

**The Creative Dance of Love and Consciousness:
An Integral, Phenomenological Inquiry into the Experiences of Belonging
and Not-Belonging**

By

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Abstract

This is an Integral and Phenomenological Inquiry into the experiences of 'belonging' and 'not-belonging'. Using Wilber's Integral Operating System and its AQAL model as a basis, the inquiry brings together the interior and exterior dimensions of individual and collective experiencing. With an emphasis on embodiment, its approach to method incorporates a Participatory axiology and leans upon Gendlin's philosophy for its interpretative framework. The thesis considers some of the complex individual and social phenomena which are implicit to a sense of alienation and the behaviour of marginalisation, as well as those inherent to the movements of integration, healing and growth. Multiple methodologies combine to integrate evidence which reflects the four quadrants of the AQAL model. Included here is a Case Study of the social dynamics of a Norfolk town and the perceptions of 'marginal' groups within that community. Gendlin's approach of 'Thinking At the Edge' is used, as well as individual and group contemplations which contribute to building the overall narrative of the thesis. Discourses of individual and community development, identity and consciousness are considered along with those of attachment, trauma and Gendlin's idea of 'stuck processes'. Even with its inherent risks, in this thesis it becomes clear that the experience of not-belonging is as fundamental and vital to individual and collective development as is that of belonging. Our belonging and not-belonging are two protagonists in a grand narrative. Between them an essentially creative, evolutionary dynamic emerges – a dance between love and consciousness.

Acknowledgements

At the completion of my research journey I must give thanks for the generous participation of all the people who have shared their experiences of *belonging* and of *not-belonging* with me along the way. I am grateful for the accompaniment of my supervisory team, Dr Judy Moore and Professor Anne Cockburn (and also to sundry dogs and cats) for believing-in me and for encouraging me to keep going. I also owe a great deal to my doctoral friends in the School of Education and Lifelong Learning – they have been an incredible source of inspiration, support and fun as we have shared and witnessed the joys and sorrows of each other's academic and more ordinary lives. Most of all I must thank my beloved family for their unstinting support and understanding - and for getting on so nicely without me whilst I became increasingly occupied with this task.

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A brief synopsis.

My interest in the phenomena surrounding belonging and not-belonging arose in personal experience and from my practice of psychotherapy. In particular it was inspired in the context of my work with socially marginalised individuals and groups. I originally wondered whether the experience of *Not-belonging* might somehow be connected to the anxiety, depression and addictive disorders which are often a feature of such social marginalisation. Furthermore, since the sequelae of trauma can also include a sense of *Not-belonging* socially, and of *dis-integration* intra-psychically - I also felt that a better understanding of the features of 'belonging' could be useful to the theory and practice of therapy in these contexts.

I used Ken Wilber's Integral Theory and his AQAL model as my 'operating system' in this inquiry; whilst John Heron's and Peter Reason's Participatory approach and axiology have also been taken up in order to further express the inquiry's experiential nature. Along with Integral and Systems Theories, the discourses of Embodiment and Gendlin's *Philosophy of the Implicit* have further underpinned much of my theorising.

The AQAL model identifies and makes distinctions between the phenomenal vectors of '*Individual:Collective*' and '*Interior:Exterior*' – separating these into four categories or 'quadrants' which are illustrated by means of a grid. This framework initially proved helpful to my inquiry, but it also created something of a challenge, since at the level of experience each quadrant implies and is implied by all the others and therefore no single 'quadrant' could be researched entirely discretely. Nevertheless each quadrant does suggest a particular perspective upon the phenomena under inquiry, thereby deepening my attention to the intricate complexity of the matter under inquiry.

The research methods that I have adopted here include a case-study of belonging and not-belonging in a particular community; semi-structured interviews; Gendlin's '*Thinking At the Edge*' (TAE); and individual and group contemplations. My primary data is therefore exclusively qualitative and takes the form of various types of narrative. In analysing these texts I have been guided by the approach of *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA), but I have also taken a heuristic and narrative approach to analysis – particularly in respect of the data pertaining to the inter-subjective process of the collective, where I have found the need to preserve 'whole stories' as well as identifying themes within them.

Throughout this inquiry I have been interested to learn more about the experiential phenomena pertaining to *Belonging* and to *Not-belonging*. Along the way I have asked questions about the environmental contexts and social circumstances in which these experiences can occur and be recognised; I also inquired into the objective and subjective qualities that render them thereby recognisable. How do we know when we belong or do not belong? What does each experience subjectively feel like? What objective behaviours or narratives do we associate with each one? What are the social and psychological consequences of belonging and not-belonging for groups and for individuals? What social and intra-psychic dynamics are involved in the processes of marginalisation and of integration? And, furthermore: Where is '*Home*' – how do we experientially know when we are 'at home' and 'not at home'?

What my research has revealed is that the phenomena related to the experiences of belonging and not-belonging, and of leaving and finding 'home' - are very complex indeed. My key findings came as something of a surprise to me in the light of the ideas that I had held at the outset of this inquiry - they are listed in Chapter Nine on page 190.

Chapter One.

Finding a way in...



The one who dreamed the universe loved circles. There is some strange way in which everything that goes forward is somehow still travelling within the embrace of the circle. Longing and belonging are fused within the circle. The day, the year, the ocean's way, the light the water and life insist on moving in the rhythm of the circle. The mind is a circle too. This is what keeps you gathered in yourself.

- O'Donohue (1998:18)

1.0 Introduction.

I use the metaphor of a 'journey' to describe the process of my Integral and Phenomenological inquiry into the experiences of 'Belonging' and of 'Not-belonging' - and at one level, the thesis narrates its story. The research-story weaves inside and outside of the phenomena under inquiry; it also loops around as it considers individual and collective dimensions and picks up vital 'puzzle-pieces' of experience along the way. Each piece is significant on its own, but each is also a part of a larger phenomenal 'whole': and so is part of a bigger story. My thesis itself (the thesis of the thesis) only became fully disclosed for me once I had brought all of these fragments together - at which point the story seemed to 'come to life' - revealing a dynamic: a reciprocal circling movement, creatively flowing between belonging and not-belonging.

1.1 A circular story.

For John O'Donohue (1998:18) the central motif of belonging is a circle. He develops this theme continuing on from the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter, calling attention to something particular about this circle:

Yet the circle of the mind is broken somewhere. This fracture is always open; it is the secret well from which all longing flows. All prayer, love, creativity and joy come from this source; our fear and hurt often convert them into their more sinister shadows.

An open circle actually creates a spiral if it continues to move and grow - making a three-dimensional shape through space as well as through time. This idea certainly resonates with my sense of this research process, but it now feels equally true for the phenomena under inquiry. Not only has the inquiry itself consisted of many 'hermeneutic cycles' (Packer and Addison, 1989; Todres, 2007), but it has also revealed to me a creative circular story in which Belonging naturally moves towards Not-belonging ... only to begin searching once more for Belonging. The details and variations of this basic motif are, however, infinitely more complex than this.

1.2 Overview and thesis conventions.

I have found that the experiential phenomena associated with belonging and not-belonging to be intricate, complex and multi-dimensional, involving developmental, psychological, social and cultural elements. My approach to this inquiry has therefore needed to be paradigmatically grounded with enough scope for me to incorporate multiple perspectives. During early preparative stages I investigated a number of possible theoretical frameworks upon which I might base my investigation, finally deciding to utilise Ken Wilber's (1995) Integral Theory and his AQAL operating system (sic), whilst also adopting a Participatory and axiology (Heron and Reason, 1997) and a Phenomenological approach (Todres, 2007) to method. These aspects of research design, theory and method are further elaborated in later sections of this chapter and in Chapters Two and Three respectively.

Chapters Four to Seven present the data collected with differing methodologies in order to highlight something of each AQAL quadrant perspective. Chapter Eight links findings and themes to theories from a number of divergent discourses and philosophical traditions. In Chapter Nine I collate and summarise empirical outcomes as the foundation for making some propositions which are central to the thesis; I then critically review this process before moving to suggest how the results of this inquiry may contribute to theory and practice in a number of areas.

The use of italics in the text indicates a word or phrase which stands out or which has a particular embodied *resonance* for me as the researcher of the inquiry. For instance I have used italics to differentiate between the *feeling of belonging* and the more categorical meaning of the word.

Data extracts - which are presented as indented italicised text – have emergent themes identified in **bold** print, these are also summarised at the end of each data chapter.

Line numbers relating to data transcripts appear in analysis text boxes - however, because of their personal content and the possibility of individuals from within this academy being identifiable even after the

transcripts had been anonymised, full transcripts of conversations and group contemplations have not been included as appendices. Relevant sections will be made available to examiners upon request.

1.3 'Prequel' to the story.

My initial interest in the issue of '*Belonging*' as an experience - and of what at first seemed to be its opposite: '*Not-belonging*' – had crystallised whilst working as a therapist for a ten year period in a residential rehabilitation centre for the treatment of drug and alcohol dependence (addiction¹). I completed an MA(res) in 2005 in which I focused on people's stories of transition into recovery and their experiences of integration into community life after living more isolated (and socially marginalised) lifestyles during their active addiction. Many times I have heard it said by those people seeking recovery from addiction that: "...I never felt that I belonged... not even in my own family" and I began to wonder if those feelings of not-belonging were the result of using and abusing drugs or alcohol (and its concomitant relational damage) or whether they might be an underlying causal factor of it.

The sense of *Not-belonging* seems to be a commonly shared experience amongst those who suffer from addiction; nevertheless it has become increasingly clear to me that this feeling is not unique to them.

Other contexts in which I have worked with socially 'marginalised' (Park, 1937) individuals and groups, include a year spent working with 'offenders'² during prison sentences and following release. My role was to provide therapeutic support for re-integration to society for the graduates of a prison-based drug and alcohol rehabilitation programme – helping them to develop psychological resources and behavioural coping strategies other than drug use. More recently I contributed to the delivery of a government funded programme³ which had been designed to support groups of people back to work who had been signed-off work through illness for more than six months, and who were in receipt of higher levels of 'sickness benefit'⁴. Some of those people had been on sickness-related benefits for a great many years without showing any improvement in their medical conditions or level of fitness for work. Those groups were comprised of people who came from a very broad demographic range of social, economic and professional backgrounds. What they all had in common was that, after becoming too ill to work, in spite of the interventions of doctors and psychiatrists, they had not been able to recover sufficiently to return to it. However, another experiential

1 'Addiction' is a somewhat contested generic term (O'Brian et al. 2006) which continues to be used colloquially and which encompasses the newly defined DSM-V categories of *substance abuse* and *substance dependence*. It further encompasses the obsessive-compulsive behavioural traits of problematic gambling, sexual activities, electronic and on-line gaming etc. (see also Chapter Eight)

2 A legal term (so therefore a social referent) for a person convicted of activities determined by society to be illegal.

3 An initiative which incorporated Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) elements into group work designed to raise awareness and develop skills to more effectively manage the psychological aspects of illness: The Condition Management Program. (See '*Condition Management Program*' [CMP] DWP website: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/plp-section10.pdf> accessed 15/08/11)

4 Differing levels of welfare payments are made through the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) for those who are unable to work through illness or other disability.

feature which was quite commonly held by the people in those groups was the feeling that they were somehow now socially excluded or marginalised as a consequence of being unable to work, and for being dependent upon these state benefit payments. It was interesting to note again people talking about having a sense of not-belonging, and I speculated that it could be this feeling of alienation which had primarily eroded their positive sense of 'self' and also their social identity (Aron *et al.* 1991).

In each of these contexts, as well as in my general clinical work as a psychotherapist, I had come to associate the feeling of 'not-belonging' with problematic issues and pathologies such as anxiety, depression, addiction and other obsessive-compulsive behaviours. Therefore at the beginning of this research I was regarding the experience of 'not-belonging' as something which undermined well-being and was frequently either symptomatic or causal of 'a problem'. Likewise I configured the feeling of 'belonging' as some kind of therapeutic 'Holy Grail', leading to my imagining that if only therapy were able to instil an enduring sense of belonging, many commonly problematic client issues would automatically disappear. There is plenty of evidence in literature, and also in my data, which lends support to those early ideas (for instance: Baumeister, 1990; Baumeister and Leary, 1995; Durkheim, 1963), nevertheless my position was still rather a simplistic one - as this thesis will go on to demonstrate.

In the interest of transparency (Hiles and Cermak, 2007; Packer, 2011), at this point I must lay claim to one of my own 'filters', through which I have certainly viewed all these phenomena and which also played a central role in bringing me to make this inquiry in the first place. It is the filter of my own sense of not-belongingness and my own sense of looking-for belonging. Some of the details of this 'filter' of mine do emerge in various auto-ethnographic data extracts, but I am now more than ever aware that mine is just a particular patterned set of instances of the experiences of not-belonging and belonging; I have yet to meet somebody who does not have their own. I will return to the matter of researcher transparency as a dimension of authenticity and validity in qualitative research in Chapter Three. In the next two chapter sections I bring a focus to the nature of inquiring into experience, and clarify my use, in this thesis, of various terms.

1.4 In terms of terms.

For Eugene Gendlin (1997a): 'terms' are not neutral; he points out that their meanings are always contingent, particular and situated. Throughout this thesis I have therefore endeavoured to bring an element of transparency as well as accuracy to my use of terminology, and to specify their particular and situated meanings. Firstly my particular usages of the terms 'belonging' and 'not-belonging' are clarified below.

Implicit in the following dictionary definitions for the word 'Belonging' are at least three common usage meanings:

be·long·ing n.

Oxford English⁵

1. A personal item that one owns; a possession (usually plural).
2. Acceptance as a natural member or part: a sense of belonging.

Middle English: based on Old English *gelang*: 'at hand, together with'.

3. Also suggests as a derivative: *belongingness*

Cambridge dictionary⁶

A] To be in the right place or a suitable place:

B] To feel happy or comfortable in a situation:

One way of using the word belonging is to indicate a category of inherent relatedness between things: the manner in which some-thing belongs to (is an inherent part of) some-one/where/thing else. In this usage it can indicate membership or affiliation, for instance of a family system, or an organisation. Another common meaning for the word 'belongings' (typically plural) refers to possessions - objects rather than people or relationships. Whilst a third, more experiential, way of understanding the word is highlighted by the derivative implied by the word '*belongingness*' (sic). My interest has primarily remained grounded in people's experiencing and sense of belonging and of not-belonging; however, both the 'category-of-relatedness' and the 'possessive' meanings of the terms are relevant here, so I have needed to differentiate between my use of them in the text.

I might have chosen to use the derivative term '*belongingness*' to indicate the experiential dimension and just 'belong' to indicate the category-of-relatedness meaning; however this felt a little unwieldy, especially when I start talking about the experience of not-belonging(ness). Therefore in this thesis I differentiate the two by italicising and capitalising the experiential sense of *Belonging* and leaving in normal type-face the sense of 'belonging to' (some situation) as a relational category. *Not-belonging* and *Un-belonging* are used - interchangeably – italicised in the same way to describe the experience of not feeling relationally connected or socially integrated.

Other words and phrases also need some clarification: the terms: 'marginalisation', 'social exclusion' and 'social integration' appear throughout this thesis. These terms are politically loaded - and therefore contested, (Levitas, 1996; Rudmin, 2003), implying a power dynamic existing between the inclusion and exclusion of less powerful 'others' by dominant social groups. A further distinction needs to be made between feeling

5 <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/belong?q=belongingness#belong> 15

6 <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/belong?q=belonging>

'*marginal*' and 'being marginalised'. If marginalisation is a mechanism of 'social exclusion' (Silver, 1989) and thereby social control, then the feeling of being *marginal* or of *not-belonging* may be the direct result of social marginalisation. However, this feeling may also have other possible origins, lying within the internal experiential patterning of the individual, for reasons less easy to directly attribute to social dynamics as I will further explore in this thesis.

Whilst I accept that such terms cannot be easily rendered either semantically or politically 'neutral', I claim that my use of them in this thesis is more importantly a phenomenological one than either political or sociological. Nevertheless, the dynamics of social power to include or exclude individuals or groups remains significant to such experiential phenomena, and so is relevant to the experiences I encountered during this inquiry.

1.5 Inquiring experientially into experience.

When thinking about the experiential subject matter of my research and wondering how I might set about investigating it, I had to first consider the phenomenal nature of experience (Shotter, 2000). Alan Watts (1974:96) emphasised a difficulty inherent to the objectification of experience:

There is, [in turn], no possibility of making up our minds so long as they are split in two, so long as "I" am one thing and "experience" is another.

Watts (1974:103) goes on to suggest that the solution to such conceptual dualism is an experiential one: '*To "know" reality you cannot stand outside it and define it; you must enter into it, be it and feel it*'. Fortunately there are philosophical frameworks of understanding which help validate such an 'entering in' to the processes inherent to 'knowing' (Wosket, 1999). By bringing together the experiencing body (Gendlin, 1997a) and the embodied mind (Varela, Thompson and Rosche, 1992; Lakoff and Johnson, 1999) both subject and object are considered reflexively as part of the same process.

According to Gendlin (1997a; 1997b), considering experience as if it were an object, available to stable categorisation and meaning is an inherently flawed way of thinking - since thinking and experiencing are both part of the same reflexive process. Gendlin (1997a:202) proposes that fundamentally: '*Meaning is experiencing qua instance of itself*'.

Any human meaning is always "such" a meaning, but not in one category or under one universal. Rather, from any "particular", supposedly subsumed under a category, we can generate countless new universals. These are the ways that any "this" experiencing is an instance of "such" experiencing. (ibid.p.xx)

In this case Gendlin is not rendering experience into units of instances of "such" a meaning, if he were, "meanings" would be amenable to some kind of stable categorisation, and they are not. Trying to categorise

the meaning of experience is like trying to 'herd cats' – they keep slipping past and out of all purpose-built containers. But it is possible to *sense* into the qualities of experience, and to check – using a resonant, bodily-based, reflexive and aesthetic sense (Todres, 2007; James, 1978) how well (or how 'truthfully') we can say that "this" might be an instance of "such" an experience. The significance of Gendlin's assertions regarding the reflexivity of this process applies to cognition in general and to this experiential mode of inquiry in particular:

...since we refer to experiencing directly both in assertions and in our method of reaching those assertions, naturally then, what we assert of experience must apply also to experience as we have been employing it to reach these assertions. (Gendlin 1997a:201).

Although I remain in strong agreement with Gendlin (2004): that the essence of experience can never be fully captured by concepts and categories, I have nonetheless proceeded, throughout this inquiry, to create both conceptual themes and categories of themes as they have emerged for me out of the narrated experiences of my research participants. Gendlin (2004:128) points out that experiencing and linguistic concepts are inherently intertwined, even though he stresses that experiencing always goes beyond the functioning of categories:

What I call "experiencing" is not separable from concepts, but it plays crucial, directly demonstrable roles in ongoing thinking. It performs functions that concepts cannot perform.

Nevertheless, without concepts I would have been unable to create a theoretical framework for inquiry or to utilise methods of analysis for the purposes of meaning-making. Therefore this inquiry proceeds by means of cyclical hermeneutic iterations moving frequently between experiencing and concept-construction. The processes of experiencing, meaning-making and embodiment are thus integral to my research (Todres, 2007). Integral too are the implicit dimensions of individual and collective experiencing of both belonging and not-belonging – as well as the subjective and objective aspects of both. It was this phenomenal complexity, coupled with my sense of there being developmental processes inherent to such experiencing, which led me wonder how I might paradigmatically position my inquiry.

1.6 An Integral Inquiry.

In this section I briefly introduce Ken Wilber's (1995) Integral Theory and his 'AQAL' 'Operating System' which I have chosen as a framework for the design and organisation of the complex elements of my study – bringing them into a conceptually unified integral system.

Wilber's (1996) 'Theory of Everything' (TOE) essentially brings together a vast range of systems of thought and spiritual traditions pertaining to the organisation and development of what he refers to as the 'Kosmos' (Wilber, 1995/2000:45-6). According to Esbjorn-Hargens (2010:8), the whole corpus of Wilber's work has

collectively become known as *Integral Theory*; and Esbjorn-Hargens (2010:9) further considers that Integral Theory is best represented by the AQAL model.

Wilber (2000a:2) gives his own description of what he means by the term integral:

Integral: the word means to integrate, to bring together, to join, to link to embrace. Not in the sense of uniformity, and not in the sense of ironing out all the wonderful differences, colors, zigs and zags of a rainbow-hued humanity, but in the sense of unity-in-diversity, shared commonalities along with our wonderful differences. And not just in humanity, but in the Kosmos at large: finding a more comprehensive view – a Theory of Everything (TOE) ...

Paulsen, (2004:135) has suggested that all modern conceptualisations of integral thought regarding a unified 'reality' can be traced back to the work of Indian mystic Sri Aurobindo (1970), whose interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita and other Vedanta texts sought '...to integrate the mundane and spiritual aspects of life' (Chaudhuri [1965] in Paulsen). Sri Aurobindo's influence is also acknowledged by Wilber (1995) who has himself sought to create a unified and integrated model of the evolution of matter and consciousness (psyche or spirit). Furthermore, by positioning the exterior and interior dimensions of individual and collective phenomena within an 'operating framework', Wilber brings into a relational coherence the subjective-objective and inter-subjective-inter-objective dimensions of those same phenomena.

1.6.1 The 'AQAL' Model.

The acronym stands for 'All Quadrants, All Levels' (but also incorporates: *All Lines, All States and All types*. Forman, 2010:9; Wilber, 1995); while the model represents the manner in which Wilber conceptually brings together objective and subjective phenomena with multiple theories regarding the individual and collective processes of development and evolution.

Some versions of the AQAL model diagram include lines to indicate these process elements; however, the basic diagram (Fig. 1.1) represents the four quadrants of interior/exterior and individual/collective with developmental 'levels', 'lines', 'states' and 'types' being implicit across all four. In terms of my own approach to methodology I have principally considered my data from the perspective of the four quadrants indicated in Fig. 1.1, however, the significance of developmental levels and inherent processes are highlighted for discussion in Chapter Eight.

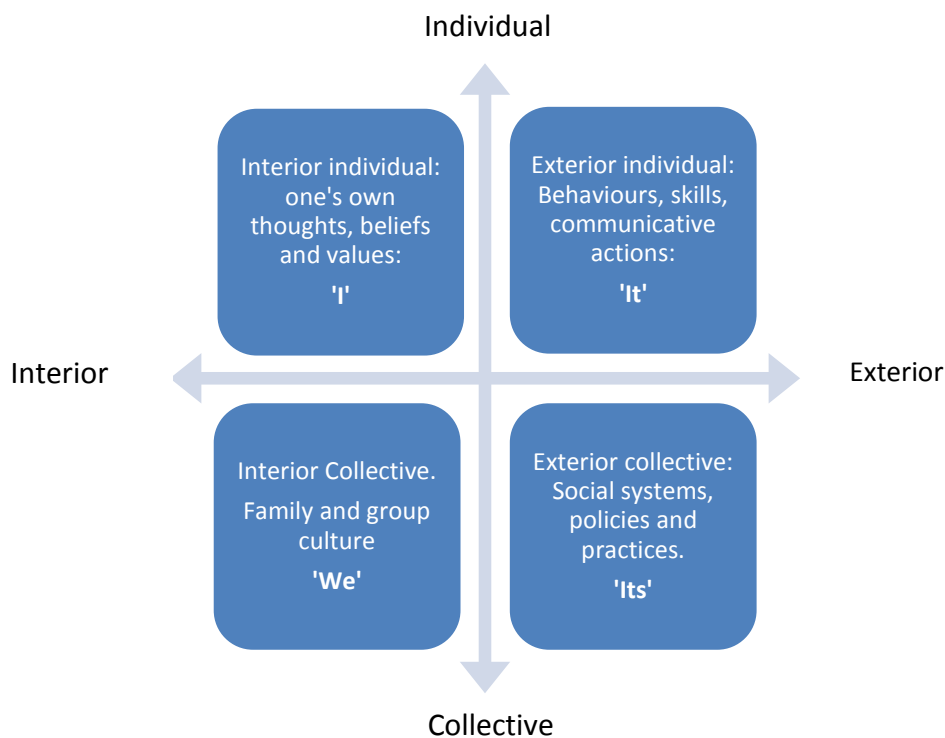


Fig. 1.1 Basic AQAL Model

Fig 1.1 is a simple representation of the AQAL model. Further complexity is described by Wilber (2006) in terms of differing levels and lines of development as well as 'states' of conscious awareness (for instance: waking, sleeping, dreaming); also differing 'types' described in terms numerous possible typologies such as those of Carl Jung (Forman, 2010). The lines of developmental processes for Wilber (2000:53) include: *cognitive, moral, spiritual, aesthetic, somatic, imaginative, interpersonal, psycho-sexual*, each of which proceeds individually - as well as collectively - at differing rates. He proposes that:

Development is not a linear ladder but a fluid flowing affair, with spirals, swirls, streams and waves – and what appear to be an almost infinite number of multiple modalities. (Wilber, 2000:5).

In order to bring some coherence to all this complexity, Wilber (1995:40-85) adapts a Platonic concept: '*The Great Chain of Being*' into what he calls '*A Great Hierarchy of Being*' (1995:444). Inside this integral 'AQAL' framework Wilber suggests that everything has a place.

1.6.2 Approaching design.

As I studied Wilber's Integral Theory and his AQAL model I realised that it could offer me a framework with enough scope to consider the phenomena in question; nevertheless, I remained open-minded about using it during my first year of study and I continued to read more deeply and widely into alternative paradigmatic and epistemological positions, whilst reviewing their related literatures. By the second year of registration my thinking had continued to orientate itself around an integral design so I decided to adopt the AQAL operating

system. After this the detailed design became easier, and I began to conceive of methodologies which could serve my inquiry into one or other of the four AQAL 'quadrants' (see Appendix C).

My approach to design and my choice of methods broadly involved taking a *phenomenological stance* (McLeod, 2011; Todres, 2007; Husserl, 1964) towards the experiences under inquiry - I will elaborate further upon this in the next chapter. Regarding research design, I began looking for methods of inquiring reflexively (Etherington, 2004; Hiles, 2008) into the subjective (inner) individual and group experiences of *belonging* and *not-belonging* for potential research participants. I also wanted to consider the objective experiential manifestations as well as the social contexts and the environmental situations in which those experiences arose.

Even at that early stage I recognised that the AQAL model could have some limitations as an experiential map for research - since it is itself, essentially, an abstract concept. As already stressed in section 1.5 of this chapter, I knew that I would not be able to inquire into experience via abstract concepts - but I hoped that I might be able to arrive at some concepts via experience. I therefore continued to create my own further integration (more fully explicated in the next chapter) in order to give a greater emphasis to experiencing and the '*participating*' body.

1.7 The participating body - a 'fifth domain'.

My sense of the experiencing body as a locus of integration for the interior/exterior (subjective/objective) and individual/collective (inter-subjective/inter-objective) domains has been elsewhere and otherwise expressed by Gendlin (1973:324):

Experiencing is not 'subjective,' but interactional, not intrapsychic, but interactional. It is not inside, but inside-outside.

The implicit *inside-outside* nature of experiencing is perhaps illustrated by the single boundary of a 'Möbius loop', (Pickover, 2005). Like the ant⁷, experiencing moves seamlessly between the outside and the inside, and along this movement, each surface is implicit of the other, creating a single dimension.

Purton (2013:192) problematizes the conceptual separation of 'inner and outer' in terms of experience and awareness. He equates awareness with: '*what can be said*' (linguistically represented – or 'storied') regarding experiencing - and suggests that by bringing a focus to the match (or mis-match) between what is being articulated and the situation, a level of objective, self-reflexive awareness can become the basis of a more accurate articulation – and thus of '*finding a better story*' (p.198). In terms of the importance of such a 'better story' I agree with Purton and I recognise that narrative is used to integrate, as well as bring coherence to,

⁷ A Möbius loop is a single continuous curve with only one boundary, to illustrate this fact it is suggested that an ant traversing the inner surface of a closed paper Möbius strip would seamlessly emerge to continue its journey along the outer surface.

the subjective and objective aspects of experience. For me however, it is an *'aesthetic sense'* (Todres, 2007:8) which tells us how well a story 'works' - and this sense relies on our resonant and embodied 'pre-reflexive' (Ikemi, 2013) involvement or participation in situations.

John Heron (1996:19-20) has proposed that the Participatory Paradigm opens up a domain which integrates the four quadrants of the AQAL framework. Heron has not specifically emphasised the body in this respect, though it is implicit in the human engagement of participation. Heron (1996:20) goes on to describe the participatory domain as the: *'tacit, inter-subjective, participative, pre-understanding of our world...'* which would implicitly confine it to the Left Hand quadrants of the AQAL model. However, the discourse of embodiment, from contributors such as Todres (2007), Ingold (2011b), Csordas (1994), Totton (2005), Crossley (2006), Langan (2007), as well as Gendlin's (1997b) concept of the experiencing body-in-situation, would actually seem to lend weight to Heron's suggestion of a 'fifth domain' when it is considered to be the participating body.

The embodied 'fifth domain' is thus inclusive of all the histories of social structures, in-formational fields and situated processes which are inherent to thinking (consciousness) through experiencing. The body is also implicit to all of the particular (situational), and more general (universal) interconnectedness of knowledge formation. Because the self-aware body is continuously situated as an interface to all the other domains (quadrants) - and since it cannot be reduced or confined into any of them - but is implicit in all four - I suggest that it represents the only possibility of fully integrating them. Watts (1975:97) points out:

You can reason that the universe is a unity without feeling it to be so. You can establish the theory that your body is a movement in an unbroken process which includes all suns and stars, and yet continue to feel separate and lonely. For the feeling will not correspond to the theory until you have also discovered the unity of inner experience.

The integrating or 'unifying' effect of approaching the phenomenal world via the experiencing body is even more clearly stated here by Gendlin, (1978:77):

Your physically felt body is, in fact, part of a gigantic system of here and other places, now and other times, you and other people, in fact the whole universe. This sense of being bodily alive in a vast system is the body as it is felt from inside.

Therefore, by positioning my own inquiry within a Participatory Paradigm, I am explicitly emphasising this notion of the body as a fifth 'tacit domain' and as the phenomenal ground wherein Wilber's four quadrants are experientially and consciously integrated.

1.8 Concerning Others.

The involvement of other people in this research has been vital to the scope of the study as well as richly rewarding for me as an experience on its own - valuable beyond anything which I subsequently came to call 'data'. I have consistently found that whenever I have talked informally about the topic of belonging and not-belonging there always seems to be resonance of one kind or another for people. Usually people have *wanted* to talk to me about it, often expressing a sense of amazement at the scope of such an inquiry – recognising its importance but doubting if it would be possible.

Indeed, although the complexity of the experiential phenomena became increasingly evident to me as my research journey wore on, the seeming universality of these *Belonging* and *Not-belonging* experiences made me feel sure that there must be some underlying 'logic' to them (Gendlin, 1997b). Therefore, even before formally setting out to do so, I knew that I would need and want to involve other people in this research; how I would involve them needed careful thought and is further described under the section on ethical considerations in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical groundings-

Six blind elephants were discussing what men were like. After arguing for a while they decided to find one in order to determine what it was like by direct experience. The first blind elephant felt the man and declared, "Men are flat!" When the other blind elephants had felt the man - they agreed...⁸

2.0 Introduction.

In this chapter I assemble the main elements of theory which I have identified in order to establish the paradigmatic ground and an epistemological framework for this research. I begin by explaining the choice that I made to pursue purely qualitative approaches to method, before going on to say some more about paradigmatic matters, clarifying the term 'integral' which has been used in differing ways. In this section I acknowledge some of the strengths and weaknesses that others have identified in Wilber's integral model before introducing another, complementary, perspective in Irving Laszlo's (2004) '*Grand Unified Theory*' (GUT) and the use he makes of the concept of the '*Akashic Field*'. Next I return to the *Participatory Paradigm* (Reason, 1994; Heron, 1997) and elaborate upon its relevance in providing me with a distinct and embodied mode of research engagement. I go on to discuss the notion of 'embodiment' per se (Csordas, 1993; Crossley, 2006; Langan 2007), acknowledging some of its social, psychological and philosophical interpretations. Next I give an introduction to phenomenology (McLeod, 2011; Todres, 2007) which has orientated my basic approach to this study.

