



**Dr Toni D'amant**

**Title:** The Power of The Circle

Traditionally, tribal women gathered monthly to share their stories in supportive circles of sisterhood. My intention in setting up similar circles is to create safe, participatory spaces where women's lives and identities can be explored, negotiated and reconstructed. In the circle, all are equally valued and heard and facilitation is from an energy of working *with* participants towards personal and social transformation within an ethic of collaboration. These circles acknowledge the politics of the personal - where women's subjectivities and experiences of everyday life become the site of the redefinition of patriarchal meanings and values and of resistance to them.

Narrative inquiry and visual methodologies lie at the heart of this research endeavour. Working visually and verbally with the material of our lives deepens and expands our understanding and ability to unpack conscious and unconscious investments in aspects of our personal and social identity. The transformative potential of these circles lies in critical self-reflection on internal and external structures, which may have been keeping women trapped in traditional, unequal power relations, and empowering participants to renegotiate their identities and change the conditions of their lives. This paper offers insights and reflections on the power of these circles towards this end.

**Key words:**

Circles of sisterhood, participatory spaces, ethic of collaboration, women's subjectivities, renegotiating identity, narrative inquiry, visual methodologies