and no path to proceed with dialogue. Dialogue itself is a reciprocal process of shared understanding and definition. Recognizing this, the survey has attempted to articulate differing and divergent understandings, and different definitions of belief. Response to the different articulations then aimed to locate any commonality of feeling around statements and particularly to elicit strong oppositional or affirmative/empathetic feelings. Perhaps evocation of strong negative feelings in a survey format is counter-productive to a positive result. Through the diversity of survey statements however, it was hoped to uncover where shared understanding existed, understandings around which future dialogue which would further refine and define meaning, could be developed.

People's experience of surveys with their intent to box and categorize into neat and rigid categories, also affects their response. Although the technique is designed to show connections and relationships, rather than to

set women in concrete definitional spaces, there is no infallible way that this sentiment can be communicated and all fears allayed. Using such a technique as this with a large number of 'unknown' faces at the other end of a postal system is fraught with reactionary difficulty, i.e., it may produce negative reactions, which may distort the result and work against one of my original intentions, i.e., to have women gain in a positive way from the process of participation. Emotional reactions to the survey format may condition the response given in the survey and give a different result to that which may have been gained in interview.

Different personalities will also indicate their perceptions on a sliding scale differently. Comparison of responses will show where strong feelings exist and group these women together. Where there is greater individual variation within groupings, positive and negative trends ($\geq +1$ or ≤ -1) will be used to show the overall leanings of the cumulative group.

Despite the limitations of the survey technique, it was felt that the Q-sort methodology, the object of which being the "operationalization of subjectivities" (Kitzinger 1987, p. 79), definition of pattern, connective tissue and relationship, working in concert with material gained in interview, could provide some useful interpretative insight. This would furnish a starting point for understanding the multiplicity of opinion, and open paths of dialogue in the process of creating an alternative future.

CHAPTER 3.

HEARING WOMEN'S VOICES:

RESULTS OF INTERVIEW

I am

I am the deep blue woman
of the Southern Ocean; my

head rests warm
on ancient earth of the
Australian continent; my

hands sink into
soft sands
of far distant shores; my

feet rest cool
on Antarctic
ice

water flows through me; my
body moves
with the tides
regular as pulse
on pulse

fish pass through
touch as light as
fluid on fluid

every molecule
of me surrounded
by waters triangles

ringing
in
exhilaration!

pam maltland (1989).

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In her introduction to *Sacred Dimensions of Women's Experience* (1988, p. 1) editor Elizabeth Dodson Gray reflects on 'naming' and 'voice'. She notes that:

Throughout recorded time men have 'named the sacred' from the standing point of the male body and male life experience. Naming is power, power to shape reality into a form that serves the interests and goals of the one doing the naming.

She and a number of other women are claiming that power to name and shape reality, through "peering into the richly woven texture of ordinary human experience". (Gray 1988, p. 2).

The present study affirms women's emergence in the environment movement. In giving voice to the different experiences of women in the movement we begin a process of naming and constructing meaning through women's eyes and experience. Such a process is likely to reveal a rich and diverse tapestry of speech, of lived experience and perception. We need, as Elizabeth Dodson Gray (1988, p. 5) reflects to "hear each other into speech [for] in our diversity we bring you truth; where we are undifferentiated we bring you limitation".

3.2 PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEES

The following is a brief sketch of the diversity of lived experience and perception, the voices of 30 women whom I interviewed, who are engaged in the environment movement.

Perception very much depends on the ground, the socio-cultural space, where people stand. The women interviewed came from involvements in

Government, family, schools, community, university, various movements²⁹ and campaigns. They are trained ecologists, biologists, anthropologists, mothers, campaigners and resource managers. Networks that these women are connected to include: Australian Conservation Foundation; Wilderness Society; Friends of the Earth; Nature Conservation Society; Trees for Life; Greenpeace; Natural Resource Management (national and international); Government; Business; Women's Peace and Anti-nuclear movements; Women's centre for Spirituality; Equal Opportunity; Women in Science Network; Quakers; Community Aid Abroad; Greenham Common; The Green Party; Rainbow Alliance; Amnesty International; Women and Environmental Action Group; Women's Spirit Collective; Friendship Networks; Food Co-operatives; Organic Gardening; Women in the Bush; Ornithological Society; School Environment Group; Milk Carton Recycling Campaign; The Last Resort Campaign. Overall there was a high level of commitment to social and environmental politics.

Where did the commitment of these women to the environment come from? What analyses do they apply to their understandings of environmental problems? What are the conceptual frameworks out of which they operate?

A number of women talked of their childhood relationship to nature, particularly inspired by their mothers, as a time of forming connections with nature, and intimate relationships with places, plants and animals. Some talked simply of a "sense of place" or a "love of life, a desire to give back something of what we've taken from nature", of a desire to save something for the people they love, for their own or other's children. One spoke of the importance to her of "caring for what we've been given".

For several other women their specific training in science, as ecologists, in³⁰ natural history, etc. and their experience of observing the effects of "the human race on living systems", has stimulated a desire for working toward the "management of the natural world before it becomes further degraded". One woman held a specific "emotional commitment to systems". A number also affirmed evolutionary perspectives, and saw themselves as working within long time frames, maintaining a long-term view of environmental processes. Passionately held concerns for specific trees, places, peoples, human rights, the rights of indigenous peoples etc., form the context of the 'campaigner's' outlook.

Some women strongly affirmed a feminist analysis, specifically an analysis of power relations (i.e., who holds power and why) as informing their perceptions on the environment. Some of these women specifically identified a lesbian separatist position as providing the framework for their analysis.

A few women were committed to radical self-sufficiency. Other women exercised their commitment to the environment through political activity. This was expressed as a means for these women to link those things they felt to be personally important with politics, an opportunity to express their philosophy within the public arena. One woman had chosen to leave a job in the public service to become a "poverty stricken gardener" to reduce the enormous personal contradictions she felt present in her life, living out her commitment to the environment through her subsequent political action and work.

A couple of women expressed their environmental sensitivity as stemming from a "presence to the body", coming to their environmental concerns from "the inside out, then outside in", by a process of attuning their small

body to the Earth's large body, gaining a perception of self as very expansive³¹ yet connected.

3.3 INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES.

Feelings of anger, passion, pain and despair were expressed when women talked of their perceptions of environmental issues. Anxiety was expressed at the degradation and impoverishment of the environment through pollution, the generation of garbage and industrial waste, the greenhouse effect and ozone depletion, species loss, reduction in habitat diversity and the Australian history of land management. "We are fouling our own nest" and simplifying our ecosystems and "we are way too overpopulated". These were the most immediately felt and expressed elements of women's everyday experience.

Some women expressed deeply felt concerns over the connections between environmental degradation and human impoverishment. This was expressed in a number of ways. One was through a concern over the systematic exploitation of indigenous minorities and third world peoples, who are being forced, by the burgeoning appetite of Western capitalist and communist regimes, into impoverished environments and into impoverishing their environments. Another woman stated:

What concerns me is the quality of existence for the environment and within that, humankind The enormous sadness that I feel is not so much that the planet is going to die, because one recognizes mortality, but the difference between dying with dignity, integrity and love and dying with absolute squalor, despair and loneliness. I want to see life unfold with dignity and care and within that humankind as well.

Many women felt that "whatever happens in the exterior world we experience internally as well", and further, that the crucial problem is what is happening inside of us. We have cut ourselves "off from self-awareness and self-knowledge" of what lies within us. Our refusal to deal with our

emotional and psychological problems, to face our inner realities, means³² that “unreflected ways of being are cemented into social systems that bring about the disintegration of people and of the earth itself”.

Cultural attitudes and values (e.g., an individualist, competitive, materialist ethic) and their embodiment within the systems of culture (e.g., competitive individualism and the subsequent economic rationalist market system) were also seen as issues. On a pragmatic political level, the lack of political will to act on environmental problems was also identified as a concern.

The women’s perceptual understandings of the basis of our environmental dilemmas can broadly be clustered into five groupings, obviously involving some overlap of perspectives.

- a) Population analysis, which describes population pressure on a limited supply of resources as the basic cause of environmental degradation;
- b) Social systems analysis, whereby the meanings which are structured within the institutions of culture, are seen to be causative of environmental problems;
- c) Philosophical analysis, which asserts that the culture’s definitions of human being, ways of knowing and valuing are the problematic;
- d) Patriarchal analysis, which identifies that the dominant values and institutions of culture are and have been male defined and thus, distorted toward one way of being, i.e., the masculine;
- e) Psychological analysis, which points to an apparent human refusal to deal with inner realities, and the subsequent structuring of the outcomes of this refusal, into the systems of culture.

Those women who hold that over-population is the single greatest cause of environmental degradation, see that the fouling of the earth results from increased pressure on and competition for resources. The Western world is seen to be providing the model for the third world's developmental aspirations; the problem however is that the world does not have sufficient resources to support ever increasing consumption. That is, the earth cannot tolerate the entire human population of earth living at the standards of comfort demanded by Westerners. Greater population pressure inevitably means greater consumption, according to this analysis. This concern was articulated in the following statement:

Philosophy, says mankind [*sic*] has the brain to develop all possible things (to support Western lifestyle), and therefore should, considering his [*sic*] own interests above other occupants ... Western man's [*sic*] got to set an example and he's not doing it, (meanwhile) the third world goes on producing and distributing population to the rest of the world to relieve (their own resource) pressures.

Some women participants expressed a deep antipathy to this argument, feeling that the problem lies more with social injustice, inequity and poverty, than it does with over-population; that these other factors constitute the basis of population problems. Thus there were comments made of the following nature: "The problem is in the first and second world's exploitation of their own environments and that of the third world"; We really need to address "social inequity, greed and exploitation" as they are "tied into the growth economy"; We need to address "equity of all peoples, first and third world, male and female, young and old"; and further, "in our failure to create socially just society we are living globally off the blood and resources of others".

Another analysis of environmental degradation sees an ethic of exploitation and logic of domination structured into social systems. These women see systems operating out of an ethic of competitive individualism and rational materialism, and a growth economy geared to material profit

as the norm of progress. Accounts which favoured this analysis implicated³⁴ factors such as: industrialization; a consumptive versus conservationist mentality; the idolatry of corporate heroes which legitimates and rewards accumulation, greed and entrepreneurial appropriation of profit; inequality structured into the distribution of wealth and resources across sexes, generations and cultures; resources being pulled from "the periphery to the centre, e.g., the city acting as the centre of capitalization", accumulating wealth without proper redistribution to the periphery.

Some women feel that ignorance is a major factor in the development of environmental problems, "choices being made without an awareness of consequences"; or simply, as the "frog in the boiling water" scenario, in which "issues that are going to be issues" are ignored; or the ignorance which arises from a cultural maladaptation or refusal to deal with one's psychic or emotional baggage. Hence it is always someone else's problem.

Another group of the women interviewed would agree with elements of the above analysis, yet extend it, identifying the roots of the problem in our philosophical traditions; e.g., the scientific worldview which supports values of competition, domination and control; a "compartmentalization of the brain", notably, a preference for the rational over emotive or intuitive knowing. Stemming from this compartmentalization there is the development of a hierarchy of value, which legitimates the oppression or suppression of the lesser valued.

Religious philosophy, specifically of Christian derivation, has been blamed for environmental degradation, particularly in so far as it is perceived to support an ethic of dominion, the hierarchical structuring of reality in which humanity is separated from, and set over the rest of creation by virtue of being made in the image and likeness of God. Christianity is also

perceived to be blameworthy in that it is seen to support an abdication of³⁵ responsibility to some external 'other'. Salvation theology in its emphasis on personal salvation and transport into some other worldly realm is seen as the manifestation of this abdication.

Still others of the women interviewed believed that all of the previously described issues are grounded in patriarchy: "It is the rise of patriarchy, specifically the men, who have done the damage". The 'masculine' approach is identified with domination, power and control, and is based on a fear of woman and nature: "The prior cause of environmental degradation is the oppression of women and others" (indigenous peoples, for example).

Another grouping of women identified with an analysis that the dimensions of psyche and the psychological, are fundamental to our understanding of what has happened to the environment; namely, our inability to cope with "being out of control, being vulnerable, with existing in the unknown or realm of mystery". The need to dominate the landscape and others, they perceive stems from this inability, and further supports psychological and physical separation from the land and those perceived as 'other'. This psychological and physical separation actively takes place, through the accumulation of wealth and through the exercise of power and control.

There is a great deal of overlap and difference in these positions. Some women do not possess, articulate, or in some cases specifically reject, a gender-based analysis; whilst others display no structural or social analysis, with a preference for understanding problems and solutions from within individual behaviours.

Perceptions are constructed from within people's experience of life and social realities. The goal of sharing perceptions, of hearing one another's voice and specific 'naming', is that each person may critique and enlarge her analysis, expand her vision, hope and capacity to act for constructive change.³⁶

3.4 INTERVIEWEES' VISION OF THE FUTURE.

3.4.1. INTRODUCTION

Imaging creates the possible ... When we are in touch with our own images of new ways to live, we tap our unconscious resources, experience our own creativity, and are consequently less ready to accept external and traditional definitions and authorities that support the status quo. It is important for women to be able to define our own meanings because it is through that different vision, translated into our politics and spiritual quest, that we are able to create and hasten the birth of a new culture.

Juanita Weaver (1982 p.250.)

Vision informs our actions and gives meaning and direction to our commitments. What then do the women in this study envision in their imagined futures? What realities or possibilities are they hoping to unfold through their actions, relationships and commitments?