In section 2.5 I introduce some theoretical perspectives on the social collective dimension, acknowledging the evolving history of some differing interpretive lenses before focusing specifically on key theories from an integral perspective. These include 'Systems Theories' (Lewin 1951; Von Bertalanffy, 1981; Luhmann, 1982); 'Family Systems Theory' (Boszormenyi-Nagy, 1984/1954; Hellinger, 1998) and the systemically organising dynamic of 'Autopoeisis' (Maturana and Varela, 1974) as a way of illuminating some underlying developmental and evolutionary tendencies of living systems (Sheldrake, 2009; Sahtoris, 2000; Lipton, 2004). Finally in section 2.6 I explain the way that 'Narrative' (Polkingthorne, 1988; Reissman, 1993; Etherington, 1996; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) and the creation of stories (Mac Adams, 1997) both play a fundamental role in this thesis.

⁸ A twist on an Eastern teaching story. From: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blind-men-and-an-elephant> (accessed 22/03/2013)

2.1 The qualitative rationale for this inquiry.

As I considered the practicalities of an integral research design I wondered if might need to include some quantitative elements in my investigation of the upper and lower Right Hand AQAL Quadrants since these pertain to more objective, and therefore 'measurable' or 'countable,' aspects of phenomena. I reasoned that, in practice, this could entail the creation of some kind of a 'belonging measurement scale' with a related interpretative instrument in conjunction with the distribution of a questionnaire constructed for that purpose. To be able to argue for validity using such quantitative data I would have needed quite large sample sizes in order to have sufficient numerical data for any meaningful statistical analysis. Indeed a review of the literature of the many psychological and sociological studies pertaining to groups, identity, affiliation, conformity, marginalisation and social isolation, revealed that this would have been an acceptable social science way of proceeding, using a 'mixed methods' approach (Johnson, and Onwuegbuzie 2004). Although those studies have helped orientate my thinking about social phenomena and provided me with both a theoretical basis and a source of secondary data for the current inquiry, I realised that such a nomothetic⁹ approach would not well serve my desire to gain a deeper understanding of the personal experiences of *belonging* and *not-belonging*.

I am interested in the particulars, peculiarities and qualities of situated experiences – recognising that each facet reflects something of the 'whole' – which is an idiographic approach (sic) to research (Molenaar, 2004). Molenaar (2004:202) creates what he calls a 'manifesto' for the use of an idiographic approach in psychology suggesting that:

It brings back into scientific psychology the dedicated study of the individual, prior to pooling across other individuals. Each person is initially conceived of as a possibly unique system of interacting dynamic processes, the unfolding of which gives rise to an individual life trajectory in a high-dimensional psychological space.

The complexities of human experience, and successive attempts to overcome the difficulties inherent to its study, have given rise to an increasingly complex array of approaches to qualitative research. These have emerged alongside an evolving paradigmatic spectrum which, in terms of both quantitative and qualitative research, have been described very broadly, for instance by Denzin & Lincoln (2000) and Guba & Lincoln (1989, 1994), as one which involves a progressive movement from positivism through post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism.

According to Martin Packer (2011:5), these successive research paradigms have increasingly demonstrated the rationale for using qualitative approaches for inquiries into human experience. He asserts that:

⁹ The term *Nomothetic* is derived from a Kantian philosophical idea based on the tendency to generalise, and it is typically the inquiry approach used by the natural sciences for the study of objective phenomena and the search for natural laws. The term *Ideographic* was Kant's way of referring to a tendency to specify. It describes the effort to interpret the meaning of contingent, unique, and often subjective phenomena and is most familiar within the study of humanities.

Studying humans as objects, albeit complex and sophisticated objects – is not the same as studying humans as beings who live in particular cultural and historical forms of life and who are made and make themselves specific kinds of subjects.

Packer goes further than this in suggesting that qualitative research may have now come to occupy a paradigmatic position itself which can be viewed as distinct from that of either the natural or social sciences. In common with other commentators (e.g. Flyvbjerg, 2001) Packer also recognises that qualitative research still sometimes struggles to define or express itself except in terms familiar to the natural or social sciences, where *'neutrality is equated with objectivity and viewed as genuine knowledge'* (Packer, 2011:5). For Packer the real power of qualitative research lies in its capacity to illuminate what he calls *'historical ontologies'* (Foucault, 1984/1986) illuminating: *'...the complex interrelationships between knowledge, politics and ethics'* (op.cit. p.6) which, he says: *'always implies a moral imperative within its capacity for emancipation'* (ibid). I find it reassuring that Packer essentially seems to be making a plea for qualitative inquiry to be taken - and also to take itself - more seriously. He argues for a re-visioning of the possibilities of qualitative research by clearly stating that reflexivity is capable of revealing fundamental facets of a more unified whole. In addition, the ethical emphasis which Packer identifies endows the practice of qualitative inquiry with a particular agency within the historical and cultural unfolding of human reflexive endeavour and consciousness. This is a serious claim, but it does feel consonant with my own sense which is that qualitative research can provide many vital routes towards deepening our understanding of the world of human relationship, as well as of our human relationship with the world.

2.2 Paradigmatic positioning.

2.2.1 Three modes of thought.

Eugene Gendlin (1999:233) points out that a scientific way of thinking about a given phenomenon is to consider it in terms of its (smaller and smaller) determinable component parts; he refers to this mode of thought as the *'unit model'*. Whilst acknowledging the importance of this mode of thought to science and technology, Gendlin (1992:7) observes that the *'dissecting'* effect of this unit model mode of thought can actually 'kill' something of it, particularly when applied to experience. Gendlin further identifies a second mode of thinking, which he refers to as a 'holistic' or ecological view of things, in which all elements and organisms are understood as comprising (larger and larger) 'structures' which are all inherently part of a universal 'whole'. He then goes on to propose a third (complementary rather than mutually exclusive) mode of considering phenomena – which is to view them as *processes* rather than as (solely) either units or as structures.

Using a characteristic [...] symbol to represent the un-divided, and as yet un-represented 'whole' of experience with its implicit process-nature, he suggests that the inherent 'structure' of situations need not get lost by being dissected into parts:

Laying something out in distinct parts changes it. Laying it out can kill it, but not if we keep the whole [...] with us as we think. Then laying out can carry the [...] further, change it in a way that lets it develop. When we think further in this way, we can also find and correct errors. From a [...] there are more-than-logical criteria that let us know which move carries forward, which line satisfies the design that is not yet. We can tell when laying a [...] out "develops" rather than "kills" it. (Gendlin, 1992:7)

All three modes of thought inhere and are implicit in the current inquiry; my experiential focus means that I have leaned more upon the process and structural perspectives than the unitary view. The perspectival distinctions that Gendlin establishes here are useful and have helped me to see how aspects of the phenomena under inquiry also fit within an integral theoretical framework.

Drawing upon Heidegger's thought regarding the nature of things, Dreyfus, (1991) makes the following observation:

...we work out many perspectives – many lexicons – and reveal things as they are from many perspectives. And just because we can get things right from many perspectives, no single perspective is the right one. (Dreyfus, 1991:280) [*my emphasis*].

What he says here reminded me of a teaching story - (versions of which can be found in many Eastern wisdom traditions – a humorous *inversion* of it appears at the beginning of this chapter) - concerning the six blind men who try - by means of touching the various different parts of it - to determine the overall nature of an elephant¹⁰. Each one asserts the nature of the whole based upon the particular features of the part that they individually have contact with. [*The inverted version above posits blind elephants inquiring in a similar fashion into the nature of a man*].

2.2.2 Integral Theories.

Ken Wilber's (1995) Integral Theory, or 'Theory of Everything' (TOE), introduced in the last chapter, has been widely acknowledged for its breadth and depth of scholarship (e.g: Grof, 2008; Ferrer, 2002; Rothberg and Kelly, 1998; Reason 1998, 1994; Laszlo 2004; de Souza, 2006; Paulsen, 2004). Stanislav Grof (2008:11) acknowledges that, along with other theorists such as Robert Assagioni, Arnold Mindell and Michael Washburn, Wilber made a significant contribution to the developing the discourse of *Transpersonal Psychology*.

The impressive scope, comprehensive nature, and intellectual rigour of Wilber's work have helped make it a widely acclaimed and highly influential theory of transpersonal psychology. Wilber (1995) himself contends that his *integral world-view* goes beyond transpersonal psychology in a number of key areas specifically concerned with stages of 'spiritual development', consciousness and

¹⁰ [For instance in Shah, \(1993\)](#)

transpersonal (collective) experiencing. For physicist and fellow integral theorist Irvin Laszlo (2004), the process aspects of Wilber's integral framework have not been fully articulated (see also the review section of Chapter Nine). Laszlo (2004) acknowledges Wilber's integral model as an impressive account of how everything fits together, but he argues that it does not go far enough in offering an explanation of how it all works. Laszlo's (2004) own 'Grand Unified Theory' (GUT) is based in quantum and theoretical physics but also extends to encompass consciousness and evolutionary biology studies. Like Wilber, Laszlo draws upon both Eastern and Western philosophical traditions in order to create a narrative account for his '*how it works*' Grand Unified Theory. Essentially, Laszlo (2004:61-71) proposes a conscious and evolving universe, in-formed and 'in-forming' complexity through interpenetrating fields of the 'quantum vacuum' (which he suggests could also be referred to as the '*quantum plenum*'¹¹). Taken as a whole he refers to the phenomena of this creative *informing* process by the Sanskrit Vedanta term of '*Akashic Field*'¹².

The idea that information is present throughout nature is a recurrent theme in cultural history, but it is new to Western Science. It calls for the recognition that information is not an abstract concept: as "in-formation" it has a reality of its own. It is a part of the physical universe. And because it is present throughout nature, it is best conceptualised as an extended *field*. (Laszlo 2004:72-3)

Gidely (2007:18) summarises the similarities and differences between these two '*integral endeavours*' and concludes:

[Laszlo] claims that he built significantly on the theoretical traditions of Whitehead's process theory, Bertalanffy's general system theory and Prigogine's non-linearly bifurcating dissipative structures. Wilber's process appears to have been much broader and more diverse—but perhaps less systematic—gathering together as many theorists in as many fields of knowledge as he could imagine, then arranging them according to the system that he developed—which he calls an integral operating system.

Laszlo's (2004) conceptual integration of systems and field theories helped orientate my thinking in respect of human systems and evolutionary processes. Although I have remained generally receptive to Wilber's paradigmatic perspective, I have found agreement with some of the arguments that others have made against his interpretations. Ferrer (2002:55) recognises that Wilber's AQAL model brings together '*...the four-fold intrinsic nature of all phenomena – intentional, behavioural, cultural and societal*' but he goes on to argue with the manner in which Wilber uses the AQAL model to interpret the *transpersonal* dimensions of experience. Specifically, he suggests that Wilber has adopted a '*positivist epistemology and methodology*' (ibid) for considering the transpersonal and spiritual aspects of experience (Left Hand quadrants).

Ferrer quotes Wilber here to illustrate this point:

11 Based on the contention that space is not so much 'empty' as full of *in-forming* quantum potentialities (or information).

12 Akasha is a Sanskrit word meaning "sky", "space" or "ether" and is described as containing all knowledge of human experience and all experiences as well as the history of the cosmos encoded or written in the very ether or fabric of all existence. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akashicrecords> . Accessed 20/03/2013)

[...the transpersonal dimension] too has its injunctions, its illuminations and its confirmations, all of which are repeatable- verifiable or falsifiable – and all of which constitute a perfectly valid mode of knowledge acquisition [Wilber cited in Ferrer, 2002:57]

From this it would seem to be the case that Wilber intends for transpersonal (interior collective) phenomena to be considered in the same scientific terms as those of the more observable and *measurable* exterior domains (also Edwards, 2012). As a manner of thinking about those things, I would concur with Ferrer – that it may not be so helpful to consider transpersonal experiencing solely in terms of structures.

2.2.3 Holons, Holarchies and Spiral Dynamics.

Wilber (2000b) suggests that all phenomena are implicitly represented in all four quadrants and can therefore be viewed from the perspective of either their interior or exterior dimensions and as an individual 'whole' or as a part-of a bigger organisational structure, or 'holon':

The Left Hand is what the holon looks like from within; the Right Hand is what the same holon looks like from without. (2000b, p.121)

This structural concept of a 'holon' is important in Wilber's Integral Theory, and was first used by Arthur Koestler (1967). For Koestler, (1967:48) a *holon* is something that is simultaneously a 'semi-autonomous' organisational 'whole' as well as a 'part' of a more complex organisational 'whole'. Koestler concluded that, although it is easy to identify these sub-wholes (or parts), neither wholes nor parts actually exist anywhere in an absolute sense, since such a 'whole' is always also a part of a more extensive and complex system. From this perspective, holons can be considered as semi-autonomous wholes in relation to their sub-ordinate parts, whilst simultaneously remaining dependent 'parts' when considered as elements of a more complex holon at a (higher) level of organisation. Koestler (1972) also used the word '*holarchy*' to describe the levels of related self-regulating holons which function at each level, firstly as autonomous systemic wholes supra-ordinate to their parts, secondly as dependent parts in sub-ordinate to systemic controls operating on higher levels of complexity, and thirdly in responsive and adaptive co-ordination with the conditions of their local environment.

Wilber (1995:444) suggests that holarchic structuring can be demonstrated by the relationship between quanta (subatomic particles): atoms, molecules, organelles, cells, organs, bodies (individuals), families (collectives), communities, Nations (etc.). In a holarchic system each developmental wave encompasses and transcends all previous levels:

For example, a cell transcends but includes molecules, which transcend but include atoms. To say that a molecule goes beyond an atom is not to say that molecules hate atoms, but that they love them: they embrace them in their own makeup; they include them, they don't marginalise them. Just so each wave of existence is a fundamental ingredient of all subsequent waves, and thus each is to be cherished and embraced (Wilber, 2000:11).

I find it interesting to note here that Wilber creates an anthropomorphic metaphor out of this relationship by

imbuing particles with human feelings and intentions as a way of suggesting that, in a holarchic view of human systems, the *marginalisation* of those who are inherently a part of our overall structure does not make any (structural) sense. This metaphor only partially works as there are the psychological processes of differentiation, individuation and evolution - inherent to individual and collective development, which are also implicit to an integral perspective. The idea of 'cherishing' and 'embracing' earlier developmental levels or stages is slightly incongruous in this instance, but nevertheless may have some relevance in respect of the current inquiry.

A key influence in Wilber's integral theory is Beck and Cowans' (1996) *'Spiral Dynamics'* which is inspired by, and further develops, the work of Clare Graves (1970). Stage-models of development have become well established in psychology, but Graves' (1970) *Spiral Dynamics* is, according to Wilber (2000b:5), a particularly '*elegant system*'. Wilber (ibid) cites Graves here:

Briefly what I am proposing is that the psychology of mature human being is an unfolding, emergent, oscillating spiralling process, marked by progressive subordination of older lower-order behaviour systems to newer, higher-order systems as an individuals' existential problems change. Each successive stage, wave, or level of existence is a state through which people pass on their way to other states of being. When the human is centralised in one state of existence, he or she has a psychology which is particular to that state.

Wilber (1995:444) explains that: '*Each senior level is an emergent, marked by properties not found in its juniors*'. Significantly - in this integral world view - 'Spirit' (or psyche) is immanent as consciousness at all holarchic levels. Wilber (ibid) continues:

Spirit is both the highest level (which transcends all, includes all), and the equally present Ground of each level.

Thus, in response to the reductionistic question of whether or not a 'fundamental holon' exists - (representing a 'bottom' layer or lower 'limit') - Wilber (2000:146) contends that it does not, effectively bringing to the integral paradigm a spiralling evolutionary dynamic which moves in both descending and ascending modes away from, as well as towards, what is referred to as the Dynamic Ground of Being (Spirit). In this *Spiral Dynamics* model all stages co-exist in both 'healthy' and 'unhealthy' states, meaning that any stage of development can have desirable or undesirable outcomes with respect to the health of the human individual or the collective social environment (Wade, 1996; Beck, 2003). Advancing this integral evolutionary perspective, Lockely (2010) asserts that the evolution of consciousness, viewed as a whole-planet, ecological and organismic unity, is grounded in human participation.

2.2.4 The Participatory Paradigm.

John Heron (1996:10) has proposed that the *Participatory Approach* also represents a 'fifth paradigm' following on from the four basic inquiry paradigms posited by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely: positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructionism.

The term '*Participatory Research*' has a specific application in the field of international development where the practice of *Participatory Rural Appraisal* or 'PRA' (Chambers, 1997) has sought to support local people to participate in research in order to identify their own development needs and projects. This should not be confused as a whole concept, or as a set of practices, with the Participatory Paradigm and the method of '*Co-operative Inquiry*' described by Heron (1996) and Heron and Reason (2001), arising as it does from the discourse of Transpersonal Psychology. However, there are features commonly held between the participatory approaches of the two disciplines. Centrally they both have an '*emancipatory axiology*' –which contends [that]:

Human flourishing is intrinsically worthwhile: it is valuable as an end in itself. It is construed as a process of social participation in which there is a mutually enabling balance ...of autonomy, co-operations and hierarchy. It is conceived as interdependent with the flourishing of the planetary ecosystem. (Heron, 1996:8)

There are strong ecological as well transpersonal themes inherent to this valuing of social participation. Richard Tarnas (1991:434) identified that transpersonal psychology has a need '*...for a participatory epistemology in which humans are regarded as an essential vehicle for the creative unfolding of reality*'. Whilst Peter Reason (1994:15) emphasised the fundamental involvement of '*humanity's participation in the natural world*' and in the processes of its evolution:

I believe that the development of a participative world-view requires an imaginative recognition of humanity's fundamental participation in the natural world; a recognition of the way the human mind is engaged in a co-creative dance with the primeval givens of the cosmos.

The inherent involvement of human existence and agency - 'Being' and consciousness - as part of an organismic field of the evolving ecology of biological life on earth is consonant with James Lovelock's 'Gaia Theory' (2000, 2009) to which I return in Chapter Eight.

According to Peter Reason (1994) and Heron (1996), the Participatory Paradigm, like Wilber's Integral one, is based upon a holonomic¹³ principle of inter-relatedness (Garoli, 2013; Koestler, 1964; Heron, 1996; Pibram, 1987) in which:

... to participate in anything explicitly is to participate in everything tacitly. The whole is implicit in the part (Heron 1996:16)

In respect of this inquiry it is significant that the Participatory Paradigm also takes an essentially embodied approach to the processes and modes of knowing and knowledge production. Heron and Reason have described it as giving forth a '*radical epistemology*', one which weaves together (or integrates) several modes of knowing:

There is a radical epistemology for a wide-ranging inquiry method that integrates experiential knowing through meeting and encounter, presentational knowing through the use of aesthetic, expressive forms, propositional knowing through words and concepts, and practical knowing—how

¹³ Holonmics is a term which refers to the laws which govern whole systems (Leonard, 2006).

in the exercise of diverse skills—intrapsychic, interpersonal, political, transpersonal and so on. (Heron and Reason, 1997:280)

Heron's description here suggests that there are several contexts or systemic levels in which human beings participate in the processes and products of knowledge - from the intra-psychic system through social systems to the transpersonal. Mikhail Polanyi (1975:44) proposed that '*All knowing is personal knowing – participation through indwelling*', whilst Hiles (2008:1) emphasises that: '*human life is inherently participatory, and that human experience is always participatory*'.

Therefore, although I have used the AQAL model and integral theory as an interpretive framework and road-map for orientating and informing the objective and subjective aspects of this inquiry, the participative paradigm also importantly lends me, the researcher, a central and 'participatory' position in my quest for, and in the production of, knowledge. Les Todres (2007:17) helpfully clarifies this: '*Understanding is then properly thought of as neither objective nor subjective, it is participatory*'.

2.3 Concerning embodiment and introspection.

As the subject and object of philosophical thought, the body has - at various times in history - occupied both a very peripheral and also a more central position (Tarnas, 1991; Crossley, 2006; Luchte, 2009; Dytchwald, 1986; Groddeck, 1912). Following on from Kant, Schopenhauer, argued that the human mind is unable to comprehend any meaning for '*the-thing-in-itself*' and therefore must satisfy itself with a more contingent or personal (individual/collective) sense of the meaning of the '*thing-itself-for-us*' (Schirmacher, 2011). Schirmacher (2011) suggests that Schopenhauer's contemplative practice of introspection had granted him a philosophical '*turn of the body*' in an epoch where it became predominantly subordinated to 'reason'.

The embodiment of introspection, its philosophy and the study of its practice has been written about by Hill (2011). Hill acknowledges that in modern times, the western philosophical base from which the body has emerged as its own '*existential ground of culture*' (Csordas 1993:135) owes much to the writing and phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964). For Merleau-Ponty (1962) the problem of overcoming the dualistic philosophical consequences of the *Cartesian subject-object or 'mind-body'* split (Csordas, 1993; Crossley, 2001; Langan, 2007) demanded recognition that perception is an embodied phenomena and that the body and phenomenal world occupy the same *conceptual* space (Carmen, 1999). This has been taken further by Gendlin (1992; 1997b; Todres, 2007) who proposes that the body's living-in its situations is already implicit in perception and conceptual framing (linguaging) of percepts. Gendlin (1997b:15) writes: '*Perception is never first and alone*' – it does not exist separately from its lived context; Todres (2007:21) further explains: '*we could say that the way we are bodily in situations exceeds any precise formulation or patterning of it*'. Todres suggests that, in Gendlin's philosophy of the implicit, there are always as yet unformulated '*mores*' which are inherent to experiencing.

Csordas (1993:129) draws a distinction between the use of the term 'embodiment' as it is referred to in cultural anthropological discourse, in which the body can be regarded as an artefact or '*locus of social practice*' (Bourdieu, 1977:52), and that of Merleau-Ponty's embodied '*Phenomenology of Perception*' (1962). Csordas (1993:135) stresses that for Merleau-Ponty the body could not be thought of as an *object* since the very mechanism for such a perception arises in the body. Importantly in this respect, Csordas points out that: '*the body is not just - good to think, it is necessary to be*'.

Philosophically then - as well as experientially - the body's *being* and its *knowing* cannot be construed in isolation from its environmental context. Merleau-Ponty (1963:248) proposed that the body: '*is dispersed through its lived context*'. Carrying on from this, Gendlin (1993:27) has created a philosophical framework for what he calls *thinking differently* (and directly) from the body's involvement in and experiencing of situations.

In a rough way we can say that the body knows the situations because it is our living in them. From the body comes our next moves, not just inhaling and eating, but also our interaction with others and what we are about to say to them.

Purton (2004:112) further explains:

Gendlin believes that our current ways of thinking don't really allow for the existence of human beings in the world. Our current ways of thinking separate 'the world' from what the world means to us; once that is done we are *outside* the world. Gendlin wants to bring us back *into* the world. But there is no place for us if we think of human beings with the current concepts about physical (physiological) systems. So to make room for us in the world, the world has to be re-thought. Gendlin's concepts constitute a framework for this re-thinking.

Todres (2007:20) also acknowledges Gendlin and the significance of this other way of thinking about the body summarising: '*...embodying is where being and knowing meet*'.

2.4 Adopting a phenomenological stance.

Phenomenology has been described as the '*study of the structures of experience and consciousness*' (Woodruff, 2013). The origins of this twentieth century philosophical tradition are generally attributed to the work of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, each of these creating a differing philosophical emphasis of the subject-object dynamic inherent to consciousness and experience (Zahavi, 2003; Woodruff, 2011 [online- accessed 14/2/2014]). Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964) went further and radically grounded the theory and practice of phenomenology in the perceptions of the body. The term 'phenomenology' is also used to refer to a methodological approach to inquiry into experience which is itself grounded in the same philosophy (Silverman, 1987; Finlay, 1999; Todres, 2007; McLeod, 2011).

In this experiential inquiry I have been interested to learn more about the nature of two key experiences: *belonging* and *not-belonging*. I have considered the differing ways in which individuals are aware of this sense, and their intentionality and behaviour in respect of it. Husserl's use of the term *intentionality* is

significant here since it moves reflexively between objective and subjective knowing. Woodruff (ibid) further explains that:

...phenomenology develops a complex account of temporal awareness (within the stream of consciousness), spatial awareness (notably in perception), attention (distinguishing focal and marginal or “horizontal” awareness), awareness of one's own experience (self-consciousness, in one sense), self-awareness (awareness-of-oneself), the self in different roles (as thinking, acting, etc.), embodied action (including kinesthetic awareness of one's movement), purpose or intention in action (more or less explicit), awareness of other persons (in empathy, inter-subjectivity, collectivity), linguistic activity (involving meaning, communication, understanding others), social interaction (including collective action), and everyday activity in our surrounding life-world (in a particular culture).

In this case, different types of subjective awareness are understood as being as important as the objects they re-present. Woodruff (ibid) clarifies:

Of central importance is the way that objects of awareness are presented or intended in our experiences especially, the way we see or conceive or think about objects.

Adopting a phenomenological approach to this study has therefore meant taking into consideration the fact that differing types of awareness may also be intrinsic to the experiences in question. Van Manen (2000:460) suggests that, as an approach to research, phenomenology is best characterised by a particular attitude or stance:

It is best to think of the basic method of phenomenology as the taking up of a certain attitude and practicing a certain attentive awareness to the things of the world as we live them rather than as we conceptualise or theorize them.

What I take from Van Manen is that, if I am to maintain a phenomenological attitude towards my research, I must remain attentive to, and aware of, my 'living' of this inquiry without sub-ordinating it to pre-given concepts or theories. Holding this phenomenological attitude and using an integral framework for this inquiry requires me to consider the dynamic relatedness between 'internal' and 'external' manifestations of phenomena as well as the dynamics existing between individual and collective systems.

2.5 Social systems, organic systems and field theories.

The importance of incorporating a systems-view into my theoretical framework is underscored by the issue itself. A person's 'belonging' must, at some level, always be qualified by the (social/environmental) context in which they belong - or else do not. This holds true for both 'categories' and 'experiences' of belonging because 'categorical' belonging to a particular social system does not necessarily mean that a person will experience a sense of *belonging* within it; conversely, a person with no previously established links to a situation, or membership within a group, can experience a spontaneous feeling of '*belonging*' within it. It was these experiential anomalies which had (in part) inspired me to inquire more deeply into the matter.

A full review of the major theoretical frameworks and theoreticians pertaining to social systems would be a

major undertaking here. It would need to include 'Marxian', 'Durkheimian' and 'Weberian' approaches to sociology (Hechter and Horne, 2003) and it would take in the 'Structuralist' perspectives of Foucault and Derrida (Deleuze, 2002), include Turner (1984/2004) and Bourdieu's (1984) responses to those discourses, and then focus on Bourdieu's (1990) more reflexive and embodied theories of 'Social Practice'. It would move to consider the influence of Vygotsky in 'Social Constructivism' (Palinscar, 1998; Burr, 2003; Daniels, 1996) before arriving at the 'Radical Constructivism' of Maturana (1992), 'Autopoiesis' and then 'Enactivism' of Maturana and Varela (1979). Taking an integral view of all these systems of thought, I have recognised how the evolution of each is somehow built upon the previous one (whilst also going beyond it) and therefore the existence of each depends upon this evolving process.

Each perspective has had its own relevance, and all of my reading has helped shape the direction of this research in one way or another. However, it gradually became clear to me that many of the studies I had reviewed pertained principally to the Right-Hand Quadrants, in other words, they had been designed to consider the objective phenomena of individuals and social systems. Even in the field of psychology (by definition an 'inner realm') it seemed that most research had generally been aimed towards creating measurements of internal psychic phenomena by making reference to external, observable, features by means of carefully constructed 'quantifiers'. Being neither a social scientist nor a psychologist, I began to realise that the essentially experiential design of my inquiry could never be fully articulated solely by reference to those discourses. So, even though I later refer to studies from other disciplines relevant to the RHQ phenomena in order to theorise about specific issues, I have shortened the lengthier review of literature in order to focus here upon those which have principally informed my thinking.

In terms of social phenomena, the writings of Jürgen Habermas (1987) are influential in Wilber's (1995) integral theory. According to Frijof Capra (2003:69), Habermas' *'Theory of Communicative Action'* is itself a skilful integration of two complementary perspectives: the 'Social System' which focuses on the ways that social structures constrain and enable people's actions (corresponding to Wilber's 'collective exterior') and the 'Life-world' which focuses on the issues of meaning and communication (corresponding to Wilber's *collective interior*). Capra (2003:69) observes that for Habermas, analytical knowledge is *'associated with the external world [of] causal explanations'*, whilst hermeneutics – the study of meaning – is associated with the inner world of language and inter-subjective experience (communication).

A deepening inquiry into systemic and field theories brought me to Kurt Lewin (1951) and his notion of 'field energy'. For Lewin, human behaviour is environmentally determined and can only be understood by reference to the totality of an individual's situation. In his Field Theory, a 'field' is defined as *'the totality of coexisting facts which are conceived of as mutually interdependent'* (Lewin 1951:240). Within this framework, individuals and groups can be viewed in topological terms using map-like representations. Lewin also saw that individuals participate in a series of what he called 'life-spaces' (such as: the family, work, school or

church). For him these life-spaces were constructed under the influence of various *'force vectors'* or needs (Lewin 1952). Lewin's early application of field-theory to human systems finds accord in a number of subsequent theoretical and practical contexts. Lewin's topological mapping of individuals in a human system and the contextual force vectors having a bearing on both individual and system feels consonant with Bert Hellinger's (1998) concept and practice of *Family Systems Constellations* (Ulsamer, 2003).

2.5.1 Family Systems.

In Hellinger's approach the elements of a family or other system are constellated topologically - using living representatives for its members (and sometimes also for the 'forces'¹⁴ themselves) - in accordance with the inner sense (map) of an individual from that system. The field energy of such a living constellation seems to then be able to reveal much about the (often hidden) intergenerational and systemic effects of love and loss. Ulsamer (2003:22) reports: *'The placement in the constellations seems to have a power of its own, so that anyone who stands in that place has a similar reaction'*. Ulsamer explains that this constellation phenomenon has been described, (for instance by Mahr, 1998) as a *'Field of Wisdom'*, but he continues:

I have chosen to call this the 'in-forming field' because it is the field which forms the connections and also reveals the form and dynamics for the system, *i.e.* it forms and it informs as well. It is this which connects the representative s to the people they represent and which broadens to include all those present during the constellation. Through this phenomenon, the conflicts within a family come to light and resolutions can be found. (Ulsamer, op.cit.)

The practice of Family Systems Therapy was already a part of my clinical work prior to embarking on this inquiry. I had completed my training in the fundamentals of Bert Hellinger's (1998) *Family Systems Approach* in 2006 and since that time I have been facilitating therapy and supervision groups using the theory and practice of his systemic constellations. Like Lewin (1952), Hellinger suggests that human groups cohere and act according to systemically and environmentally determined forces. Hellinger (1998:5-30) has described these dynamics - he originally referred to them as the *'Orders of Love'* - and suggests that they operate at various levels, socially mediated by the effects of 'conscience'.

Hellinger's (1998, 2000, 2006) theories are based upon his own empirical observations of human relational systems, but are grounded in the work¹⁵ of Hungarian psychiatrist Ivan Boszormenyi-Nagy (1988/1951). Boszormenyi-Nagy and his clinical team had also recognised that patterns of loss and traumatic fragmentation were often repeated inter-generationally in family systems. He observed that family systems appeared to be bound together by hidden bonds of *'loyalty'* (Hellinger, 1998). In spite of the fragmentation caused by trauma and loss, the organismic nature of the bonded system seems to retain a memory of its 'wholeness' (Bohm, 1980; Sheldrake, 1988; Laszlo, 2004) so that patterns of fragmentation are re-created - sometimes very

14 For instance a particular illness in a family may be represented; or a religion or other resource/constraint.

15 Other contributory influences include Virginia Satir, 1976, 1987, 1980 and Arthur Janov, 1970, 1977, 2000

literally and specifically recreated and sometimes more symbolically so – through later generations. Hellinger (1998) and Boszormenyi-Nagy (1988) both observe how an individual's way of belonging in their family systems, inclusive of its difficulties, 'enmeshments' (Green and Werner, 1996) and traumatic fragmentation, will often determine the manner in which they subsequently engage with other social systems. In this sense the 'history' of the whole system can be said to be holographically represented within each individual belonging to that system. Developing this idea a little further with reference to systemic holons and the holarchic structuring already discussed, discrete 'family' systems are themselves seen as part of larger human social collectives and systems. Such collectives can be differentiated (as well as inwardly connected) by social phenomena such as culture, language, practice, religion and nationhood. Each differentiated system is also a holon – and therefore a part of a larger (unifying) system, ultimately encompassing all life on Earth.¹⁶ In order to view human social systems from such a broad ecological and evolutionary perspective, I turn now to the organisational theory of *Autopoiesis* (Varela, Maturana and Uribe, 1974; Maturana and Varela, 1972, 1979).

