

**“Building Inclusive Spiritual Spaces”
Women’s Spirituality - Four Perspectives form a Quadrant.
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"In honour of International Women’s Day on March 8, fellowship members of the Canadian Unitarian Universalist Women’s Association explore how women create an inclusive spiritual space."

The following outline addresses each quadrant of a matrix that Dr Donaldson articulated over time when teaching a Graduate course: Women and Education at the University of Calgary. It is explained more completely in an award-winning book, “Coming of Age” (2004) and has been used in a number of dissertations and research projects. The schemata that follows provides a visual representation of the concept. The 4 perspectives also provide a framework for the CUUWA mission and vision statement (www.cuuwa.ca). Please contact Dr. Donaldson via email (above) if you are interested in further information.

PART 1 Women’s Spirituality: 4 Perspectives

Intro

Background: Personal. Professional, Public and Political matrix

Represents my evolution as well as the changes in society during the late 20th C affecting all of our lives.

Personal: Unitarian women’s programs.

Professional: Women and Education courses; graduate students

Public: CUUWA established

Political: Mother Earth-based Gaia; feminist but not anti-male

Purpose: to interpret the 4 Ps within the context of International Women’s Day and Inclusive Spirituality.

Personal

Definition generic but include women’s spirituality

Our inner life; the dialogue “who am I”. Related to codes of observable behavior: nice girls don’t get angry (except that they do) and boys don’t cry (except that they need to). So much easier for females to talk about their feelings and to share their inner thoughts.

Example: Religious terms: immanent not transcendent; Earth (y) is a positive, not negative quality.

Some Differences from male perspective: more risky for them because of higher public expectations

Professional

Definition careers, not jobs – Example: less of a hierarchical trajectory; more plateaued multitasking valued but that can be an excuse to avoid risk taking re actualizing talents. Successful women lead more lonely lives than do such men.

spirituality is associated with morality and values

Influence of 7 Principles - which one is most important.

(me: search for truth but for many Unitarians it is social justice)

Some differences from males: \$ income marginalized from norm. Women earn 70 cents to a \$1 of men. 14% of 4000 Boards, large companies, have women Directors; 41% of companies have no women at all. More women own small businesses (flexible timetables)

Public:

Definition: pretty women, mostly young sexy ones;

or witches (inverted)

Represent symbolic values i.e. liberty; grace, motherhood

Example: ads – sexuality sells; mentors?

Some differences from males: craggy older men more desirable than grandma in the kitchen. Maiden; mother; crone what are the male opposites? Bachelor? Father? Old man?

Political:

Definition: not just elected numbers but conflict resolution

Example: 6 women premiers (85% of Cdn population) but we don't have critical mass in Houses. Define "critical mass"

Some difference from males: “voice”; conflict is less physical, more verbal.
Generally prefer conversation to guns.

Conclusions

4Ps an analytical tool that assists in understanding women’s lives

and how they differ from men’s without being hostile. Kaleidoscopic dynamic overlaps within the 4Ps and the reality of our lives. Unlikely to ever be identical to men’s but “gender-sensitivity” (not “gender neutrality”) enhances spiritual development in all. In service will now, pass the chalice to Meg who will present a holistic and integrative interpretation of women’s spirituality.

Handout - *Defining the 4 P’s*

Before retirement, when teaching a Women and Education graduate course at the University of Calgary, I wanted a conceptual framework that encouraged an understanding of women’s issues from a holistic woman-centred perspective. It is not healthy or empowering to understand one’s social world only from a marginalized “other” stance. It’s necessary to celebrate achievements as well as to reduce inequities.

Gradually a quadrant approach evolved that helped sort our lived experiences into four dimensions: personal, professional, political and public. They could be viewed as dynamic kaleidoscopic patterns: reflecting the overlapping, beautiful, ever changing, dark and light vignettes of our lives. However, one could focus upon only one aspect or perhaps the relationships between two of the dimensions.

“Personal” is that dimension which emanates from within the individual and intimate relationships such as family and friends. “Professional” is acquired expertise, usually based upon education, formal credentials and paid work. “Political” is an arena in which contested issues are strategically addressed. “Public” is an image, a recognition (or lack of it) by the community, the perception of the collective eye.

Any theme might be threaded through the quadrant. For example, “spirituality” might be explored from a personal perspective (a insightful vision) but it might seem quite different when viewed professionally (ministerial responsibilities) or politically (the reproductive issue) and public (the maiden, the mother, the crone).