3.4.2. THE WOMEN'S VISION

A number of women felt pessimistic about the future feeling that "we have gone too far in polluting our environment, in fouling our own nest"; that the "pressure of population is too great". Others, because of this feeling of overwhelming pessimism, found they had an inability to imagine how "we're going to get out of this mess".

Chaos theory in offering a vision of creativity arising out of chaos, offered hope to one woman, while another had a sense of the "vision taking place in an unarticulated way inside ourselves, which will erupt when it is ready

- but it's not ready". The hope is that in "attending to what's going on³⁷ inside myself and in being present to what's happening in others, that something new is being created, whether we can see the shape of it or not". Her felt perception also was that "vision is a group or community process" and also, something that is happening within the "collective unconsciousness of the culture".

Other women had visions of a transformed society which valued differently, with less emphasis being placed on material accumulation and more on quality of life; for example, placing greater emphasis on values of empathy, love, compassion, inner peace, harmony and social justice. Other women imagined society operating with an enhanced sense of community, with greater value placed on human emotional and intellectual enrichment, and the development of a spiritual sense, a society embodying principles of intergenerational equity, and the practice of living more closely with the environment rather than against it.

A developmental ideal based on ecological and not economic sustainability, working from within an ecocentric ethic and emphasis, was the priority occupying the imagination of some women. They felt that a good start on ideological re-orientation could be made by spending, for example, more money on people and the environment than bombs, or giving economic and practical support for the greater development of organic products and for recycling etc.

Changes in the way people deal with each other, valuing difference, rather than 'monoculture' (in its broadest sense of cultural sameness), and relationship and process, rather than a myopic concentration on the end product as the receptacle of value, with its ethic of means justifying ends, are all part of these women's imagined different society. The development

of different modes of conflict resolution, is also an element of their vision.³⁸

Women saw that change would happen variously on personal and political levels, internationally as well as locally; global treaties and agreements being seen as positive indicators of the development of a sense of global responsibility, co-operation and conflict resolution. Another specific goal on the global scene identified as relevant was that of stopping the export of Western development models into the third world, because "Western society is maladapted to the environment, physically and psychically" as well as on the grounds of cultural imperialism. Bioregionalism as a political vision was articulated as a possible alternative to the current social and political organization.

Those women who adhered to a patriarchal analysis identified with a vision of women creating women-centered alternatives as normative models for society. This will be considered under the following discussion on women's perceived role.

3.5 INTERVIEWEES' PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN'S ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION.

When asked the question of what they themselves as women or women in general had to offer the environment movement or, more generally, society at this period of history, the majority of women affirmed a belief in women's 'difference', biologically or socially constructed. That is, they perceived women are different and are creating a difference by virtue of their socially/biologically created traits or skills and different 'conditioned' ways of being and seeing. A desire not to discredit the processes or possibilities of change happening within men was a concern for some, while the life experience of others lead them to believe in the irredeemability of males:

Men don't have a choice in being anything different, they are like a football team, where they can't get out of the team even if they don't like the game. I don't see any men as agents for change.

Contrasting with this was the belief that men are able to access the feminine principle, and women the male principle, within themselves; that society has elaborated and given power to the male and that the feminine has now to be emphasized to balance society's excessive predilection for the masculine. Women, however, have better access to the feminine principle, it was felt, by virtue of their socialization.

The skills, attributes or sensitivities that the majority of the women interviewed, saw women as possessing, or displaying at least to a greater degree, were their relational abilities; openness to others; tolerance of difference; communication and conflict resolution skills; compassion; nurture; gentleness; awareness of others; sensitivity; humility; receptivity and responsive listening presence; an orientation to the long term (*c.f.* short term maximization of profit); an ability to hold contradiction; to embrace deep places of suffering, depression and pain as well as the converse, an ability to celebrate pleasure and hope. Women were seen to be able to respect and honour experience, their own and others; to have a capacity to express their emotions and respond passionately; not all women, not all possessing each equally, but in different measure according to their milieu. The list is not exhaustive nor confining, merely a reflection of some of the feelings of these particular women.

There was an essentialist flavour to some of the women's reflections and a strong rejection of this by others. Essentialism is reflected in the following statement made by a number of the women interviewed.

Women through their body rhythms are very in touch with the rhythm of life, not being able to control our physical nature as men give us to believe they are, gives women a greater sensitivity to the rhythms of nature.

Men fear women for their power to reproduce and give birth, for their inner strength. The epitomizing act is for men to kill, for women to give birth. Men being about power, control and domination, stemming from a basic fear of women and nature, because of the inherent chaos of women and nature. They can't be controlled.

Life loving stuff is women's stuff. The stupidity murder and madness belong to the patriarchy. The boys want to kill us if we don't do what they say. It's about women being killed all the time. Only women can bring about change, men are too interested in destroying.

The latter comments arise out of experience at Greenham Common and experience of the violence associated with police involvement at Roxby shipment demonstrations and the like. They also illustrate the background for the desire of some women to create an enclave or separate space where it is possible to share women's energy, where normative alternatives can be created to those now dominating in Western culture.

An affirmation of women's space, while specifically rejecting the 'enclave' mentality, where women can nurture the vision and find their own kind of feminine power, strength and voice to challenge the patriarchy, was an articulated desire. However, a need was recognized to "work with men to solve the relationships of power and domination, but from a basis of equality".

The potential of women is enormous and untapped. Women have never found power. Men have divided and ruled. If women were to unite, to rise up and say enough, we will not put up with this being done to our planet, our children and the world, the impact would be immense.

It is in the company of women that the 'vision' is coming to some kind of birth. Women are at a crucial suffering point under patriarchy. The lack of access to income and meaningful work, the discounting which happens if you're not 'successful' in business or socially constructed terms, the vulnerability of not knowing how you're going to survive except on the poverty line, puts women in touch with crucial feelings. There is a largeness to the women who honour that there might be insight in this experience, that is not present in others who don't come to this crucial point of pain and exhaustion.

Socially men are upheld much more, in the basic means of income and security. This closes off self awareness. Those on the underside, the unemployed and marginalized, whoever is bearing the brunt of the patriarchal system, within them, is the birth of something new, there is life pulsing. There if one can embrace self, are the seeds of something wonderful happening.

This theme of women being connected, through their vulnerability and⁴¹ experience of oppression, to other marginalized and exploited people and thus, to exploited nature, was strongly felt by a number of women.

Some women questioned whether anything would be different if more women were in power. There is something of a rejection of essentialism, but an acceptance of patriarchal social construction of reality in the feeling that “women who rise to power in the patriarchy, often become pseudo-men, having to adopt the values of the system”. Others felt that “if enough women were in the system it will change by definition”. This position approximates that of liberal feminists, with two strains of thought being obvious. One that women have an equality with men in the bureaucracy, and the second, that women's socialized difference will effect change, simply by virtue of their presence in the structure; the second being the more strongly affirmed by this group of women interviewees.

Two different experiences, of power and of disempowerment, were related:

As long as you regard being a woman as an advantage, you can be productive with it. Women have tremendous power in an all man's world. They can infiltrate the bureaucracy quickly and easily, spending time getting to know personalities, communicating with people, unearthing things men don't get access to. Men believe the way they see things are the way things happen. They are less able to see from the other side and so miss out on a tremendous amount.

Contrasted with:

Men can't deal with me as a woman on an intellectual level. There is no clear cut equality. There is a temporary advantage in being able to quickly establish a rapport. But treatment is as an intellectual inferior. My ideas often get lost in male sexism.

Both of these women are, however, committed to working for change within the existing political system and in the mainstream environmental organizations. Women working in the movements felt that women “are creating an integrity throughout the entire process” of environmental action, by inserting personal relational values into the political arena. They

favour "nurturing" styles of management, where the primary aim is to⁴² enhance people's opportunities for personal expression and growth over that of corporate management, wherein they saw money being offered as the great elixir, the great compensation for all burdens suffered. Further, these women reject the separation of private and public morality, with one set of rules existing within the home and another for out in the 'real' world of business and politics.

Women are seen to be changing things from the inside of the movements by their openness to ideas and their preparedness to canvas the full range of issues and solutions. They are, it is asserted, less aggressive, competitive or combative in their approach to discussion of issues. Formal debating skills, the parliamentary format, were seen to be entrenched male processes entailing the quickest delivery of invective to debilitate and dominate an opponent, and esteem for confrontationist models. These patterns are being challenged by women. They are endeavouring to create a range of relational processes, and to increase communication on the personal level, so that when conflict arises, there is a pre-existing relationship of respect, and therefore, a base for different forms of conflict resolution. Women are trying to develop less formal ways of operating, and in so doing, see that an "entirely different political system" could potentially emerge.

3.6 SOURCES OF INSPIRATION AND SPIRITUALITY

"Writings on both feminism and spirituality (reveal) themes ... woven together in a criss-cross pattern of search, promise and quest for wholeness and healing in a world torn asunder" (King 1989, p. 6).

The women interviewed reflect this "criss-cross pattern" in the diversity of⁴³ their spoken perceptions. There is undoubtedly a quest for wholeness and healing. Some women, however, reject spirituality *per se*, largely because of its association with formal religion, and some as a result of their scientific training. There is a rejection of an "out there in control" figure, by this group, and also by some of those adhering to a spiritual belief. A sense of practical realism, of responsibility for management, for changing attitudes and political and social realities, was aired by a number of women. One comment was that "there is nothing in any religion or spiritual discipline that is more powerful than the human mind".

Most of these women, however, talked of the overwhelming experience/impact/ renewal of "being in wilderness" or even in the non-human dominated landscape. For them it was a source of inspiration, a place of sensing scale and smallness, and a source of gaining commitment to their action: "I don't believe in a God or a Goddess or a series of Goddesses but, I have a feeling that the environment, the world, the diversity in it is bigger than I am". The converse was also narrated, with women having through this relationship, an enlarged sense of themselves.

Other women who had not explored spirituality to any degree, nor rejected it, spoke of relating to feelings of awe, mystery and an integral relationship to nature. A particular experience was that of a convergence of self with nature through the medium of writing poetry, thereby accessing the non-rational:

As I write about the ocean I am a part of the ocean. I could almost say the poems have a prayerful element. It is a powerful source. There's something incredibly nurturing about writing a poem like that, a process that gives me a lot.

Another comment:

I heard a talk by a woman relating to God as a friend, lover. God is rock, tree. God isn't something but relationship. She chooses the word God...it introduced a very broad concept of spirituality. I think that in fact that in my relationship with nature there has in fact been a spiritual element.

A concept of oneness, of integral relatedness to nature, of being part of the experience of a place, of empathy with rainforests and organisms, was a strong theme emerging: "We have to realize we aren't above nature but a part of it" and, "I don't see ecology, the environment as being outside of me. I see them as an essence of my living existence. I am a hologram". Referring to a particular place, one of the women narrated an experience of feeling that "if I didn't meet my responsibility to this place, I would be letting down my own fabric. It was real Mother Earth stuff".

There is an element of the ethic of Deep Ecology (Devall & Sessions, 1985) reflected in these statements, an enlargement of the bounds of self, by identification with a larger self, a rainforest, a place like Wilpena, or Earth as a whole. It is the sense of deeper connectedness. Ecofeminism rejects the implications in this philosophy, of self merging and losing identity within a larger reality (Kheel, 1990). The experience spoken about in interview was however, identified as one of being related, of desiring to respond from a felt perception of connectedness. Enlargement of perception and sense of responsibility through essential relatedness, rather than an obfuscation of self seemed to be the experience. Witness this interviewee's statement:

On a hot dry day in Tuson, I recall seeing a bee drinking water and found myself going through my own cycle, recognizing how each of us are intimately and inextricably linked by the way in which we decay and recycle and in terms of how water and air travel through us, and how air and DNA links us all. Nothing is lost in the fabric, it just comes up in a different way.

Mystical experience with nature, a "deep rooted love of things natural", access to some "greater" dimension or energy, or feelings of nurture and peacefulness were significant experiences talked about. A relationship to Gaia or a concept of Earth Mother were identified, as was an attunement to

pantheism, a sense of "the natural world as an expression of a greater⁴⁵ creativity, a place where basic values reside". Some identified this to be akin, perhaps, to Aboriginal spirituality.

This stream of pantheism seems to occur, but is specifically rejected in Sallie McFague's (1989) work in her "The Earth as God's body" experiment. She insists on the metaphorical nature of all theology, that all articulations are approximations which come short of the actual reality. A feeling for this "experiment" was spoken about by one woman and further extended into a reflection on the consequences of entertaining such imagery. Questions arising were: "How do I live in a caring and sustaining way on this earth? What does it mean to walk on this earth the way you would if you loved it?" A sense of "dropping into being with the earth, of seeking a lover relationship with it" were feelings arising from this contemplation. Stemming also from this attunement, was a strong desire to "listen for the inspiration, the embodied wisdom, that is spirituality pulsing through me, through the earth, people and this current mess". God was then imaged as "the heartbeat, constant pulsation, energetic source or wellspring", and spirituality, a "manner of being in diverse relation", acknowledging "a universal pulsation", but one possessing "different colours or streams".

Relationship seems to be an integral dimension connecting all of these women's experience. It was expressed as a relationship to a set of beliefs: "I get inspiration from the Christian tradition of Social justice. I feel it is important to reflect upon the paradigms of Christianity and challenge them. They are human constructs not gods in themselves". Other women affirmed Buddhist and Animist beliefs, relating to nature as embodied wisdom. Some found the voice and experience of God in their relationship to people, in listening to the desires for justice of the oppressed. They saw these as reflecting the voice of God within history. This sense of relation is

also encapsulated in the statement: "I don't have a notion of God as having⁴⁶ an aim or a goal. God is more interested in process".