2.5.2 Autopoiesis.

The term 'Autopoiesis' (from the Greek words *auto* meaning 'self' and *poiesis* meaning 'creation' or 'production') was coined by Chilean biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1972; Varela, 1979) to describe their theory of the organising dynamic of biological life from single cells to more complex organisms and systems. Maturana and Varela (1992:45) propose that autopoietic systems are '*continually self-producing*' and also have the capacity to develop components which are similarly autopoietic. Autopoietic systems have 'boundaries' which help constitute their organizational identities but the semi-permeable nature of these boundaries facilitates the exchange of information and other resources (in the manner of a cell membrane; Lipton, 2006).

Capra (2003:31) explains that *autopoiesis* proposes that living systems are reflexively and inherently connected to their environment through recurrent interactions – called '*structural-couplings*'. A living system responds autonomously to disturbances in its environmental context by rearranging its pattern or structure of connectivity. Each interaction initiates structural changes in the system. As the organism responds to environmental influences, these changes alter its future behaviours such that it can be seen as a non-linear 'learning' system which builds upon previous 'experience' according to new situations. As long as the basic organisation (the 'topology') of the system remains intact, the organism preserves its autonomous identity and can continue to maintain the production and re-production of its own structural unity (its 'self').

Continual structural changes in response to the environment – and consequently continuing adaptation, learning and development -are key characteristics of the behaviour of all living beings. ... As it keeps interacting with its environment, a living organism will undergo a series of structural

¹⁶ This is also an arbitrary point to stop - since life on Earth is dependent upon the existence and proximity of the sun and the stabilising effect of the moon and other planets constellating the solar system (Cox, 2013).

changes, over time it will form its own individual pathway of structural coupling. At any point on this pathway, the structure of the organism is a record of previous structural changes and thus of previous interactions. In other words all living beings have a history. Living structure is always a record of prior development. (Capra, 2003:31)

Accordingly, at any moment, the next possibility for an organism is thus partially determined by the history of all its previous (social) 'structures' and partially by prevailing environmental conditions. However, it also maintains its living potential to go beyond what has been done before (partly *because* it has been done before) and to innovate something new. Multiple autopoietic systems, interacting within an environmental context, are also considered to be a (larger and more complex) autopoietic system - in other words an organisational holarchy.

In this integral inquiry I am using the theory of autopoiesis as a theoretical model for considering the dynamics of family systems as well as the more complex dynamics of community (Chapter Four).

Maturana and Varela, (1972, 1992), Varela, (1979), Varela, Thompson and Rosch, (1991), have further proposed that the interactions of living organisms with the environment – be they plant, animal or human – can be deemed to be *cognitive interactions* since they are capable of discriminating between self-producing and self-destroying influences (also Lipton, 2006). On this basis they assert that knowledge and cognitive processes ('*mind*') can be said to be – '*immanent in matter at all levels of life*' (cited in Capra, 2003:30).

Maturana and Varela's ideas have led this particular strand of cognitive and evolutionary science to adopt an embodied paradigmatic position known as *Enactivism* (Maturana, Thompson & Rosch, 1991; Hutto and Myin, 2013). According to Burman (2006:115) an Enactivist perspective emphasises that:

...the developmental history of each organism constructs a 'lens' through which the quality of individual phenomenal experience is 'perceived,' as an internalized felt-approximation of those aspects of the real things-in-themselves that impinge upon the successful implementation of planned actions. Thus, the world is grown into; it is not, *a priori*, 'represented' ...

In human beings, the 'lenses' through which we interpret experience are also narratively constructed in the form of language and beliefs (Varela, 1979; Lipton, 2005; Maturana, 1978) which perform interactively with previously configured neurological patterns (Maturana, Thompson and Rosch, 1991; Thompson, 2007).

2.6 Representing experience - 'braiding' narratives.

'*Why Narrative? Because experience*' (John Dewey, in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000:50).

Clandinin and Connelly (2000:19) inform that for Donald Polkingthorne (1988) '*Experience happens narratively*'. Furthermore, Gendlin (1991:25) points out that language and narrative are always patterned by cultural forms which: '*...have already played their role in our situations and experiences even before we speak and think*'. Jerome Bruner (2004:692) wrote that: '*We seem to have no other way of describing "lived time" save in the form of a narrative.*' He went on to suggest a 'mimicry,' (*mimesis*) – a reflexive relationship -

between human life and narrative 'art':

...just as art imitates life in Aristotle's sense, so, in Oscar Wilde's, life imitates art. Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative. "Life" in this sense is the same kind of construction of the human imagination as "a narrative" is.

Dan Mc Adams (1997:9) states it even more forcefully claiming that: '*We are the stories we tell*'. He stresses the central role that narrative plays in the creation of our private and our social selves. The theme of this self-storying is further developed by McLeod (2004) in the context of the creative significance of building narrative in therapy - as well as in wider socio-cultural contexts. The suggestion here is that *narrative* – as an activity and as a cultural artefact – fundamentally in-forms our coherence at the individual and the collective level. Stories are what, individually and collectively: 'glue us together'.

The manner in which narrative can shape our differing collective 'realities' is evident in the way that the media portrays events, privileging certain story-lines or accounts over others according to the mood and the political agendas of the moment. Researchers also have to make decisions about which elements of participant narratives 'make the press' – and what new narrative will be made of them. However, stories also seem to have an agency of their own – at least their creative possibilities are not stillborn once told, and what they will 'do' in the world is by no means determined by the intentions of their author. Roland Barthes (1967) famously proposed that '*the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author*' – suggesting that a story's meaning will ultimately be determined by its reader.

I have taken a more inter-subjective view of the relationship between experience, narrative and representation. Following on from Reissman (1993) I acknowledge my responsibility as the *author* by adhering to the *authenticity* of my own experience whilst being *as* transparent (Hiles, 2008) as possible about my intentions. It is my responsibility to recognise that my involvement with, and further representation of other people's narratives will transform them in some way. Reissman (1993:6) confirms:

I present research as a series of transformations involving telling, listening, transcribing, analysing and reading.

In dialogic and narrative inquiry these transformations are a two-way street – they change me and my unfolding perspectives too. Clandinin and Connelly (2000:124) write that:

Narrative Inquiry carries more of a sense of continual reformulation of an inquiry than it does a sense of problem definition and solution.

This has certainly been my experience – at times I have felt confused and disorientated as my original perspectives (as well as many subsequent ones) moved from what seemed like a centrally significant position to a much more peripheral (or even a redundant) one. For this reason I have tried to keep the narrative mode and style of this process in the thesis – it has felt important to me to try and convey something of my experience of finding out as well as to communicate and represent what has been 'found'.

Todres (2007:8-13) writes about how our *'aesthetic response'* to narrative can serve to evoke something of the authenticity of experiential phenomena it describes; he suggests the need to return *'texture to structure'* in the texts of qualitative research. Todres (ibid) refers to the *'full-bodied descriptions'* of Van Manen (1990) and Moustakas (1990) and concludes:

...nothing can replace the researcher's personal digestion of the research experience in producing a description that is both valid and aesthetically communicative.

My engaged participation in dialogue, the experience of individual and shared contemplations and the creation of narratives from those experiences has been the primary mode of this research. This thesis is (perhaps over-) full of individual story-fragments, but it was only when I was finally able to bring them all together – as pieces in an expanding jig-saw puzzle – that a bigger picture, or *'meta-narrative'* began to emerge.

2.6.1 Contemplation, dialogue and love.

Steen Halling and Michael Leifer (1991) emphasised the role of dialogue as a fundament of participation and of phenomenological inquiry (McLeod, 2011). McLeod (2011:99) suggests that, rather than setting out fixed processes: *'... the promotion of dialogue is regarded as a central principle which informs all aspects of a study'*. This notion is founded upon Bakhtin's (1975) proposition that dialogue is the condition in which ideas emerge; therefore, creating the various conditions for experience and dialogue becomes the task of such an inquiry. Jaakko Seikkula and David Trimble (2005:473) go further by proposing that the context in which dialogue is able to support the emergence of ideas, *'knowing and healing'* - is love. Leijessen (2014:147) also points towards love as a healing fundament describing it as a: *'... "connecting" virtue that finds expression in many strengths in the physical, social, personal and spiritual dimension'*.

The practical contexts and conditions which I have created in the hope of learning more about my own and other people's experiences of belonging and not-belonging are discussed more fully in the next chapter., McLeod (2011:99) suggests that small inquiry groups may be formed in which people can *'sensitise themselves to the phenomenon by reflection...'* in order to explore some aspect of lived experience. This method has proved invaluable, as through sharing dialogue and contemplative reflection with others I have been able to work my way towards recognising both resonances *and* dissonances - the *'convergences and divergences'* of meaning along the way (Cornish, 2010:19).

Zajonc (2009) suggests that practice of *'Contemplative Inquiry'* or meditation improves our capacity for giving inner attention and awareness to the phenomena of experience. Implicit in this practice, according to Zajonc, is a compassionate attitude of acceptance and *inclusivity* for whatever arises. He calls this *'an epistemology of love'* (2009:179) of knowing through loving and he quotes Goethe: *'we come to know nothing beyond what we love...'*.

This compassionate sense of self and other is strongly echoed by Martin Buber's (1937) description of the 'I-

Thou' relationship (1937) and is fundamental to contemplative practice and inquiry. Zajonc (2009:182) goes on to describe how, with this compassionate attitude, we can also participate in sharing the inwardly directed attention of each other in the inter-subjective processes of communication:

We learn to move ourselves according to the dynamic reality that is the other. We become one with their living interior [and] we participate in the world of others all the time when we enter into their thoughts and feelings, whether in conversation or through literature.

The phenomenon of 'empathic resonance' (Decety and Ickes, 2009) or 'Love' (Lewis, Amini and Lannon, 2000) has been described as forming the basis of our social connections as well as the foundation for various modes of therapy and healing practices (Kornfield, 2008). The theory and neurobiology of *empathic resonance* sheds light upon the social experience of *inter-subjective knowing*. Scheff (2006:196) describes inter-subjectivity as: '*the sharing of subjective states by two or more individuals*' whilst Gillespie and Cornish (2007) suggest that to participate in dialogue is to enter in to this inter-subjective mode of knowing.

A deeply orientating and motivating fundament for me - in my life, in my practice of psychotherapy and in this research – is of the presence of *love* as I have experienced it in those connections. Maturana (1978:62-3) asserts that:

...the only transcendence of our individual loneliness we can experience arises through the consensual reality that we create with others, that is through love.

Furthermore, for Maturana (2008:81), the very existence of language and the possibility of dialogue as verbal exchange, is an expression of the *co-operative* nature of human beings in the emotion of love. He suggests that in order for language to exist, co-operation, as a manner of living, must have been sustained by the mutual pleasure of co-operation '*in the emotion of love*' - such that it continued to be conserved and replicated, through successive generations in the evolution of human beings. He writes:

Language is not a systemic of symbolic communications – language is a manner of living together in a flow of consensual co-ordinations of consensual co-ordinations of behaviours. Moreover we do not just live in languaging, we live in conversations in the braiding of languaging and emotioning.

Maturana is suggesting that our human '*languaging*' manner of being is our way of expressing the shared human love of being-together.

Zajonc, (2009) suggests a quality of spaciousness in a contemplative inquiry which seeks, rather than to impose concepts and theories, to create opportunities and cultivate conscious '*presence*' (Noë, 2012) so that the phenomena under inquiry can 'show up' (Anderson 1998; 2000). Rosemary Anderson (2000:31) recounts how even a scientific inquiry can be illuminated by a loving interplay between subjective and objective knowing:

We are a part of what we know, intimately embraced in the physical, psychological, and spiritual senses, as well as in our objective and subjective realities. Following upon quantum physics and its clear signals about the connected nature of interpretation and knowledge, the knower and the known are inseparable in science too. Like ordinary knowing, scientific inquiry becomes an act of love.

Perhaps my experiential mode of inquiry is closer to what Anderson is referring to as 'ordinary knowing' than it is to scientific inquiry, but I have certainly shared her sense of *'being part of what we know'*.

If, as the researcher, I am to avoid 'flattening' the subject of my inquiries in the manner of a bunch of blind elephants, then I will need to attend sensitively – using all of my senses – and try to remain aware of the complexity and multiple dimensions of my engagement. Some of the theoretical perspectives relevant to this complexity are mapped out in the following chapter.

2.7 Summary.

In this chapter I have sketched out a map of the theoretical terrain and identified the frameworks of understandings which have guided and informed my research journey. In the next chapter I describe in more detail the exact route that I chose to take in terms of design and methodology and I explain the ethical processes behind involving others in my research.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology-

"I could tell you my adventures—beginning from this morning," said Alice a little timidly; "but it's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then."

- Lewis Carol.

3.0 Introduction.

Like 'Alice' in Lewis Carol's story, I have discovered that the way I now think, and can talk about, this thesis has changed very radically from how I was regarding it at the beginning. At each stage, step, and choice-point, my sense of what I needed to do next has been based partly on the inquiry's 'design plan', partly already a consequence of what had been done thus far and partly upon my own intuitive sense of 'the whole thing' (Gendlin, 1987; Anderson, 2000). In this way, each co-ordinated 'doing' has seemed to open up a next step (Gendlin, 1997) so that, looking back over it now, I can recognise that my research has also been an organically un-folding 'living' (and lived) process.

Tim Ingold (in Marchand , 2011:115) writes about the way that knowledge is 'grown' as a result of the continuum of our journeying and participation in and through the world, he says:

...knowledge is grown along the myriad paths we take as we make our ways through the world in the course of everyday activities, rather than assembled from information obtained from numerous fixed locations.

I have a sense of visceral agreement with his 'growing' metaphor for knowledge; there is something organic about the embodied way that living things incorporate experiences into 'a body of knowledge'. Nevertheless I have also needed a few '*fixed locations*' as well as some invaluable pre-digested sources of information in order to navigate the curious alchemy of my engagement in this research. By referring to these fixed points, and describing the research journey I will explain the growth of knowledge along its way, and say how I arrived at my final thesis.

In this chapter I introduce the methods and the resources which I have used to create an integral inquiry into the topic in question. Since the primary source of data for this inquiry was going to be the experiences of people, my paramount concern from the outset had to be the ethical considerations which are inherent to '*researching lived lives*' (Van Manen, 1990; McLeod, 2011). It is with these general considerations that I begin this chapter. In subsequent chapter sections I discuss methodological matters on an AQAL 'quadrant by quadrant' basis, and I then elaborate on any ethical matters specific to each one.

3.1 Involving others in research: *negotiating ethics*.

Key ethical issues for research involving others have been outlined generally, for instance by Bond, (2000; 2004); Corey et al. (2003); and McLeod (1994, 2003, 2012). These served as guidelines which are summarised below, along with my translations of them into the responsibilities I hold as researcher contemplating the specific involvement of others in my research.

Freedom: Potential participants should be free to choose to 'opt in' to the research rather than being put into a position of needing to 'opt out'. Invitations to participate in my research were therefore made in the form of a notice displayed in a given location (as described later), or else were communicated by emailed 'circular' in such a way that someone choosing not to respond to it at all would not risk causing me any offence. Having expressed interest in becoming involved, potential participants were given an information sheet (see Appendix A) – one aspect of which stated that they would remain *free* to withdraw their participation without needing to justify that decision.

Information and consent: Offers to participate in research should always be made on the basis of clear and accurate information being previously provided concerning the overall nature and purpose of the research, the nature and purpose of their possible participation in it, the availability of support resources and any complaints procedures. I was keen to ensure that consent to participate was only made once it had been mutually agreed that a satisfactory level of information had been made available and explained where needed. (Information and consent forms in Appendix A)

Justice: An aspect of 'justice' for me was my relational sense of the need for reciprocity in the exchange of something valuable to my research (Wilson, 2008). All of my *collaborators* (see section 3.1.1) expressed the satisfaction that their involvement was of sufficient personal interest to them that they were willing to offer it without any material exchanges being made. However, where I invited participation from those who were either living in less-than fortunate circumstances, or else their participation had a material 'cost' to them in terms of lost income, work or leisure time, I have felt it important to recognise this by making some kind of an exchange for their contribution. The specifics of these are discussed in relevant sections of methodological discussions. A further matter of *justice* is the participant's right to complain should their involvement in the research prove to have led them to feel in any way injured. Complaints procedures were explicitly detailed in the *information for participants* for this reason.

Confidentiality: It is a convention of modern research ethics that participants generally have the right to remain anonymous and to be unidentifiable in written up research papers (Orb *et al.* 2001). Whilst this right should always be observed as a first principle, occasionally participants may give their permission to be identified in person – in this thesis two such permissions have been given in writing and are included in Appendix D of this work. Confidentiality is also pertinent in terms of representation and identifiability: all

taped conversations were transcribed and verbatim transcripts sent to contributors so that they could edit out any extracts they wished to be removed or else add in any clarifying comments before finally giving me their further permission to use any fully anonymised transcript excerpts in my thesis. In the case of collaborators, there was often some on-going dialogue on issues of analysis, validity and representation – with the contemplative inquiry group I was able to return some of the analysed texts back to them for further comments in order to test how well (or otherwise) I had understood what had been shared.

Beneficence: Following on from medical ethical codes of conduct, and those set out by therapeutic governing bodies, research with people should really have at its core the intention to ‘first do no harm’ – *primum nil nocere*. Going beyond this, McLeod (2003:175) suggests that ‘*The ultimate moral justification for research is that it makes a contribution to a greater public good, by easing suffering and promoting truth*’. This injunction places a responsibility upon the researcher to think about the beneficence of the research aims as well as its methods. As a practitioner-researcher my intention and hope has always been that my research might ultimately make a contribution to the theory and practice of psychotherapy, in the interest of alleviating suffering. This matter is further discussed in Chapter Nine.

Ethical concerns were addressed through a careful consideration of the implications of involvement for each of the prospective populations of contributors, and ethical approval for my proposal was sought from the ethics committee of the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of East Anglia. Initial approval was granted by the committee in April 2011 with a further application being made and approved in December 2012 detailing my proposal for the inclusion of voices from the most potentially vulnerable population – homeless people who were not (then) attached to community support services. In the event, as I will explain in Chapter Nine, I did not move to collect this data.

3.1.1 Research contributors and levels of participation.

The inquiry began with my own interest regarding the experiences of *belonging* and *not-belonging*; in this respect I am actually at the centre of all of its participatory levels. By choosing to include an *auto-ethnographic* strand (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Ellis, 2004), and by incorporating a ‘*Thinking At the Edge*’ project (Gendlin, 2004) into my data, I have involved my-*self* as a participant as well as being its researcher. Ethical considerations meant considering whether I wished to expose aspects of my personal process to analytical scrutiny, bearing in mind that I could not offer myself the same level of anonymity as I would be able to offer to any other participant. As a psychotherapist, I am familiar with the processes of self-disclosure of self-analysis and in the interests of authenticity and validity – approached through an attitude of ‘*transparency*’ in qualitative inquiry (Hiles and Cermak, 2008), I deemed that my personal presence in this work would be both legitimate and necessary (Etherington, 2004).

Having decided to reflexively incorporate myself into the study, I needed next to invite some contributions from other people. Initially I planned to elicit the involvement from people whose potential vulnerability I considered to be low (in terms of social isolation) and whose personal agency high (in respect of my research) because of being fellow academics and/or practitioners. I reasoned that the non-hierarchical nature of collegial relationships would ensure that nobody need feel any social (relational) pressure to offer their participation, and that I could therefore trust that the motivation to volunteer participation would be free and self-determined. Within the community of the academy and within my practitioner peer groups there exists a culture and ethos of supportive interest in research which is relevant to personal or professional concerns.

I placed a notice in staff-rooms at the University of East Anglia and at two counselling agencies where I work regularly. This notice gave a brief outline of my experiential research focus, explained my request for volunteer participants and suggested that interested parties could email me in the first instance to gain a more detailed information sheet. This information sheet can be found in Appendix A. Of the twelve responses made to that initial invitation, nine volunteered to participate in my research by offering to take part in an individual '*focusing conversation*'; two people who initially expressed an interest were subsequently unable to participate because of work commitments and a third became unavailable because of personal circumstances.

The focusing conversations were essentially un-structured interviews (McLeod, 2011; Stanley and Temple, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) and were either loosely based around the participants' prior contemplation of a series of '*questions for contemplation*' (see Appendix B) which I emailed to each person once they had expressed satisfaction with the information given and had signed a '*consent to participate*' form (See Appendix A).

In order to further my inquiry into the inner dimensions of experience I needed participants who were willing to self-reflect on potentially uncomfortable questions. Therefore the 'focusing' (Gendlin, 1978) element of these conversations was intended to facilitate an additional depth to the shared attention that I wanted to be able to give to the way individual experiences were both embodied and expressed. This was, I realised, a deeper and potentially more challenging request to make of participants, so I wanted to ensure that they had understood the experiential dimension of the dialogues I hoped to create – this was why I had been concerned to consider the social functioning, integration and level of agency of respondents.

Collaborators and Participants.

In this thesis I have created a subset within the total research participants whom I refer to as '*research Collaborators*'. Of the nine contributors at this level of participation, six also expressed interest in

volunteering to take part in the group contemplations or *'talking circles'* which I was proposing to hold at intervals over the following 18 months. These people became known as 'collaborators' in acknowledgement of their ongoing formal and informal contributions made in the 'talking-circles' and during our un-folding conversations over lunches or coffee for a period of nearly two years - as well as for the deeper reflexive nature of their involvement. More details of this research activity can be found in this chapter (section 3.2.4).

For the second level of participation, I needed to invite contributions from individuals from populations that I had identified as being less well socially integrated and therefore potentially more vulnerable. Here my research interest was in the experiential aspects of the social phenomena associated with marginalisation and integration – I wanted to gain some insights into the complexity and the consequences of belonging and not-belonging (both as a social category and as an experience). To this end I had decided to make my inquiries within community-based agencies who worked with marginalised populations. I felt that it could be important to learn about the values, motivations and practices of the agency itself and then to hear directly from both agency staff and service users.

The issues of power-relations for potential research participants within an agency context are potentially more sensitive than those of the more horizontal relational dynamics of the first level of participation, as there may be a risk of staff feeling in some way obliged to participate by senior organisational members. Furthermore, agency work always happens under pre-existing constraints of time and money – so any expectation that staff members would give up either their work or personal time may be experienced as an imposition, again, especially if there is any perceived pressure from someone in a senior position. When negotiating with senior members of staff within the two agencies involved in my study I was therefore careful from the outset to establish a suitable manner of invitation in which people would not feel under pressure to participate. I also ensured that their participation would be acknowledged by a level of reciprocity recognising both the agency's co-operation and the individual contribution of the staff member (see section 3.2.1 for details).

The level of participation in this phase was not intended to become as deeply reflexive as the focusing-conversations, so narratives of experience were collected in a semi-structured interview (McLeod, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), without making any reference to felt-sense phenomena (sample questions in Appendix B). I reasoned that staff members in the context of work may not wish to delve too deeply into personal experiencing, and also that service users were potentially more vulnerable to being emotionally affected by my topic of inquiry. Those who have contributed to my research at this level I also refer to in this thesis as research 'participants'.

In my original design plan I had proposed to include the voices of 'homeless' people who were leading very socially marginalised lives. These were always going to be the most ethically sensitive persons to involve in my research, particularly as I would wish to talk to them about their experience of social isolation in the

knowledge that they had no immediately available support resources (other than the possible use of mood-altering substances). After reviewing the measures that I suggested for minimising potential adverse consequences to such participants, I gained approval in April 2012 from the Ethics Board, for this part of my proposal. I did not want to impose unnecessarily upon the fragility of the lives of homeless people - for the purpose of my doctoral research - unless it was clearly of central importance to the inquiry. By the time I was ready to begin collecting that data I was less than convinced that I really needed it – and so in the event, I decided not to. I review my decision in Chapter Nine.

3.2 An Integral Design and Methodological Pluralism.

In terms of methodologies, overall I have adopted a pragmatic approach dubbed ‘Integral Methodological Pluralism’ (IMP) by Esbjorn-Hargens, (2010), following on from ‘Methodological Pluralism’ (Payne *et al.* 2004; Davis, 2009). Wilber (in Esbjorn-Hargens, 2010:33) affirms:

The word integral means comprehensive, inclusive, non-marginalising and embracing. Integral approaches to any field attempt to be exactly that: to include as many perspectives, styles and methodologies as possible within a coherent view of the topic.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000:6) have also described this approach to inquiry as ‘*bricolage*’. The *bricoleur* makes use of what is at hand and can adapt systems, objects and structures to suit the purpose required; however, as is the case with any architect, engineer or technician, the more familiar he is with the materials, the more deftly and innovatively he may be able to put them to use. As both the ‘architect’ and the ‘technician’ of this research I started out with what was readily at hand for me in terms of my existing research experience; I then went in search of resources which could better serve the requirements of the task before setting about developing the necessary technical proficiencies.

Esbjorn-Hargens (2010:50) informs that *Integral Methodological Pluralism*:

...operates according to three principles: *inclusion* (consult multiple perspectives and methods impartially), *enfoldment* (prioritise the importance of findings generated from these perspectives), and *enactment* (recognise that phenomena are disclosed to subjects through their activity of knowing them). [original emphasis]

He elaborates on the scope of application for integral theory in research by pointing out that, in each quadrant of the AQAL model the focus of inquiry can be orientated from either first or third person perspectives thereby creating ‘*eight zones*’.

Esbjorn-Hargens (2010) suggests some possible approaches to methodology within an integral framework, as illustrated by the following diagram (fig. 3.1):

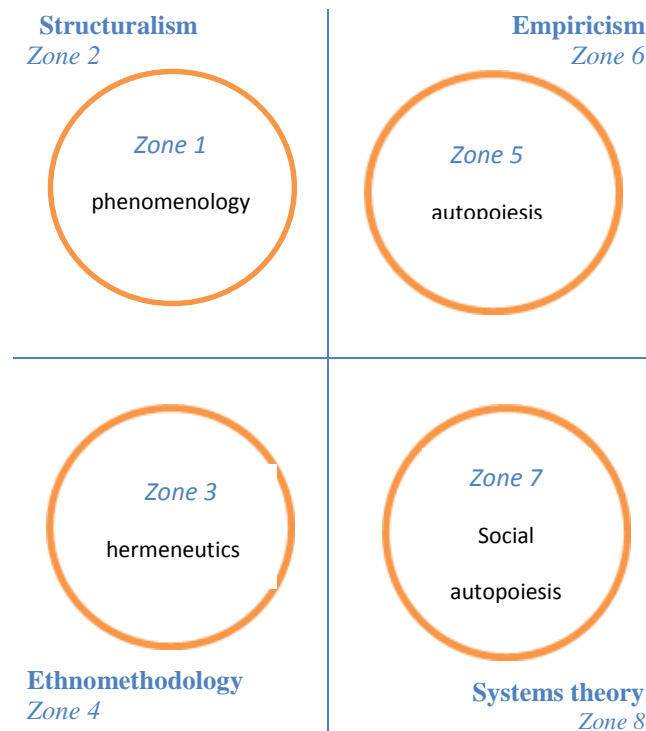


Fig. 3.1 Eight methodological zones. In Esbjorn-Hargens (2010:51)

In this representation, phenomenology is confined to individual subjectivities and the organisational principle of autopoiesis applied only to the external aspects of phenomena. I have made a slightly differing interpretation of this model in which phenomenology provides an over-arching approach to the whole inquiry. Narrative is the representational mode of all four quadrants and hermeneutics are implicit to the method of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which I used to generate themes in the exterior (right-hand) quadrants (see sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2).

I suggest that the IMP principles of ‘inclusion’ and ‘enfoldment’ identified by Esbjorn-Hargens (2010:50) hold good in my design and overall approach. In addition, I am interpreting the principle of *enactment* to have a broad equivalence to the notion of *participatory knowing* (Heron and Reason, 1997), which is central the epistemology of this inquiry.

3.3 Four Quadrants, four methodological perspectives.

The following diagram (fig. 3.2) provides a more detailed illustration of how various methods of inquiry have been used in order to consider the experiences of *belonging* and *not-belonging* from the differing perspectives of all four domains. The manner in which I used this framework as an organisational tool during data collection can be seen in Appendix C.

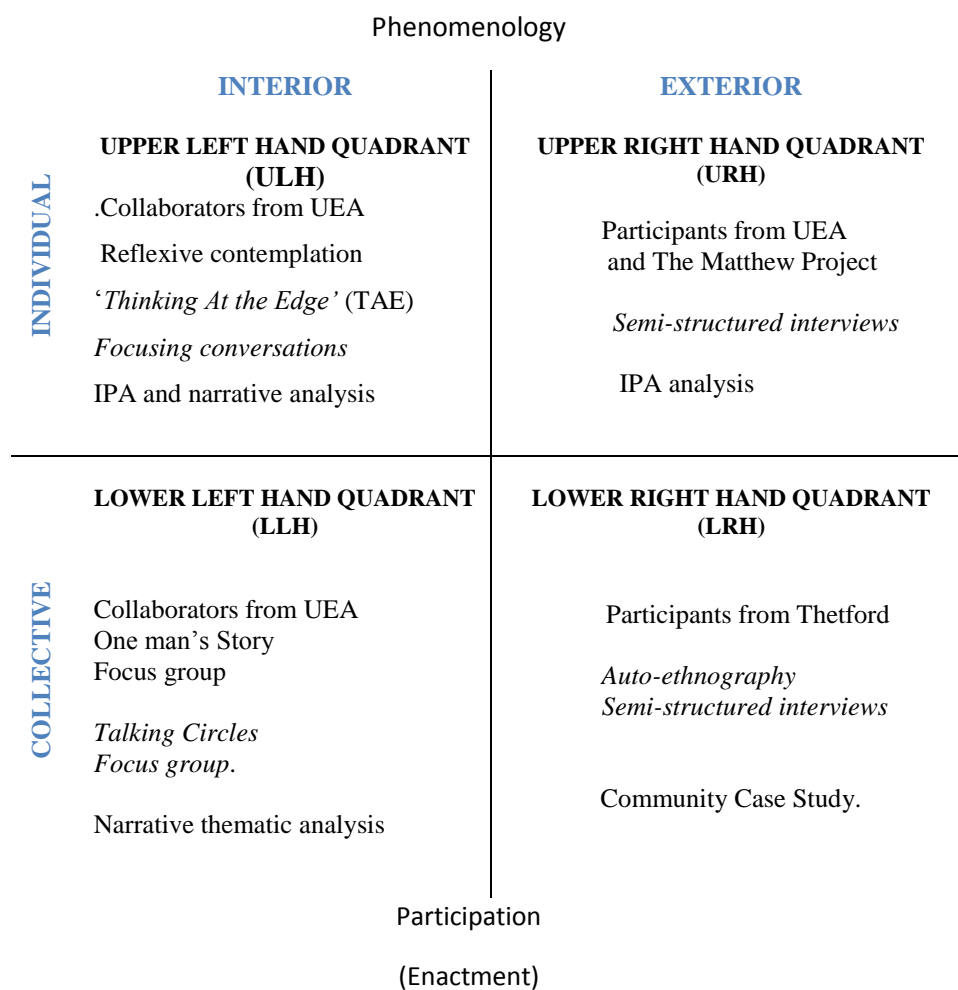


Fig. 3.2 Inquiry Methods.

The order in which the quadrant domains are attended to in this chapter - and in which they are subsequently presented in the thesis, does not reflect the sequence of data collection. My reason for beginning my data presentation with the LRH quadrant *‘collective exterior’* is that, before inviting anybody else into my study, I had begun my inquiry with an auto-ethnographic reflection of my own *‘belonging’* circumstances and the collective exterior of my home town. The effect of this was to *‘story’* myself into this collective as well as the research itself.

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I need to orientate myself inside this research. To sense into and speak from my own sense of un-belonging and belonging - I cannot authentically invite others into this circle of inquiry unless I have prepared the ground to some extent. Reading Shawn Wilson is helping me to understand this need for research 'ceremonials'.

This idea had been the cue for me to spend time writing an auto-ethnographic piece, although I had not decided at that stage whether I would include extracts of it in the thesis. Later, once I had conceived of making a situated community case-study within which I could position various aspects of social experiencing, it occurred to me that my own town was an interesting (and available) case, and that in this context I could position my own *auto-ethnographic* (Etherington, 2004) narrative along-side other 'units of analysis' (Yin, 2012).