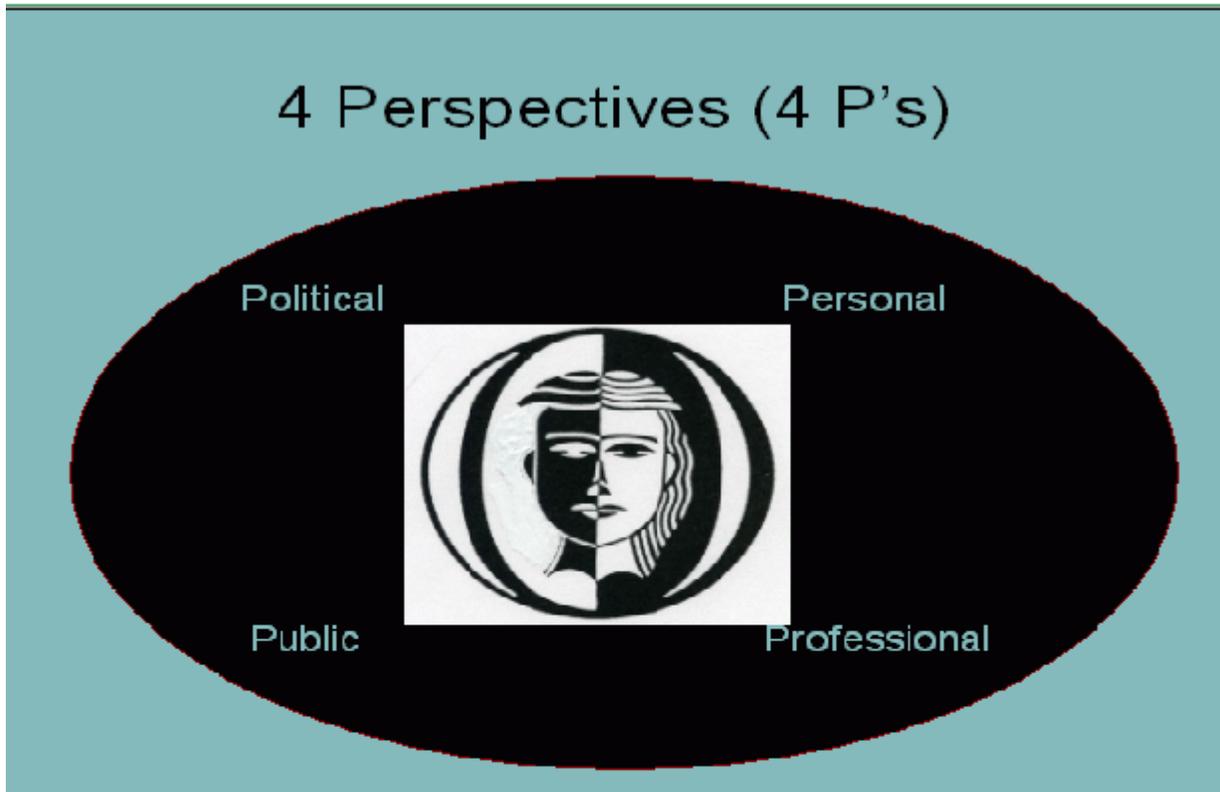
“CUUWA has a national and international profile with respect to the personal, professional, political and public aspects of women’s lives and reflects the core denominational principles of the Canadian Unitarian Council. “ Our Mission statement resonates with possibilities. May it inspire all of us!

Betty Donaldson
Chair, CUUWA
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(adapted from E.L. Donaldson, Preface, *Coming of Age* (pp5-6, 2004, Calgary: Detselig Enterprises; recipient of the Alberta Centennial medal.)

Summary of the Four Perspectives used to understand contemporary women's lives

4 Perspectives (4 P's)



DEFINITIONS: The quadrant represents four core aspects of women's lives, each of which may overlap; all of which may be foreground for a discussion.

Personal: represents inner (spiritual) and outer (family, friends) relationships; support and community.

Professional: focuses upon education, career selection and trajectories, workplace environments; salaries.

Public: addresses public stereotypes and images; recognition.

Political: includes conflict and change; representation; issues.

May 3, 2011, sources: Images of the Goddess, and UC Women and Leadership Graduate course.
ELD. Courtenay, BC