Some women had a notion of some greater being, God, a spiritual force, feeding into the world. Notions surrounding this were as diverse as "by doing something positive in society, I access spirituality. By doing something detrimental, I am moving away from the source of what [spirituality] is", and a belief in "some larger immortal nature ... a spiritual dimension feeding into our world, producing a more creative solution than we alone in our analytic method could". This was seen to be happening largely through the processes of the collective unconscious.

There was a belief in a spirit-matter continuum, that is, where neither could exist without the other:

We are a part of the spirit manifest in matter [but also] just a passing phase in some larger scheme of things ... Possibilities exist within a much larger whole.
An implicate order enfolds possibilities and some are explicated out at times.

Matter and spirit therefore exist in a "dynamic link". They are "totally inter-related", neither "being able to exist without the other".

Some other women totally rejected the notion of a "being out there" in control, largely on the grounds that it allows for the rejection of responsibility and sets up a relationship of superiority/inferiority. Some of those adhering to a belief in an "other" being would also reject notions of control and abdication of responsibility also. One statement reflecting the former was:

The life force is everywhere, immanent in everything, manifest everywhere. Natural magic holds that we learn to use the life force. There are numerous planes, all occupied with various beings, nature spirits, etc. Good science or ecology is discovering interconnected physical planes, etc.

This position reflects an affinity with Earth-based spirituality. Others⁴⁷ affirmed the experience of women-bonding in, for example, Women-spirit camps, perchance a tie to women's spirituality.

3.7 SUMMARY

Altogether the interviews reflect that an immense diversity of belief, values and perceptions exist among women engaged in the environment movement on the themes of women, the environment and spirituality. The question I sought to address was just how this diversity was related to the broader experience of women in the environment movement. Could other women relate to the sentiments expressed by this specific grouping of women? The survey was designed to respond to this question. It therefore, above all else, speaks of women in the broader movement's relationship to these specific women's perspectives. It is not an analysis of ecofeminism *per se.*, but an analysis of how women in the environment movement feel and perceive issues interconnecting these three themes which happen to be converging in ecofeminist thought, that is, around the themes of women, the environment and spirituality.

CHAPTER 4.

GLIMPING THE DIVERSITY:

CLUSTERS OF WOMEN ACCORDING TO THE SURVEY

Trees for life

from the base of my smooth trunk
to the tips of these my tenderest leaves You

know how
and where

to touch
me

so
far below

twisting roots shudder
and every leaf breathes deeper You

the northerly wind I
dream of in winter

the driving rain I
open my mouth to in drought

the silvered moon I am alone
with at night We make

a very old
kind of ritual.

Pam Maitland (1991)

4.1 PROFILE OF RESPONSE

4.1.1 GENERAL RESPONSE

The survey received a 66% response with 142 questionnaires out of 215 being returned, with five further returned unopened. Responses to the survey were mixed, ranging from a rejection of the format and an hostility toward the survey process to a gratitude for both the nature of the research and for the opportunity to participate.

Hostility surrounded the perception that the survey format was designed to “put people in boxes”, and further, boxes of my mind’s construction. It became apparent from these responses that the covering letter (see Appendix 1) did not sufficiently explain that the statements included in the survey, were in fact statements obtained by interview of women in the environmental movement, changed only editorially for the sake of clarity.

One response to the survey exemplifies this:

You do not seem to have internalized the fact that there are those of us who do not believe in any kind of spirit/God. I found your statements aggravatingly simplistic, full of new age jargon and permeated by a smug feminist superiority. It is valid to try and find out about whether those who believe in spirituality are having an influence in the environment movement and what sort, etc., but you have to stand outside to ask the questions. You, however, seem to be on the inside of the spirituality group and are unable therefore to ask unbiased rigorous questions.

This statement obviates the need for greater clarity in explaining the nature of research to those participant in the research. Failure on my part to do this when inviting participation in the research is a weakness of the approach which needs acknowledgement. On the other hand, the hostility generated by this weakness in methodology did reveal the failure of some women in the environmental movement to understand and tolerate the diversity which exists within the movement.

4.1.2 PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Of the respondents 50% were aged 21 to 35, 41% aged 36 to 50, one was under 20 and the remainder (8%) were over 51. Those resident in cities comprised 78% of the respondents, while 11% resided in towns and 10% were from rural areas. The women's major work was focused in the home and with children (21%), in the environment movement (13%), public service (18%), in studies, in universities, teaching and research, self-employment or self-sufficiency, film and video production, gardening, farming, writing etc. With regard to voluntary activity, 42% of the women were engaged in the environment movement. The volunteer work specified by other women involved activities as various as massage, mothering, peace and justice, hobby farming, women's groups and centres, etc.

By far the largest percentage of women interviewed were engaged in or had completed post-graduate study (50%) or had completed tertiary study (42%). Two women (1.5%) had received education only to the primary level and 10 (7%) to the secondary level.

The questionnaire asked women to indicate their spiritual affiliation. Some indicated that they had none, others "many". This eclectic identification was significant to a number of respondents. Of those who indicated a response to the list of spiritualities presented, 24% identified themselves with Christian spirituality, 10% with Buddhist, 8% with Animist beliefs and 7% with Wicca. A number of these women circled more than one of the above spiritualities. Other women identified themselves as Atheist, Agnostic or Manachiean, or linked their spirituality with Gaian Philosophy, Deep Ecology, "Oneness", Pantheism, "Holomovement", Women's Spirituality or Yoga.

Involvement in environmental organizations was extremely diverse with the women surveyed often belonging to a large number of environmental organizations. The largest percentage, 40% (58 respondents), were involved primarily in mainstream national or international organizations (Australian Conservation Foundation, Wilderness Society, Greenpeace etc); 19% (27) were members of nature conservation or appreciation societies (Nature Conservation Society of South Australia, Conservation Councils, Women and the Bush, Trees for Life etc.); 7% (10) were members of environment movements focused on action within the home and local community (Household Options for the Environment, HOPE; Worldwide Home Environmentalists' Network, WHEN; and Project Local Earth Awareness, PLEA); and 2% (3) were members of Nurses for the Environment groups.

4.2 SURVEY ANALYSIS

4.2.1 INTRODUCTION

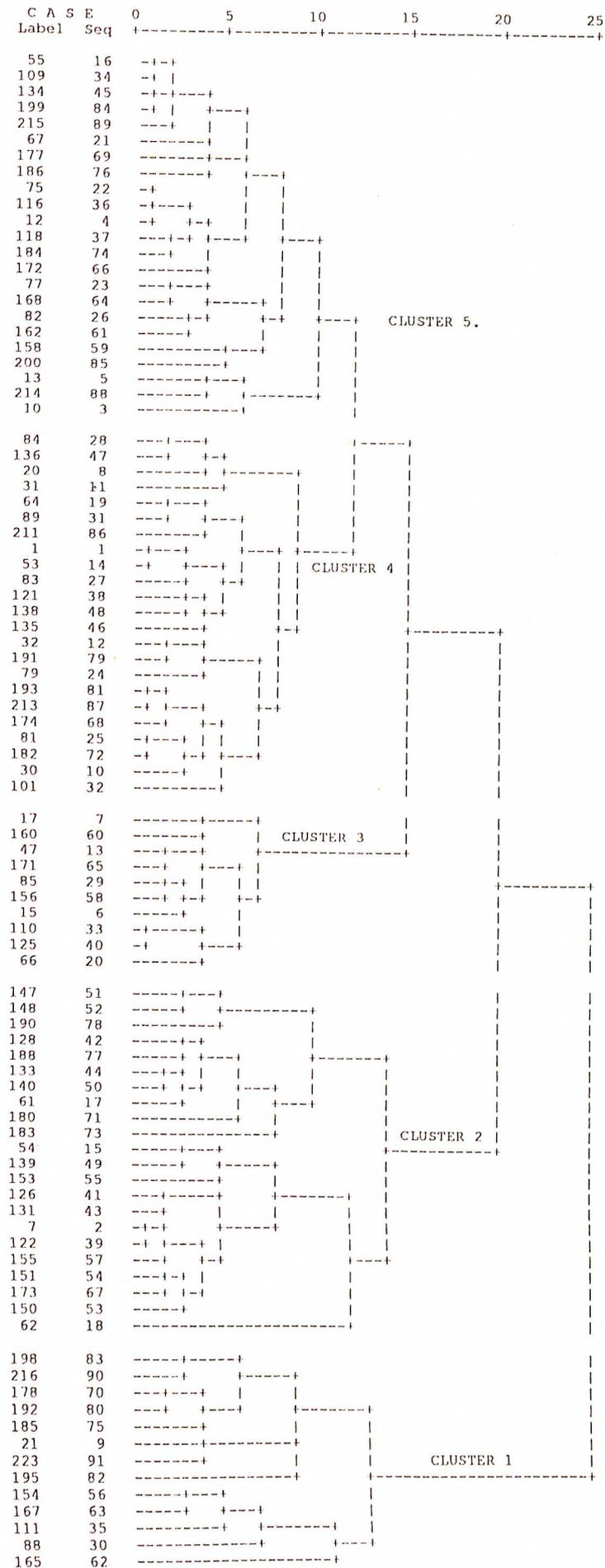
Factor analysis (SPSSX), sorting on the basis of Q analysis (Respondents) as explained in Chapter 2, Section 2.3, revealed some 27 factors (Eigenvalue \geq 1.0). Since this number of factors was difficult to interpret, some respondents were eliminated on the basis of their uniqueness (i.e., their lack of correlation with other women as determined by the calculation of co-efficients) and analysed in terms of the comment section of their survey sheet alone. A cluster analysis (SPSSX) performed on the remainder of the cases revealed some five clusters, with a high degree of similarity in a large portion of the sample (Figure 1).

FIGURE I.

HIERARCHIAL CLUSTER ANALYSIS:

CLUSTERS OF WOMEN IN THE ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT

Rescaled Distance Cluster Combine



Note: Discrepancy in Case Numbers (225 total cases of 215) as the sample size of the survey group is due to a misnumbering of the initial survey sheets.

The survey was not constructed with sufficient hierarchy to polarize the sample into definitive ideological clusters. Reference to the frequency distribution of responses on each question and to comments by respondents within the survey format was made in order to clarify the characteristics of clusters, with broad trends then being identified.

4.2.2 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONSES

Analysis of the frequency distribution of women's responses, to all the variables constituting the survey, reveals some overall trends, as follows. In response to the statements concerning the "causes of environmental problems", there is a strong perception of no single cause and therefore, of interlinked causation, as indicated by Table 3. However the respondent's analysis of causality tended to favour the following as underlying causative dynamics.

Statement 1: Materialism and individualism, ignorance and greed are the major causative agents of the environmental crisis; (88% of response was greater than positive 1, $\geq +1$).

Statement 12: Christianity is in no way responsible for the ecological crisis (a strong negative response, indicating that women feel Christianity is responsible 78% ≤ -1).

Statement 14: It is the patriarchy that has done the damage. If the balance is to be redressed it will be through women finding their power and strength and acting for change (81% $\geq +1$).

Statement 42: Capitalism and the growth economy are the major causes of environmental deterioration (79% $\geq +1$).

TABLE 3. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES TO SURVEY STATEMENTS ON PERCEPTIONS OF THE CAUSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS.

Statement No.	Statement Descriptor	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
1	Materialism, etc.	1	2	4	2	3	12	2	8	24	35	47
11	Inequity	4	5	10	4	4	18	8	8	22	16	41
12	Christianity	42	23	22	16	6	17	1	3	5		5
14	Patriarchy			6	2	2	15	14	24	33	14	29
25	Loss spirit	7	3	4	4	3	16	17	14	31	17	24
27	Overpopulation	30	15	11	9	9	11	7	9	15	10	14
36	Science-tech	3	6	9	7	9	16	11	26	1	21	17
42	Capitalism	4	1	2	3	5	14	7	12	37	24	31

Compiled by Author from Questionnaires

Science and technology (*Statement 36*: 54% $\geq +1$) and loss of spirituality (*Statement 42*: 74% $\geq +1$), as causes of environmental problems also received significant positive responses.

There exists a split among the women surveyed, between those who see over-population as the single major cause of environmental problems and those who do not. A negative response to the population statement was made by 58% of women who gave a less than negative one (≤ -1) response.

Statement 27: Over-population is the most significant cause of our environmental problems.

In contrast, 39% of the women affirmed the statement at a greater than positive one level ($\geq +1$). Inequity, injustice and poverty (*Statement 11*, Table 3) were seen by another grouping of women to be fundamental dynamics affecting environmental degradation (41 or 29% of the women indicating a +5 response, with 95 or 68% responding positively at a $\geq +1$ level). There is a 10% overlap between these two statements, suggesting, along with the comments made to this effect, that a number of the women surveyed saw population as being equally as important as the other three variables (inequity, injustice and poverty), acting in conjunction with them.

In response to statements concerning women and the environment, the majority of the women's responses were positive to the majority of questions, at least on the basis of the frequency distribution (Table 4). The statements which received the greatest negative response were the ones with an essentialist 'flavour'.