3.3.1 The collective exterior (LRH quadrant).

The lower right-hand domain is referred to as 'Its' by Wilber (1995) and is the external collective aspect which can denote 'society' in terms of its practices and policies – and can also be thought of as 'what manifests' at the systems level. For my purpose here I have considered society at a localised level of 'community' (Cohen, 2002; Delanty, 2010) – and do so by focusing on some of the features of one community in particular.

The town where I live and its locality has the unusual, for East Anglia, demographic profile of a migrant population of approximately 30% (mainly European economic migrants) I was aware that the issues of integration and marginalisation were topical there and so I began making some local inquiries. Having been directed to the Trust - called *Keystone Development Trust* (KDT) – by the clerk to the town council, I was very interested to meet and talk with its CEO Neil Stott¹⁷. Following our initial conversations, and reading up on some of the background publications relevant to the locale, I decided upon making a *case-study* of it. According to Yin (2012:8) a case-study can be *loosely defined in geographical terms*, and so I determined that I could investigate the experience of belonging or not-belonging in a particular geographical and social locale - the community of Thetford.

A Case-Study approach.

The type of case-study I have identified here is of a *single case study design* (Yin, (2012:8) and has three embedded *units of analysis*: Myself, Keystone Development Trust and The Matthew Project. Given the scope of the whole project, and bearing in mind that the data generated would be used as representative of only one quadrant, my investigation into each unit has not been deeply made. Rather, I have sought to achieve a sense of overview of a particular locality and some of its historical features, which I deemed to be socially

¹⁷ Written permission to identify the organisation and its CEO is given by Neil and can be found in appendix E 1

relevant to my study, whilst also positioning some detailed particulars within this context. Similarly, when analysing and theorising about these individual features, I have found myself constrained in terms of depth, by the complexity and scope of the whole project (Byrne, 1990). Yin (2012:80) acknowledges that these dimensions are necessarily related: '*The desired descriptive theory should cover the scope and depth of the case being described*'. In this instance, the purpose of this case-study is to create a *textured* (Todres, 2007) descriptive of some of the complexities that I have discerned at the level of the social collective.

My initial contact with the CEOs of Keystone Development Trust and the manager of The Matthew Project¹⁸ in Thetford was made by email giving a brief introduction to myself and to my research. Both organisational heads then agreed to meet with me, and subsequently offered to take part personally in taped semi-structured interviews, which would focus on the community issues that their agencies were engaged with. Later, they offered to facilitate the invitation for participation from staff and service users from within their organisations and negotiated with me how this might most ethically be carried out.

In the case of Keystone this negotiation included agreeing that the organisation would invoice me directly for the time given over to me by staff members who volunteered to talk with me personally or who agreed to act as translator in order to facilitate my interviews with European migrant service users. Furthermore I agreed to exchange shopping vouchers (with a value £10) to all staff and service users who took part in recorded half-hour interviews. I had the information to participants translated into Portuguese, Polish and Lithuanian (see Appendix F) and this was given to all prospective participants prior to signing a consent form.

Yin (2012:52) suggests a basic protocol for collecting this case-study data as simply to: '*maintain a contact with the question*' that the case-study seeks to illuminate; in this case (broadly) my question was: '*what is the experience/story of belonging and not-belonging in this place?*' Yin (ibid) refers to this as having a '*field agenda*' and points out that the questions asked to respondents can be very variable as long as the researcher holds this basic attitude towards the collection of data.

In Chapter Four I present my analysis and theorising as a discussion-thread which runs throughout the case-study. My hope was that by gathering these differing perspectives and experiential commentaries, I would learn something about the effects of social policies, practices and procedures in this place rather than just identifying or describing the fact of them. Extracts from transcribed interviews have been used throughout the case-study to illustrate or highlight some of the social phenomena of the locality.

¹⁸ The Matthew Project is a regional community-based agency with a branch in Thetford which works in support of individuals with drug and alcohol problems and in concert with other statutory and non-statutory agencies.

3.3.2 The individual exterior (URH quadrant)

In order to bring the focus of my inquiry to the AQAL domain of the *individual exterior*, I had a number of things to consider. Wilber (2000:31) proposes that this quadrant be considered in objective terms:

The upper-right quadrant is the individual viewed in an objective, empirical, “scientific” fashion. In particular, this includes organic body states, biochemistry, neurobiological factors, neurotransmitters, organic brain structures (brain stem, limbic system, neocortex) and so on.

In this experiential inquiry I am utilising a ‘broad empiricism’ (Black, 2008) – one which encompasses the *embodiment* of both interior and exterior domains and which includes the manifestation of social phenomena, including narrative and other forms of communicative action.

According to Clandinin and Connelly, (2001:50) the view that narratives are ‘*experientially embodied*’, situated in personal and social histories, and contingent upon spatial and temporal continuities, is grounded in John Dewey’s (1938) theories of experience. They go on to propose that Dewey’s thought creates a framework for studying experience through narratives in which:

... any particular inquiry is defined by this three-dimensional space: studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the person and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places.

Following on from these considerations, my methods for inquiring into the ULH quadrant consisted of the collection of individual narratives, in the form of semi-structured interviews (Denzin and Norman, 2000; McLeod, 2011). Sample questions, around which the semi-structured interviews were loosely based, can be found in Appendix B [ii].

I have divided Chapter Five into two parts: in part one I present an analysis of transcripts from recordings of half-hour conversations with five participants¹⁹ who were, at that time, accessing the services of the Matthew Project in Thetford, and who had volunteered to contribute to my research. Part two of Chapter Five uses the same mode of analysis with the transcripts of recorded conversations with seven participants, four of whom subsequently agreed to become *collaborators* in the group contemplation process.

3.3.3 The individual interior (ULH quadrant).

The ‘individual interior’ that I am most intimately familiar with, and to which I have the greatest access through ‘introspection’ (Hill, 2011), is of course my own –my investigation of this domain was significantly progressed by using the method of Thinking At the Edge (Gendlin, 2004).

Thinking At the Edge (TAE). TAE -Gendlin and Hendricks 2003; Lou , 2012) is a systematic method of inquiry into experience, formulated into 14 steps. In the autumn of 2012 I undertook a TAE project

19 see section 3.1 concerning phases one and two and ethical procedures arising from each.

inquiring into my own experience of belonging and not-belonging. The TAE method and process is further explicated and also illustrated by that research project which can be found in Chapter 6.1. In the second part of Chapter Six I present the IPA analysis of transcripts of three '*focusing conversations*' with research collaborators (see section 3.1).

I have distinguished what I refer to as '*focusing-conversations*' from semi-structured interviews (McLeod, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000) on the basis of their reflexive inwardly directed attention to current experiencing. In essence, they were contemplative dialogues with an explicit level of attention being periodically given, by both myself and my collaborators, to our bodily *felt-sense* of the dialogue as it happened. As a preparation for these focusing conversations I sent each collaborator a list of questions for contemplation (Appendix B [ii]) along with the suggestion that they might create a little time for reflecting on those questions prior to our meeting. The questions pertained to the individual's sense of belonging in a number of differing relational contexts and had a scale drawn under each context where they could indicate whether their *belonging-sense* felt weak or strong in a given situation. My intention was not to use that information as data, but merely as an exercise aimed at inviting inner reflection on their sense of belonging in various contexts. In the event, some participants found this exercise useful and so we were able to use it as a basis for our shared '*focusing conversations*', whilst others had either forgotten the exercise (because they had completed it sometime previously) or else had not felt sufficiently engaged with it to find it beneficial, in each case we just began the reflective process on the basis of their current experiencing.

3.3.4 The collective interior (LLH quadrant).

Wilber (1995) denotes this interior collective dimension as '*We*' suggesting that it encompasses those patterned aspects of human being that are implicitly '*us*', inclusive of the textures and cultures of human groups and systems. According to Banks *et al.* (1989) symbolisation and meaning-making are essentially cultural phenomena.

Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways. (Banks, Banks, and McGee, 1989:8).

These influential, though reflexively mutable, patterns of culture seem to strongly contribute to our understanding of how, or indeed *whether*, we may belong in a particular human system. Nevertheless, deciding how I could design my inquiry to take account of such collective experiencing was initially a puzzle for me. Cresswell, (2013:104) suggests that phenomenology is a suitable approach to the study of experience, but I still needed to design a method and set the scene for the phenomena to '*show up*' (Anderson, 2000).

Talking Circles.

Inspired by his idea that '*Research is Ceremony*' I reviewed the approaches described by Wilson (2008) in the *Indigenous Paradigm*. I decided to make an invitation to bring together a core group of collaborators to take part in a series of what I came to call 'talking-circles' (Bohanon, 2006; Wilson, 2008) - or collaborative 'group contemplations' (Zajonc, 2006).

The talking-circles took place over a period of eighteen months and were comprised of whatever combination of collaborators who were able to be present at any given time - varying from three to six in number. These contemplations usually began by me offering a short meditation in order to collect our awareness and bring attention into the body. In the first two 'circles' I also brought a particular question which had become pertinent to my research at that time— suggesting that the group could either pick up and engage with the question, or else leave it and find their own 'way in'.

In order to maintain a contemplative approach to our exchanges I suggested the use of a 'talking stick' (Werner, 2003) which in our case was actually a carved wooden pear. This 'talking object' was placed on a table in the middle of the gathered circle, and when somebody wanted to contribute by speaking they would reach for the wooden pear and hold it for the duration of their sharing. This ritualised way of sharing did seem to help in keeping us in a contemplative mode of dialogue (Cooper, *et al.* 2013), since speaking involved making a decision, creating the movement or gesture of reaching for the 'stick' whilst also observing whether any other person was making similar preparations to move. In this way we had to give attention both to our own inner process and to what was happening in the group.

Group contemplations were recorded and transcribed by me, the full transcript being then circulated to all who had been present with the invitation to edit out or additionally annotate *their own* contributions to the process. When I came to analyse and work with these transcripts I found that the contemplative reflections of group members collectively follow unfolding themes, but they also worked quite well (with very little editorial intervention) as individual narratives or 'monologues' which could then be re-woven in to a larger 'circle story'.

The narrative monologues presented in the first section of Chapter Seven were created by extracting sequential contributions from the verbatim transcript of each group member. In this way I hoped to capture and represent the 'wholeness' of individual experiences within each context, creating a story of the ephemeral and situated 'wholeness' of the talking circle. Each 'circle' seemed to me to have its own rather organic unfolding shape and thematic process, which formed itself into a particular motif. The construction and use of narratives in this quadrant and in this manner is also a way for me to draw attention to the role and significance of stories as artefacts of culture – significance which I further discuss in Chapter Eight.

In order to be able to argue for the validity of my re-woven narratives, I circulated drafts of the circle-stories to the group of collaborators who had been present, and invited them to comment. Overall, this process affirmed that I had generally been able to capture the aesthetic and semantic significances; realising that this feed-back task placed an additional burden on the collaborators, I only asked for their general sense of these stories rather than a more detailed critique.

Constellation Focus group.

My second method of inquiry into the systemic and cultural dimensions of belonging and not-belonging drew upon my knowledge and practice of 'Family Systems Constellations' as developed by Bert Hellinger (1998). I knew that this body of knowledge was going to be relevant to this study; however, deciding how I could incorporate it into my research was something of a tricky process for me.

I wanted to be able to find a way of incorporating this embodied phenomenological practice into my research as a method of inquiry into the dynamics of belonging at the internal collective level. The boundary issues and ethical dilemmas (Etherington, 1996, McLeod, 2003; West, 2002) of doing research with people whilst they work on 'live' personal or family issues needed very careful consideration. As a researcher I am ethically bound to inform potential participants what the research process will entail, so that they are then free to give their *informed consent* (Bond, 2000) on the basis of knowing what to expect. In 'live' therapeutic work this is not possible and this made me very cautious of using what is essentially a therapeutic intervention as a research method.

In therapy, new personal insights gained may sometimes be accompanied by the release of strong emotion (Rothschild, 1998) - the intensity of which can sometimes come as a surprise to the client. Such emotional release is usually understood as a normal part of the process of integration of some aspect of experience and therefore a positive indicator (*ibid*). However, the unpredictability of this process, along with the deeply personal nature of its content, meant that I felt that it would be unethical to conduct research with a constellation group - unless it was completely comprised of people who were already very familiar with the approach and had experienced many such integrations in that context, and who would therefore know what to expect. On further reflection I still felt that the ethical dilemmas implicit in researching intergenerational cultural patterns within family systems actually extended beyond the issue of informed consent, since other family members are generally implicit in such work.

As a *psychotherapist* I am ethically bound to hold safely, and confidentially, the content of an individual's personal work, supporting their wellbeing as my main priority. As a *researcher* I have other, more personal interests and priorities which must be balanced with this basic premise, and which can easily run in conflict to it. In considering the possibilities of divergent 'goals' emerging when researching therapeutic process and outcomes, McLeod (2011:174) confirms:

As a researcher the practitioner has a duty to collect data and make a contribution to knowledge and understanding. Much of the time these roles may complement and enhance each other. On some occasions, however, they may be in conflict.

McLeod points out that in each therapeutic modality there may be a temptation for the researcher/therapist to emphasise or else return to those themes in the therapy which best serve the production of research data. He goes on to observe that, in the context of a therapeutic relationship, clients may also collude to some extent with the researcher's aims by striving '*to produce the 'right' (or 'wrong') material for the counsellor,* (ibid). McLeod's overall message is one of endorsement for the value and necessity of research in counselling clinical practice, however he cautions that great care must be taken before embarking upon it because - although the issues of boundaries in dual relationships (Prior, 1991; Etherington, 1996) may themselves be considered fruitful material for therapeutic growth:

...it could equally well be argued that these issues merely interfere with a therapeutic task that is sufficiently challenging without the addition of a new layer of intricacy. (McLeod, 2011:174)

McLeod's use here of the word 'intricacy' resonates very strongly with my experience of the complexities inherent to the facilitation of systemic constellation group work, such that I became satisfied that I did not want to attempt to research this process at the same time as being responsible for facilitating it. In the end I decided that a satisfactory compromise would be to use the inquiry method of a *focus group* comprised of people who had already experienced doing some personal work using the constellation approach.

Invitation to participate in this focus-group activity was made by emailing an information sheet (Appendix A) about my research to my existing mailing list of constellation workshop participants (people that I knew had prior experience of the systemic constellation approach). In order to create some reciprocity (Wilson, 2008) for this level of research participation, I offered a free place on a one-day open workshop which would be held the day before I proposed conducting a two-hour focus-group which would reflect upon their individual experiences of the constellation approach and would open a discussion on whether it had (or had not) had any influence upon their own current sense of belonging and not-belonging. The one day workshop was also an 'open' one and so was attended by paying participants who were not involved with the research group – because I did not want the workshop itself to become research orientated.

The focus group session was recorded and transcribed by me and the transcripts sent to all group members for validation, editing and any additional commentaries that people might feel inclined to make in the service of clarification. In addition to this step, when I was working with analysing the transcript I found that a further question had arisen for me which had not been covered by the focus group and so I emailed the focus-group participants with the question and asked if anyone felt like responding to it by email. All the members of the focus group emailed me with further experiential reflections and so contributed to this aspect of data –for which I was most grateful.

3.4 Methods of analysis

The data in this qualitative inquiry is exclusively comprised of various forms of narrative. Paul Ricoeur (1984:473) advises that:

A society where narrative is dead is one where men are no longer capable of exchanging their experiences, of sharing a common experience.

It is hard to envision such a society, for according to Clandinin and Connelly (2001), human experience is constantly being narrated at various levels of inner, private, and of public life – and in both instances is reflexively shaped into various discourses (Foucault, 1977).

3.4.1 Working with narrative texts.

Narrative therefore seems to form the fabric of our personal and social selves; Dan McAdams (1997:5) considers that to a large extent: *'We are the stories we tell'*. Hiles (2008:94) takes a similar position, but also creates a distinction between what he calls *'contingent narratives'* and *'discursive narratives'* where *'contingent narratives'* are created: *'consciously or unconsciously, in order to shape our experience of ordinary life'*. He continues by saying that such narratives are: *'fundamental to our construction of reality and self-hood'*; by contrast he suggests that discursive narratives are those which pass in the *'...effortless mode of communicating our experience with others'* (ibid).

By studying narratives, or more specifically, by experiential engagement with, and immersion in these narratives, I have been able to find resonance (Decety and Ickes, 2012) with some of the nuances of the tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 1966) which is contained within narrated experiences. Iser (1980:19) suggested that it is only as a result of the phenomenon of *'what happens'* in the reader when reading a text that the text reveals its potential for meaning:

[A]n interpreter can no longer claim to teach the reader the meaning of a text, for without a subjective contribution and a context there is no such thing. Far more instructive will be an analysis of what actually happens when one is reading a text, for that is when the text begins to unfold its potential; it is in the reader that the text comes to life ...In reading we are able to experience things that no longer exist and to understand things that are totally unfamiliar to us; and it is this astonishing process that now needs to be investigated.

The narration of experience presupposes a listener; its forms of representation must suit the purposes of the narrator but will also often be tailored towards the interests of the listener. Strands of my own auto-ethnographic story (Ellis and Bochner, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 1997; Etherington, 2004), and the story of the unfolding context in which this study took place are woven together and have become braided, along with other data strands, into the overall narrative of the thesis as a whole.

Methods of narrative analysis (Daiute and Lightfoot, 2004; Stephens and Breheny, 2013) of the texts of the transcribed research conversations have differed slightly in each of the quadrant domains. In the Lower Right

Hand domain – the case-study - I took a *Thematic Analysis* approach (Guest, 2012), enabling me to highlight individual and social phenomena. I used the background demographic information of the case to contextualise these themes into more general discourses (Fairclough, 2003) and took quotes from the transcripts to illustrate these. In this way I was foregrounding my observations of the phenomena portrayed by the narratives rather than seeking to find resonant meanings from within them.

The recordings of the talking-circles and the constellation focus-group had a very particular quality to them, containing many long silences which evoked for me my own tacit experience of being in them. The transcripts are also somewhat 'sparse' and I found it easiest to just allow them to crystallise into narratives which illustrated the themes which had emerged. In presenting this data I also wanted to evoke something of those tacit spaces and use them in the story rather than just focus on themes from what had been spoken.

The texts which I analysed for inquiry into the upper two quadrants – the individual exterior and interior domains – were carried out using the approach of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which I describe below. The important exception to this was my use of Gendlin's Thinking At the Edge (TAE) method of inquiry into my own inner experience of belonging and not- belonging, which is detailed in an earlier section of this chapter, and further elaborated in Chapter Six.

3.4.2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. (IPA)

Smith and Osborn (2007:53) suggest that IPA combines '*empathic hermeneutics*' (resonance) and '*questioning hermeneutics*' (propositional questioning/theorising). In order to begin to discern something of the phenomenal 'life-world' contained within a person's narrative, IPA stays with the content of the whole of that individual's transcript. To this end, *meaning* is central to the approach, and the aim is to try to understand the content and complexity of those meanings rather than to measure their frequency. In practice this involves the investigator engaging in an interpretative relationship with the transcript through many cycles of reading and re-reading a single text, using these hermeneutic modes of resonance and questioning (ibid. p.66).

By initially making notes in the margins and by taking phrases or paraphrases which continue to resonate accurately with the original text, it becomes possible to begin to identify themes as they arise within the chronology of the narrative (Smith and Osborn, 2007:67).

Each reading has the potential to throw up new insights. This is close to being a free textual analysis. There are no rules about what is commented upon, and there is no requirement, for example, to divide the text into meaning units and assign a comment for each unit.

Smith and Osborn suggest that identified themes are then 'clustered' (p.71) by making connections between them on the basis of their relatedness to each other, or else to 'superordinate concepts' (rather than in the original chronological order in which they appear out of the transcript). These superordinate concepts

themselves have also emerged from the same analytic process, afterwards acting as 'magnets' (2007:70) around which other themes may naturally seem to converge.

Clustered themes are initially particular to each person since the IPA process continues to work within one transcript at a time until the very last stage when it became possible to bring together all of the individual thematic convergences and divergences in order to consider how these might build together in order to enlarge the understanding of the phenomena in question.

CHAPTER FOUR.

Community: 'The Case of Belonging in Thetford'.

Community is already inside of you.

There's this idea of a Venn diagram out there. These are diagrams that show all hypothetically possible logical relations between a finite collection of people or things. [...]

Community exists in one place – in your heart.

Without that, what is community?

Without passion, without connections, without a feeling of belonging – what is there?

You cannot build heart.

It's either there, or it's not.

You know you have a community when it takes care of its own.

- Chris Pirillo [on-line - accessed 7/11/2013]

4.0 Introduction.

In the AQAL model the lower right-hand quadrant pertains to the collective exterior. In this chapter I therefore set out my exploration of some of the dimensions of belonging and not-belonging at the collective level of society, or rather its more embodied correlate: community. Chris Pirillo's evocation of community (above) emphasises its human substrate – more specifically, the substrate of the human heart. He does not talk about environment or place in this extract for the simple reason that he is actually referring to the virtual world of on-line communities. What he says is important though - and relevant here – so I will return to the parallels and distinctions between geographically located and virtual communities in chapters eight and nine. The current study concerns itself primarily with the objective and the subjective elements of human relationships to and within a place.

4.1 A Case-Study.

Taking up a phenomenological stance then I set out to find out something about not-belonging and *belonging some-where*. In the LRH quadrant this may be interpreted as being about social marginalisation and integration (Rudmin, 2003). For this purpose I have created an *Embedded Case Study* (Yin, 2012; also Robson, 2002) with four 'units of analysis'(Yin 2012:8) of the community where I live - a West Norfolk town called Thetford.

The first unit of analysis contains extracts of an auto-ethnographic narrative of some aspects of my own experience of belonging and not-belonging – generally, and more specifically in relation to Thetford - as a newcomer to living in the town, but also as someone returning to the region of my birth.

Secondly I investigate a local community development trust *Keystone Development Trust*²⁰ and present

²⁰ www.keystonetrust.org.uk

extracts of a conversation with its CEO which highlight several of the pressing local issues concerning both community and belonging.

The third unit of analysis considers *'The Matthew Project'* which is a community-based agency supporting those who have problems with drug and alcohol dependence or abuse. I present extracts of a conversation with its manager and some of the service users there.

The fourth unit of analysis is an organisation called *'META'* (Moving Europeans Taking Action) which is an initiative formed under the umbrella of Keystone Development Trust supporting incoming and resident European migrants - I talk to staff and service users.

Each unit of analysis is presented separately but also forms part of an ongoing thematic analysis of the case (Guest, 2012). Identified themes are indicated in the text by bold print and summarised at the end of each unit (chapter section) before being collated at the end of the chapter.

4.1.1 Case-study tasks:

I have identified four overall objectives for data collection in this 'quadrant' and identify them here as 'case-study tasks' (Guest, 2012).

1. To position myself as the author of the inquiry using an auto-ethnographic element to identify some of the facets of my own relationship to the questions of belonging and not-belonging, generally as well as here, *in the place where I live*.
2. To consider the locality itself as a place *'to belong or not-belong'*, taking into consideration the relevant historical and geographical influences.
3. To learn something of the policies and practices of some community agencies in this locality to see how they engage with the issues of marginalisation and integration.
4. To identify emergent themes of belonging and not-belonging by listening to the narrated experiences of some of those who live and work in this particular locality.

4.1.2 The Case locality – a brief history.

Thetford is a town with a lot of history, both ancient and modern, much of which has to do with the issues of migration and trade (Lee, 1966). It was from here, in Neolithic times, that flints - used for striking fire and for making into arrow and axe heads - were mined locally at 'Grimes Graves'²¹. Examples of these have been found all over England and in far-away parts of Europe - suggesting trade and migration of the ancient peoples that moved across Europe as the last Ice-age receded about 15,000 years ago (Pryor, 2004).

At the beginning of the first century BC the 'Iceni' - one of the tribes of Ancient Britain - lived in this region. Archaeology suggests that their last queen 'Boudicca', had her strong-hold home in the Iron-Age settlement

21 Neolithic flint mines situated near by the town of Thetford – they were originally excavated over 5000 years ago.

<http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/grimes-graves-prehistoric-flint-mine/>

that is now Thetford (Pryor, 2004). Boudicca and her family were at the forefront of the dramatic events of AD 60 during which she led the Iceni, and several neighbouring tribes, into the last concerted rebellion of the British tribes against the Roman military colonisers. That rebellion was finally and violently, quashed by the Roman army - at which point Boudicca allegedly took her own life and the Iceni passed out of contemporary commentary.

Another famous son of Thetford is the revolutionary social and political activist Thomas Paine (1737-1809). Paine left his home in 1774 and migrated to the British colonies in America where his writing became an influential voice during the American civil war as he endorsed the idea of establishing independence from Britain. Seemingly a man with a great taste for social change, Paine subsequently moved to France during the French revolution where, in 1791, he wrote 'The Rights of Man' (Crosby, 1986).

It would seem that Thetford's history already contains themes of migration, settlement, the trading of resources, the build-up of tensions between an 'old order' of indigenous peoples and the social changes brought about by incoming colonisers. The fortune and fate of the town itself has been built in layers by the lives of locals and incomers alike. Local historian Alan Crosby (1986:6) summarises the last thousand years of Thetford's history in the following way:

Thetford was the sixth largest town of Saxon England; a cathedral city in the late 11th century; a sleepy medieval borough with five major monasteries; one of the most corrupt and venal of all pocket boroughs during the 18th century; a town with a death rate in the 1870's higher than that of Whitechapel; the home of the world's largest manufacturer of traction engines during the age of steam. Its population in the late 1930's was less than it was at the time of the Domesday Survey, but in the 1960's and 1970's it was the fastest growing town in Britain.

The latter period of rapid expansion was, according to Crosby (1986:119) the result of an agreement between the local Borough Council and the planners of the post-war inner London regeneration schemes (Smith, 2012). The agreement aimed to provide new housing for 5000 of the 'London overspill' migrants and was signed by the Borough Council in 1957; the work on the building project began in October 1958 and the first tenants started to move in during April 1959. No sooner was the work underway than a massive extension to the original plan was put forward, by 1960 a further agreement agreed to provide accommodation for another 5000 people was made, at which point, with a population of 17000, approximately 60% were incoming Londoners (Crosby op. cit.). This massive influx of people inevitably created strained and many difficult social dynamics for both the incoming migrants and for the indigenous residents. However there were benefits too, as the cheaper rentals on the newly constructed industrial units- which had been purpose-built on the peripheries of the housing developments – coupled with lower local rates of pay than in the London area, encouraged many light industries to also move their businesses to into the Thetford area, leading to hopes of economic prosperity and stability. Unfortunately these hopes were never entirely realised, and the national

recession of the mid 1980's again saw a rapid decline in investment so that the existing social problems were exacerbated by those that accompany high rates of un-employment.

Some of the biggest employers of the region are based in agriculture where large field-scale operations require the hand-picking and packing of vegetables. The low rates of pay and the often cold and wet out-door conditions make this type of work less and less attractive to the British labour market, so that by the 1990's a new influx of economic migrants from the European Union began to be encouraged into the area by employers looking for cheap and capable labour.

The effects of increased pressure on both housing and local social provision, and the un-settled and difficult social dynamics are reflected in Keystone Development Trust's (2004:24) 'A Profile of Thetford' which brought together national and local statistics to give a comprehensive picture of the existing social problems and also of the local resources of the four parish wards that comprised Thetford.

In terms of social deprivation the report determined that: Three out of the four Thetford wards are in the top quintile of most deprived wards for *MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION* both in Norfolk and nationally.

The National Office of Statistics puts the 2010 population at 24,000, although this figure is difficult to determine accurately says Neil Stott, CEO of Keystone, because of the 'floating population' of European economic migrants – and guesstimates a figure closer to 30,000 - with approximately 30% of Thetford's current residents originating from outside the UK (Stott *et al.* 2009).

4.2 First unit of analysis: *Auto-ethnography*

In terms of my own relationship to Thetford I would say that I am neither entirely an insider nor entirely an outsider - and at the same time I am both. I was born in this area, although my family are not indigenous to it, and we moved away from here when I was still a child, so in a sense I grew into my '*self*' in other places. Maalouf (1998/2000) discusses how identity is to some extent shaped by place as well as by the people of a place -its culture. After more than twenty years of living in France, Lebanese-born Maalouf, (1998:3) writes:

What makes me myself rather than anyone else is the very fact that I am poised between two countries, two or three languages and several cultural traditions. It is precisely this that defines my identity.

My own identity does not feel very strongly shaped by this locality – I have moved too far and too frequently for that, and I suspect that local people who know me only a little would probably consider me an 'outsider'. But a part of me does *know* this area and feels deeply connected to its story; just as this area is bound together - right from my beginning here (and now again in more recent times) - with my own story.

Three years ago I moved back to 'Breckland', the region where I was born, after 40 years of living in other places. Breckland is the name given to a region of East Anglia located on the Norfolk and Suffolk borders. At that time the reasons for my return seemed to be pragmatic and work-related, they did not appear to me to have been prompted by any kind of nostalgia or 'homing instinct'. But Breckland has become my home again

during the process of this inquiry into belonging, and the themes of place and of home are important considerations for me in respect of it. As I reflected more deeply on how I came to be living in Thetford, I could see that there were also issues of life-stage (Erikson, 1959) and particular personal circumstances which had led up to my choice to move to here and which have also contributed to the heuristic processes of this inquiry (Douglass and Moustakas, 1985). The following indented passages are extracts from a much longer piece of auto-ethnographic writing that I wrote whilst I awaited ethical clearance to commence my field work.

I moved to Thetford in 2009, shortly after my second marriage (of 20 years) had come to its end, and as the youngest of my four children left to go away to college. As a family we had previously lived in a number of locations close to the coast of North Norfolk for all of those 20 years. When the children left school they began making their own excursions into the wider world, developing a taste for travel and returning home for shorter periods of time as they went further afield before beginning to build first partnerships, and then homes and families of their own.

*Now I can see that I was re-negotiating not only issues of **place and belonging**, but also of **identity and belonging** in terms of my **identity roles** as 'wife' and as 'mother', whilst also in the midst of a profound sense of loss. My sadness at the ending of our marriage partnership was compounded by the less obvious but still very powerful underlying sense of a **'life-stage transition'** for me.*

According to Erikson's (1958) 'life-stage' model 'Generativity' is the existential theme of the middle-adulthood life-stage spanning ages 40-65. Slater (2003:53) suggests that: 'Generativity, then is primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation...the concept is meant to include...productivity and creativity'. At 48 years old I felt that I was still creatively involved in the lives of my children (a first grandchild had recently arrived) and that my professional capacity for being socially productive was still (I felt) improving, so this transition did not signify the end of that life-stage – it was more a case of suddenly needing to re-position myself within it.

*One of the consequences of so many changes happening at once was that for a while after moving to the Breckland area, I felt intensely uprooted and disorientated – as if I existed in a **'liminal' place** of my own life. These experiences certainly fuelled my curiosity about questions such as "**where do I belong?**" "**Who am I in my not-belongingness?**" And also – "**where is home?**" But my interest in those questions did not begin in that hiatus, I was already sensitised to these matters on both a personal and on a professional level.*

As a psychotherapist I knew that I was not alone in contemplating these questions; nor in encountering the particular life-circumstances which had highlighted them so strongly for me at that time. In fact I felt sure that they were at the same time *both* particular to me, and also existential or trans-personal questions (May, 1975; Yalom, 1980, 1989; Todres, 2007; Almaas, 2004; Madison, 2010). One of the things that I noticed personally, as I negotiated the displaced 'liminality' of all those changes, was that my awareness of myself and of my surroundings became very heightened, and that I frequently experienced a sort of back-ground feeling of 'free-floating' or non-specific anxiety.

*I still feel like a bit of an outsider here at times. I very quietly occupy my house and move through Thetford's spaces as I rather tentatively begin to establish some connections within this community... gradually 'getting to know' and becoming 'known'. **Thetford seems like a fairly easy place to be an outsider - somehow it is semi-permeable.** It is something of a frontier town with many people newly arrived from all over Europe; and many quite recently settled families who were part of an earlier English mass-migration But the place itself is by no means new, it is an ancient settlement and trading centre, situated as a gateway between Norfolk and Suffolk at the intersection of two rivers – the Thet and the Little Ouse; and I love that its long human history is written architecturally everywhere you look.*

When I first came here - knowing nobody - I felt strangely comforted by the knowledge that I already had my own 'historic' connection to this area. I was born and lived until I was eight years old, on a small farm on the outskirts of a village about 10 miles to the East of Thetford, on the Eastern border of the Breckland region. In the absence of any human connections, I was somehow at least able to 'story myself' in to the landscape here.

The landscape of 'the Brecks' is characterised in modern times by expanses of gorse-studded, sandy heathland interspersed with clumps of native hardwood and Scots Pine trees which contribute to its distinctive sky-lines. Although this is normally the driest region in the UK, the Breckland is also laced with small streams and rivers and occasionally, during wet seasons, with marshy waterways that fill the 'marl-pits' and those created by sunken 'Pingos'²². All around the sandy heathland areas there are large tracts of adjoining forest, collectively known as Thetford Chase; most of the existing forest was planted in the early part of the 20th century, however many more ancient trees still stand amongst their ranks.

Anne Whiston Spirn (1998:5) suggests that the landscape of our childhood is somehow impressed upon us so that we may experience its familiarity as a kind of home-coming:

I believe we are imprinted with the landscape of our early childhood. I am a creature of the Eastern deciduous forest. Except for brief excursions into desert, prairie and dry woodland, I have spent my life in the temperate forest of North America and Western Europe. I feel a sense of coming home every time I return to North-western Connecticut, although my family moved away when I was two.

Perhaps my emotional, and my *aesthetic*, response to this Breckland landscape was an evocation of such an embodied imprinting of 'home'. The term '*aesthetic appreciation*' of landscape is also used by Madison, (2009:71) and I find it resonant, but I can also appreciate landscapes which are very foreign to my eyes, not just in relation to a sense of 'home'. My own sense of belonging to this Breckland area feels as if it is not just a legacy of having early life experiences here, nor of responding aesthetically to its landscape. Another aspect of my belonging here seems to me to be that I can participate in some of the multi-layered and on-going stories (McAdams, 1997) of this locality. The fact that I know, and can tell some parts of various local stories - which often include things like memorable floods, droughts and freeze-ups of particular years long-past - seems to render me some feeling of entitlement to belong here. I can remember who once owned a

²² A Pingo, also called a hydrolaccolith, is a mound of earth-covered ice found in arctic and sub-arctic landscapes. The sunken Pingo's (pits) in this area evidence the retreating glaciation following the end of the last ice-age - about 10,000 years ago.

particular shop in this village, or who lived at the bakery and who farmed this or that bit of land (before it became a housing estate) in this way I seem to be able to somehow authenticate my account of myself with the indigenous folk who did not leave. Furthermore, when I participate in telling these stories with others who also have their own little 'snippets' to share - together we seem to be able to create something larger as our over-lapping pieces fit together, perhaps reassuring us that because our story-fragment has a place, so therefore, do we. The role of story as an aspect of 'belonging', 'identity' and 'being' (Mathews, 2007) turns out to be an important one for this thesis - it is a theme that I return to discuss in Chapter Eight.

Summary of themes from first unit of analysis.

- The liminal experience of 'change'.
- An aesthetic response to landscape belonging in a 'place'.
- Identity (life-stage/role) and belonging
- Belonging to a story – narrating belonging.

4.3 Second unit of analysis: *Keystone Development Trust*.

Central to the work of the *Keystone Development Trust* are the ideas of place (locality) and 'community', their literature points out that:

The concept of community is a slippery term, and one that may be interpreted in a myriad of ways. Individuals may belong to any number of 'communities' simultaneously based on notions of place, identity and/or interest. (2009:5)

The Development Trust Association, now known as 'Locality' (<http://locality.org.uk>) is a collective of more than 700 organisations across the UK which operate in various ways to support and encourage community development following some shared values and ideals.

Community Development Trusts are:

- Owned and managed by the local community.
- Aim to achieve the sustainable regeneration of a community or address a range of economic, social, environmental and cultural issues within a community.
- Are independent but seek to work in partnership with other private, public and third sector organisations.
- Aim to reduce dependency on grant support by generating income through enterprise and the ownership of assets.
- All trading surpluses are principally reinvested in the organisation or the community.

(<http://www.dtascot.org.uk>)

Keystone Development has been based in Thetford since April 2003. On its website it introduces itself in the

following way:

As a development trust Keystone aims to build what it calls 'community capital' in this area: empowering individuals, groups and communities to tackle needs and issues by creating their own solutions, organisations or enterprises; whilst ensuring services, assets and enterprises anchor collective wealth locally. (<http://www.keystonetrust.org.uk>)

Interview with CEO of Keystone Development Trust.

I spoke with Keystone's chief executive, Neil Stott, about the challenges and successes to date for this community development trust. We began by talking generally about sustainability, and Neil explained how important sustainability has been to Keystone's approach to working in the community:

Anna: *...so is sustainability the vision that is driving this along?*

Neil: *Well the vision was to do social good – and to deliver social good you have to earn your own way as far as you possibly can, and if you have ever worked with charities or community organisations you will know that to earn your own way is hard, so we had to do some things that were special. So this was created [we are sitting in the cafeteria of an impressive building with extensive office and conference facilities] a £3.2 million pound project that can deliver high quality office space and conference facilities –in order to make money; and all the money we make from this goes into the charity core funds or into other development stuff. So then we started a portfolio of new development, a neighbour centre, a children's team, credit union work, increasingly work with migrants, ... social enterprises like re-cycling, furniture, newspaper – a Portuguese newspaper, which is now a national newspaper, food, consultancy and publications, an innovation centre, a factory on Brunel Way... quite a big portfolio. Unfortunately, although we were becoming pretty **sustainable** ... but then the world changed financially...*

The inherent 'un-sustainability' of the global trend for consumer-dependent finance, propped up by over-lending, over-spending and government 'bail-outs' (McKinley, 2012) was dramatically exposed by the 'global financial crisis' of 2008. The consequences of this trend and the subsequent economic down-turn are ongoing, and continue to affect life at the level of individuals and of whole communities throughout Europe. Bauman (2003:74-5) pointed out that consumption is an essentially solitary and un-relational activity, even when there are fellow consumers in the same proximity; he paints a dark picture of the effects of globalisation and market economic forces upon community (Bauder, 2006).

Neil went on to explain how the work that Keystone does in support of Thetford's resident and incoming European migrants has caused the Trust to be stigmatised in the press by other local residents and agencies, some of whom clearly hold strong negative attitudes about incoming migrants.

Neil: *Well - about 10% of our work and 90% of our publicity seems to be about migration. I will read you a quick quote, which I gave a talk about on the BBC radio yesterday: 'If they (Keystone) stopped helping them, they would stop coming, they are just encouraging them to come over, they come because they get all the help they need, **we should look after our own, not the foreigners**'. That response was part of an interview done with a local person. You know, their idea is that it is our fault that they are coming, the migrants.*

Anna: *I guess it is a highly politicised issue as well- the kind of politics that wins votes by saying that*

'we must clamp down on incoming migrants', but it seems that there is a local fear that is evoked by this issue too...

Neil: *You know **there are a lot of perceptions and most of them are myths about migrants** - actually they were invited here, mainly by big employers - most of it now is very routine and not very exciting. But we have been very rude to them, as a nation, this is aided and abetted by the media and also the politicians ...*

Anna: *So I was wondering why helping migrants is so big on your agenda? it sounds like it actually makes life quite difficult for the development trust because you give it this importance.*

Neil: *There are a number of factors. The first is that I have experience of working with community racial integration, and the second is that we were responding at the time to what we perceived to be a local need... and if we didn't do it then no one else would - we have helped over 10,000 people - most of it low level stuff, helping people settle in. I work on the principle, which basically is: 'do unto others...' I am not religious but if I pitched up in Spain, and I couldn't speak the language – I would like a little help to settle in.*

We considered again the issues that lie more widely behind the trends in migration, including the phenomenon of globalisation and the forces of the 'free market economy'. European economic migration is not a new phenomenon (Garson and Loizillon, 2003; Jennissen, 2007). Zimmerman, (1996) observed that there have long been both 'push' and 'pull' dynamics behind economic migrations, pointing out that during periods of recession in a particular country workers may seek employment elsewhere - and during periods of rapid growth in a country employers also actively recruit (cheap) labour from elsewhere in Europe. Neil feels that migration is a central concern both locally and more generally, one which needs to be understood in its proper context and worked with in a creative manner.

Neil: *Migration is going to be one of the biggest issues of the 21st century.*

Anna: *And this is why the issue of belonging and not-belonging and identity feels so pressing –and is not going to just go away. So these politicised agenda's of 'clamp down' and go back to 'tighten the borders and get rid of the foreigners' is simply stupidity in terms of politics, because it is just not going to happen, the world is not moving like that...*

Neil: *Yes, I think you are right, it is something we have to cope with and I think it is going to be a very big issue, in the European context it is all about the free movement of labour. It was set up as a capitalist thing but then countries don't quite want to fulfil their obligations.*

Anna: *So a product of Market Economy?*

Neil: *Absolutely – this is about economic necessity, one of labour for the employer, because people round here do not want to pick, pack or pluck! You know people say "they are taking our jobs" – so I say: "ok, lets go at 4 o'clock in the morning to the carrot field and do a shift!" For the employees who are coming from economies that are even worse than ours, it is economic necessity. My basic thing is - if people are invited, you know by people like Tesco's and Bernard Matthews, (big employers who keep their heads well below the parapet) **if they are invited then they should be treated with respect!***

Neil's personal passion, vision and his sense of justice seems to be the force behind Keystone's successes, but he is not easily satisfied. I mentioned how I have been impressed by the level of integration I have observed now that I live in the town, and gave the example of having talked earlier that summer with a young police

officer who had told me that in Thetford the police carry laminated cards with a translation into four languages explaining that people are not allowed to consume alcohol in public places. I suggested that it seemed to me that Thetford copes well with migrants, however, after explaining that the translated cards carried by the police had been a Keystone initiative, Neil was more reticent about the on-going situation:

Neil: *Well I am not entirely sure that it has coped that well, I mean it didn't handle the late '50's early 60's migration all that well, and we still living with the consequences of that. **Thetford is an imbalanced town**, it went from about 4000 people in the 1950's rising to nearly 30,000 now of which about 21,000 are ex-londoners who have never quite settled...and then there are the incoming European migrations.*

I ask about the local policy-making processes and whether there are representatives of the migrant communities at the level of the town council.

Neil: *No, there is no democratic participation as yet by the new communities. Ok – it is made slightly harder by the diversity and the fluidity of the communities. I mean, as a rough rule of thumb – we have Portuguese, and Polish, and now we have Lithuanians with a smattering of Latvians; about a third tend to stay, and settle...and run businesses; a third move off to other parts of the country, to work; and a third go home – now that is really rough but there is a churn. The sort of work they do is shift-work and hard. The sort of accommodation they have tends to be...well you have day shifts and night shifts so it can be roll-in roll-out...[...] you know when people first arrive here with not enough money in their pockets, they are often sharing accommodation. So the population is fluid and **democratic participation** is quite hard to achieve. They have very different cultural experiences, in terms of authority... Lithuanians particularly do not quite understand how our police operate when they are used to dealing with their police in a very different way, including bribes and all that sort of thing, quite **big cultural differences**.*

Cultural differences give rise to a need for education in order to facilitate integration, a need which extends beyond that of the incoming migrants:

Neil: *And that is a part of our job to try and educate around...[...] our main tasks - and I remember writing them down at the time – were to support migrants, towards supporting themselves – which META does. To inform migrants about practices that may cause tensions, ...and also educating the indigenous population about cultural differences. **Finding places for interaction – where people can mix, celebrate or whatever**. And then trying to persuade other agencies to do things differently.*

Anna: *So is the harder stuff actually educating the indigenous population?*

Neil: *That is very hard, and the agency bit, that is really hard. We ran lots of events, big events. We had a Portuguese Christmas celebration, a Portuguese Cinderella, story. Youth work, etc. But it is slow, and it is painful. I think that, from my past experience, **what you have to do is protect the people who are vulnerable**. And to do that **you have to make boundaries**. I am sure you know this from your work. You have to create boundaries - so things like racial harassment have to be dealt with. So you can stop what people do, but you can't necessarily change how they think. **To change what people think takes time**.*

Perhaps 'society' or the external manifestations of a community (its behaviours) is a reflection of the prevailing cultural attitudes of its internal collective dimension. Neil seems to be suggesting that the creation of new policies or practices is only the beginning of possible change at community level (Amit, 2002; Alexander, 2002). The conditions which support attitudinal change within communities are, according to Neil,

all about the quality of relationships that are built between people.

Neil: *The essence of Keystone, I would hope, is about **trust and relationships** – spending time with people. I will give you an example – you know the big work programs that happen? where big companies like Serco deliver government programs to get people back into work...we have some operating here, ok they are not part of the Job Centre but they have got power – and if you don't pitch up they can cut you off without a penny...in fact they have suggested recently, at least the press has, that they actually have more power to cut people off from their benefits. Our approach to this - we have set up our own versions...and we have no power...is to spend time with people. So we run work clubs where **staff team spend a lot of time with certain individuals**...it is not just about their CV's and presentation, **it is about confidence...trust***

Anna: *And **that stems from relationship**....*

Neil: *And that is all about relationship. And the great strength of a development trust done well is that **it is in a 'place'**, we are here as much as is humanly possible, and we are **committed to 'Place' and the people who live in that place** – and we do not come and go. That is important, because a lot of regeneration schemes come and go – I have worked on them. And people, like me, have just followed the money...*

The theme of relationship being facilitated by 'place' and the consideration of 'relationship to place' emerge again here as aspects of belonging. For Shawn Wilson (2010) relationship is the central value-system (axiology) and knowledge-system (epistemology) of what he refers to as '*The Indigenous Paradigm*'. In this world-view the relationship between people and all other living beings *belonging in a place* can only be understood as an un-separated dynamic whole. I was interested to pursue the notion of relationship, and to find other significant links between our disciplines – one which had caught my attention being the notion of resilience:

Anna: *Well when you talk about relationship building we are kind of in the zone of overlap between my work and yours, and there is also a word that crops up in therapeutic literature, to do with managing change – which is '**resilience**'...*

Neil: *That is a word that we use a lot as well...*

Anna: *Yes I found it a lot in your literature as well, and you talk about **community resilience**...and I was just wondering if you could articulate what community resilience is....*

Neil: *Ok.....where it came from is...well nothing we do is necessarily original – it is bricolage – a popular notion in management literature at the moment! There is nothing actually new under the sun. So innovation is not necessarily about finding something new it is about using resources in different ways. '**Social capital**' became popular as a term you have come across it ?*

The concept of 'resources' is a further link between the well-being terminology of psychotherapy and those of community development, although 'capital' is the more familiar term as Neil refers to it here:

Neil: *Yes, so anyway we came up with the idea of **community capital** – which is: '**what makes a place tick**'...**it is the people, it is the organisations, it is the buildings and it is the economy – it is looking at things holistically**. And that is what we are trying to do, I am not saying that we succeed...because if I just tackle housing for instance, I am not tackling everything else that needs tackling. From that came the idea of '**Community Infrastructure**'.. this is about trying to persuade the various people I do work for to think in different ways. It is considering people, places and property as intellectual and physical resources...and **if you want to create a new community or to transform an existing***

community, you have to provide sufficient space for people to interact, and people to enable that interaction – ie community workers...

Anna: So it hinges around the physical resources and these individuals who are actively engaged...

Neil: Yes, **it is people who have the skills to facilitate** – which is really hard – you know...everyone imagines that just anybody can be a community organiser, well they can't. **It is all about facilitation and it is all about groups and understanding the networks, perseverance, spotting opportunities. That's what community development is all about. In some ways community developers are like the new priests, without the religion. You know people that held the community together...**

Anna: I love that idea....

This idea - that some individuals might work in a way that 'holds the community together' - feels important. The qualities that Neil describes such individuals as needing – skills of facilitating relationships, understanding networks, perseverance (commitment) and vision – evoked again the psychological concept of *resilience*. This concept has its roots in social science (Werner, 1971) but has been applied to a number of differing contexts. Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker, (2000:543) suggest that generally '*Resilience refers to a dynamic process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity*'. While Masten, (1990:29) identifies a list of qualities which contribute to psychological resilience, these include: positive relationships (attachments); cognitive competence and self-efficacy (a sense of self); faith, hope and a sense of meaning (existential purpose); commitment; (perseverance) and '***cultures that provide positive standards, rituals, relationships, and support***' (communities). Masten (1990) is suggesting therefore that a combination of internal and external resources helps facilitate resilience in children. At the level of whole communities there are clearly parallels, but these also seem to hinge reciprocally upon individuals. Neil gives a couple of examples of what he is talking about here:

Neil: Villages in the past were really quite **socially controlled and hierarchical places** and I am not saying I want to go back to that, but what has been lost is...now you don't know your police officer, you don't know your social worker or health person, you don't know your doctor. The continuity has been lost, **and most of human life in my opinion is down to relationships** – in terms of interactions with people. Business is about interactions with people – most big business is conducted on the basis of personal relationships with each other...**same principle in community, most people like the face to face stuff** – and that is what has been removed and it is what we do – we are quite old-fashioned in that respect. So resilience is about... it is not just about being able to cope with the buffers of economic change, it is more than that – I mean...

Anna: And the elements of resilience ?

Neil: **It is about individuals being resilient**, if you have got enough **capacity** – financial for instance – to cope, or **social capacity to cope with big changes**. Of course this is really hard in poor places, so it is that ideally money circulates in that area rather than disappearing – that is an aspiration rather than a reality. **And increasingly I think it is about making local economies more self-sufficient.**

Anna: What do you think about the transition town stuff?

Neil: I think it is interesting...and I think it is all based...on the writings of Peter Kropotkin – a Russian anarchist, and he wrote a book called '*Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*' [published in 1902] in which he tried to argue that **nature and humans are not all about conflict they are about co-operation...**

The idea of locally sustainable communities with enough resilience to withstand economic hardship and enough adaptability to facilitate change reminded me of the 'Transition Town' community initiatives currently

establishing themselves in various parts of the UK (Alexander, 2002; Hopkins, 2008). I was also fascinated to find a link here to the evolutionary dynamics of co-operation rather than conflict (Sahtouris, 2000; Maturana, 2008) suddenly appearing in a dialogue about community and social practice. This is an integral perspective, one which is inclusive of the individual and the collective and takes into consideration the influences of the past (as a whole-planet issue), present and future ('we will not be able to move so much'). I was still interested to come back to the related idea of resilience, and I wanted to know how it might be understood at the level of community and particularly as an aspect of Keystone's notion of 'community capital'.

Anna: *So I am mapping the concepts of resilience as you are describing them at the level of a community onto the concept of resilience as it is understood therapeutically, for instance when dealing with trauma and loss or big changes at the personal level. One of the elements of resilience that has been identified, along with social support, and basic resources – are goals, and also beliefs – so when people have positive beliefs, whether or not they are religious – but some kind of positive value-system - this seems to be a component of emotional, and therefore also physical resilience...*

Neil: *Well in terms of community I would summarise the factors of resilience as: **People, Places, Property – and Passion...***

Anna: *Yes, that's the bit I am meaning I guess. Ok, so coming back then to my thing about belonging – what are the essentials for belonging to a community?*

Neil: ***Safety, a place to be, respect for difference.** The issues for community development initiatives are not to try and pursue integration as a form of homogenisation of different communities and cultures, but to **create shared spaces** where those communities can exchange resources and find **areas of common concern** and interest.*

Neil summarises with three key dimensions necessary for community level belonging: safety, place and respect – for a community development practitioner the first two dimensions might be relatively quickly translated into the kinds of strategic initiatives that Keystone have already begun to put in place in order to build what he called 'community capital'. The third dimension of 'respect for difference' is perhaps a harder, less tangible, resource to build – being to do with collective attitudes. I wondered how disparate communities, with historical difficulties and limited available resources, might be supported to have such respect for each other's differences?

Summary of the themes from the second unit of analysis.

- Community relationship to 'place', relationships between people in a place.
- Community capital (resources): People, places, property and 'passion'
- Resilience is a dynamic of community sustainability.
- Community needs: safety, place, respect, boundaries (protection of the vulnerable elements).
- The evolution of community is driven by co-operation as well as conflict.

4.4 Third unit of analysis: *The Matthew Project*

The Matthew Project is a 'Tier 2'²³ community-based drug and alcohol service currently located in offices in the centre of Thetford close to the river, opposite the public library and adjacent to a popular Portuguese café.

With her permission²⁴ I present here a conversation with Nicky Lambert, the manager of the Matthew Project in Thetford. I also include here some of the voices of the people accessing the service at that time, although they will be more fully introduced in the following chapter. In 2013 the Matthew Project became part of an integrated multi-agency 'Norfolk Recovery Partnership' which now delivers drug and alcohol services across the county of Norfolk. My visit and these interviews took place before those changes took place.

According to Robin Room (2005:143) *'Those in treatment for alcohol or drug problems are frequently and disproportionately marginalised.'* He recognises that the literature on social stigma provides evidence of differing discourses on this matter: those which focused on mental illness and disability in connection to drug abuse arrange themselves around the premise of 'neutralising stigma', whilst those which focus primarily on issues of criminality seem to have a more 'benign' attitude towards the existence of stigma as a means of social control.

I have not assumed that the behaviours of substance misuse result in marginalisation as a simple 'cause and effect' dynamic – rather I have also been interested to consider whether the feeling of being marginalised or stigmatised might result in the behaviours of addiction. Those with addictive disorders frequently describe the feeling of *not-belonging* as preceding their use of psychoactive substances. Nevertheless, the anti-social behaviours concomitant with drug and alcohol abuse certainly do contribute to -and quickly compound - social isolation, stigmatisation and marginalisation; but many of the narratives of addiction seem to paradoxically rationalise the use of substances as a *solution* to the problem of feeling isolated or marginal rather than its cause. As I will suggest in the next chapter section– this solution can be a very effective one, even though it may also carry a very high price for individuals, families and society. Nicky explained to me how The Matthew Project came to be in Thetford, and what they do here.

Nicky: *This part of the Matthew project came into being under a DAAT contract 6 years ago, [...] Because of Thetford's position on the edge of Norfolk and Suffolk...it has sometimes had its drug services delivered from Suffolk and sometimes from Norfolk. Whether Thetford itself belongs to Norfolk or Suffolk is a moot point! So that's why we are here and we are commissioned alongside a clinical service so we are commissioned to be 'open access' and do what is called 'tier two work'...so to run a drop-in service...to be available...with a needle exchange... and to be available to support people to [access] treatment...and we also do some structured treatment here...we are also part of the network of services in Thetford so we work very closely with them...we work closely with the*

23 The National Treatment Agency (NTA) 'Models of Care' framework (2002/2006) involved a four 'Tier' systemic of drug and alcohol services and treatment provision - which ranged from 'information, advice and screening' (Tier 1) to 'residential treatment' (Tier 4) See: www.nta.nhs.uk/

24 Written permission can be found in Appendix E 2

clinical services and the G.Ps and the mental health trainers and the housing providers...

‘Open-access’ means that people do not need to be referred to the Matthew project by doctors or other health professionals, they can just walk in and ask for help. At its most basic level the project provides a ‘place’ where local people with substance misuse problems can begin accessing professional assistance. Nicky is clearly proud of the expertise and attitude of her team, I asked her to describe what the essential qualities of their approach were.

Nicky: Everybody who walks through that door is welcome. *That is a very important part of the basis of how the Matthew project operates, that is its ethos - and it is true. So we build relationship - and in those interpersonal relationships, and by crisis management, we build trust...[...] they are invited - in addition to those one-to-one appointments - they can come to a lot of other activities, and they can come to those if they want to. And every afternoon they can come and just drink tea...and they are welcome here...everybody who walks through that door is welcome. That is a very important part of the basis of how the Matthew project operates- that is its ethos - and it is true.*

Thetford is not exceptional in terms of having the problem of a significant percentage of its inhabitants demonstrating problems associated with substance misuse and dependence. Some aspects of what is particular about these problems may be related to migration and its effects on ‘community’. Thetford’s history of settlement, as Neil Stott already mentioned, is still playing out at the level of lived experience here. Nicky explains more about this:

Nicky:...*just thinking about Thetford. I am sometimes struck when listening to people telling their stories, how many stories begin: “It all went wrong when we moved to Thetford” with people my age who moved here in the 60’s and 70’s*

Anna: *The London overspill...*

Nicky: *Because of the circumstances in which those people moved, and the things that had motivated them to move... it seems that there was family break-downs and there was [a sense of] running away [because] there was pain and tragedy that the people who chose to come here were bringing with them...but for many of them the story goes...that when they came as children...that was when the trouble started...*

There may easily have been optimism about a new start in a new location for those migrating families, however it seems that integration with an existing, small country-town community like Thetford was deeply problematic. Listening to some of the narratives of Matthew Project service users it seemed that the attitudes of local people towards incomers remained parochial and defensive long after that original influx of Londoners. Andy - a man in his 30’s - reflects on his childhood experience of *being* marginalised after coming with his family to live in this area:

Andy:...*well years ago I lived in a village called [...] the moment we moved in we were asked “where do you come from?”...You mention anywhere near London (we were actually from Essex) and that was it ... and it was like: “Right, you are not one of us”. We were outsiders. We were not welcomed. We initially moved to [...] and my mum used to drop us off at school in the morning and picked us up – my mum used to say ‘hello’ to the other parents but they just ignored us. [...] it would always be us lot who would get blamed because we were from ‘London’ we would get the blame.”*

What is being described here is a kind of group hostility; and a level of aggression within the dominant group's power to reject (marginalise) or accept (integrate) someone who is perceived as different or 'other'.

The experience of being marginalised as the child of a newly settling family in a region historically sensitive to migrants 'from London' may have sensitised Andy to feelings of not-belonging. But the sense of not-belonging and of and marginalisation have often seemed to me to be a theme in the stories of addiction irrespective of family background stories. Whether or not the experience of feeling marginal is linked to the problems of substance misuse, Nicky seemed quite sure that for people suffering with it, finding ways to belong and become 'a part of' something plays a strong part in its healing resolution.

Nicky described the kind of help the service offers and talked about the role that the Matthew Project has in Thetford by establishing itself as a presence *within the community* of Thetford, and by developing a sense of community within the service.

Nicky: *Yes...so we do a lot of work with people who are beginning to engage, and harm reduction with those who are not really looking at changing their behaviour...we do a lot of that...and we do some structured treatment, one to one and group work...and we also do quite a lot of what you might call aftercare...again on a drop in basis, for old clients. So we do see ourselves as, roughly speaking...forming a community...because we stay in touch with people and we continue to support them...and we run activities and seek to engage them. So a sense of belonging in that sense is certainly part of my vision of what we are doing actually...*

In terms of community-building, the challenges faced by the project in helping resolve the problems caused by the chaotic effects of substance misuse on the lives of the service extend beyond that initial phase of engagement. Nicky explained how one of the frustrations can be that as soon as people start feeling better and doing well again - 'they disappear' (disengage from the service). Typically, this un-hooking from the support of the 'recovery community', leads to a quick return to the same chaotic and destructive patterns of behaviour and substance misuse. The phenomenon is well known to me, and it is one of the things that originally led me to wonder whether the 'being a part of' – making a movement towards belonging - might actually be more problematic for some people than the experience of not-belonging. The complexity of the addictive process and **the push and pull of belonging** seemed to me to be somehow deeply entwined.

The challenges faced by the service users themselves are also complex as they consider making the all behavioural changes necessary for 'recovery' - I asked Nicky what she thought these might be, from a service-users perspective.

Nicky: *I think that they would say that a big challenge is **how to use their time...how to find things to do...this they face whether they come here or not...** That is a big challenge...[when] coming off drugs...what do you do with your time. And they have also health challenges...physical health challenges and mental health challenges too...*

The causes of substance abuse are notoriously difficult to pin down and medical and psycho-social models offer differing hypotheses regarding its aetiology (Mate, 2008). Connections have been made however

between substance misuse and displaced peoples (Dacker, 2009, Reading and Raj, 1999) so given the particular demographics of Thetford I wanted to know whether the Matthew Project was able to deliver its specialist services within the various European migrant communities.

Nicky: *Yeah, yes it is something I monitor, because I hope that the people coming through the door are an accurate reflection of the population...that is a basic something that I need to know...and actually it does, more or less - well just crudely if you look at the people coming through the door at the end of the year, it is roughly...well my understanding is that it is about 30 % and that [Thetford has] about a 30 % migrant population. But most of those do not engage with us long term, most of them are in and out again. All my staff are very comfortable using translators, that I am very proud of – they use translators in one to ones and they use translators in groups, which helps, and they have favourite translators...and all that is funded by the DAT. ...We do book translators – most weeks there will be a translator here.. And **we also have good relationships with META so that if they have come and brought somebody...then they will also stay and help** in the initial consultation.*

I was impressed by the level of inter-agency *co-operation and integration* of the local voluntary sector services regarding the various communities of people with substance misuse issues in this locality, this inter-agency co-operation also extends to working with the statutory services, including the police as Nicky explained.

Nicky: *... we have been strengthening that [community] relationship really because there has been a project through the summer that has been led by the police on street drinking and anti-social behaviour... and we have been involved in that...and NORCAS²⁵ have been involved in that...and META...have been going out on the police patrols...and we have trained them on some brief interventions and they have been doing that. We haven't seen any fruit from that in terms of people coming here yet...but the police are very happy with it...*

We returned to ideas of community, engagement and a kind of '*belonging through doing*'. Nicky felt that certain patterns of substance misuse seem to strongly facilitate a level of group affiliation and thus of belonging – constructing identity through its shared activities (and needs) and developing some behavioural and cultural norms which become the medium of mutual understanding.

Nicky: *So for a lot of users - a lot of injecting drug users, and crack users, and drinkers - **they belong to the community of drug users...***

Anna: *Like a sub-culture belonging...*

Nicky: *Because **they use together and they inject each other and they pick stuff up together and they smoke crack together and they drink on the street together...**it is not true - I don't think of everybody - not of all drug users, because **there is another sub-group of 'shut-in' alcoholics who don't appear to relate to anyone...and similarly some cannabis users are like that...***

Anna: *Ok ...so you would see a kind of profile of substance abusers who kind of hang together by means of, or through the medium of their drug use – it creates a kind of belonging. And there is another kind of profile which is very isolated type of user, so that for the people whose sense of belonging is mediated by their drug use...is that then a problem? Is it a factor in their decision to stop using...that they would have to lose that affiliation?*

Nicky: *Yes, it makes it very difficult, makes it very difficult for them to stop using...because it means not-belonging - with that crew - **well not-belonging anywhere... then it is a very vulnerable knife-edge that they stay on for a long time I think, really. It is, well: 'If I am with them, then I will use... if I am not with them...what am I going to do...?'***

25 (NORCAS are another local provider of drug and alcohol intervention services, with particular expertise in working with offenders and offending behaviour related to substance misuse).

Anna: *'Who am I?'*

Nicky: Exactly.

This dilemma is a familiar one in the field of substance misuse work, it highlights a more general issue of 'identity' as a factor of group affiliation and of activity: *'I am what I do'*. I was interested to learn how Nicky viewed the possibilities and the mechanisms for change under these circumstances – if *identity* and *belonging* have become involved in the behavioural 'problem' of addiction, contemplating changing that behaviour would imply a risk to both.

Nicky: *...I think you can't take that risk until you can see a viable alternative, until **you have got some hope**, and that is in turn related to their **sense of self**, and what there is of them to relate to other people. Because as you know – people who have used drugs for a long time in a very intensive sort of way...it is just themselves and the drug and the other people with the drugs – they **have lost all the other people in their lives**...so there is not much there to relate to. And so part of what we do in terms of that is art and music and going for walks and just sitting and chatting, it is just people re-discovering, or else discovering for the first time, what they can do...who they are... **learning to relate**.*

This is very interesting thread for me, because it hinges on relationship and the possibility that a drug problem is, at some level, a problem of relating. I asked Nicky what she thought about this.

Anna: *So I am interested to know how you would respond really to this idea. And that is that the use of drugs in itself, as a strategy, has to do with the same problem...**the problem of relationship**...or rather that it may have to do with this problem of relationship...that it is actually a solution to a relationship problem in the first place...?*

Nicky: ***'Creative adjustment'**...I use the phrase creative adjustment, rather than solution. It is **people doing the best they can under the circumstances**...Well that is true for some people, I don't know that I would want to say that it is true for everyone...it is true for a lot of the people that we see. And it is true, I think, that **the need to belong is very profound** - the need to be in relationship. Going back to my gestalt theory and **the Buber 'I-Thou' thing** – that is where the **sense of self** – of **'who I am'** - **develops in the relationship interface**. **Self is developed in relationship to somebody else**. And certainly for our clients, **a lot of them have not had that from...well, when they were really, really tiny, or else they have had it in a verydisturbed way**.*

We talk for a while about patterns of attachment and trauma, and about the possibilities and limitations which tend to play out as individuals struggle to find a way out of the series of double-binds that are often engendered by addiction.