Statement 21: Women are more in touch with nature because of the inherent chaos of their body rhythms (40% ≤ -1 , 27% 0, 33% $\geq +1$)

TABLE 4. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONSES TO STATEMENTS ON WOMEN

Statement No.	Statement Descriptor	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
3	Nurture	8	2	3	5	4	21	6	22	25	20	24
5	Pseudomen	9	5	7	7	2	24	11	20	32	11	12
6	Men-birth	1	1	3	6		21	9	23	22	20	34
9	Power-with	2		4	5	1	15	7	14	24	30	37
15	Greenhome	25	11	11	5	4	20	11	9	12	9	19
19	Waiting	14	10	24	12	3	35	7	13	11	4	7
20	Fem-mascul	3	1	1	1	2	12	6	11	21	23	58
21	Chaos	32	6	6	6	5	38	14	6	9	6	9
24	W In system	1	1	4	7	2	19	15	16	24	22	29
26	W advantage	9	6	6	7	2	21	8	25	18	9	24
28	W spaces		1		2	1	14	6	21	25	17	53
30	Kill epitomize	23	13	14	7	8	34	6	14	8	4	9
32	Links	4		1	3	6	17	9	28	27	20	25
35	Masculinity	8	4	10	1	3	32	10	20	13	10	27
37	Wchange			3	2		19	16	28	36	20	16
38	Restructure	2		2	3	1	9	13	8	23	21	57
39	Person-political	3		2	1	1	39	6	11	11	21	44
40	Separate	26	5	16	11	6	22	13	7	13	5	15
45	Men fear	5	2	1	5	5	26	12	20	23	17	24

Compiled by Author from Questionnaires

Statement 30: The epitomizing act for women is to give birth, for men it is to kill (46% \leq -1, 24% 0, 30% \geq +1).

Statement 40: Women need to withdraw their energy from the patriarchy, to separate completely and to create women's alternatives as normative (46% \leq -1, 16% 0, 38% \geq +1)

In the written responses, there was an overwhelming rejection of the concept of 'chaos' (*Statement 21*). Women saying "there is nothing chaotic about my rhythms", "masterly precision I would call it".

I see such order and cyclical balance and wise combination of rhythms and feelings that I see changes in women's bodies as orderly, friendly and normal, whereas chaos sounds frightening, unless you're using it as chaos theory.

A disappointment was expressed by one woman that a statement wasn't included on women's biology, separate from a concept of chaos, e.g., women are more in touch with nature because of their biology and body rhythms.

Statements 15 and 19, drew the next greatest proportion of negative and divergent response.

Statement 15: Women as homemakers should bear greater responsibility for environmental repair through the education of their children, reducing consumption, reusing and recycling and buying green products (40%, \leq -1, 14% 0, 46% +1)

Some women reflected that women already were doing these things and need to continue to do them, however, "Men should too", was a much repeated refrain.

Statement 19: Women, biologically and socially conditioned to patient 'waiting', would favour non-interventionist solutions; providing the conditions for the earth to heal itself. (45%, \leq -1, 25% 0, 30% \geq +1)

With respect to Statement 19 the 70% response of women at ≤ 0 , indicates largely a rejection of this concept. Comments reflect a felt urgency surrounding the current situation: "We haven't time to wait".

A strongly positive response, with over 80% indicating a response greater than +1 on the survey, was given to Statements 9, 20, 28, 37 and 38.

Statement 9: Power for women is about empowerment, 'power-with'; power for men is about 'power-over' and control (80% $\geq +1$).

Statement 20: Men are able to access the feminine principle and women the masculine principle in themselves. Society has elaborated and given power to the male principle. The feminine now needs to be emphasized to balance the excesses of the masculine (85% $\geq +1$).

Statement 28: Women need their own spaces to tap their inner strengths and to empower one another to speak and act (87% $\geq +1$).

Statement 37: Women are changing things from the inside of organizations by giving value to a greater range of informal relational processes (83% $\geq +1$)

Statement 38: Our ecological crisis demands a radical restructuring of society, according to feminist and ecological principles (87% $\geq +1$).

The 87% positive, $\geq +1$ response, received by Statements 28, 38, was the greatest proportion of response received by any of the statements in the survey. Further 41% of the total number of women, indicated a +5 response to both Statements 20 and 38, indicating the overwhelming perception that the feminine needs to be reasserted into the historical process to effect an ecological and feminist reconstruction of society.

A secondarily significant grouping of statements were 6, 24 and 32.

Statement 6: A greater involvement of men in birthing and child-rearing would result in more effective social, political and environmental structures and processes (77% $\geq +1$).

Statement 24: If enough women were in the social and political system it would change of necessity (75% \geq +1).

Statement 32: Women have a greater awareness of the links between the exploitation of natural resources, the environment, other people and of women (78% \geq +1).

The level of response to all of these statements (6, 9, 20, 24, 28, 32, 37, 38), indicates that a gender analysis is significant to the majority of these women. Whether women are operating out of a liberal feminist framework, where they merely perceive the need for women's equality and presence within the systems of society as effecting change, or whether they apply an analysis which critiques the structures as patriarchal, so devaluing of the 'feminine', is not clear but is further explicated in the cluster analysis.

Response to statements on spirituality indicates that understanding of and sympathy for spirituality is divergent (Table 5). 40% of women indicated no spiritual affiliation or recorded Atheist or Agnostic, in the profile data included in the survey. Statement 22 attracted a 47% negative (\leq -1) response, indicating that around half of the women had not rejected concepts of spirituality.

Statement 22: I have rejected concepts of spirituality because of their association with formal religion.

A further 19% of women recorded an ambivalence to Statement 22 (0), possibility indicating that they either had not thought much about spirituality, and/or, had never been associated with formal religion. One person specifically stated that she had rejected formal religion and not spirituality.

TABLE 5. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY RESPONSES TO STATEMENTS ON SPIRITUALITY

Statement No.	Statement Descriptor	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	Energize	12	14	8	10		24	4	6	21	19	17
4	Godmove	74	10	4	4	5	33	2	2	2	2	2
7	ChristianSJ	45	17	9	6	7	17	13	8	4	7	7
8	Spiritmatter	7	2	3	1		27	11	17	14	13	45
10	Heartbeat	26	3	7	2	1	43	9	9	7	11	22
13	Godrelation	5			1		78	9	4	18	8	17
16	Nature spirits	14	8	9	3	3	42	12	6	12	9	22
17	Awe	11	3	4	3	4	27	12	15	21	17	22
18	Copout	11	7	14	10	8	40	6	8	11	9	10
22	Reject-spirit	28	10	13	11	4	26	9	11	15	9	2
23	Oneness	3	1	4	2	4	24	9	13	16	19	43
29	Lover relshp	35	6	5	3	3	56	6	10	6	3	7
31	Positive access	7	1	4	1	3	28	17	20	15	15	29
33	Passion	2	1	4	2		28	11	22	29	11	30
34	Goodness	6	1	6	2	4	36	7	15	21	18	24
41	Dont believe	11	2	3		1	25	7	9	17	18	45
43	Integrity	17	6	3		2	57	3	7	18	9	18
44	Source	8	6	3	1	5	47	7	10	18	8	27

Compiled by Author from Questionnaires

Further, 31% of the women responded that they “get energized in the natural environment” and would call this spirituality (≤ -2), with 52% ($\geq +1$, 41% $\geq +3$) responding that they either don't get energized in the natural environment or wouldn't call it spirituality.

The interesting fact about these statements is that greater than 70% of the women then responded affirmatively ($\geq +1$) to the following statements.

Statement 8: There is a spirit/matter continuum. Neither would exist without the other. We are part of the spirit manifest in matter (71%).

Statement 33: My spirituality is about tapping into and releasing my deepest passions for life (74%).

Clearly there is an affinity with concepts of spirit and passion for life, seemingly spiritual positions, yet not named so by a number of the women surveyed. A 69 % response ($\geq +1$), to statement 41 perhaps explains this phenomenon.

Statement 41: I don't believe in God, a Goddess, or a series of Goddesses, but have a feeling that the environment, the earth and the diversity in it, is bigger than I am.

There is possibly a rejection of a greater being or beings, but a sense of self in relation to a larger horizon of mystery, or meaning. The fact of this inference would need further exploration.

Of the women surveyed 71% ($\geq +1$, and 31% at +5) affirmed Statement 23.

Statement 23: I feel a sense of oneness with nature. If I do not feel and respond to her beauty and pain, I feel as if I am letting down my own fabric. ($\geq +1$, with 31% at +5).

Relatedness to nature through a sense of oneness is therefore a position of significance to a great number of these women.

4.3 CLUSTER ANALYSIS.

As noted in Section 4.2.1 of this chapter, cluster analysis identified 5 clusters of women, separating out according to the similarity of their responses (Figure 1). Each cluster is analysed in detail hereafter.

4.3.1 CLUSTER 1.

This cluster identified 13 women as responding in a similar way to the questionnaire. Table 6 shows the distribution of responses to the variables which typified or distinguished this grouping.

There is a strong rejection of the essentialist statements.

Statement 30: The epitomizing act for women is to give birth, for men it is to kill ($100\% \leq -2$).

Statement 21: Women are more in touch with nature because of the inherent chaos of their body rhythms ($54\% \leq -3$, $38.5\% \leq 0$).

Statement 14: Women need to withdraw their energy from the patriarchy, to separate completely and create women's alternatives as normative ($85\% \leq -1$).

There is in this group, however, an affirmation of women and men's socially constructed difference.

Statement 3: Women's socialization as nurturers and care-givers gives them a greater intuitive understanding of, and empathy with nature.

Statement 6: A greater involvement of men in birthing and child-rearing would result in more effective social, political and environmental structures and processes.

Statement 9: Power for women is about empowerment, 'power-with'; power for men is about 'power-over' and control.

TABLE 6. PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSE TO STATEMENT VARIABLES WITHIN CLUSTER 1.

Statement No.	Statement Descriptor	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	I get energized in natural env.	7.7		15.4			15.4	7.7			30.8	23.1
3	Nurture/Nature	15.4	7.7				15.4	15.4	7.7	15.4		23.1
6	Involvement men in birthing		7.7				15.4	23.1	15.4	7.7		30.8
8	Spiritmatter continuum	15.4	7.7	7.7	7.7		23.1	7.7	30.8			
9	Power-with/over					7.7		15.4		30.8	38.5	7.7
10	God/ess heartbeat	53.8	7.7	15.4			23.1					
14	Patriarchy					7.7	7.7	23.1	30.8	23.1		7.7
17	Spirituality Awe	15.4	7.7				23.1	7.7	15.4	7.7		23.1
21	Women more in touch with nature due to chaos of body rhythms	46.2		7.7			38.5	7.7				
22	Rejected spirituality	15.4		7.7	7.7		15.4		15.4	7.7	23.1	7.7
23	Sense of Oneness with nature	7.7			7.7		30.8	7.7	7.7	7.7	7.7	23.1
24	Women in the system -change of necessity		7.7	7.7	15.4		15.4	7.7	15.4	23.1	7.7	
26	Women productive advantage	23.1			7.7	7.7		7.7	30.8	7.7	7.7	7.7
27	Overpopulation	38.5	7.7	7.7			7.7	7.7		15.4	15.4	
28	Women need own spaces			7.7		23.1		15.4	30.8		23.1	
29	Lower relationship with earth	76.9		7.7	7.7		7.7					
30	Epitomizing act for men is to kill	61.5	15.4	15.4	7.7							
32	Women greater awareness links oppression	15.4				7.7	23.1	7.7	30.8	15.4		
35	Masculinity-manipulate and control women/nature	23.1					23.1	7.7	23.1		7.7	7.7
37	Women changing env. mvm't			7.7	7.7		15.4	15.4	7.7	30.8	15.4	
38	Radical restructuring of society							38.5	15.4	7.7	15.4	23.1
40	Women need separate	53.8		15.4	7.7	7.7	15.4					
41	Don't belive God/ess							7.7		7.7	23.1	61.5
42	Capitalism cause	7.7							15.4	15.4	23.1	38.5
44	I am one manifestation of the Source	38.5	7.7	7.7		7.7	38.5					

Note figures are percentage 7.7% = 1 person Total number persons = 13.

This grouping also seems to reflect a sympathy for a liberal feminist position, as shown by the affirmation of Statements 24 and 26.

Statement 24: If enough women were in the social and political system it would change of necessity.

Statement 26: As long as we regard being a woman as an advantage we can be productive with it. Women have tremendous power in a man's world.

The comments which this grouping of women included within their questionnaire focused to a large degree on the language of the statements. "Your language didn't hold meaning", and "I didn't understand or relate to many of the questions", were typical comments.

Another comment specifically focused on spirituality. "I found it difficult to deal with the terms spirit, God and Goddess. I just wouldn't use these terms. They are too much related with formal religion". Over half of the women in this cluster (7 or 53%) responded that they had rejected spirituality because of its association with formal religion. We see a strong rejection (100%, ≤ 0) of the more specific spirituality statements.

Statement 10: God/ess is the heartbeat, the energetic source or wellspring of wisdom and inspiration within people and the earth.

Statement 29: I seek a lover relationship with the Earth, embracing an image of the earth as God's body, and; I am one physical manifestation of the Source, experiencing itself in time and space.

There is a positive response (62% +5, 100% \geq +1) to Statement 41.

Statement 41: I don't believe in God, a Goddess, or a series of Goddesses, but have a feeling that the earth and the diversity in it, is bigger than I am.

Some women indicate an affinity with statements 8, 17 and 23.

Statement 8: There is a spirit/matter continuum. Neither would exist without the other. We are part of the spirit manifest in matter (38% \geq +1).