Nicky: *...you know I guess that my fundamental optimism is that people can be stable for a very long time, but one day they will see a friend, or something will change in their environment that makes things that looked impossible look possible.*

Anna: *Yes...and how important is it...do you think...in terms of creating this...for the impossible to become possible...to...have a sense of belonging? How important is that?*

Nicky: *I think that is essential. **I think a sense of belonging...and of not-belonging...and of wanting to belong** - so the **possibility of belonging** - is what generates the movement.*

This is an amazingly exciting observation for me: *'...so the possibility of belonging is what generates the movement'* – it seems that the movements of change, which Nicky had previously referred to as 'creative

adjustments' occur in the dynamic experience between belonging and not-belonging. This moment in our conversation was galvanising for me, my heart seemed to miss a beat so important did it seem to be. I checked the recording device to ensure that it was still running and looked forward to listening to it again.

We returned to talking about the particular issues for the project in terms of providing services for the migrant populations of Thetford. I observed that there seemed to be quite large communities of people who all seemed to be trying to live alongside each other but without much involvement in each other's lives. Nicky had some interesting comments about the differing ways that the use of substances can reduce and also highlight cultural barriers and differences.

Nicky: *Some of [the migrant populations] are more 'community' than others...some are conglomerations of people rather than community. And in terms of a substance misuse service, my observation is that the heroin and crack users are actually quite well integrated into the indigenous community!*

Anna: *Yes – it is a bit of a universal language I think!*

Nicky: *But with alcohol use there is an Eastern European alcohol use pattern which is quite different from the more usual pattern we see– at least that we are set up to work with here.*

Anna: *The way that the indigenous population abuse alcohol is different you mean?*

Nicky: *Yes, it is a different kind of dependency, or at least it is a different pattern for it, and the binge drinking, the real destructive binge drinking, and then months of ok-ness and then 'off again' [...] at least it is different. You can't bring people down with a drink-diary for instance, you can't work with it that way... you need a different way of working with those people to meet their needs. And counselling is difficult and challenging. There are enormous cultural issues...*

With all this complexity, not only in terms of the difficulties of working with addiction, but with the added dimension of doing so in a socially and culturally diverse and disparate community, I was interested to know how Nicky viewed the bigger picture for the project of integration in Thetford.

Anna: *Do you have any thoughts or visions about community in its larger sense, in terms of integration? ...Are you optimistic or pessimistic about it ?*

Nicky: *I am optimistic, and I think **people need to be encouraged and supported to be themselves**, so that the if the Polish are Polish, and the Portuguese people are Portuguese and the Lithuanian people are Lithuanian, [they be] **respected and valued for that rather than being expected to change... I think that is a more sustainable way of moving forward.***

Summary from the third unit of analysis.

- A place to come – where everyone is welcome.
- The story of what went wrong.
- Building trust through relationship and risking change.
- Engagement and belonging through activities.
- Communities of shared practice (drug use).
- Identity and activity.
- Development of 'self' in relationship.
- Respect for difference.
- Change is generated in the movement between not-belonging and belonging.
- Sustainability

4.5 Fourth Unit of Analysis: *Moving Europeans Taking Action (META)*.

Located quite centrally in the town, 'META' is a Keystone initiative which offers drop-in advice services as well as job-clubs, individual consultations and a smoking cessation program for the migrant and settling communities of Thetford. My visit to META had been pre-arranged with the service director who had arranged for me to talk with two members of staff 'Roberta' and 'Viktor' and two service-users: 'Irena' and 'Marco'(pseudonyms).

Roberta and Viktor are themselves formerly migrants from other parts of Europe and they told me about what META does, and also a little bit about their own experiences. They had also agreed to act as translators so that I could engage with some of the META service users who had accepted an invitation to talk with me²⁶.

Roberta is Portuguese and has worked in META for seven years.

Anna: *Can we start perhaps with you telling me a little bit about your work here?*

Roberta: *The name 'META' stands for : Mobile Europeans Taking Action - so it is an organisation that helps people who come here – migrant workers – that can't speak English...so we work as an intermediate between them and the other organisations...everything that you can imagine: education...housing...financial ...insurance ...everything that you can imagine that people might need. If we are not able to sort out something then we know who is able to, and so we signpost. Probably we are mainly a service of signposting...*

We discussed the practical help needed by incoming migrants in order to 'find their feet' and settle down; Papadopoulos (2002) has also emphasised the importance of the provision of these practical resources over therapeutic ones in the care of refugees. The similarities between the experiences of refugees fleeing political or natural disaster areas, and those who choose to migrate for economic reasons are significant and also discussed by Papadopoulos (2002). Even though the term *economic migrant* might conceivably conjure up a person seeking their 'fortune' or even to a 'tax exile', it becomes clear that the realities behind the decision to leave a homeland and family are usually a long way from that image. Furthermore the conditions which meet such economic migrants once they get here mean that their difficulties are far from over once they arrive.

Viktor set about explaining to me some of the financial motivations and consequences behind European economic migration. He told me that migrants from outside the EU have no right to independently register for employment in the UK, they must already be registered with an employer or with an agency - although they may register themselves as self-employed. If they are registered self-employed however, workers and their families will not necessarily be eligible for benefits. Those restrictions were generated in 2010, but Victor went on to describe new restrictions which were coming into force from Oct 2012 regarding migration.

Victor and I talked about the trends which were behind the tightening of regulation for migrants and the

²⁶ Agreement to contribute in this way was made after reading a translated information summary and in exchange for a shopping voucher worth £10. See ethical considerations in chapter two.

restriction of access to resources, acknowledging the 'global economic crisis'. Viktor wanted to put this into some perspective for me by describing what he knew directly about the situation in Lithuania:

Viktor: *I want also to highlight that the so-called crisis in the world – Ok the crisis in the western European countries is difficult, prices are going up, petrol, food, accommodation...but – **compared to what is going on in Eastern European countries ... this is not a crisis...there it is a collapse – it is chaos.** [he gives several examples of what he means by economic chaos in Lithuania] ...So in England petrol is about £1.40 in Lithuania it costs 5.20 L for a litre – so four times the price. Bread for example it is costing here perhaps £1 and in Lithuania it would be £6 for a loaf of bread – 6 L.*

His descriptions strongly evoked for me the sense of urgency and desperation that can lie behind the decision to look for work in another country where perhaps you not even speak the language. Viktor went on: *'It is [these] circumstances which force them to leave their country to come here'.*

I have been interested to find out more, in concrete terms, about the net costs and contributions made by the phenomenon of economic migration. Reviewing the literature, it seems that the fiscal impact to the UK of economic migration under the European Free Labour Market is something which has generated a lot of debate. Professor John Salt (2012) reviewed the more recent findings and cited a survey conducted by Sriskandarajah *et al.* (2005) which demonstrated that:

Total revenue from immigrants grew in real terms from GBR 33.8 billion in 1999/2000 to GBR 41.2 billion in 2003/04, a 22% increase compared with the 6% increase for the UK born. Sriskandarajah *et al* found that migrants were positive net fiscal contributors in upturns in the economy and negative fiscal contributors in downturns. Nevertheless migrants proved to be greater net fiscal contributors than natives during upturns and downturns. (Salt, 2012:123).

Salt also pointed towards a more recent government interdepartmental paper on the subject which suggested that the main beneficiaries of immigration are the families of the migrants, however it too concluded that:

...in the long run it is likely that the net fiscal contribution of an immigrant will be greater than that of a non-immigrant (Home Office & DWP 2007 cited in Salt, 2012:124).

These might not be politically very popular findings in the current anti-migrant climate, during which the then Secretary of State called for *'An end to Benefit Tourism'*²⁷ when he announced yet more stringent measures for the control of the way that European and other economic migrants may access the UK labour market and benefits system. It was clear that Victor had a point about the increasingly difficult conditions being created for migrants, both at home and once they arrive in the UK.

One of the ways that META strives to support incoming migrants is by offering relevant information and advice in the respective languages. Viktor showed me some of the publications with which META, and Keystone more generally, continue to try to help migrants to overcome being disadvantaged - and further marginalised - by the language barrier.

Victor then acted as translator for my conversation with 'Irena', a Polish woman who was accessing META

²⁷ BBC television documentary 3/3/2013

support services - she explained how the biggest social hurdle for her remains the problem of language:

Irena: (Viktor trans) *I have been in England for about one and a half year, but normally I spend some months in England and then I go back to Poland. The main problem for me here is the English language... this is the barrier for me.*

Anna: *This was a question I had too, so is this the greatest barrier for integration, language?*

Irena:(trans) *The most important barrier for me is – as I just mentioned – the language, at the same time I also understand that the English people have this [problem] too – **they cannot communicate with me...and it is frustrating for them too and it leads to mis-understandings sometimes, but still they try to help me...***

Viktor explained how META works to alleviate some of the difficulties of communication faced by newly arrived migrants and in the provision of basic information for integration into a new 'society':

Viktor: *Well we are on the front line...we are supporting migrant workers to settle down...there really isn't any other organisation who can help them with this kind of assistance...in their own language. This is the problem, first of all this lady you spoke to she put it well, **they need to have the information about their rights and their responsibilities in their own language** because they don't understand it what is allowed and not allowed, what about their rights such as employment rights...for example here is a leaflet...also in different languages including in Portuguese...and Russian language...in this leaflet it is written with different subtitles... different subjects...like medical information...*

Thetford's history and location has possibly sensitised rather than accustomed it to incomers, but META seems to have taken a pragmatic approach to the provision of support for migrants, one which was clearly appreciated by those people accessing its services. With so many pressing practical concerns to attend to I wondered whether the issue of 'a sense of belonging' was even relevant for migrants. So I asked Roberta this question:

Roberta: *Yes it is important - well we are human beings and as human beings we are sociable... and as sociable beings we need to feel that we belong to some groups, political groups or religion or social - **we need to have this feeling to feel that we belong to a group.** But probably, **when we speak about migrants, for them to feel that they belong to a British community ...probably...that doesn't really happen, we are always separate communities.** There are some barriers...the language...the culture...we never understand totally the other people...and **it is difficult this integration...to get this feeling of belonging...***

[...]...it is very difficult for people living abroad ...the relationships...the people here are totally different from what they are in their own countries. Here people are too autonomous ...they don't care about the others...even if they think they belong to a social group...

Roberta told me how it seemed to her that in England 'we socialise alone' - even within the more settled Portuguese community. This may be a cultural adaptation because Roberta explained that in her native Portugal she had felt that there was a more continuous sense of collective socialisation. I return to the experience of 'culture and the collective' in chapter seven; Roberta was clearly not unique in her sense of having made some cultural adaptations - here she is translating for a Portuguese married man called 'Marco' who has also lived with his family in Thetford for the last 7 years:

Marco: (Roberta translates) *I think that **the English community is very closed...they don't explain anything...they don't show their feelings...their opinions...there is no feedback...***

Anna: *...so you don't know how to proceed...?*

Marco: (t) *They don't say how they want things to be and we don't know how to do them...Even going to English events **the integration is difficult because the English people don't get so close to us...probably there may be one or two that try...to get us involved...but only a few...but it is only...if it happens it is only for a few moments...and then suddenly everything disappears and we feel alone...***

Anna: *Yes this is exactly what you have said[R]...and so **the doors close again...***

Marco: (t) *He says that when the event is finished...everything is finished and everybody goes to their own lives...*

Anna: *So you have to start freshly every time...because it doesn't continue...*

In Thetford the Portuguese have the longest history of settlement and there are several well established businesses which are owned and run by Portuguese families - cafes, retail outlets and garages. I wondered if the feeling of 'being alone' was an inevitable consequence of migration, and whether it had been different previously. Roberta acknowledges cultural differences, but also draws attention here to the consequences of loss of established community connections, and of trauma:

Anna: *So was it different, growing up in Portugal?*

Roberta: *Yes... people here are too superficial...probably because they are away from home they are much more sensitive...and they can't see the others ...they are looking only to themselves... perhaps **...and perhaps many things have happened to them here...bad things...bad experiences...and so they are afraid to get close to the others... people are afraid to get more hurt...***

It is not hard to imagine that the patterns and cultural norms of socialisation are likely to be disrupted by the effects of displacement and migration; perhaps this can be understood in some instances as a result of various kinds of systemic and personal trauma (Ruppert, 2010; Papadopoulos, 2002), but it seems that it is not enough to simply behave in similar ways in order to experience the same feeling of belonging. This social/cultural dilemma (possibly experienced, to a certain extent, by many ex-patriot workers and colonisers) is touched upon again in a later chapter. In terms of migration and the sense of marginalisation, one issue overlaps the work of META and the Matthew Project – that of substance abuse and addiction.

At the Matthew Project Nicky had talked about viewing addictive behaviours as a '*creative adjustment*' to some conditions or circumstances – often relational difficulties of some kind. We had acknowledged how effective drug use (and alcohol consumption) can be in overcoming social and cultural differences. For those participating in the shared practices of drug use, it seems to create something of a 'universal language'. In Marco's opinion the effectiveness of this solution surpasses all other possibilities of integration:

Anna: *Do you think that it is possible to feel like you are more than a 'migrant'...more than a visitor here...to feel that 'yes I belong here now'..?*

Marco: (t)[long pause] *...**I think it is not possible**...we belong to a society where it is very difficult to separate totally...and to be totally integrated in a new society it would be necessary for a person to have a very big open mind [long pause and a discussion with Roberta before...]...Well, **I know someone who does feel that he belongs totally here... but...it is in a bad sense - because he is a drug addict, he is very involved with that community...And this person has used this way to live in many different countries...in the United States...in many places...There is a horrible beauty in this...it is like a fire...when someone sets fire to the forest... it has a terrible beauty...It is not a good way to***

belong...This person I am talking about is a fantastic person - but he is not tied to anyone...not to the family...he is completely free...

Anna: ...yes...I guess there is something important to him about being so free...

Marco: (t) *But it is hallucinating!...This man is a fantastic person ..but he is not integrated with his own family... he has three children but he his totally free from them...but he is a good person to work with...you could say he integrates well at work...everybody likes him... But he doesn't assume any responsibility at work...No responsibility with the family either...*

As well as echoing what I had heard at the Matthew Project, this is a wonderfully descriptive account of the creative/destructive effects of drug addiction as a way of belonging. *Creatively* it seems to serve as a miraculous cross-cultural 'passport'; *destructively* such 'freedom' can deprive a family, or other collegial group, of a 'responsible' member. Marco had already told me how, with a family to feed, he himself found little personal freedom, in terms of time, money, or opportunities for socialisation and he seemed to be both fascinated and saddened by such a radical abdication of responsibility –he was certainly not suggesting it as a solution to the problems of integration.

Listening to these accounts I began to wonder what the term 'integration' actually implies, and to feel suspicious of it as a community development goal if it veers towards a kind of homogenisation of cultural patterns, or if one had to creatively adjust beyond a sustainable ecology for the self (Theodori, 2005). How far one might want to become 'integrated' into another culture would, I suspected, depend a great deal on individual preferences.

Much of what I was hearing at META concerned the wish to preserve a sense of cultural identity and 'roots' which had remained connected to the soil of another county, whilst also needing help to navigate the linguistic and other cultural differences of the UK. There seemed to be a delicate balancing act – moving between the solidarity of what is culturally familiar, of being identified with, recognising and recognisable (an inward-directed referent), whilst also needing to develop skills in order to negotiate and use adaptively what is less familiar (an outward-directed bit of creativity). Perhaps these inward and outwardly directed movements balance the needs of identity - with its' sense of 'a collective-self' (Sedikides and Brewer, 2001) - with a creative ability to innovate something new.

The theme of 'home', as a special instance of belonging, is one which develops through the thesis, here I had asked Roberta whether, after seven years here, she now feels as though 'home' is here in England, or whether it is still back in Portugal.

Roberta: *On the one hand -yes it is a home here, because when we go back on holidays to our countries...it is funny ... but we feel that we don't belong there anymore. Because **everything is different, there have been many changes**....things that we don't recognise any more. And we even feel that we don't belong anymore to our family... because they talk to each other about things that we are not aware of...so we can feel like outsiders ...intruders...that just came in at that moment...*

Anna: *Gosh how strange that must be...*

Roberta: *Yes it is very strange. [...] The last time I went back I was very shocked with my mother ... because I sat on the sofa – and she said to me 'Don't sit there – there is the dog's place!' and I thought – 'Oh...the dog is more important than me now' ! But you know they are old now...and they have their*

habits...and well, the dog was the only one who didn't leave her!!

At this moment in our conversation we both laughed a great deal, it was a funny image that she had evoked, and Roberta was also reflecting very tenderly about her ageing parents. Our laughter felt like the kind that comes when identifying with something very ordinary in a human sense, that we both seemed to know about in a similar way. The quality of the experience was familiar to us both, even if the details of it were specific to Roberta's story of leaving home through migration.

In each of my conversations at META I have been trying to gain a sense of the problems faced by the different groups of migrant settlers and learn about the ways that the agency works to help address them here in Thetford. I have also been listening to how people experience being here as migrant ex-patriots of their own nationalities, and to find out what they felt might be done differently here to make the experience easier. Whilst recognising that my interest is counter to the current political rhetoric on the matter (which seems to be angled towards making life less 'easy' for European economic migrants), as a resident of Thetford - one who enjoys its cultural diversity – I would like to know how we might make life better for us all.

Marco had been talking about how important it was to have spaces for socialisation, and to organise events that facilitate this.

Marco: (t) ***Social events are important, I think that the church is doing some things...they try...it is possible to see information in the churches ... leaflets about the events they are doing. Church is a place that people go because they are looking for something that they cannot find in the real British organisations...that they can recognise...***

Marco did seem to think that the will exists on both sides to create opportunities for cross cultural socialisation and Irena also had some very practical suggestions to make, some of which META already have in hand:

Irena: (Viktor translates): *First of all there need to be understandable information about the rights and responsibilities of the migrant workers; this is in the first place. Also it is important to get interpreters to translate for the **migrant workers so that they can more quickly settle down – and adopt the new regulations and rules.** At another [level] such as **the council, they need to know for instance about how many migrant workers are residing in this area, and how can they help them... It would be very beneficial if all the communities had a representative at the level of the council – for the Portuguese, the Polish and the Lithuanian communities** – if they were employed within this organisation. [This could] include all the organisations such as high street banks for instance... For instance to go and see a local doctor...I have a colleague a Polish National, and she refused to get the tests and get medical treatment on the grounds that she will not be properly understood–*

Supporting new migrants to be able to understand and adapt to local regulations and rules seems like an eminently sensible idea from both sides – and it evoked for me Neil Stott's comment about how communities need boundaries and order for the protection of its vulnerable elements.

Irena's idea of representation at the level of local government of the various settling communities also struck me as a good one. I had already established that the town council does not currently have any democratic

representation for its resident migrant communities, so I wondered how other people at META would respond to this idea, this is Marco:

Anna: *Would it help do you think if the Council had a representative for each of the communities...Portuguese, Polish, Lithuanian...[...]... do you think that would that help?*

Marco: *(t) It is a fantastic idea...it would be easier, quicker...probably it would be easier to create these social events and not to lose roots...to keep the sense of music...which usually unites people...*

Summary of themes from the fourth unit of analysis

1. Migrants need some level of facilitation and support.
2. Socialisation requires places to meet and events through which to connect.
3. Circumstances force them to leave.
4. Barriers of language are felt by both sides.
5. Not belonging to a group – *we socialise individually.*
6. The 'terrible beauty' of integration through drug use.
7. Migrants can lose the sense of belonging back 'home' without gaining one in the new place.

4.6 Chapter summary.

In this chapter, '**Place**' has emerged as a dominant theme across all the units –it seems that belonging can be individually associated with place and 'space' is also an important community resource for bringing people together for socialisation. Place can also be negatively associated with not-belonging and narrated as a feature of 'the problem'.

The themes of **Home** and **homelessness** emerge here for the first time and 'home' is represented as a particular kind of *belonging* experience.

Safety and **respect for difference** are also significant in community belonging – and **boundaries** which protect the vulnerable are indicated as factors in providing safety.

Roles, occupation and **identity** have been linked in this chapter with the strategic 'how' of belonging. The lack of them has been associated with difficulties in social integration although the creative adjustment of drug abuse seems to provide an alternative 'how'.

Stories of belonging and of **migration** seem to create a historical context and also a manner in which 'visitors' and 'settlers' become part of the local narratives.

Themes summarised from each unit of analysis have been collated and are presented in the table 4.1 (overleaf).

Collated Themes from all four units of Analysis

1st unit of analysis	2nd unit of analysis	3rd unit of analysis	4th unit of analysis
<p align="center">Place</p> <p align="center">A place to belong.</p> <p>Aesthetic response to landscape.</p> <p align="center">Home</p> <p align="center">Losing 'home' feeling at home.</p> <p align="center">Identity</p> <p align="center">Roles and belonging.</p> <p align="center">Life-stage</p> <p align="center">Liminality/transition.</p> <p align="center">A peripheral stance</p> <p align="center">Being in transition</p> <p align="center">Stories of belonging</p> <p align="center">Belonging to a collective story.</p>	<p align="center">Community</p> <p align="center">Relationships between people in a place.</p> <p align="center">Relationships</p> <p align="center">Facilitation</p> <p align="center">Resources</p> <p align="center">'Community capital': <i>People, places, property and 'passion'</i></p> <p align="center">Community needs: Safety, place, respect.</p> <p align="center">Sustainability</p> <p align="center">Resilience is a dynamic of community sustainability.</p> <p align="center">Change</p> <p align="center"><i>The evolution of community is driven by co-operation not conflict...</i></p>	<p align="center">Place</p> <p align="center">A place to come – and be welcome</p> <p align="center">Relationships</p> <p align="center">Building trust in relationship Developing 'self' in relationship.</p> <p align="center">Respect</p> <p align="center">Respect for difference.</p> <p align="center">Occupation</p> <p align="center">Engagement and belonging through activities. Communities of shared practice (e.g. drug use)</p> <p align="center">Stories of not-belonging</p> <p align="center">The story of what went wrong Risking change.</p> <p align="center">Change</p> <p align="center">Change is generated in the movement between not-belonging and belonging.</p>	<p align="center">Migration and Leaving</p> <p align="center">Circumstances force leaving.</p> <p align="center">Places for connection</p> <p align="center">Socialisation requires places to meet, socialise and connect.</p> <p align="center">Facilitation – Migrants need some level of local facilitation and support and access to resources.</p> <p align="center">Strategies for integration-</p> <p align="center">The '<i>terrible beauty</i>' of integration through drug use.</p> <p align="center">Barriers to integration</p> <p align="center">Bridging barriers of language</p> <p align="center">Liminality</p> <p align="center">Not belonging to a group – <i>we socialise individually.</i></p> <p align="center">Marginal Stories</p> <p align="center">Having a voice. Stories of not belonging.</p>

Text Box 4.1

CHAPTER FIVE

The individual exterior.

With reference to human beings, this quadrant is the one emphasised by behaviourism. Behaviour can be seen, it is empirical – which is precisely why empirical science is always concerned only with the behaviour of holons (the behaviour of atoms. The behaviour of gases, the behaviour of fish, the behaviour of humans) and wants nothing to do with nasty ol' introspection, which involves, of course, the interiors of individuals.

-Ken Wilber (1995:128)

5.0 Introduction.

In this chapter I am investigating phenomena pertaining to the 'individual exterior' of the AQAL model (URH quadrant). Wilber (above) makes clear that this is the domain of the objective and observable – but this does not only refer to objective observable phenomena pertaining to the exterior of the body. This domain also addresses the internal (but still objectively observable) bio-chemical, neurological processes of the body. As the quote above illustrates, such objectivity can also be described in behavioural terms by phenomenologically asking: '*what becomes manifest here?*' In the current study I have taken this to include not only behaviour but also the aspects of experience which are represented by its narrative symbolisation. The external dimensions and artefacts of identity (i.e. 'roles') are pertinent here as well as any physical or embodied phenomena including those regarded as 'pathologies' (e.g. depression, anxiety and addiction). Using the AQAL framework I have foregrounded what has seemed to me to be the more 'objective' phenomena of the experiences recounted to me – however, in reality I am only making a change in my observational position and in the mode of my observing towards a more 'objectifying' one. Smith and Osborn (2007:53) informed me that the IPA method of narrative analysis recognises these distinctions:

Different interpretative stances are possible, and IPA combines an empathic hermeneutics with a questioning hermeneutics. Thus, consistent with its phenomenological origins, IPA is concerned with trying to understand what it is like, from the point of view of the participants, to take their side. At the same time, a detailed IPA analysis can also involve asking critical questions of the texts from participants...

What follows here is my IPA treatment of transcribed conversations held with twelve research contributors and collaborators. I have again highlighted resonant issues and themes as they emerge from the data extracts by the use of bold print. Themes are then summarised and collated at the end of the chapter.

Of the twelve transcripts analysed for inclusion in this chapter -the five in **Part One** were conversations with people accessing the services at the Matthew Project who had volunteered to talk with me about their experiences of belonging and not-belonging. These conversations understandably orientate round some particular issues concerning substance misuse and its effects, and also upon these individual's experiences of being involved with the agency itself. Because of this, and also because they represent voices of a particular

socially 'marginalised' (Silver, 2007) group, I have created a separate section of analysis in this chapter.

In **Part Two** I present IPA analyses of conversations with seven of my core collaborators. Within the second data-set there are also some specific themes, such as migration, as well as some individual differences. The life circumstances of the people whose conversations are included in Part Two are markedly more secure, in terms of social integration and available resources, than those of the people in Part One; some of these social issues become highlighted for later discussion.

By the time I had analysed three of the transcripts through several '*hermeneutic cycles*' of immersed engagement, I was beginning to identify and then '*cluster*' emergent themes (Smith and Osborn, 2007:70) into '*superordinate concepts*' (ibid) or 'thematic categories' as I came to call them. I initially discerned eight such categories, which were further reduced by amalgamation to six. Four of these six categories (listed below) seemed to broadly correlate with the AQAL quadrants themselves (as indicated in brackets):

1. Spatial/geographic/situational themes
2. Inter-personal, relational and social themes ('*Its*' – LRH quadrant)
3. Intra-personal (self-reflexive/individual identity) themes ('*I*' – ULH quadrant)
4. Behaviour, strategies and physical embodied phenomena ('*It*' – URH quadrant)
5. Culturally informed meanings, values and collective identity themes ('*We*' – LLH quadrant)
6. Interpretative or philosophical propositions.

The first and sixth category sub-sets relate to spatial and philosophical themes respectively. The sequence of these categories listed here is not significant – this was simply the order in which I identified them. The thematic categories emerging from each whole data-set (Part One and Part Two of this chapter) are presented in a text box at the beginning of each discussion section.

Each transcript produced themes that could be arranged within some, but not necessarily all, of the identified categories. Therefore - because individual transcripts did not give rise to every thematic category - some of the tables do not include extracts from all participants in that data-set.

5.1 Part One.

Conversations at: The Matthew Project.

In this section I introduce the five participants from the Matthew Project who volunteered to speak with me regarding their experiences of *belonging* and *not-belonging*. I have given them the pseudonyms: 'Joe', 'Sue', 'Pete', 'Francis' and 'Andy'.

Spatial/geographic/situational themes (all five participants).

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Joe	Problems get associated with place	<i>'I got really bad there'</i>	[5]
	Belonging in nature	<i>'I came here to get away from it'(drinking) 'I like being outside, in woods walking along rivers and forests'</i>	[4-5] [164-5]
Sue	The agency provides a place to go	<i>'Without this place I would be out there getting pissed'.</i>	[125]
	Something to do	<i>'I come every day it is open'</i>	[52-3]
	'Home' place	<i>'You would be sitting at home drinking' 'It is just that I live here', 'I was born here'</i>	[78] [311-12]
Pete	Re-locating through drug using affiliations	<i>'...do you want to come to Madrid?'</i>	[98-9]
Francis	Not belonging in an environment	<i>'I do not feel that I belong here'</i>	[19-20]
Andy	'Home' place – not feeling 'at home'	<i>'It is just somewhere to wait to die'</i>	[128-9]
	Place becoming an internal resource	<i>'The thing that keeps me strong is Australia'</i>	[224]

Text box 5.1

Issues of travel and relationship – leaving, joining, dwelling and becoming – seem to be bound up in this cluster of place-related themes.

Joe felt that his problematic drinking had become associated with the town and locality where he had been living, and he had decided that he would need to 'get away' in order to stand any chance of changing those behaviours. It becomes clear later on in this analysis that the place itself was not really the cause of Joe's problems there, rather it was the social context and relational complexities *of his experience of* the place had become strongly associated with difficulty.

Joe: *'... it was just non-stop drinking for about 2 years – I was living in a tent for about 6 or 8 months in the woods – and it was fucking cold!'* [14-5]

Joe also described some more positive associations that he has with differing places and situations. He told me how he feels in his body when he is in natural surroundings such as walking in forests and by rivers where

it seems that he experiences himself differently, and even *thinks* in a very different way from the way he experiences himself when in town:

Joe: [*in a forest*] ...***you just relax...you don't worry and your head isn't thinking about everything...you are just paying attention to what is around you...rather than mulling things over...***[171-172]

...when you walk around town, and people look at you – and you know that they are thinking something...but when you walk in a forest or whatever, and you see a bird...and they look at you – they might be thinking 'what is he doing?' but they are not really paying that much attention to you! They are not taking the piss or judging you ...because people do judge – automatically they do...[175-179]

This sense of ***feeling judged*** by others who must be ***'thinking something'***, is a theme in itself which I have categorised in the section of 'interpersonal dynamics' rather than as an aspect of 'place' even though for Joe it was certainly associated with the environment of town and the context of being around the people there. The problem wasn't just connected to being around people - in the company of other street drinkers (drinking) and also the in the alcohol reduction group at the Matthew Project – Joe felt that he was *'on the same level'* and *'in the same boat'* (not being judged in a negative way). It felt significant to me that, after his experiences of **homelessness**, and his sense of being marginalised by mainstream society, the Matthew Project now offered Joe a physical place to come and be sociable, and find a non-judgemental welcome. The physical place provided by the Matthew project was also significant for Sue too. She explained that after her initial rather shaky introduction to the agency she has made coming here a central part of her life: *'I come every day now that it is open'*. She felt that without this focal place she and the other service users would drift back into difficulties: *'if we didn't come here everyday, we feel... like 'what would we do?' - we would go down that rocky road to no-where again...'*

Francis' feelings about the 'places' of his life seemed at that time to be indicative of his low-mood. Even though his presence at the project suggested that he was still motivated to access support (and even to volunteer to come and talk with me: a new face in the building) nevertheless he described his being there as just *'clutching at straws'*. In his depression Francis was felt that the flat where he was living was just *'somewhere to wait to die'* – rather than somewhere that felt like 'home' The reasons for his pessimistic outlook became clearer as we spoke, and are further described in later thematic categories.

Andy had positive associations of dwelling in a particular place – in his case it was a year which he spent in Australia – and experience which he felt had strengthened him:

Andy: *The biggest thing that keeps me strong is that year in Australia. That gives me a sense of hope. It was like a spiritual adventure, **people were so kind and there is no conditions attached to that.*** [224-225]

Pete described how he had initiated a friendship with a Spanish man on an aeroplane -whilst they shared an

illicit beer and how they had connected through their stories of participating in other substance-related behaviours. Pete told me that before the flight was ended he had been invited to stay with the man and his girlfriend in Madrid - even though *'they were total strangers really'*. The common-ground that they had established in terms of their drug use had provided a basis of connection or 'belonging' which seemed to have quickly bridged their linguistic and cultural differences facilitating a way to belong.

Inter-personal, relational and social themes

The cluster of themes pertaining to relationship is quite a large one, with all of the conversations having a high degree of relational emphasis.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Joe	Rupture of a relationship	- <i>She cheated on me, I lost everything</i>	[8]
	Traumatic primary attachment	- <i>My mum was an alcoholic</i>	[35]
	Drug using group affiliations	- <i>I don't think I belonged (to that group).</i>	[58]
	Hierarchical social system based on need	<i>They are only there for the drugs</i>	[90]
	Drinkers are all on the same level	- <i>You feel you belong – you are welcomed- you are on the same level</i>	[92]
	The agency is a 'community' of recovery Feeling welcomed and respected.	- <i>It is like a little community really</i> - <i>I can relax - I feel respected and welcome</i>	[219] [196]
Sue	Outreach bridges marginal 'gap' Group affiliation (agency & peers)	- <i>They came to my house, I wasn't rude</i>	[41-42]
		- <i>I speak on behalf of a lot of us here</i>	[60-61]
		- <i>A group of us here are really friendly</i>	[258]
Pete	Relational difficulties Love	- <i>My daughter was born, me and her mum split up</i>	[26-27]
		- <i>I didn't love her mum, but I love my daughter</i>	[31]
	Bereavement and loss Dis-identification with family	- <i>My best friend died</i>	[66]
		- <i>I pushed them away</i>	[107]
	Identification with drug users Connecting across cultures Belonging in the recovery group	- <i>I felt detached from family</i>	[113]
		- <i>They sniffed my out as well</i> - <i>They were complete strangers</i> - <i>Now I feel that I belong more than I ever did</i>	[101] [35-36]
Francis	Belonging in a couple relationship Rupture of relationship Bereavement and loss Lack of friendship	- <i>Everything comes second to that</i>	[271]
		- <i>We split up about 18 months ago</i>	[8]
		- <i>I lost my parents a few years ago</i>	[29]
		- <i>I don't have friends, I have acquaintances</i>	[22]
Andy	Feeling like and outsider Agency as a resource	- <i>We were outsiders, we were not welcomed</i>	[164]
		- <i>They got me off alcohol here.</i>	[45-6]

Text box 5.2

The issue of relationship threads forwards In Joe's narrative from his primary attachment with his alcoholic mother - *'she couldn't wake up without the shakes'*. Thinking about his relationship with alcohol, Joe explained:

Joe: *'My mum gave me my first drink when I was about 6 or 7, she didn't realise that this bottle...she thought it was like cola - it was called 'black beer' and she bought some home – and said 'try this'...and it was about 8% proof! So we didn't have much of a chance really...'* [135-136]

Later, Joe felt that the break-down of his partnership had precipitated the disintegration of his life: *'I lost everything'* - culminating in him becoming homeless. Now, through his engagement with the Matthew project, it seemed that Joe was beginning to find a context of relational safety: *'You automatically know that no-one is judging anyone up here, 'cos you are all in the same boat...'*

Joe described how his lifestyle as a cocaine dealer had also been relationally complicated; now he recognised that although he had had wealth and power at that time that he was also somehow isolated by it: *'I don't think I belonged'*. Joe felt that the people in his life at that time were *'only there for the drugs'* and that mainly *'they don't respect you, and you don't respect them'*.

Sue's relationship with the Matthew Project was the focus of our conversation, although she also described a background story of relational difficulties and losses that had accompanied her history of heavy drinking. Nowadays she is certain how important her relationship with the Matthew Project remains:

Sue: *This is like my life...I don't know what I would do without it...ok, it is not my life...but it is a big part of my life...and I know that I speak on behalf of a lot of us that come here – we don't know what we would do without it. [59]*

A similar pattern had emerged for Pete, in which he described progressing from using cannabis as a teenager to becoming an enthusiastic *"weekender"* drug-user and *"social drinker"*. The social aspects of his substance misuse are something of a motif in Pete's narrative, he came across as a very sociable and talkative man explaining how drug-taking and drinking had been activities which had once facilitated friendships and had moved him into new social and cultural circles. Pete could also see that during this process, he had gradually dis-identified himself with his family as his behaviours created an alternative social identity within drinking and drug-using friendship groups. As Pete's drug use escalated his relationships began to deteriorate:

Pete: *[being] a part-time dad and also not having a job...well I did work, I was working, but obviously I got signed off work and put on incapacity benefit because of my alcohol and drug use– um – I did inject, I started off smoking it, and I used to take...[well] I used to misuse my meds... [61-2]*

This process worsened after the death of a close friend who overdosed on heroin:

Pete: *'...my best friend, who died at 31 – who introduced me to heroin actually, he was the first person I injected with' [66-7]*

Loss and relationship were strong features underlying Francis' enduring low-mood - which coloured everything that he described. The experience of meeting and falling in love with his (now estranged) wife had been, for Francis, the quintessence of 'belonging': *'nothing else comes close to that'*. Now the trauma and loss he felt at the breakdown of their marriage had been *'incomparably worse'* than the deaths (in quick succession) of both of his parents and the subsequent loss of their family home which he had shared with them. It seemed that Francis had been searching for a special kind of relatedness and 'belonging' prior to experiencing the depth of the connection that he had shared with his wife; in his descriptions of using MDMA (Ecstasy) during the 'Rave' party scene of the 1980's he comments:

Francis: *It felt like it [was about belonging] at the time, it was obviously ... a very false thing ... like you are talking to somebody like they are your best mate – and you go ‘where are you from, what is your name?’ and ‘oh yeah!’ – rardy, rardy rah ! Like this is your new best mate... but you have forgotten them 30 seconds later... There is so much of that – and I suppose it is the falseness of that ... [236-239]*

Andy had come to live in Thetford as a child and had felt, along with his whole family, like a ‘outsider’ (as already described in the previous chapter). It seemed that feeling like an outsider thereafter had become something of a way of life for Andy; he seemed to be quite reconciled to some possible benefits to be found in this outsider position. When I asked him if there might be also be any advantages to ‘belonging’ he hesitated a moment and thought about it:

Andy: *Well there can be, I used to have long hair, and what is the stereotypical attitude towards people with long hair? – Peaceful hippy type. I got fed up with having people have that attitude towards me, because people will take advantage of you, and bully you with that attitude – with a different hair-cut they don’t make those judgements [...] so I thought ‘if I fit in with people, then they will leave me alone’...[236-267]*

For Andy, the main advantage of ‘belonging’ was that, by conforming to a dominant stereotype, he was able to hide himself - and thereby be less noticeable and so less vulnerable - safer from being bullied for being ‘different’.

Intra-personal (self-reflexive awareness) individual identity themes.

This super-ordinate category is one that showed up more prominently in some of the IPA analyses of these transcribed interviews than in others for this data-set. The chief characteristic of themes in this category is that they pertain to a sense of ‘I’ and ‘Self’.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Joe	Piecing together a narrative	- <i>it becomes one straight line, sort of one book.</i>	[237]
Sue	Social self-consciousness	- <i>You know they are thinking something</i>	[175-6]
	Integration of support	- <i>It is part of my life</i>	
Pete	Insight into problem of alcoholism	- <i>You don't realise how bad it gets</i>	[181-2]
	Addiction and identity	- <i>I am an ex-IV heroin user and alcoholic</i>	
Francis	Insight into problem of addiction	- <i>I was a social drinker.</i>	[13-14]
	Family history of depression	- <i>I was a mess – drinking every day.</i>	[66]
Andy	Recognising consequences of drug use	- <i>I have always suffered from depression</i>	[229]
	Impact of trauma	- <i>My mother suffered from depression</i>	[229]
Andy	Sense of self -	- <i>I lost interest because of the ‘Moody Tuesday’.</i>	[239]
		- <i>I have got this disability</i>	
	Insight into anger response	- <i>I had a head injury when I was two years old</i>	[21]
		- <i>I am a kind, sort of nurturing person</i>	[100]
		- <i>I have got an analytical mind</i>	[39]
		- <i>It stems from my parents.</i>	[109]
			[99]

Text box 5.3

In this integral study I have differentiated between individual identity and collective identity in order to pick

up any differences between a person's sense of 'I am' (which may still have a feeling of un-belongingness') as distinct from 'We are' (which carries more of a sense of 'belonging- identity')

Joe's self-awareness seemed to be quite attuned to the different ways that he experienced himself in a variety of contexts. We talked about what it had been like for him to be involved with dealing cocaine and I suggested that there is a 'social power' in supplying what quickly becomes a powerful 'need' in others. He agreed and explained the effect of this on him:

Anna: *I guess...something about being in the cocaine business, supplying gives you quite a lot of power...I mean people are coming to you because they want something from you...*

Joe: *Yeah, I mean – my mate will tell you – I turned into an arrogant git, because I thought I was above people, but you are not are you? You are not above anyone. But I did feel like I was – I guess that does isolate you from people doesn't it? [72-74]*

Joe also recognised how confused he had felt about the dramatically changing circumstances and, seemingly disjointed experiences of his life-story to date - a story made especially confusing for him by the effects of drug and alcohol abuse. He explained to me how one to one counselling and group therapy was helping him to create a coherent narrative of his life:

Joe: *Which is why these groups are so good up here...you can deal with it here. I am having one to ones with my keyworker here, because we tend to skirt around the edges in the group a bit...but I can go into more detail in the one to ones. **And he helps piece it together...***

Anna: *So then you can get a sense of the whole story of your life, stitch it all together into one piece...?*

Joe: *Sure – I mean I wouldn't be able to make much sense of it on my own, the time-line is all over the place really...but together we can work it all out so it is not just zig-zagging all over the place but it becomes one straight line – sort of one book. It is cool. [230-237]*

During our conversation Sue had touched upon several clear insights that she has gained into the progression and the nature of her alcoholism such as 'You don't realise how bad it gets' and 'you get all defensive', recognising how, in the end, she had needed to ask for help: '...I said "I can't cope no more"'. Although she did not explicitly define herself in terms of either her drinking or her recovery, both things seemed implicit in the way that she had described her relationship with the Matthew Project. Sue felt respected by the term 'service user' of the Project and she felt that this was preferable to being defined or categorised by her problems (e.g. 'patient' or 'alcoholic').

Pete seemed to have had quite a strong sense of identity based upon his relationship with drugs and other drug users. This identity clearly impacted his sense of belonging: 'I will start it at feelings of not-belonging...I am an ex-IV heroin user, and an alcoholic'. His affiliation with various groups and their shared behaviours seemed to inform his identity: 'I was a social drinker' - and - '[the drugs] were great – they used to call me "the weekender"'.

In my conversation with Francis there are not so many elements of self-reflection or references which point

towards identity themes. Analysing the transcript, I wondered if this could be an aspect of his prevailing low-mood state, but also that his attention was quite strongly focused on the painful loss of his wife rather than on himself. He did open our conversation with *'I guess I have always thought that I was a misfit...'* seemingly underscoring the way that he described his current feelings: *'I don't belong in this environment'*. Later we focused explicitly on his depression and he suggested links both to family origins and to consequences of drug use.

Depression is one of the possible sequelae of the abuse of 'stimulants'²⁸ over a prolonged period (Kosten *et al.* 1998; Hall-Flavin and Hoffman, 2003) – however the recreational use of stimulants ('uppers') may also be a 'self-medicating' response to underlying low-mood states. Francis talked about the 'Rave scene' which had been a big part of his early drug use – and he also spoke about the chemical 'come-down' he experienced from stimulant abuse – colloquially referred to as *'The Moody Tuesday'* effect. Francis acknowledged its cumulative impact on his mental health: *'I kind of lost interest in all that because of the Moody Tuesday thing – the whole serotonin depletion thing...'*. I return to discuss this phenomenon in Chapter Eight.

Andy's conversation was full of many examples of the way that he is continually trying to make sense of himself and the experiences of his life-story. His story also highlights the belonging issues which connect to the effects of trauma; Andy explains here how he had sustained a serious traumatic head-injury as a two year old child.

Anna: *Why do you think that you were drinking so much Andy?*

Andy: *Er – well one reason was that it was like a medication for me because I have got this disability which causes my eyesight and other things to go a bit mad - and alcohol helped to calm it down...[...]*
I have got permanent double vision...

Anna: *Did you have a head injury?*

Andy: *Yeah – when I was 2 years old. About six or seven years ago that started to be a big problem, it had been sort of ok up to then, then all of a sudden my eyes started to deteriorate and I lost my licence because I was unable to drive a car safely...*

Anna: *Had something changed with the injury?*

Andy: *A part of the brain had died. The part of the brain that deals with vision – you can have eyesight like this, but your brain can deal with it and still give you a 3-d view of the world, but that part of my brain doesn't function. So I get days when I can't walk through a door-way easily, I feel like I am going to hit my head on the door-ways, I get height and width perception problems, so it feels a bit crazy.*

Anna: *And so alcohol calmed all that down?...I guess it relaxes the muscles a bit...[20-30]*

The physical and emotional effects of that trauma had been on going for Andy. Although he now understood that his parents had struggled at the time to manage the behavioural consequences of his head injury – their difficulties in coping with him seemed to have compounded Andy's difficulties with managing his anger:

Andy: *I was about 4 or 5 years old, and my parents couldn't cope with me, because I had had this head injury and that had had an effect on my behaviour as a younger child. My parents would pin me down and do funny things like that – so I learned not to release anger as a child. Because I couldn't express that anger because they would just get more angry and hit me. So it is cognitive training – I am trying to deal with it that way – but it is like trying to undo sort of thirty-odd years of conditioning.*

28 Such as amphetamine ('Speed') MDMA ('Ecstasy') and also Cocaine .

And that is where I am at the moment, trying to undo that conditioning – [99-105]

Andy understood that his use of alcohol had been a way of quietening down the physical symptoms of the head injury and of managing his anger, but he had also come to recognise the limitations and the negative consequences of this coping strategy. Currently he was focusing his considerable reflexive awareness on the task of developing alternative strategies to better manage the emotion of anger without alcohol or cannabis:

Andy: ... *it is trying to catch the early warning signs, I am trying to train myself – because it starts with a little insignificant thing, a trigger – and then my anger starts to build up...then I start thinking about what happened 20 years ago or what happened 10 years ago, or this other situation – and before you know it is – the whole thing is overwhelming...* [123-5]

Behaviour, strategies and physical effects.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Joe	Refusing alcohol 'agonist' (blocker)	-You don't tackle the reasons	[225]
	Social comfort of drinking	- I feel more comfortable around drinkers	[62]
	Walking and being 'in nature'	- I can relax and pay attention to things	[171-2]
Sue	Asking for help	- I said 'I can't cope'	[177]
	Social mediation of drinking	- A lot of social activities are based on drinking	[208]
	Tasks of recovery	- You have to re-build your life	[243]
	Occupation and belonging	- And find other ways of belonging to society - they help you find things to do with your time	[244] [76]
Pete	Choosing to not belong	- I used drugs because I enjoyed 'em	[75]
	Using drugs	- I am still on Subutex	[124]
	Using a chemical agonist	- I overdosed on Methadone by accident	[125]
	Substitute prescribing		
Francis	Using drugs	[continued overleaf] - I was doing tons of E's	[221]
	Substitute prescribing	- I still smoke cannabis,	[193]
	Medication	- I am on a methadone script	[193]
	Suicidal impulse	- I am on anti-depressants	[229]
		- Just that blackness	[247]
Andy	Trauma	-part of my brain died	[130]
	Disability	- I have got disabilities which affect my ability to work	[5]
		-I get claustrophobic in supermarkets.	[55]
	Alcohol as medication	- It relaxed my mind enough	[35]
	Prescribed medication	- They put me on some emergency medication	[80]
	Alternative strategies	- I try things like breathing exercises. - I had acupuncture and felt so calm...	[56] [46-7]

Text box 5.4

There are a great many behavioural, strategic and physical elements which emerged thematically from all of my IPA treatments of these conversations, only a selection of which are represented in the text box above.

The role of prescribed and un-prescribed medication as a support in recovery is touched upon here by Joe, Pete, Francis and Andy. Joe had decided not to take the chemical blocker (agonist) for alcohol called

'Antabuse' (Disulfiram) which was offered to him on prescription²⁹, because he felt that such a strategy would not help him to *'tackle the underlying issues'*. He felt that the support from the agency was what was really helping him to significantly alter his drinking behaviours:

Joe: *'I can manage on 2-3 cans a day now – and I mean that is only the 7.5 % alcohol as well because when I was drinking Special Brew that was 15- 20 cans a day, or 3 litres of that 'Frosty' crap...[98]*

Pete on the other hand had decided to accept the prescribed 'Subutex'³⁰ (Buprenorphine) as a safer alternative to the Methadone maintenance on which he had already experienced an overdose. Subutex is itself a drug of abuse and dependence, but it seemed that Pete felt more secure with this option.

For Francis his Methadone *'maintenance'* prescription seemed to form an acceptable back-drop to his sense of the way that he otherwise uses cannabis and alcohol to manage his feelings, he does not alter the way that he takes this prescription and it has remained stable for the last 11 years:

Francis:... *so I use what I use and I am steady on it. I only have quarterly urine tests...and I have never failed one'* [200]

Francis felt that there had been considerable psychological and physical effects of his heavy usage of Ecstasy during the rave party scene and he reflected upon how he had had a suicidal impulse when driving home one time:

Francis: *I remember, the worst experience I ever had of it, we had been out partying all weekend - been to a big party in [town] – and you sort of continued on the next day... not eating or anything. And on the Tuesday dropping down [...] I had quite a quick car at the time, [...] and I have always been an enthusiastic driver... It was quite late autumn, very dark and sort of driving down this tunnel of trees, and I just suddenly felt like jinking the car into one of the trees ... [245]*

Andy had decided that he wanted to be clear of all drugs: *'I don't want to be addicted to anything'*, however he was also pragmatic in his approach to reducing, he felt that with the on-going symptoms of his disability he still needed more skills to manage his anger as well support in the form of prescribed and un-prescribed medication:

Andy: *'I still have a small cannabis problem at the moment [...] I have reduced it down to a miniscule amount where it is just medicine really', [78-9]*

Andy also mentioned how the *'auricular acupuncture'* he had tried at the Matthew Project had helped him in being able to finally let go of alcohol and as a means of relaxing in the evening. Now with the help of these support resources he was beginning to see how he could create alternative thinking strategies as well:

29 The effect of Disulfiram is to deter alcohol intake in the patient by creating a 'blocking' (agonist) effect on the body's ability to metabolise the alcohol which – if alcohol is ingested - results in violent emesis.

30 Buprenorphine is a semi-synthetic opioid medication which is used in some cases in an assisted withdrawal (detox) from opiate addiction. Its mixed 'agonist/antagonist' means that it can be used as a substitute prescription for heroin whilst also 'blocking' the misuse of other types of opiate.

Andy: *when I have a stress response I want to get so that instead of thinking negatively when I have some stress – to take it on the positive level. So to say – ok this has happened, what are the answers, here is a solution.* [113-4]

Sue observed that for most people in this country alcohol mediates socialisation ‘a lot of social activities are based around drink’. Now in recovery she felt that it had become necessary to:

Sue: *... re-build your life and find other ways of belonging to the society...and it is not all about drinking...or taking drugs...I don't know...I am still yet finding them...but I am sure there must be...* [243-4]

Sue told me that her new strategies for socialisation and ‘belonging’ included meeting up with other Matthew Project group members at each other’s houses for a meal or to watch TV together. Sue felt that the activities and events that the Matthew Project regularly organise with service users were very helpful in this re-building process – being creative with time and through the occupation of a shared activity:

Sue: *... you can come here and it is all under one roof, and you feel...I don't know they just....they help you find things to do with your time...they put on some lovely things, some fantastic events for us...* [75-77]

Culturally informed meanings, values and collective identity themes.

In this section I have clustered themes which seemed to connect to a sense of belonging (or not) in a collective. In terms of identity this is the sense of ‘we’. I have also looked for meaning-making with a cultural or systemic flavour.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Joe	Identity and shared experiencing	- <i>We are all in the same boat</i>	[122]
Pete	Non-hierarchical belonging	- <i>we are on the same level</i>	[78]
Sue	Shared culture of drug-using practices	- <i>We do it like this...a ‘rock’ and heroin.</i>	[86]
	Service-user identity	- <i>We have all had an addiction</i>	[106]
	Culture of the agency	- <i>The main thing here is we have respect</i>	[118]
Andy		- <i>You don’t feel judged</i>	[104]
	Culture of materialism	- <i>Too many people are all money based</i>	[233]

Text box 5.5

Joe had used the phrase ‘we are all in the same boat’ to describe how he felt in the alcohol reduction support group, he also described the sense that: ‘we were all on the same level’ when describing the comfort of being with drinkers on the street. Both instances had positive feel him and carried some sense of his belonging within a collective_was supported by a non-hierarchical, non-judgemental culture.

Sue also had a strong sense of being ‘on the same level’ with other people at the Matthew Project - she felt that having the status of ‘service users’ was an indication of the non-judgemental attitude:

Sue: *You are not judged [here] either....you don’t feel judged. You don't feel...we are called ‘service*

users' here...and none of the other service users judge you either...it doesn't matter if one of them is on heroin...we have all had an addiction...and that is what it is, they are all addictions, whether they be alcohol, drugs, whatever... [104-7]

For Pete, the culturally shared practices and values of drug-using behaviours had seemed to bridge the differences that otherwise may be felt between different nationalities and cultures. Pete talked about how he had got into step with the drug using practices of some newly made Spanish friends:

Pete: *I smoked heroin in Spain and they looked at me strange – like “why?...we do it like this...[use] a rock and the heroin together”*

Anna: *Like a speed-ball but with crack..?*

Pete: *Yeah...but with crack...and they tend to smoke it off the foil over there rather than inject it...[87-89]*

Andy's feelings about his relationship with 'the collective' were not particularly warm - his experiences of group contexts seemed to have left him with a highly individual sense of himself and a wary scepticism of the collective 'other'. A notable exception to this had been during his travels in Australia when he had observed he had frequently been offered help seemingly without any reward-based motives.

Interpretative or philosophical propositions.

The final section in this part of the chapter is a cluster of themes emerging in the category of generalised philosophical propositions. They do not crop up in every conversation, either in this section or in the next, but every so often during my original listening, and again whilst listening to recordings, I encountered the particular *resonance* of a deeper philosophical level of reflection. I particularly liked listening for these deeper 'bass-notes' of meaning from the transcripts; I suspected that they begin to point me towards some meta-themes of human experiencing in terms of belonging and not belonging.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Joe	Belonging	<i>-I think everybody wants to belong</i>	[150]
	Respect for difference	<i>-The key to belonging is respect for difference</i>	[248-9]
Sue	Respect	<i>-The main thing is that we have respect.</i>	[128-9]
	Security of belonging	<i>-With belonging you get a sense of security...</i>	[343]
Andy	Inspiration for change	<i>-It is worth...changing your life</i>	[80]
	Safety	<i>-Being able to walk down the street without caring</i>	[179]

Text box 5.6

'*Respect for difference*' comes out as a key quality for belonging - right at the end of our conversation, when

I asked Joe whether we had out missed anything important out about belonging, he said:

Joe: *Um...I think that part of being able to belong to a group – or to society – is actually to respect other people, even when they are different to you. If you can't respect other people you are going to struggle to belong yourself as well.* [248-50]

Sue also felt that respect was the main ingredient of the way the Matthew Project succeeded in bringing its staff and service users together in a shared endeavour – that she felt a part-of it and with that a sense of belonging which for her has been an inspirational experience:

Sue: *With belonging you get a sense of security and with security you get a sense of happiness.[...] if you felt that you didn't belong, in any aspect, in any meaning – then that could have a knock-on effect that would be very negative.*

And they give you a sense that there is something in life worth bothering about...and it is worth...you know changing your life, it is worth being a better person...and you come here and you get that feeling...that inspiration...that is what I feel anyway... [79-81]

Andy's response to my question 'what really matters...?' spoke eloquently of his need for safety in belonging:

Anna: *So what matters...what really matters?*

Andy: *Not being afraid – being able to walk down the street without caring. It is nice to be able to dress up in nice clothes, but you don't have to wear the uniform.* [179-182].

5.2 Part Two: Core collaborator conversations

In this section I found that the same overall set of categories of themes emerged in the third cycle of IPA analysis – possibly because by this time I was listening for them. Whilst I remained open to the possibility that other thematic categories could emerge – the original six seemed to continue to suffice. Once again, themes from all six categories did not feature in every conversation within this data-set.

The conversations presented here are with collaborators: ‘Lydia’, ‘Grace’, ‘William’, ‘Mark’, ‘Sophia’, ‘Diane’ and ‘Helen’ (pseudonyms).

Spatial, geographic and situational themes.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Sophia	Home does not feel ‘home’	- <i>I didn’t feel that I am from where I am from</i>	[42]
	‘Home’ is the worst place	- <i>when I go there I feel so bad</i>	[30]
	Feeling of belonging in a new place	- <i>I still kind of feel that my home is there</i>	[37-8]
	Feeling of belonging in an old place	- <i>Ok, it [my old city] is bad and ugly, but it is mine!</i>	
	Home	- <i>To be ‘home’, the situation must bring out the best in me.</i>	[92]
Diane	Leaving home	- <i>this sense of belonging becomes very important</i>	[218]
		- <i>You have to say who you are</i>	
	Living away from home	- <i>I don’t belong in [this region]</i>	[19-20]
		- <i>the place belongs to me</i>	[21-22]
Lydia	Not belonging (here)		[72]
	Owning a place	- <i>I prefer not to belong to a place</i>	[61-2]
Helen		- <i>I felt -‘this place does not accept me as I am’</i>	
	Not belonging to place	- <i>[my parents] were fighting over me.</i>	[15]
	Not feeling accepted by a place	- <i>I moved away from home to a different country</i>	[25]
Mark	Being the contested territory		
	Migration	- <i>I felt a sense of belonging back home</i>	
		- <i>that place feels somewhat enchanted in my head</i>	[41]
	Belonging and home	- <i>I have always felt like I am a far away from home</i>	[50]
	An enchanted place	- <i>I kind of took root there a little bit</i>	[23]
		- <i>my working model of the [a UK region]</i>	[28]
	Feeling ‘far from home’	- <i>my favourite little places as a little child</i>	
	- <i>I think it is searching for the familiarity, for the comfort</i>	[69]	
			[78]
	Putting down ‘roots’ in a place		[85]
	An internal ‘working model’ of place		[374]
	Remembering places of childhood		
	The comfort of familiarity		[50]

Text box 5.7

The thematic category related to place and situational context had, perhaps understandably, a resonance for those collaborators with the direct experience of *migration* – of having chosen to go and live and work in

countries and cultures other than their own. The circumstances behind these choices were perhaps less economically pressing in this group of participants than had been the case for the people I talked with at 'META', however it became evident – as Madison (2009) had also established – that a great pressure to leave a place of origin can also arise for more existential reasons. Sophia, Diane and Helen, are all foreign nationals currently working here in the UK; each of them has also previously lived and worked in countries other than their own – in this respect they have some interesting perspectives to offer.

Sophia had felt a powerful need to leave the place where she was born in order to be able to become '*her authentic self*'. Her descriptions are evocative of what Greg Madison has called *existential migration* (Madison, 2009:10), a theme which I return to discuss in Chapter Eight. Sophia went on to describe how she had subsequently discovered a more authentic sense of '*being at home*' whilst living and working for some years on an island. There she had experienced a heart-felt aesthetic response to its beautiful wild landscape and towards the local culture: '*in my heart I was always so much connected to the place and to the music of the place*'. At the same time she realised that her capacity to truly 'belong' on that island was contingent on her being accepted by the local people, and they continued to regard her as 'a foreigner'.

A new perspective on 'home' followed a period of living abroad for Diane too. She felt that the question of her own national and cultural identity had only really become significant since leaving her country. In this conversation, Diane focused more on her sense of these issues of culture and nationality rather than her relationship to the geographical *place* of her country – but she did comment on its history and told how it had been the site of many episodes of colonisation, which she felt may account for some of the current emphasis on issues of national identity. Diane considered that her respect for her country and its unique 'cultural identity' served her as an internal resource of strength and '*confidence*'.

Like Sophia, Helen explained that she had left her original home because of a deeply-felt *need* to do so: '*when I was a very young girl I moved away from home and went to live in [country]*'. As a young child, Helen had felt that *she* herself had become the '*contested territory*' during her parents' divorce proceedings – an experience that had left her with a strong desire to be free, and to be nobody's '*possession*'. Belonging - in the possessive sense of ownership – is a relational theme which is further developed by Lydia's experiences.

For Lydia '*belonging*' seemed to be mainly interpreted as a dimension of community and of relationship with people rather than place. She recognised that she does have an involvement with 'this place' but in terms of her relationship to it, when I asked whether she felt that she belonged to it, she said reflectively: '*no...the place belongs to me*'. There seemed to be a sense of contingency or impermanence about this situation for Lydia, and that, as a basis for a relationship with place, even her 'ownership' of it did not have the effect of strongly connecting or *rooting* her to it, certainly not in the same way that Sophia had felt connected, *by love*,

to her temporary Island home.

Mark had felt very positively '*rooted*' by the experience of his original 'home' – which was described in terms of a geographical location, a family house, the village in which it stood and the local landscape. He also ascribed the *feeling of home* to some of his childhood experiences, embedded as they were in the culture and values of his family and in a wider regional culture to which he refers as contributing to creating his '*working model of the world*':

Mark: '*...my working model...of the [region] is one of modesty, slightly modesty in personality, but modesty in terms of aspirations as well – you know, work hard, and if you work hard and pay into a pension, you will be alright...*' [352-3]

Mark's connection to, and affection for that region, and its cultural history, felt very strong - which contrasted with the way that he describes his relationship with the region of East Anglia:

Mark: *...But really it is what it looks like ... but there is no kind of depth. That is how I feel here, it is all a bit flat...I don't feel very committed...*

Anna: *Because it is flat?*

Mark: *When I say 'flat' I don't mean flat as in not hilly, I mean flat as in cardboard – flimsy, it doesn't feel very solid. I suppose I feel quite nomadic in a way you know...[378-383]*

Mark's description of his relationship with East Anglia as being '*flimsy*' and '*like cardboard*' and his sense is of not being very '*committed*' here seems to me to be the opposite of of the sense of being rooted. Without any sense of personal connection to the cultural history of the place, and without any aesthetic resonance with the landscape - is a relationship of convenience rather than one of love (Sircello, 1989; 1993).

Interpersonal, relational and social themes.

All of the transcripts in this group contained some resonances that fell into this category of relational themes, and within these I have found expressions of both aspects of belonging and of not-belonging. It is interesting to note that, as with the conversations from the Matthew Project, these relational expressions are not always positively weighted towards belonging - rather what begins to emerge here are some of the systemic complexities of human interpersonal relationships.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Sophia	Home is with people	- <i>at the end I decided that my home is the people</i>	[144]
	A 'family' of friends	- <i>we are all foreigners - and we are so much family</i>	[151]
	Not being mis-understood	- <i>however I express myself, it will be alright</i>	[204]
Lydia	Rupture of belonging	- <i>partly it was my divorce - the separation</i>	[41]
	Social isolation	- <i>nobody wanted to know about you</i>	[259]
	Other people's stories	- <i>you know that you are not on your own</i>	[250]
	A sense of belonging	- <i>everyone was accepting, warm, wanting to make me feel good</i>	[442]
		[continued overleaf]	

Helen	Not-belonging	-I actually thought I never fit-in	[24]
	Possession	-People don't let go, this is why I don't want to belong to them	[48] [110]
Eleanor	Feeling judged	-What I did was never good enough	[120-1]
	Constraints of relationship	-Inside I felt limited again	[242]
	Connection to parents	- I use the word 'connected', but wish I was not	[265]
	Risk of not belonging in social situations	- I have feelings of guilt and of wanting to get away - a feeling of over-stepping, over-reaching	[44] [27-8]
Grace	'Qualities' of connection	- Different for each sibling and parent	[344] [345]
	Fear of rejection	- I am visible to being 'rejected'	
	Fear of judgement or ridicule	- or to be sneered at...	[466]
	Pleasure of belonging	- A huge pleasure belonging to that group in that moment	[182-3]
	Leaving a 'tribe'	-I feel like I left my tribe, a long time ago.	[210]
Mark	Push and pull of membership	-Wanting to be in, but staying out	[236]
	Formative belonging identity	- We were the hippest coolest people!	[239]
	Loss of group belonging	- it took me years to get over not having this group	[232]
	Belonging has to be 'right'	something about it being right...	

Text box 5.8

Inclusive of her experience of feeling empathically connected to the island where she had felt 'at home' - in the end Sophia comes to the conclusion that her strongest experiential sense of 'being at home' is in the company of people, specifically an international group of friends and fellow travellers:

Sophia: *we are all foreigners...and we don't have anyone...we are so much family...and it is really fantastic.* [151]

The qualities of these connections are quite specific for her to be able to call them 'home', a central one being that she always feels understood at the level of her intention. This understanding is a deeper one than the matter of simply understanding language since Sophia, and many of her friends (none of whom are English) communicate with each other in a second or third language.