Statement 17: Spirituality for me is about being in 'awe', in touch with a greater mystery (54% \geq +1).

Statement 23: I feel a sense of oneness with nature. If I do not feel and respond to her beauty and pain, I feel as if I am letting down my own fabric (54% \geq +1).

Half of the women say they've rejected spirituality, half respond to the latter quoted examples on spirituality. However, 100% while not relating specifically to a being, (God, Goddess) seem to have a sense of themselves in relation to largeness of the earth and her processes (*Statement 41*).

4.3.2 CLUSTER 2

The second cluster of 20 women reflects a strong gender analysis of environmental issues, with a significant number of the women exhibiting a sympathy for an essentialist position. Of all the differing clusters this grouping is most strongly represented in the affirmation of Statement 30 (Table 7).

Statement 30: The epitomizing act for women is to give birth, for men it is to kill (13 out of 20 or 65% \geq +1, cf 0% Cluster 1, 10% Cluster 3, 26% Cluster 4, and 29% Cluster 5).

Further, of all the groups, this cluster records the strongest affirmation of Statement 38.

Statement 38. Our ecological crisis demands a radical restructuring of society, according to feminist and ecological principles.

TABLE 7: PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSE TO STATEMENT VARIABLES WITHIN CLUSTER 2.

Statement No.	Statement Descriptor	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	I get energized in natural env.	5	15	15	5		10	5	5	10	25	5
3	Nurture/Nature	5			10		5	5	20	10	25	20
6	Involvement men in birthing			5	5		25	15	5	20		
8	Spiritmatter continuum		5				25	10	5	15	5	35
9	Power-with/over			5			5		5	10	35	40
10	God/ess heartbeat	30					35	10		5	10	10
14	Patriarchy						10	5	5	15	10	55
17	Spirituality Awe	10	5	5			35	5	5	5	15	15
20	Feminine/Masculine Principle	10					15	5	10		20	40
22	Rejected spirituality	15	5	5	10		20	10	5	25	5	
23	Sense of Oneness with nature		5	5			15		5		25	45
24	Women in the system-change			5			10	5	10	10	25	35
25	Loss spirituality cause	15			5			10	10	20	10	20
26	Women productive advantage		15	10			15	5	30			25
27	Overpopulation	40	15	5			10		10	5	5	10
28	Women need own spaces								5	25	20	50
29	Lover relationship with earth	35	5	5			45		5		5	
30	Epitomizing act men to kill					10	25	10	10	15	10	20
31	Do something positive access spiritual energy	5	5	5			10	15	15	5	15	25
32	Women greater awareness links oppression	5					5	15	20	10	5	40
33	Spirituality access deepest passions			5			25	10	5	15	15	25
35	Masculinity-manipulate and control women/nature			5			10	10	5	10	20	40
37	Women changing env. mvm't						5	10	15	25	30	15
38	Radical restructuring of society						5		5		10	80
39	Personal is political			5			5			10	20	60
40	Women need separate			5	5			10	10	15	15	40
41	Don't believe God/ess		5				10	5	10	20	15	35
42	Capitalism						10		10	30	10	40
44	I am the Source	5	10		5		30	10		10	15	15
45	Men fear women's power and strength							5	5	35	15	40

Note figures are percentage 5% = 1 person Total number persons = 20

Of the women, 80% responded at a +5 level to Statement 38. Other strong responses in this particular vein are those relating to Statements 14, 32, 40 and 45.

Statement 14: It is the patriarchy that has done the damage. If the balance is to be redressed it will be through women finding their power and strength and acting for change (55% +5, 90% \geq +1).

Statement 32: Women have a greater awareness of the links between the exploitation of natural resources, the environment, other people and of women (40% +5, 70% \geq +1).

Statement 45. Men fear women for their inner strength and power to reproduce and give birth (90% \geq +3).

Statement 40. Women need to withdraw their energy from the patriarchy, to separate completely and to create women's alternatives as normative (90% \geq +1, 70% \geq +3).

A typical comment made was:

I use andro-centrism to explain for practical purposes, capitalism, colonialism, over-population, militarism. Most environmental and economic problems are directly related to militarism and cannot be understood in a useful way from a gender neutral framework.

While separatism was strongly affirmed by most, two women responded negatively (-2, -3) to this statement and added comments:

I believe most patriarchal ideas and practices can be destructive. I feel we should be gently encouraging men into freer concepts of the nurturing, protective feminine parts of themselves, as a co-operative rather than an us and them thing.

We need women's alternatives as normative. It's a start, but there's a danger of ghettoization. Men need to get used to listening to women more. Then the all powerful sisters will rise up with their palatable reform programs and won't get dismissed as fringe lunatic lesbian morons.

There is a mixed response to aspects of spirituality. For example there was a strong positive response (17 out of 20 or 85% responding \geq +1 and 14 or 70% \geq +3) to Statement 41.

Statement 41: I don't believe in God, a Goddess, or a series of Goddesses, but have a feeling that the earth and the diversity in it, is bigger than I am.

A spread of responses was indicated on Statements 2 and 22.

Statement 2: I get energized in the natural environment, but I wouldn't call it spirituality.

Statement 22: I have rejected concepts of spirituality because of their association with formal religion.

There is generally a positive response to Statements 8, 17, 23, 25, 31 and 33.

Statement 8: There is a spirit/matter continuum. Neither would exist without the other. We are part of the spirit manifest in matter (75% \geq +1).

Statement 17: Spirituality for me is about being in 'awe', in touch with a greater mystery (45% \geq +1).

Statement 23: I feel a sense of oneness with nature. If I do not feel and respond to her beauty and pain, I feel as if I am letting down my own fabric (75% \geq +1).

Statement 25: A loss of the spiritual dimension in life has caused our environmental crisis (70% \geq +1).

Statement 31: If I do something positive for society I access spiritual energy. By acting negatively I move away from the Source of that spiritual energy (75% \geq +1).

Statement 33: My spirituality is about tapping into and releasing my deepest passions for life (70% \geq +1).

A comment was made in response to the statement on awe (17), that the concept conjured up images of diminishment and so was rejected. A number of the women surveyed hadn't explored spirituality to any degree, and were not associated with formal religion.

I have never felt the need to explore spirituality. I have a deep love for all living things and natural systems. Christianity is and always has been anti-woman and anti-nature.

I feel OK about the spirituality aspect of the survey and I disassociate spirituality from formal religion, because I see formal religion as an instrument of political power. However the association of spirituality with environmentalism may be used to weaken an otherwise valid argument.

The other dimension specifically articulated by two of the women was of a belief in wholism.

I don't believe in a God/ess that is separate. This creates a dichotomy. We are all manifestations of an energy; humans, grass, rocks; at different levels of reality. Basically everything is interrelated and each is responsible for the ramifications of actions and non-actions taken.

Responsibility and accountability for our existence was a theme echoed by several women. "We are part of a whole that simply is. How we choose to interact is the problematic". Further, this woman rejected any dimension of goodness and badness being attached to the natural world. "I don't agree with attempts to tie biological processes to some sort of spiritual imperative that has a moral component".

4.3.3 CLUSTER 3

A gender analysis is also articulated by this cluster of 10 women. What characterizes this group then, is the strong belief that is identified in the comments that the "patriarchy has harmed men too" and that "women and men have to get a sense of their inner power in order to change society".

There are strong affirmations of Statements 3, 6, 9, 24, 32, 38 (Table 8).

Statement 3: Women's socialization as nurturers and care-givers gives them a greater intuitive understanding of, and empathy with nature (80% \geq +3).

TABLE 8: PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSE TO STATEMENT VARIABLES WITHIN CLUSTER 3.

Statement No.	Statement Descriptor	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5
2	I get energized in natural env.	30	30	10	10		10					10
3	Nurture/Nature	10					10			40	30	10
6	Involvement men in birthing								10	20	20	50
8	Spiritmatter continuum	10									30	60
9	Power-with/over						10			40	20	30
10	God/ess heartbeat	10									30	60
14	Patriarchy			10					20	30	20	20
17	Spirituality Awe				20					40	10	30
20	Feminine/Masculine Principle									20		80
22	Rejected spirituality	70		10			10			10		
23	Sense of Oneness with nature				10		10				10	70
24	Women in the system-change						20			40	10	30
25	Loss spirituality cause			10			10			20	20	40
26	Women productive advantage	10	10				10		20	10	30	10
27	Overpopulation	30	20	20						10		10
28	Women need own spaces									30		50
29	Love relationship with earth	10					30		20	20	10	10
30	Epitomizing act men to kill	10	10	30	10		30		10			
31	Do something positive access spiritual energy							10	10	20	10	50
32	Women greater awareness links oppression							10	10	20	40	20
33	Spirituality access deepest passions							10	10	30	10	40
35	Masculinity-manipulate and control women/nature			10			40		30	20		
37	Women changing env. mvm't								40	10	30	20
38	Radical restructuring of society									20	40	40
39	Personal is political						10			10	30	50
40	Women need separate	10	10	20			40	10				10
41	Don't believe God/ess	50					30		10			10
42	Capitalism		10				20		20	30	20	
43	Integrity						10			20	20	50
44	I am the Source								10	10	10	70
45	Men fear women's power and strength					10	30			30	20	10

Note figures are percentage 10% = 1 person Total number persons = 10

Statement 6: A greater involvement of men in birthing and child-rearing would result in more effective social, political and environmental structures and processes (100% \geq +2).

Statement 9: Power for women is about empowerment, 'power-with'; power for men is about 'power-over' and control (90% \geq +3).

Statement 24: If enough women were in the social and political system it would change of necessity (80% \geq +3).

Statement 32: Women have a greater awareness of the links between the exploitation of natural resources, the environment, other people and of women (100% \geq +1).

Statement 38: Our ecological crisis demands a radical restructuring of society, according to feminist and ecological principles (100% \geq +3).

The following is a typical comment:

Men can't be themselves because patriarchy defines them too. They hurt as much inside but its buried deeper and they have a different set of responses to the problems and the world around them. For humans to live in harmony with themselves and the environment/planet then both women and men have to locate their inner sources of power, their humanity and work together to repair the planet or at least make a space for the planet to repair itself.

There was a strong affirmation of spirituality in this group, a number of statements receiving greater than 60% in the +5 range.

Statement 8: There is a spirit/matter continuum. Neither would exist without the other. We are part of the spirit manifest in matter.

Statement 10: God/ess is the heartbeat, the energetic source or wellspring of wisdom and inspiration within people and the Earth.

Statement 23: I feel a sense of oneness with nature. If I do not feel and respond to her beauty and pain, I feel as if I am letting down my own fabric.

Statement 29: I seek a lover relationship with the Earth, embracing an image, a metaphor of the earth as God's body.

Statement 44: I am one physical manifestation of the Source, experiencing itself in time and space.

This distinguishes this group significantly from any other.

The distinction we make between ourselves and others, ourselves and earth, ourselves and God, are arbitrary. Fundamentally "it" is all one (and it is possible to live in that knowing). We wouldn't or couldn't harm earth if we lived in that knowing.

On ideas of "cop out" and someone "out there in control", it was felt that this did not leave "much room for response-ability", i.e. response to a being, who is not "out there [and] in control", but working within and with the human agent.

4.3.4 CLUSTER 4

This cluster of 23 women could be labeled the qualifiers, those who largely rejected the survey format, or rejected defining themselves around such definitive statements. One woman wrote: "the problem with the survey format is that much of it tries to shape information in terms of black and white, yes and no, the only or the most important". Another woman:

I don't like the idea of filling in a survey like this with questions and statements taken out of context, very dogmatic, often linked to other statements in unsatisfactory ways. I feel these questions don't even begin to unravel my understanding of the complex relationship between ecology, feminism and spirituality.

Not surprisingly then this group were the most verbose in ascribing supplementary comments to the text and in the comment section at the end of the survey.

The response that most characterises this group is a 95% response at a greater than +3 level to the statement on men and women being able to access the feminine and masculine principles respectively (Table 9).

TABLE 9: PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSE TO STATEMENT VARIABLES WITHIN CLUSTER 4.

Statement No.	Statement Descriptor	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
2	I get energized in natural env.	8.7	21.7	8.7	8.7	21.7			4.3	17.4	4.3	4.3
3	Nurture/Nature		4.3		4.3		13.0	4.3	21.7	30.4	13.0	8.7
6	Involvement men in birthing						4.3		34.8	21.7	26.1	26.1
8	Spiritmatter continuum						4.3		13.0	21.7	17.4	43.5
9	Power-with/over					4.3		4.3		17.4	17.4	26.1
10	God/ess heartbeat						26.1	17.4	21.7	4.3	17.4	13.0
14	Patriarchy						8.7	13.0	34.8	21.7	13.0	8.7
17	Spirituality Awe				4.3		4.3	8.7	26.1	26.1	17.4	13.0
20	Feminine/Masculine Principle							4.3		17.4	17.4	60.9
22	Rejected spirituality	21.7	26.1	4.3	4.3		21.7	4.3		8.7	4.3	4.3
23	Sense of Oneness with nature					8.7	17.4	4.3	13.0	17.4	21.7	17.4
24	Women in the system-change	4.3		4.3		4.3	13.0	21.7	17.4		21.7	13.0
25	Loss spirituality cause		4.3				4.3	8.7	8.7	43.5	21.7	8.7
26	Women productive advantage	8.7	8.7	8.7			13.0	4.3	21.7	26.1	4.3	
27	Overpopulation	26.1		13.0	13.0	8.7	13.0	13.0	4.3	4.3	4.3	
28	Women need own spaces						4.3	8.7	8.7	21.7	17.4	39.1
29	Lower relationship with earth	17.4	13.0	4.3	4.3		30.4	8.7	21.7			
30	Epitomizing act men to kill	8.7	13.0	17.4		8.7	26.1		17.4	8.7		
31	Do something positive access spiritual energy					4.3	13.0	17.4	26.1	13.0	13.0	13.0
32	Women greater awareness links oppression						8.7	8.7	21.7	26.1	21.7	13.0
33	Spirituality access deepest passions			4.3			13.0	4.3	21.7	34.8	4.3	17.4
35	Masculinity-manipulate and control women/nature		13.0				21.7	4.3	13.0	13.0	13.0	21.7
37	Women changing env. mym't						8.7	8.7	17.4	34.8	8.7	21.7
38	Radical restructuring of society				4.3			4.3		21.7	21.7	47.8
39	Personal is political						17.4	8.7	8.7	4.3	30.4	30.4
40	Women need separate	30.4	4.3	17.4	13.0	4.3	8.7	8.7	4.3	8.7		
41	Don't believe God/ess	8.7		4.3		4.3	13.0	8.7	4.3	26.1	8.7	21.7
42	Capitalism			4.3	4.3		8.7	13.0	8.7	34.8	8.7	17.4
43	Integrity			4.3			30.4	4.3	13.0	26.1	13.0	8.7
44	I am the Source			4.3			34.8	4.3	13.0	21.7	4.3	17.4
45	Men fear women's power and strength			4.3	4.3		8.7	4.3	21.7	26.1	17.4	13.0

Note figures are percentage 4.3% = 1 person Total number persons = 23

Statement 20: Men are able to access the feminine principle and women the masculine principle in themselves. Society has elaborated and given power to the male principle. The feminine now needs to be emphasized to balance the excesses of the masculine.

A comment which links these two former perspectives is:

The questionnaire seems geared toward an assessment of whether respondents are either predominantly feminist and totally patriarchy blaming, spiritual and or goddess worshippers. There does not appear to be many questions which are trying to draw out differences between a sense of women and men being able to control their environment through socially and ecologically smart and responsible policies *but* instead appears to be leaning toward depending on specific sources, if we were all nature lovers and Goddess worshippers things would be better.

My view is that of achieving a balance, between manipulating and controlling nature, harnessing in a responsible way and conserving and protecting nature which places human beings as but one of a range of living things and not necessarily the only important living species.

A 90 - 95% positive ($\geq +1$) response was recorded to Statements 6, 9, 14, 28, 32, 37, 38.

Statement 6: A greater involvement of men in birthing and child-rearing would result in more effective social, political and environmental structures and processes.

Statement 9: Power for women is about empowerment, 'power-with'; power for men is about 'power-over' and control.

Statement 14: It is the patriarchy that has done the damage. If the balance is to be redressed it will be through women finding their power and strength and acting for change

Statement 28: Women need their own 'spaces' to tap their inner strengths and to empower one another to speak and to act.

Statement 32: Women have a greater awareness of the links between the exploitation of natural resources, the environment, other people and of women

Statement 37: Women are changing things from the inside of organizations by giving value to a greater range of informal relational processes.

Statement 38: Our ecological crisis demands a radical restructuring of society, according to feminist and ecological principles.

This indicates gender analysis, the particular emphasis of which is explicated in the women of this cluster's comments. Perceptions of the need to restructure the "balance between men and women", moving away from this "dichotomy and labelling and toward [an appreciation of] human qualities", characterises this group of women. They affirm the need to recognize the "patriarchy as a power structure that equally oppresses all", and therefore the need for "restructuring of organizations to include feminist ideals", for men and women to discover "power-with" and "act for change". They reject essentialism.

There is an acceptance of separatism "for some women, but not forever". One woman commenting that, in her experience, separatist women's alternatives can only act as "spiritual and physical refugia".

This grouping generally showed an affiliation with statements on spirituality, with 70% of the group responding that they get energized in the natural environment and would call this spirituality (*Statement 2*). A large proportion of the women responded positively to Statements 10, 23, 25, 31 and 33.

Statement 10: God/ess is the heartbeat, the energetic source or wellspring of wisdom and inspiration within people and the Earth (74% \geq +1).

Statement 23: I feel a sense of oneness with nature. If I do not feel and respond to her beauty and pain, I feel as if I am letting down my own fabric (74% \geq +1).

Statement 25: A loss of the spiritual dimension in life has caused our environmental crisis (91% \geq +1).

Statement 31: By doing something positive for society, I access spiritual energy. By acting negatively I move away from the Source of that spiritual energy (82% \geq +1).

Statement 33: My spirituality is about tapping into and releasing my deepest passions for life (82% \geq +1).

Two comments which reflect on the relationship of God to the human experience and to nature affirm a "depth, breath and spiritual dimension to nature", and a spiritual dimension pervading the entire universe ... manifest in the complexity, power, beauty and superiority of the natural environment". Human exploitation, destroying what it is "that we do not know", is identified as a barrier to the full realization of "what could be", if humans worked in relationship to available spiritual energy.

I have faith that this spirituality, comprised of infinite organisms and connections, will one day be supported by life forms such as us. It can survive now with other forms of life, without us, but I think it wishes to include the beauty and creativity which human beings as a unique group of organisms can achieve.

God is the name we give to this seeming miracle that is life itself, tenacious, wondrous, myriad in form. God is the name we give to the arrangement of stars and the universe, huge, awe-ful and imponderable. We try to narrow God down to a being like us, vengeful, narrow, anti-intellect. If God equals awe and we respect this awe, the fellow travellers with us on this planet would stand a much better chance of remaining extant in spite of the mechanisms of our 'civilizations'".

Another woman questions the efficacy of naming too soon:

My spirituality comes out of darkness and silence as well as words. I'm a bit concerned about developing a theology which is in fact emptily verbose as a lot of Christian theology appears to me. In the beginning was the void. I'm still learning to find words for it, sometimes it is as empowering not to name as to name too superficially.

4.3.5 CLUSTER 5.

This cluster of 23 women embodies an even more strongly stated opposition to the separation of male and female, feeling that an emphasis on "masculine and feminine is not helpful in building bridges between men and women".

I really don't like the notion of separating women from men. I agree there is a distinction between what we have come to call feminine from masculine, but 'feminine' ideologies can manifest themselves in men and vice versa.

I believe Western individualist culture has a dominance of values it associates as masculine, (e.g., Mind, Reason, Order). Your questions of 'men' and 'women' did not express my perception because women are equally (though differently to men) victims of this value system in their socialization.

The preference reflected by these women's comments also seemed to be toward talking about "human" qualities. "Regardless of sex all humans should work together on the problems facing us". Further, with respect to the statement on restructuring society, one woman's response was: "perhaps an emphasis on ecological restructuring which both sexes can accord".

Socially constructed difference seems to constitute the basis of these women's analysis. However, there does not appear to be an analysis of how this socially constructed difference impacts within society to form the institutions of culture, with the exception being the comment quoted above. There seems to be an identification with a liberal feminist position with for example the response to Statements 24 and 26 (Table 10).

Statement 24: If enough women were in the social and political system it would change of necessity (70% \geq +3).

TABLE 10: PERCENTAGE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSE TO STATEMENT VARIABLES WITHIN CLUSTER 5.

Statement No.	Statement Descriptor	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
2	I get energized in natural env.			4.3	4.3		30.4		8.7	21.7	21.7	8.7
3	Nurture/Nature	4.3			8.7	8.7	8.7	4.3	26.1	17.4	17.4	8.7
6	Involvement men in birthing				4.3		8.7	4.3	26.1	21.7	21.7	17.4
8	Spiritmatter continuum	4.3		4.3			21.7	17.4	8.7	17.4	4.3	26.1
9	Power-with/over			4.3	8.7		13.0	13.0	17.4	17.4	13.0	17.4
10	God/ess heartbeat	4.3	4.3	17.4	4.3		52.2	4.3	4.3	8.7	4.3	
14	Patriarchy			8.7			17.4	8.7	21.7	21.7	17.4	8.7
17	Spirituality Awe	4.3	4.3			8.7	26.1	13.0	8.7	13.0	21.7	4.3
20	Feminine/Masculine Principle						4.3	4.3	8.7	26.1	30.4	30.4
22	Rejected spirituality	8.7		21.7	4.3	8.7	17.4	8.7	17.4	13.0	4.3	
23	Sense of Oneness with nature			4.3			21.7	8.7	17.4	17.4	21.7	13.0
24	Women in the system-change				4.3	4.3		8.7	13.0	41.7	21.7	8.7
25	Loss spirituality cause						4.3	26.1	8.7	34.8	13.0	16.5
26	Women productive advantage	4.3		4.3	4.3		8.7	4.3	13.0	26.1	13.0	26.1
27	Overpopulation	4.3	17.4	8.7	17.4	4.3	4.3	4.3	13.0	21.7	4.3	4.3
28	Women need own spaces				4.3		4.3	4.3	21.7	17.4	17.4	34.8
29	Love relationship with earth	4.3	4.3			4.3	62.5			4.3		4.3
30	Epitomizing act men to kill	4.3	4.3	17.4	8.7	8.7	30.4	8.7	17.4			4.3
31	Do something positive access spiritual energy						26.1	8.7	26.1	13.0	13.0	17.4
32	Women greater awareness links oppression					8.7	8.7	4.3	26.1	21.7	26.1	8.7
33	Spirituality access deepest passions						13.0	4.3	34.8	13.0	17.4	21.7
35	Masculinity-manipulate and control women/nature		4.3	8.7			26.1	8.7	21.7	17.4		17.4
37	Women changing env. mvm't				4.3		8.7	17.4	17.4	34.8	8.7	13.0
38	Radical restructuring of society			4.3			4.3	17.4	4.3	21.7	13.0	38.4
39	Personal is political			4.3			38.4	4.3	13.0	8.7	17.4	17.4
40	Women need separate	8.7		13.0	13.0		17.4	21.7	8.7	17.4	4.3	
41	Don't believe God/ess			4.3			26.1	4.3	8.7	8.7	17.4	34.8
42	Capitalism					4.3	4.3	13.0	4.3	26.1	30.4	21.7
43	Integrity	4.3	4.3				47.8	4.3	21.7	8.7	4.3	8.7
44	I am the Source						34.8	4.3	30.4	13.0	13.0	8.7
45	Men fear women's power and strength				8.7		21.7	21.7	17.4	13.0	13.0	8.7

Note figures are percentage 4.3% = 1 person Total number persons = 23

Statement 26: As long as we regard being a woman as an advantage we can be productive with it. Women have tremendous power in a man's world (75% \geq +2).

There was an 83% response at a +3 or greater level also to Statement 20, and a 91% \geq +1, to Statement 38.

Statement 20: Men are able to access the feminine principle and women the masculine principle in themselves. Society has elaborated and given power to the male principle. The feminine now needs to be emphasized to balance the excesses of the masculine.

Statement 38: Our ecological crisis demands a radical restructuring of society, according to feminist and ecological principles.

The 75% \geq +1 response to Statement 14, on the patriarchy having done the damage, and women therefore, needing to find their power and act for change, seems to suggest that a tension exists in the analysis of these women, between this position and that of Statement 24. This suggests a need for further education and dialogue, to clarify this analysis.

There seemed to be a positive response to statements on spirituality in this grouping of women, with no particular statements being resoundingly affirmed.

4.3.6 CLUSTER 6

This particular grouping of women is held together more by its lack of fit with other divisions rather than any internal logical consistency. The analysis given here is a compilation of the responses of the women who, on the basis of dissimilarity of correlation coefficients, were removed from the

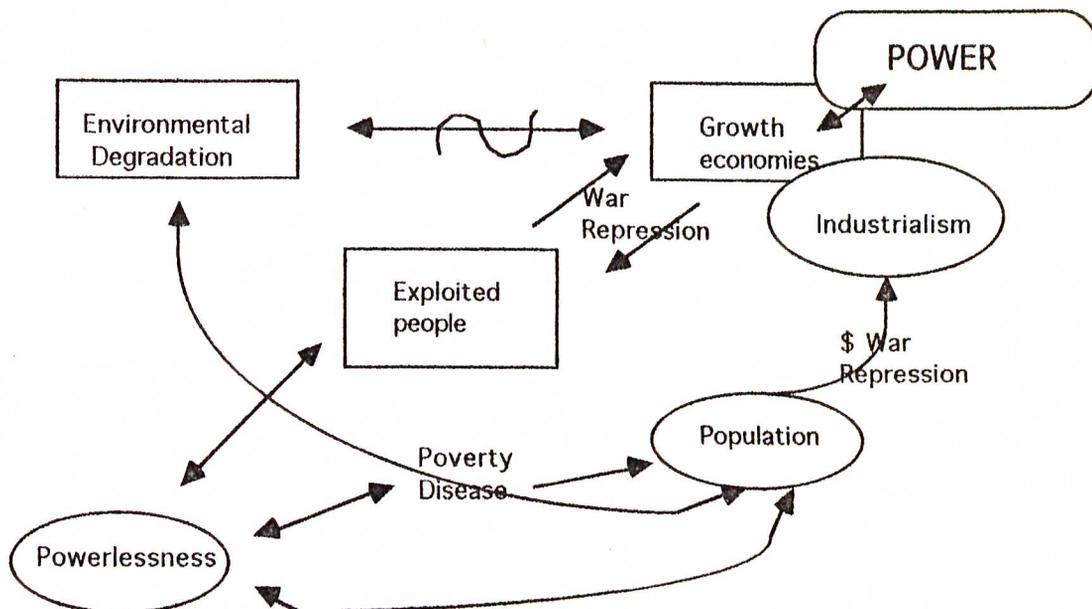
cluster analysis *per se*. Some themes emerged in the comparison of these comments.

As with Clusters one and four, this group expressed difficulty with the language and format of the survey. "Most of the issues are too complex and interrelated to be addressed as a series of unqualified statements". There was a specific rejection of the statements on the 'cause' of environmental problems. A couple of salient comments were:

I am worried about the questions that ask one to say this or that is the cause. If I give it a -3 do you interpret this as my concern for a multi-factorial feminist approach.

It would be easier to answer if I was a very particular type of woman (goddess worshipping radical separatist feminist) or very anti that sort of ideology. However I incorporate sociology, history (herstory) and a range of knowledge and experience into my ideology. Thus I could not tell you what I thought were the causes... the whole picture is too complex to fully fit into just population or just science, technology and industrialization, etc. My zero's do not imply ambivalence, but a frustration at over-simplified statements with too many underlying assumptions.

I don't think there is a "most important cause", *everything* is linked, *everything* is important.



This analysis points to another concern articulated by a number of women among this group. That is, a questioning of the assumption that if women were in power, things would be different.

Although decision making has largely been male oriented in the world and perhaps their lack of knowledge has contributed to environmental degradation, I wonder how far one can go in saying that if women were in power it would not have happened.

If women enter the patriarchal capitalist system indoctrinated with patriarchal capitalist values they will be male clones, like being tougher than their male competitors, beating men at their own dog eat dog game. However if women enter the patriarchal system with woman centred values of co-operation, nurture etc., this will produce a more just, less exploited society. Men are in control. Society is trapped in a self-destructive spiral going down. Humans (men) have raped the earth. The planet is doomed. Perhaps women can turn the world around. I hope so.

Here we have a recognition of how masculine values have been structured into the institutions of society, and a questioning of how society could, or possibly wouldn't, be different if women were to assume power. This analysis affirms the need for an active critique of the values enshrined within the institutions of society and of the alternative values that women embody as a result of socialization, which could potentially be inserted into the institutions of culture.

Some of the women have entered this process offering a critique of masculinity as they perceive it to exist in society.

It is not so much that being a woman is an advantage, it just that being a man is a huge handicap, when trying to think and care about people and things beyond oneself.

Masculinity is based on a desire for the extensive material and emotional advantage such a system of power distribution gives to the individual male.

Most men don't even think about women enough to fear them. They fear women only in proportion to the threat women pose to men's immediate power base, a significant part of which is control over reproduction.

One response which does not reflect this analysis holds "men and women to be equally responsible for environmental degradation" and its resolution. She responded at a 0 level to Statement 38.

Statement 38: Our ecological crisis demands a radical restructuring of society, according to feminist and ecological principles.

She also commented:

Environmental damage has been done through wars, many of which are based on conflicts between religious groups, e.g., the Gulf war. If the same amount of time, energy and money was devoted to solving environmental problems instead of building up war strategies and weaponry, our environmental problems would have been solved by now.

There is no analysis of power relations, a linkage of causes of domination and oppression which reflects a feminist or ecofeminist analysis, present in this account. However, this does appear in the following comment, which reflects an ecofeminist analysis:

I have a problem with the term Nature as it has been defined for so long within patriarchal constructs. It is so caught up with dualistic constructions of mind/body, reason/emotion, natural/ man-made. [The concept of nature being] a place where basic values reside implies a belief in a basic fundamental truth or value system, which I don't think exists. I believe the environment is more anarchical, it does not exist as a role model for humanity. Humanity is part of it.

Another statement questioned the identification of Nature with "the Power, God/ess or whatever". The woman who articulated the statement identified herself as Manichean, ascribing to an inherent dualism in the world. She goes onto say:

I believe there is a power which is there to be accessed by humanity, men and women equally. Maybe it inspired creation, maybe it just provides direction in our lives or maybe it just shapes opportunity....I would be very wary of postulating any causative links between the Power, the actions of men and women and any inherent 'force' in Nature. A plethora of influences determine how people respond to each other and the environment, formal religion often has no place although a numinous 'spirit' may form independently of any other external influence.

One woman who responded to the survey was Aboriginal. She identified strongly (+5) with concepts of oneness (*Statement 23*), goodness (*Statement 34*), Nature spirits (*Statement 16*), Spirit/matter continuum (*Statement 8*), Don't believe in God, Goddess, etc. (*Statement 41*). She went onto say:

Your version of spirituality just didn't fit with mine as an Aboriginal woman. We are one with the earth, we see the land as the giver of life but it is

something which *must* be taken care of and protected because we can't only take from the earth we must always give something back and that is our protection.

4.4 LIMITATIONS OF THIS SURVEY METHODOLOGY

A number of limitations of the survey methodology were identified by respondents. Some of the women felt that statements were dogmatic, dualistic and taken out of context, contained many underlying assumptions and implications which required qualification. A specific difficulty was that a number of statements were in fact two statements, and sometimes women would agree with one half of the statement and strongly disagree with the other.

The basic problem which underlies these criticisms and which has precipitated the diversity of response (27 factors), was the breadth of the topic around which opinions were surveyed. The survey attempted to glean women's opinions on three inter-related but different issues: women, environments and spirituality. The Q-sort methodology could be applied to each of these topics as distinct entities. Attempting to cover all three topics in one survey and establish clear and concise patterns of thought and belief is, as shown by this study, a difficult exercise.

By necessity a survey has to be of a manageable size in order to elicit a good proportion of responses. The range of theoretical positions needs to be clearly defined prior to the construction of the survey. Each position then needs to be reflected within the survey in a number of different ways, including reversals of each statement. In order to make the Q-sort analysis work effectively, a number of checks and balances should be built into the statement list. For example, one should present a statement one way then reverse it, or add a slightly different emphasis. The clustering of responses

into more definitive groupings would result from this process. In order to achieve this result with such a diverse topic the survey would have to have been double the size that it was. This would have been impractical, since it is likely that many women would not respond to such a lengthy survey schedule.

Celia Kitzinger's work on the social construction of lesbianism (1987), from which this methodology was drawn, had a specific population of women (lesbians), had identified through interview and literature, a specific range of positions regarding lesbian identities, knew most of the women surveyed and in fact conducted 3 surveys on 3 different aspects of her theme.

To apply Q-methodology effectively similar conditions should exist. The topic needs to be discreet and contained, or a number of surveys undertaken with the same population of respondents. The latter could only be entertained if there were a good degree of personal contact with the participating group. I would suggest that the members of the participating group also would need to be deeply committed to the topic under consideration. Not that the women in this study were not, as indicated by the significant return rate of 66%. A greater lead in time to the project introducing the study to the participating group would also assist participation, by enabling the members of the group to develop a sense of identification with the project aims.

Despite these limitations, the application of Q-sort in this study has shown the existence of broad coalitions of thought, clusters of women, who identify with similar and in some cases specific sets of beliefs. The identification of these differing positions and analyses provides a significant contribution to the understanding of the diversity that exists in and among women in the environment movement.

Q -analysis, in showing the relationships of similarity and difference within and between clusters, provides a useful indicator to the direction that future research could proceed, in order that greater insight may be obtained in our understanding of the depths and diversity that exists among women in the environment movement.

This study is very much a first step in that process. Further study would focus on the in-depth reflection and dialogue around the themes, differing positions, perceptions and understandings as identified by this study, so that women's contribution may be further elucidated.

CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSIONS:

WOMEN IN THE ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT,
ECOFEMINISM AND THE FUTURE.

Singing the uncurling woman

While you wait curled
listen
move slow
slow and listen to your
grandmothers grandmother sing
sing the earth warm
sing its core to rippling
sing the melting of the rock.
listen
and listen to the hiss
when she licks the earth
moulds its shape
with her tongue rounding edges
lets the clay soak
at the corners of her mouth.
listen
and listen as she sucks mud
hard against her palate
pressing the shape of her word
into the sod.
listen.
listen while you uncurl
then start to turn slow spirals
along the line that connects.

Valerie Wilde. (1988)

Ecofeminism is a web of interconnected diverse strands of thought, practice and belief, integrated yet differentiated into cells of unique colour and hue. The central reality which holds the web in being, and around which differentiation exists and diversity is expressed, is a belief in feminism and ecology. That is, a belief in a feminist analysis which identifies the existence within culture of a hierarchy of domination which legitimates the oppression of women and nature, as well as a belief in ecological values of difference, diversity, mutuality, interconnection, relationship, flow, process, evolution, etc.

Above all ecofeminism celebrates a politics of diversity. Sandilands (1991, p. 90, p. 96) in discussing the difference and inter-relationship between feminism and ecology, the "different feminisms colliding with diverse ecological sensibilities in a wide range of social and political contexts", notes:

From unity to affinity, from singular "connection" to multiple and evolving tangencies: these are the elements of a politics of diversity, one in which different constructions of both women and Nature may emerge. The tensions between them do not represent failure, but rather hope, as we struggle from diversity to diversity.

This study has focused on giving voice to women involved in the environment movement, to the diversity of their namings, that is, to their perceptions of reality and namings of meaning. "Naming is power, power to shape reality into a form that serves the interests and goals of the one doing the naming" (Dodson Gray 1988, p. 2). As women have "been systematically excluded from the enterprise of creating symbol systems, philosophies, science and law" (Lerner 1986, p. 5), it has never been more important at this time of ecological crisis, for women to express their perceptions of meaning, for women to be heard, for women to have their contributions valued, and for the values which women embody, to be inserted into the agenda of social change.

It is important for women to be able to define our own meanings, because it is through that different vision translated into our politics and spiritual quest, that we are able to create and hasten the birth of a new culture. Weaver (1982, p. 250)

Women in this study have affirmed that they perceive women to be 'seeing' and 'doing' differently, in many different groups and in many different ways. Experiences of women recounted in this study have told of women being at a "crucial suffering point under patriarchy" a point of vulnerability and insight; that "women's potential is enormous and untapped"; that women are creating a difference in the environment movement by developing the relational base, by valuing process rather than an 'ends justifying means' philosophy, and further encouraging a greater range of processes of conflict resolution. "Women are creating an integrity through the movement" which may in fact "create an entirely different political system". A majority of the women involved in this study affirm the need for a "feminization of the structures".

There seems to be a high level of confidence reflected particularly in the interviews and the comments of women appended to the survey, that women have within themselves, and as a body, the necessary experience and potential to imagine and create different relationships and so different social and political realities.

Some women have withdrawn from the patriarchal system, believing in the necessity to create from within women's culture, life-loving and life affirming ways of living ecologically, personally and politically. Some women who have not disengaged entirely from the system (they may have been marginalized by it), are looking for ways to re-construct the 'inner landscape', and the dynamic of relationships within society, believing that fundamental change must reflect a change in inner-outer relationships and dynamics, an ecology of heart, body and mind interacting with a social

ecology. Some women are active in the home, with and without children, working for self-sufficiency, for ways of creating more environmentally sound households. Some women are actively engaged in socio-political structures, in Government and alternative movements (environment, justice, peace, women's). Some of these are working toward an equality of women in decision making, believing this will effect change, while some are actively trying to "feminize" the structures, i.e., move the system to a new mode of functioning, re-incorporating the lesser valued feminine qualities of nurture, co-operation, compassion etc.

There is a broadly-based recognition identified in the study, of the need to create women's space, for women to locate inner resources of power within themselves, to affirm and strengthen their values and their passionately held convictions which differ from those of masculine culture. From this space women experience themselves as empowered to act with equality, some feel empowered to engage with men in an analysis of gender, of socially constructed relations, critically bringing the feminine into interaction with the institutions and movements.

Women, because they occupy such a diversity of perceptual space, have a significant contribution to make to this moment of ecological crisis. The full diversity of positions must be affirmed for what each has to contribute at each level and phase of social change. The radical separatist position for instance, even though while not accepted by the majority of women, can play a role, by virtue of its radicalism, of calling other groupings of women into greater self-definition and therefore a greater authenticity of belief and practice. Each position must dialogue with the insights and critique offered by those who experience and name the world differently, and moreover with the insights of ecofeminism, so that each position may be clarified, enriched, and new realities created.

A liberal feminist belief, for example, needs to engage with ecofeminist critique. It needs to open itself to the possibility that in gaining equality with men within the systems of society, and within the structures and processes of the environment movement, women may be joining men in defining culture, and in directing cultural goals and aspirations, but may still thereby, be retaining culture's separation from and therefore the oppression of nature and those defined as 'other' (women, class groups, indigenous peoples, etc.), by the dominant culture. The desire articulated in the survey for emphasising "human qualities" when talking about social and ecological change, because an "emphasis on masculine and feminine is not helpful in building bridges" could assist, albeit with good intent not to disaffect men, the perpetuation of values and ways of seeing, being and knowing that are antithetical to true ecological progress. This is so, because from an ecofeminist perspective, what is 'human' needs to be re-defined; the historical understanding of 'human' as 'masculine' involving the subordination and marginalization of the 'feminine', must be consciously addressed and transformed so that the term 'human' is genuinely inclusive.

This thesis affirms the ecofeminist belief that ecological theory and practice needs feminism in order that new ways of being in the world are created which do not "depend on the exploitation, exclusion and devaluation of the sphere of the feminine and of nature, both within and without the human self" (Plumwood 1990, p. 24). It affirms ecofeminism in the diversity of its expressions, clustering around a central core of beliefs, as a significant way of naming and reconstructing meaning, that challenges the namings of the dominant patriarchal culture. As a philosophy and practice, ecofeminism needs to dynamically engage with the reflective and dialogical processes of women (and men) within the environment movement.

Ecofeminism's vision of society transformed in and through the application of ecological and feminist critique and principles, can be said to be affirmed by the vision and analysis of a number of the women within this study. Warren (1987) in creating a theory of transformative feminism, with feminism embracing ecological perspectives, sets forward an ecofeminist agenda. A number of women in the study resonate with the ecofeminist agenda proposed by Warren (1987). They:

- a) note the links between the oppression of women and the oppression of nature and indigenous peoples;
- b) reject patriarchy's logic of a hierarchy of being and value, and the subsequent legitimation of separation, (for example, of men from women, spirit from matter, nature from culture) and domination of the lesser valued half of the dichotomy;
- c) believe in the need to rethink *human* being, noting that:
 - i) environmentalism is an inner as well as outer issue. A restructuring of inner dynamics and relationships must be reflected in the social and political process, as well as the reciprocal process;
 - ii) we are nature too, part of an ecological community of relationship yet different from other members of it, separate yet co-extensive;
- d) are forming a sense of their ethics and values from within relationships, to one another and to non-human nature, (for example, valuing process and alternative modes of conflict resolution, long term goals over short term profit, etc);
- e) reject a patriarchal bias in the institutions of culture (science, technology, the market, government, religion) and;
- f) are working to heal the wounds of dualism, to bring about a new synthesis of the personal and political, masculine and feminine, nature and culture, body, mind and spirit;

A politics of difference and a policy of dialogue, of relational flow between, across and around these differences, is essential to an ecological modelling of reality, of human being, knowing and valuing, and an ecological reconstruction of society.

Ecofeminist spirituality interacts with the processes of ecological reconstruction in its rejection of patriarchal religion's separation of the human from nature, of the God/ess's separation from the realm of the material, and in its construction of new theological and theological images, metaphors, and ways of naming the meaning of human existence within the mysterious all.

For the women involved in this study spirituality is differentially significant. Though some participants reject 'spirituality, they also relate to seemingly 'spiritual' imagery. Extended dialogue in what spirituality is, could serve to clarify what is being rejected, and a different understanding of spirituality could emerge.

Other women seem to relate strongly to ecofeminist concepts of spirituality. They relate experiences of knowing, and of the desire to respond from, a sense of connectedness to nature. This spirituality involves feelings of empathy, the capacity to enter into the reality of another, and passionate orientation to life and to ecological systems. Some specifically articulate an affiliation with Earth-based spirituality, other with Womens' spirituality and with the theology of ecofeminist Christian women theologians.

Given that "symbols have both psychological and political effects" (Spretnak 1983, p. 72), and have the power to create the inner conditions to sustain meanings given to life, the transformative symbols and metaphors identified in this study as being significant to women, may potentially guide new constructions of meaning. Such transformative symbols can provide

the psychic disposition, the conviction and images necessary, to sustain and empower socio-political activity, of the kind that effects an ecological restructuring of society.

Charlene Spretnak (1991, p. 14), for instance, writes poetically of a new synthesis from the "experience" of being one with the world:

... one perceives in an instant the sacred whole, the vast organism in which we are embodied without separation, the larger self. Knowing the wonder of the larger reality, the experience of grace, all particularity is then understood to be exceedingly precious, the unimaginably diverse articulation of the dynamically creative cosmic body. Moreover, the unique abilities of the human species are understood to participate in responsibility for development in the great unfolding.

This statement picks up on a tension existing between deep ecology and ecofeminism which is significant to the experience of a number of women in this study; namely, between conceptualization's of human being as co-extensive with nature, "embodied without separation" and as a differentiated particularity with unique abilities and responsibilities to nature and "the great unfolding". This debate needs further interaction with the lived experiences of women to precisely locate how women see and experience their relationship to nature; particularly to notice whether perceptions and experience imperil or support women's emerging sense of self, and women's contribution to "the great unfolding".

Christianity as one of the major institutions of Western culture, is seen to have failed the Earth, largely in the elevation of the human over nature. Ecofeminist philosophy and psychology are involved in a task of rethinking what it is to be human. They advocate a psychological restructuring of attitudes and beliefs about ourselves and our world and a philosophical restructuring of notions of self whereby we understand ourselves to be co-members of an ecological community, yet differentiated from other members of it (Warren 1987). Any spiritual discipline that refrains from dialogue on this philosophical and psychological reconstruction of human

being and meaning, from the perspectives of feminism and ecology, will continue to harm and oppress women and nature. To speak with any authenticity or relevance to modern society, they must respond to the ecological crisis by assisting with the re-definition of human being and meanings, and the re-construction of transformative symbols to underpin social and cultural transformation in the direction of socially and ecologically just societies.

How significant the images or symbols significant to the lived experience of some of the women in this study are with respect to assisting the psychic transformation and empowerment of women (and men) to act for social and ecological change, needs to be the object of further study. Spirituality, in this context, is essentially about the creating of new ways of being in relation to self, to society and to the greater mystery of life. Without an adequate spirituality to sustain and guide the transformation of the inner and outer landscapes, any ecological transformation of society will not and cannot be sustained. No one suite of images will suffice. The diversity of attractions to a diversity of images is illustrated in this brief study. What is imperative is that all traditions old and new must grapple with new namings which are inclusive of women, inclusive of nature and inclusive of those others, devalued or denied voice by the dominant institutions of culture. Once again it will be a move "from diversity to diversity" (Sandilands 1991, p. 96).

This thesis celebrates a politics of diversity. Attempts at the construction of an ecological society must embody this politic. Ecofeminism as an emerging philosophy has much to offer the processes of ecological reconstruction, by way of providing metaphor, guiding images and practical philosophy.

I think that ecofeminism future-building is like quilting. The quilt is a quilt-in-process, one that emerges out of and reflects the lived and reflected-upon experiences of the individual quilters. And since those quilters are located in a variety of historical and socio-economic circumstances, their contributions to the emerging ecofeminist 'quilt' will differ ... the specific details of the quilt are not

specifiable at the outset; if they were, the historical and creative process would be largely tangential or even irrelevant to what emerges. But what will *not* be a part of that emerging ecofeminist quilt are patriarchal thoughts and practices, even if we do not know beforehand, so to speak, which thoughts and practices those are.

Warren (1991, p. 65)

The women involved in this study are involved in the construction of a new fabric of ecological and feminist relatedness. Future-building emerges out of creative engagement with the historical process. It emerges from reflected upon life experience and thoughtful dialogue, by those engaged in the common task of quilting a future. The task is immense, for the earth is deeply wounded. The courage to quilt, to heal and to create, to tap the wellsprings of our passion for life, to tap into the images which energize and empower, is already creating and will continue to create an ecological society, in which difference and diversity ensures survival. The unleashing of this creative stream of vibrant possibility which is directed to an ecological future is a hope-filled process. That through our creative, emotive, and imaginative faculties we should come into a new dynamic of ecological relatedness is surely 'the dream of the earth'.

APPENDIX 1: COVERING LETTER AND SURVEY FORMAT

August 1, 1991.

Dear

Hi. My name is Caresse Cranwell. I am currently undertaking some research for my Masters Degree in Environmental Studies, on the links women, involved in environmental networks, are making around the themes of Women, Environment and Spirituality.

I have interviewed some 30 women here in Adelaide on their perceptions of our environmental problems, women's, actual and potential contribution to social and environmental change, and on their sources of energy, inspiration and commitment; spiritual or not. Their responses have formed the basis of the enclosed survey.

I am working now to extend the study to a broader grouping of women across Australia. Your participation would be invaluable.

Whilst the survey at first glance appears rather large, it will in fact take you no more than 15 - 20 minutes to complete. It simply requires you to indicate your response to the statement outlined, by circling a number on the strongly agree - strongly disagree continuum. You also may feel an ambivalence toward the statement and so record a neutral position by circling zero.

I have only a short time frame for this project and knowing from personal experience that if put in the 'things to do' pile, even with the very best of intentions, sinking out of site and mind happens very easily. I ask you therefore to respond straight away to the survey and return it to me by no later than Friday August 30.

Thanks for participating in this work. I am hopeful that it will provide some insight into possible strategies for education and for social and environmental change and action.

Yours Sincerely,

Age: *f* <20 *f* 21 -35 *f* 36 - 50 *f* 51+

Residence: City Town Rural Area

Major Work: Home/Kids Community Environment Mv'tm Public Service
Other:(specify)_____

Major Voluntary Activities: _____

Educational Qualifications: _____

Ethnic Background: _____

Spiritual Affiliation: Christian Buddhist Animist Wicca Other_____

Membership of Environmental Groups _____

Please indicate by circling a number from, -5 to 5, how you feel about the following statements. Record Zero if you are unsure or ambivalent about the statement.

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
1	Materialism and individualism, ignorance and greed are <u>the</u> major causitive agents of the environmental crisis.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
2	I get energized by being in the natural environment, but I wouldn't call it spirituality.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
3	Women's socialization as nurturers and care-givers gives them a greater intuitive understanding of, and empathy with nature.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
4	It is God who moves and changes things not people.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
5	Women who rise to power in the bureaucracy often become pseudo-men.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
6	A greater involvement of men in birthing and child-rearing would result in more effective social, political and environmental structures and processes.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
7	The Christian tradition of care and social justice inspires my environmental commitment.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
8	There is a spirit/matter continuum. Neither would exist without the other. We are part of the spirit manifest in matter.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
9	Power for women is about empowerment, 'power-with'; power for men is about 'power-over' and control.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
10	God/ess is the heartbeat, the energetic source or wellspring of wisdom and inspiration within people and the Earth.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
11	Social inequity, injustice and poverty are more significant factors threatening the environment than is overpopulation.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
12	Christianity is in no way responsible for the ecological crisis.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
13	God/Goddess isn't something but relationship.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
14	It is the patriarchy that has done the damage. If the balance is to be redressed it will be through women finding their power and strength and acting for change.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
15	Women as homemakers should bear greater responsibility for environmental repair through the education of their children, reducing consumption, reusing and recycling and buying green products.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
16	I believe in nature spirits and natural magic, that you can learn the skills to communicate to and with different planes of existence and to use the life force.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
17	Spirituality for me is about being in 'awe', in touch with a greater mystery.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
18	I believe it is a cop out to believe something out there is in control. There is nothing more powerful than the human mind.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
19	Women, biologically and socially conditioned to patient 'waiting', would favour non-interventionist solutions; providing the conditions for the earth to heal itself.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
20	Men are able to access the feminine principle and women the masculine principle in themselves. Society has elaborated and given power to the male principle. The feminine now needs to be emphasised to balance the excesses of the masculine.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
21	Women are more in touch with nature because of the inherent chaos of their body rhythms.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
22	I have rejected concepts of spirituality because of their association with formal religion.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
23	I feel a sense of oneness with nature. If I do not feel and respond to her beauty and pain, I feel as if I am letting down my own fabric.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
24	If enough women were in the social and political system it would change of necessity.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	
25	A loss of the spiritual dimension in life has caused our environmental crisis.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5	

		Strongly Disagree	Strongly Agree
26	As long as we regard being a woman as an advantage we can be productive with it. Women have tremendous power in a man's world.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
27	Overpopulation is <u>the</u> most significant cause of our environmental problems.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
28	Women need their own 'spaces' to tap their inner strengths and to empower one another to speak and to act.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
29	I seek a lover relationship with the Earth, embracing an image, a metaphor of the earth as God's body.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
30	The epitomizing act for women is to give birth; for men it is to kill.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
31	By doing something positive for society, I access spiritual energy. By acting negatively I move away from the Source of that spiritual energy.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
32	Women have a greater awareness of the links between the exploitation of natural resources, the environment, other people and of women.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
33	My spirituality is about tapping into and releasing my deepest passions for life.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
34	Nature is an expression of the spiritual dimension of goodness, wholeness in life, life-givingness, a place where basic values reside.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
35	Masculinity has been constructed to manipulate and control women and nature, based on a fear of their inherent chaos.	-5	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

Strongly
DisagreeStrongly
Agree

36	Science, technology and industrialization have been <u>the</u> major cause of our environmental problems.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
37	Women are changing things from the inside of organizations by giving value to a greater range of informal relational processes.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
38	Our ecological crisis demands a radical restructuring of society, according to feminist and ecological principles.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
39	With the holistic sense of spirituality, one's personal life is truly political and one's political life is truly personal.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
40	Women need to withdraw their energy from the patriarchy, to separate completely, and to create womens' alternatives as normative.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
41	I don't believe in God, a Goddess, or a series of Goddesses, but have a feeling that the environment, the earth, and the diversity in it, is bigger than I am.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
42	Capitalism and the growth economy are <u>the</u> major causes of environmental deterioration.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
43	God/ the Goddess is intimately within <u>and</u> beyond the earth, drawing all into integrity of being, relationships of communion and transformation.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
44	I am one physical manifestation of the Source, experiencing itself in time and space	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5
45	Men fear women for their inner strength and power to reproduce and give birth.	-5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5

COMMENTS?

If you have any comments on the statements that you have just responded to, e.g., if you feel that your position or beliefs have not been adequately represented by the survey, please *use this space* to make a comment.

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