Sophia: *'...with so many English people around I always feel this huge distance...I feel that I am always mis-understood...'*
[but]...with my friends I might be mis-taken, but they would never think...my intentions cannot be mistaken. [210-11]

For Sophia the principal hallmark of her 'feeling at home' situation is that with this group of people: 'I am totally myself' – as evidenced by her body where - 'There is no tension at all'. As she reflected upon these qualities there came to Sophia a further realisation:

Sophia: *...the other thing that makes people 'home' for me – and it feels good – is that they bring out the best in me...and I think I do the same for them, so that is very nice...* [214]

For Lydia the matter of belonging within relationships had been quite deeply coloured by some painful early experiences of it, but she also spoke of some very positive - and some very negative experiences - of her later involvements with various communities. Lydia felt that a difficult relationship with her mother had been very

influential and also recognised that it had an intergenerational patterning to it:

Lydia: *'I had a bullying mother, so there was a lot of tension, a lot of fear..'* [and] - ***'I think it had happened to her – a generational thing...'*** [144-5]

Later on, during the rupture and ending of a marriage - which also had the knock-on effect of ending several other relationships – Lydia remembers wanting to *'go home'*:

Lydia: *'I remember saying "I want to go home" – and wondering what I meant by that'*. [315]

Her words evoked my own sense of 'homelessness' after my marriage had ended; there seems to be a clue to its *felt-meaning* sense in the way that we both used the word 'home' - although neither our marital nor our original 'homes' were (in that moment) available places of safety or welcome, it seemed that such a loving refuge did somehow still exist as a potential.

For Helen, the very idea of someone 'belonging' either in relationship *or* to a place was abhorrent, and lay at the very heart of the problem that she had with the concept of belonging. She said passionately: *'You cannot have a person as a kind of belonging!...'*

Helen: ***People don't want to let you go, this is why I don't want to belong to them...*** [47]

She described some of the circumstances behind her own sense of not-belonging, and of how she was now unwilling to become *'a belonging'* in relationship. The complexity of interpersonal belonging for Helen meant searching for a line, finely balanced, between her need for freedom and autonomy and a (less pronounced) desire for acceptance and security.

The word 'belonging' was problematic for Eleanor too – so she exchanged it for the word *'connected'* in order to consider the relationship that she had with her parents: *I tend to use the word 'connected' with my parents ... but I wish that I was not'*. In the past Eleanor's response to spending time with her mother had led to her feeling ill and *'contaminated'* in some way, which seemed to suggest some level of trauma in the attachment (Ruppert, 2010). The effects of parental and family trauma on infant attachment and bonding in family systems has been investigated for instance by Sheinberg and True, (2008) and are further discussed in Chapter Eight.

Grace considered the differing qualities of the belonging-connections within her original family system and also with her own children and grandchildren. Although she noticed that they were qualitatively different, she felt that the connections between herself and each of her siblings were strongly bound by a sense of family loyalty which had been culturally instilled by her mother. The strongest, and most *'unquestioned'* belonging for Grace was felt in her relationships with her own children – where she was moved to notice that: *'there is not a chink of un-belonging in there...'*

Reflecting later on her sense of her father's more complex connection to the family she wondered, a little sadly: *'...but did my father feel that he belonged to us...?'* Grace speculated that his ability to connect to his family may have been affected by his involvement in the events of World War Two [WW2]. Grace felt that her

sense of *belonging* and *not-belonging* had been textured by her personal history including the relational and developmental experiences of school life and adolescence, the establishment of her own family and of various conditions and contexts of her professional life.

For Mark the word 'belonging' evoked a sense of 'membership' and particularly of his memory of being a part of a peer group during schooldays. It seemed that this group belonging had played a very significant positive role in his developing sense of self as a young adolescent. Reflecting on some of his experiences in later life in situations where he hadn't felt such a strong sense of 'membership', he added:- '*...I do kind of feel like I left my tribe, a long time ago.*'

Mark felt that his current relationships within the various groups and communities of his adult life often involved a tension between: "*wanting to be in, but making sure that I stay out as well*". This reticence or ambivalence about belonging – in the sense of becoming a member of a group – seemed to be engendered because of his sense that "*something about it has got to be right...*"

Intra-personal (self-reflexive awareness) and individual identity themes

The significance of developmental processes in relation to experiences of belonging is further illuminated within this category. Also presented here are the facets of self-reflexive awareness which pertain to 'leaving' and experience of *not-belonging*.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Sophia	Not 'myself' 'at home'	-When I go there [...] I am not myself	[180]
	Being 'myself'	- To be my authentic self I had to leave	[186]
	The 'puzzle' of home	-The whole thing is difficult, I haven't solved the puzzle	[172]
	A new perspective after migration	- I learned lots about [my home country]	[114]
	Safety of familiarity	- I remember that I was feeling safe. [on my return]	[81]
Lydia	Embodiment of 'not-belonging' Embodiment of belonging	- if I feel I don't belong I become aware of my height	[500]
		-far too visible...and feeling stupid, or clumsy	[505]
		-I shrink back down to size	[508]
		- you take a big sigh and relax	[495]
Helen	A new perspective after migration A need for 'freedom'	-coming back home, I realised I had changed so much	[71]
		- I am very much a free-bird	[169]
		- I cannot be this anchor for somebody	[138]
Eleanor	A sense of different 'selves'	-I am not sure how I feel about these 'selves'	[37]
		-I don't really like my self being emotional	[201]
		-I can discern the difference between 'anxious' and 'hurt'.	[93]
Diane	Awareness of 'self' and of 'Process'. A new perspective after migration	- I learned that everybody is proud of what he or she is	[66]
		- I saw a gap in me as well. I don't have this strong thing	[67]
	Need for personal identity Paradox of individual and collective belonging	- If you don't know who you are, you feel anxious	[34-5]
		- the paradox that I am thinking exists- also exists in myself [continued overleaf]	

Grace	Safety and belonging	-it feels that it is about safety as well as belonging	[263]
	Feeling of not-belonging Individual sense of self	- for quite a lot of my life I have felt...not belonging to things	[61]
		- One thing I feel ... is that I feel very tall... - 'too tall, invisible and clumsy' - I have a strong sense of self, and identity	[201] [236] [275]
Mark	A yearning to go home	- I have a yearning in me to go home	[130]
	Home as a place of attachment	-I felt rooted there,	[142]

Text box 5.9

Sophia felt that she could not be authentically 'herself' in the place where she had grown up. Even now when she goes there to spend time visiting her family she finds that:

Sophia: *Everything is bad, I even have headaches...I can't sleep...it is awful and in terms of identity – because I was trying to explain this to myself - I feel that I cannot ...be ...myself...maybe this is the problem...I don't really mind but I find it weird!* [34-35]

The 'weirdness' of this phenomenon was still puzzling to Sophia, and she was fairly clear that she had needed to leave home in order to discover her 'authentic self':

Sophia: *Well, to be myself...to be my authentic self...I had to leave. Otherwise I would never have been 'me'... I guess...* [185-6]

In the previous section she had identified the context in which she is most able to feel 'her authentic self'- which is when she is with the friends that she now considers to be 'home': '**When I am with them I am totally myself**'. Her travels had also given her some new perspectives on her place of origin which had changed how she now understood and related to herself as well:

Sophia: *When I was [living abroad] all those months I felt like I didn't learn lots about [that place] ...but I learned lots about [my own country] and my-self* [113-4]

During a visit to the capital city of her own country, which she had previously considered to be 'so ugly' Sophia had been surprised to find herself now seeing it 'through softer eyes – and heart' and felt able to acknowledge 'it may be ugly, but it is mine' – recognising a sense of her 'belonging' at last.

Helen's sense of herself as an individual seemed very strong, and she was also very clear about her desire not to be 'belonging' to anyone, or to any fixed place, preferring 'not to be labelled' in those terms. The more she had travelled and experienced of the world the more she had come to recognise that there was a widening 'gap' between herself and the family and friends who had stayed behind:

Helen: *I travelled a lot, and I went to [another continent] and I saw things...and basically I was growing up in a totally different direction than the rest of the family and friends were, so very quickly I observed the gap between us and it was growing even bigger.* [71-2]

In a later section it becomes clearer how Helen began to establish her own sense of *belonging* - in a particular context - but this was also always contingent upon her being able to manage her need for freedom:

Helen: *I really don't like to be...bounded in some way...I am very much a free-bird if you like...a free spirit...*

Anna: *What is that like?*

Helen: *I don't know, its just...the feeling I can actually pack my bags and go in half an hour – it is so nice...! [171-2]*

For Diane the experience of migration had also posed many questions, specifically about the relationship between her individual and her national identity:

Diane: *If you do not know...if you do not have...I don't want to call it a strong knowledge of who you are because it may sound negative, but if you have a clear idea of what you represent in terms of your language, your country – even religion – which is the bit I have some questions with in terms of how it links with identity then this does have an effect on your body as well...**but If you don't know who you are, and you cannot engage in conversation and introduce yourself and talk about your country...then this has effects on you and the body – it makes you feel anxious.** [33-35]*

Diane was concerned that as a concept 'National Identity' is frequently interpreted in negative terms and is related to 'nationalism' and the legacies of two world wars. Diane's sense of nationhood and identity is inherently linked to her respect for both self and 'other':

Diane: *...if you know who you are in terms of your national identity, I think you are able to respect other people's national identity as well...[...] [but] I get the feeling that those people who express openly that they are proud of their country may be received as if they are nationalist in a bad way...and I don't really like this labelling because personally I completely respect other people, and I thank God for sending me to another country because **I learned that everybody is proud of what he or she is...and I learned to respect this at the same time.** But I saw a gap in me as well...[64-8]*

I wondered whether the 'gap' which Diane refers to here had perhaps emerged as a consequence of her movement away from home - or whether it was an inherent part of her existential awareness.

It seems that even small geographic movements can have dramatic effects on the self-reflexive awareness and identity - especially so when they move across 'borders' of cultural and family systems – as is inevitably the case when leaving home. Eleanor's distance from the cultural context of her childhood and her direct experience of growing up with her parents had made it possible for her to reflect upon herself with an increasing awareness of how her body responds in various social contexts, also reflected in the various 'parts' or aspects of her personality which can come into play in each context:

Eleanor: *...something that I am finding quite weird, **that there are these different sort of 'selves' and I am not sure how I feel about those selves...**that is something that interests me...[36-7]*

Epstein (1992) makes psychoanalytic reference to this reflexive sense of 'cognitive selves' and suggests that we may also have a number of 'forgotten selves'. Eleanor was aware of and had an opinion about an aspect which she called her '*speedy self*':

Eleanor: *...because **I don't like that sort of side of me, I think it is a bad thing** and I want to be this sort of centred, calm person, and then **I am beginning to realise**, partly through doing the [healing practice] that **these other things are part of who I am as well, and maybe I do need this speedy person...and so what is it about her that I don't like?** [66-68]*

There seems to be an on-going process of integration with Eleanor's internal aspects or 'selves'; and her interest in this inner process was being supported by an embodied healing practice through which she was learning to discern subtle nuanced differences between emotion and its interpretation:

Eleanor: *...I can say that **there are things that make me anxious and there are things that make me feel hurt...I can feel that difference and I have never noticed that before...[...]** probably because **the anxiety is often caused by me thinking about it, ruminating on it – you know, making it into much more of a big deal perhaps than it needs to be, whereas the hurt is perhaps more ...real...**[107-9]*

Grace had felt 'safe' growing up as a part of her original family system – but not so safe in the context of other social situations, including at school; she had concluded that 'belonging' and 'safety' were somehow connected:

Grace: *I am more sort of interested in the other occasions of belonging and not-belonging, because I am safe with my family ...but there are occasions when I am not. I mean it is about...it feels that it is about safety as well as belonging.* [262-3]

Grace described social situations where she felt a level of un-belonging and she said that she could experience herself as becoming: '**...too tall, invisible and clumsy**'. The apparent paradox here of the inherently *visible* nature of being 'too tall' and 'clumsy' were explored via the two edges of her experience of becoming both 'invisible' and 'too tall', she said:

Grace: *'But I don't want to be invisible...cos I have a strong sense of my own worth...I think I have a strong sense of myself, and identity...'* [352]

It seemed that Grace's subjective sense of her own height could change in a moment according to the social circumstances:

Grace: *'...most of the time I don't feel my height...and then suddenly I will realise that I am feeling tall...it is in those sort of situations...'*

Anna: *So your subjective height is a good indicator of how well integrated you are feeling at a given time?*

Grace: *I guess it is...yes...[360-363]*

Grace traced her height-related self-consciousness to her adolescence - which we both agreed is often a time when social discomfort and self-consciousness can become uncomfortably focused on some bodily attribute in certain contexts. It turned out that Grace was not alone in respect of having a socially-triggered subjective sense of becoming 'too tall' all of a sudden.

Lydia had a similar subjective body-perception effect:

Lydia: *...so when I feel I don't belong I 'shoot up' as it were, and become very aware of my height and very awkward ...and er...words come out wrong and ...um...I just feel in a way that I wish I wasn't there... [500-2]*

Like Grace she attributed this phenomenon to some negative messages and experiences during her formative years and which also extended to her feeling of being: '*Far too visible, and feeling stupid, or clumsy...*'.

Conversely, what she experienced about herself in a situation where she felt able to belong was that: '*I shrink back to normal size*'.

Mark's sense of himself and his identity seemed to be evoked by his descriptions of his relationship with his home locality, and his '*yearning to go home*'. But he was also aware of a need to orientate himself towards the future, as well as being 'committed' to the present: '*I really feel that for 25 years it has been about looking back...*' later on he said:

Mark: *so I don't want to be remembering all the time, at some point I remember thinking 'You have to commit to the future, you can't always look back'...and there is some truth in that – you cant improve your life by going back in time [...] you just can't recreate that, so I can have whatever I need anywhere, I just have got to make it...[...] but perhaps I am in danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater with 'it is all about the future, forget the past'*

Anna: *Well...maybe there is [a] somehow holding both, being orientated towards the future whilst committed to the present, but with a really strong sense of what that is built on..*

Mark: *And where that lives in me... [405-15]*

Mark's awareness of this embodiment, of: '*where that lives in me*' seems to acknowledge an inner 'belonging-connection' to his own personal history, and to the cultural history in which that is 'rooted'.

Behaviour, strategies and physical effects.

The embodiment of belonging and not-belonging, in terms of physical manifestations and of behavioural strategies, is the focus of this category of themes. Therefore some of the themes are of a 'doing' genre, and some of them more of a 'feeling' or 'sensing' genre.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Sophia	The need to leave 'home'	- <i>To be my authentic self I had to leave</i>	[185]
	Adapting to try and belong	- <i>I will try to speak like this</i>	[49]
	Connecting through music	- <i>The music is in my blood – the effect is incredible</i>	[238]
	Heart-felt sense of belonging	- <i>In my heart I was connected to the place, and to the music of the place</i>	[233]
Lydia	Community belonging	- <i>You have that sense that it is safe</i>	[121]
	Living without 'belonging'	- <i>What I have learned to do is to become invisible</i>	[90-1]
	Belonging and receiving	- <i>With belonging you are also being able to receive</i>	[496]
	Embodiment of belonging	- <i>A sense of opening out</i>	[497]
Helen	Embodiment of not-belonging	- <i>With not-belonging you do close off</i>	[108]
	Embodiment of feeling 'accepted'	- <i>like there is more room to breathe</i>	[117]
Eleanor	Belonging through 'doing'	- <i>If I had a purpose I could stay there [cont. overleaf]</i>	[24]
	Traumatic bonding attachment	- <i>The fracturing is staggering</i>	[271]
		- <i>it is guilt or shame-like I am contaminated</i>	[274]
		- <i>I couldn't stop being sick</i>	[107-8]
Mark	Anxiety	- <i>I couldn't stop being sick</i>	[50]
	Un-blocking creative energy	- <i>The anxiety is caused by me thinking about it</i>	[32]
		- <i>suddenly this bit in the middle had totally unblocked</i>	[33]
		- <i>I could feel this kind of creative urge..</i>	[34]
Grace	Feeling of belonging	- <i>A bit like relaxation really, familiarity</i>	[203-4]
		- <i>I know where I am and what I am doing</i>	[203]
Grace	Practicing a new way of being	- <i>I don't have to behave in a certain way to fit in</i>	[203]
	Challenge of new situations	<i>That broke through a lot of barriers</i>	[204]
		- <i>Doing scary things feels wonderful when I succeed</i>	[429]

Text box 5.10

Sophia has already identified that the strategy of leaving home was in support of her 'authentic self'. This action embarked her upon the first of many journeys, in the course of which she told me about some of her attempts to find a better 'fit' for herself. Sophia explains how she tried to identify herself with the people of the island where she had felt so 'at home' by trying to adopt their particular way of speaking:

Sophia: *I thought - "I will try to speak like this because it is so nice.." but one thing is that I could not and the second thing is that it felt ridiculous because there was no reason to talk in this way, because I did not grow up there...so **this was also a reminder that I was not belonging to that place.** [48-51]*

In spite of her difficulties in being fully accepted as 'belonging' at the social level on the island, Sophia's body still seemed to respond to the landscape and to its culture in a very spontaneous way, she told me how the music of the island seemed to have the same effect upon her as it had upon the islanders themselves:

Sophia: *It has the same effect! It is unbelievable...so **in this aspect I was feeling totally connected to them** and I was not a foreigner...no way...I was exactly the same!*

Anna: *...That has the feel of something quite ... sacred ... something very deep anyway...*

Sophie: ***It feels to me like something in the blood.** [241-44]*

The embodiment of belonging and not-belonging for Lydia was not so linked to a particular place. Of the place she now lives she acknowledged: '*...I don't feel at home in it*'. Lydia remembered how she had once felt with a strong sense of belonging in a community: '*...you have that sense that it is safe..*'. As she continued to focus inwardly on this she reflected:

Lydia: *I think...er...**belonging...um...you just take a big sort of sigh...and...relax...and a sense of...opening...out...and then also of being able to receive...because I think when you feel that you don't belong – you close off...I think I do...I close off a lot...and my whole body becomes** [too tall]. [495-8]*

Lydia realised that in that 'closed-off' state she was often: '*only relating to myself in terms of my head...*' perhaps closing-off to herself as well as to the situation. From within her sense of that closed-off place she describes something else:

Lydia: *'Yeah...and **what I want is for people to..**[see me] **...there is this desperate urge to 'break out'...I want to break out of this...**' [515-6]*

During my conversation with Helen I had remarked upon how noticeably her body posture changed when she moved from talking about the anxiety she had felt in her country of origin to the experience of being more relaxed in the country to which she had first migrated.

Helen: *That is stress...**that is anxiety**...and then when I am talking for instance about going back to [country] **I feel like my body relaxes...***

Anna: *...when you went back to [country] it is like...your shoulders expanded...like ...it looks like there is more room to breathe? [93-4]*

Helen went on to describe how she felt accepted and '*good enough*' with the people she had chosen to live, and that she had felt 'judged' and that whatever she did was not good enough for her family. Having described

herself as a 'free-bird' another significant bodily-felt facet of experience described by Helen was of freedom - the positive dimension of 'Not-belonging' - but also of not being encumbered by belongings

Helen: *Right now I am visualising just basically...like a sky...*

Anna: *Like ... stretching your wings?*

Helen: *Yes...so it is very much kind of leaving everything behind means you don't have to worry about it...or...and the second step is packing all my stuff up and moving...[...] **it is so nice not to be attached to things** [...] I know people who would never leave behind their stuff...they really get attached to their stuff! And for me it was really important to realise that I can actually be free from this stuff... [190-196]*

In terms of her experience of *belonging* Helena was clear that, for her it was bound in to her 'purpose' for being in a particular place and the intention behind that:

Helen: *If we are talking about belonging...**it is belonging to your own beliefs or to what you do...so let's say if I went to do [work] in [country]...the purpose why I am there, and the will – the wanting to do it is enough for me'** [200-3]*

This felt like a distinct 'facet' or dimension of belonging to me – the '*belonging of doing*' or of human *occupation* (Collins, 2010) and of participation (Heron and Reason, 1997).

Eleanor's awareness of her bodily-felt experiencing in differing social contexts was very acute – she summarised the cumulative effect of a number of particularly difficult situations as: '*the fracturing is staggering – the physical effects on me is staggering...*'. She described the physical effects of her rather traumatic 'connection' with her parents:

*the feeling that I have to do with them is **in my body and it is quite a sort of visceral thing**, whenever I am with them if they come to stay or if I go to visit them occasionally, I go sort of feeling positive and ok and by the end of it - it is always this feeling of intense guilt and it is just horrible. **I wouldn't describe it as pain it is more, sort of very physical, it is to do with guilt and wanting it to go away and wanting to get away.** [264-267]*

Culturally informed meanings, values and collective identity themes.

In this section I consider what themes have clustered around ideas about 'the collective'.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Sophia	Being an 'outsider'	-I was 'a foreigner' for the local people	[44]
	Being an 'insider'	- I know what is under each and every stone	[85]
Lydia	Part of a collective 'story'	- I know that I am part of this	[100]
	Intergenerational patterns	-It also happened to her...a generational thing	[144]
	Stories connect us	- You can't connect if you don't know who these people are and they don't know who you are.	[263-4]
Eleanor	Cultural 'stereotypes'	- My father is [Nationality] and emotional	[200]
		- My mother is [Nationality] and very cold	[206]
Diane	Cultural Identity	-Your language, your country – even religion, links with identity	[32-3]
		– Knowing who you are links with personality and confidence	[23-4]
		- Some things you are raised with in your country- you always carry them with you...	[132-3]
	Two faces of National Identity	- it makes people go away from each other	[73-74]
		[cont. overleaf]	[59- 60]

Mark	Cultural values (regional)	- If you respect your own, you are able to respect other peoples national identity as well - It is important to have some values...related to national identity	[122] [99]
	Sustainability	- Work hard, keep your head down - Something sustainable and nurturing about that.	
Grace	Family loyalties	- My mother made a great deal about loyalty	[86-7] [113]
	Collective trauma of war	-It would make sense to my feeling of him not-belonging	

Text box 5.11

Sophia's travels and experiences of living in various countries and cultures had given her a sense of herself as an 'outsider'. Interestingly, although she had embarked upon her journeys motivated by a feeling of not-belonging to her place of origin, on her return after many years away - even though the personal difficulties of her sense of not-belonging within her family remained to some extent – she felt more solidly and warmly connected to the collective *story* of her own country and its people.

Lydia's way of creating connections with individual others and with groups was through 'stories'. The personal and mundane exchanges of 'storying' can happen, for instance in a shop if both parties are interested to engage in that way; however there are also larger meta-narratives of lived experience in which it becomes possible to see where one's own uniqueness fits in or resonates with other people's (Mc Adams, 1997). Here she is talking about the value of the research method of 'auto-ethnography':

Lydia: *I mean you know the story-telling thing is [...]...but **hearing other peoples stories**, however much people say 'oh auto-ethnography is a waste of time', or 'it is lazy or is self-important...' **it is so important to hear other peoples stories and to know that you are not on your own...it is not that you want to all band together but just to know that you are not the only person...** [248-250]*

For Diane the matter of identifying and being identified with the collective of Nation was a central concern - but it was not without 'paradox' for her – a paradox which she guessed also was present in herself. Diane's personal experience and her values informed her that respect for one's own culture and national identity automatically engendered a respect for other people's – however she could also see that this was not always the case and that the opposite could also be true, it seems that identity can have 'two faces' (Maalouf, 1998) - Diane felt this might be to do with the issue of 'power':

Diane: *I think that this is the problem because then **there are power problems here**, because ...yeah...**there are different nations and if one invades the other so the other one has to defend itself**, I know...I understand the consequence of this as well...I mean **this idea isn't just positive, there are negatives as well...** [183-6]*

Mark was really aware of how strongly his sense of himself and his positive feelings of belonging could be orientated towards his own past. Although he felt that he needed to commit to the present, it was in his early group belonging-experiences, and the culture in which they were formed that for him created a sense of cultural 'heritage' which for Mark was configured as a source of stability or strength: -

Mark: *'...that sense of living in the past, like living in your heritage if you like – if it is not [there] – I*

am sure that must contribute to that sense of flimsiness...' [427-8]

Interpretative or philosophical themes.

This final section takes up the broader propositional or philosophical themes which emerged from my IPA treatment of these conversations. They feel particularly fruitful to me and they also create the basis of my linking of similarities and differences between the two groups of conversations discussed in this chapter.

Person	Theme	Paraphrased extract	[line]
Lydia	The role of stories	<i>-Big stories tell how things work, personal stories connect.</i>	[254-5]
Helen	Belonging of beliefs	<i>- It is belonging to your own beliefs</i>	[200]
	Belief and action	<i>- seeing the sense of what you do,</i>	[207]
	Freedom in relationship	<i>-You cannot own a person, even if you are married</i>	
Diane	Globalisation	<i>- globalisation....can it work?</i>	[299]
Mark	Sustainability	<i>- Looking to the future whilst acknowledging the past</i>	[281]
Grace	Transcendence of		[410]
	belonging	<i>-To some extent it has a transcendent feeling</i>	[479]

Text box 5.12

The way that *stories* serve to create a sense of ‘belonging’ and are also active in the construction of knowledge - of knowing how one’s own story connects to others and also the meta-narratives of ‘how things work’ - was one of the many important insights I gained by working with Lydia’s transcript.

Helena’s ‘*belonging through doing*’ and her sense of the importance of *believing in* and *valuing* what you are doing and seeing it as a contribution to the collective endeavour sets up an interesting line of thought about the role of creativity and occupation in terms of belonging.

Diane had many propositions about the positive connotations of National Identity, as well as being sensitive to the historical pitfalls and problems of this kind of ‘belonging’; she was concerned that the complexity of the phenomenon of ‘globalisation’ is something that ‘*we are not ready for!...*’

Mark’s exploration of the way that he positions himself to his own past, and his sense of rootedness in a particular situation which is locally, culturally and time specific (both in terms of his own development and in the particular epoch of which he spoke) gave food for thought on the ‘structures’ and the ‘processes’ of belonging and of not-belonging.

Finally Grace’s focusing description of a specific incidence of a good belonging-experience was reflected upon in the following way:

Grace: *...and it was soit was a huge pleasure to be part of that group, with freedom to come and go...there are obviously political things that come and go, but nothing had intruded... into that ...erm...[...] but that is all that that is...when I felt a huge pleasure from the feeling of belonging to that particular group...if it is that group...no ... to that particular moment... Yeah, it was that moment, it was being with other people, in that moment... [462-7]*

Her reflection on the quality of ‘*freedom to come and go*’ feels vital – as does **the sense of an experience which is intrinsically bound to a place, a group and a moment.**

This new moment – this time in our research conversation - became the reflexive ground from which emerged the following proposition regarding the ‘transcendent’ nature of belonging:

Grace: ...*what it brings about is a feeling of...it is a transcendentI mean to some extent it is a transcendent feeling I think...isn't it? ...Belonging...* [476-9]

5.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have begun to identify some key features of belonging and not-belonging as social categories and also key qualities of *belonging* and *not-belonging* as experiences. In addition to the themes already encountered in the last chapter – such as ‘safety’, the significance of relationship and attachment, and the ‘story-ing’ of a sense of belonging - I have begun to get a sense of the embodiment of belonging and not-belonging from the data presented here. Specific issues concerning anxiety, depression and addiction have been flagged-up, along with those of trauma and loss. Group and individual identity appears to be an important matter which is contingent on belonging and also on not-belonging (respectively). I have condensed and summarised themes in the text-box overleaf, this time in terms of a dialectic between the objective situational (categorical) and subjective experiential aspects of the two dimensions of belonging and of not-belonging.

Objective and *Subjective* dimensions of belonging and not-belonging.

Belonging (Situation) - <i>Belonging</i> (experiencing)		Not-Belonging (Sit.)– <i>Not-belonging</i> (Experiencing)	
Home	<i>Safety Feeling received and welcomed</i>	Being ‘homeless’ Traumatic attachment	<i>Feeling unsafe Wounded-ness Shame Feeling judged</i>
A place to be			
Being in nature	<i>Body relaxing Watchful</i>	Relational ruptures Bereavement	<i>Separation Loss</i>
Responding to landscape	<i>Aesthetic response Authentic self.</i>	Social isolation	<i>Feeling like an outsider Conscious of ‘self’ and of ‘others’</i>
Participation in activities	<i>Feeling a part of...</i>		
Being in a couple relationship	<i>Love connection</i>	Developing strategies	<i>Trying to fit in Feeling inauthentic Feeling ‘constrained’</i>
Group identity	<i>‘We are’</i>		
Having ‘roots’	<i>Feeling connected</i>	Individual identity	<i>‘I am’</i>
Conforming to culture	<i>Participating in its ‘Story’</i>	Seeking authenticity	<i>Sense of self and own values</i>

Text Box 5.13

CHAPTER SIX

Individual interior. Upper Left Hand Quadrant.(ULH)

*“The sacred stillness of your brilliant heart
has the myriad wonders masqueraded.
But if you knew this secret from the start,
Then you'd have quit this Game before you played it.”*

— Leventhal (2012)

6.0 Introduction.

In this chapter I present the data from my inquiries into the inner subjective experiencing of four individuals. In the first section 6.1 the individual in question is me and the mode of inquiry is Gendlin's Thinking At the Edge (TAE). I undertook this TAE 'project', focusing on my own experiences of belonging and not-belonging, in December 2011; a condensed version of the whole thing is presented here.

In section 6.2 I present three IPA analyses of *focusing conversations* with three research collaborators – 'Arthur', 'Ruth' and 'William'. It is significant to note that these contemplative inquiries are dialogues rather than monologues (as is the case with my TAE writing extracts) and that they arise out of the inter-subjective experience of our conversations. In this sense, the experiential 'border' between one individual and another can be said to be blurred. With a focus on inter-subjective resonance (Decety and Ickes, 2011) it becomes clear that the conceptual distinctions made between the upper and lower interior quadrants (individual and collective) are permeable in this interface.

6.1 PART ONE: *An Existential Quest for Belonging using 'TAE'.*

What follows are extracts (indented passages) of the writing that I did during my TAE project on belonging and 'home'.

The first step of TAE is to locate and connect with the body's 'felt-sense' (Gendlin, 1978) concerning an experience which connects to the 'question' or point of interest, and then to '*...write a few paragraphs from your felt-sense in a very rough way*' (Lou, 2004:82). This process of connecting with the body and its resonant capacity to inform and unfold experiential meaning is returned to through each step of the TAE process. My focus in this section is again in my own experience of belonging.

This is what I wrote:

STEP ONE: A felt sense.

*Just now, when [name] mentioned Sheringham **my feeling flowed towards** the idea of it and my body seemed to say: 'Yes, that would be like going home..' A part of me flowed towards the idea and memories of being in Sheringham, it is a warm and a full-feeling, but it doesn't stay there. Being in Sheringham doesn't equal an exact sense of belonging for me... I find I am inclined **immediately to flow elsewhere**, as if searching for something: towards what does my own 'fundamental need to belong flow?'*

And what is at the ebb tide of this flow? the bit of me that retreats backwards, away from - and then I wonder: towards what do I retreat? – another home? Is it 'inwards' or 'outwards' or just in some other direction?

My bodily experience of belonging feels like a moving tide which fills and empties, but is never still – and is never quite full and never quite empty. Like the symbol of the TAO, in which a point of light emerges centrally and encircles the growing darkness, whilst at the same time a point of darkness penetrates the waxing light and encircles it as they steadily flow - one into the other, in the constant renewal of both dark and light... But my home-seeking flow is not uniform like that in its filling and emptying, it seems to depend on a great many external variables, like who I am with, where I am, what is happening also on the inside of me, how much of 'me' is actually present and how much is pre-occupied with other things.

*So in terms of people: 'whom' do I flow towards in a belonging sense? My children ... but it is as if they have a belonging with me, so that they can flow and fit around me rather than the other way round. **It seems that there is some 'need' on the edge of this tide**, and I do not want to take my 'need' to my children, rather I approach them so that they can bring their belonging need to me. It feels lovely that they do belong with me, although again – **it is a continuous but not a static thing, it moves because they also need to flow away from me too**. But their place is always certain- **they always have a place 'in' me to come home to**.*

So is that also true for me and my mother? Though both my parents are a long time dead, I do feel my 'place' with my mother and father in an embodied way. I am a satellite that can 'dock' easily I and repeatedly at the 'home' of their being. It does not feel contested either by them or by me. And there is a certain peacefulness inside that contact - But neither do I stay there. It is as if I am also looking for another belonging – some 'where' else.

The next part of Step One in TAE involves finding a specific example- a particular *instance* – of when the felt-sense knowledge of the question arose and we write that example down in what is referred to as a '*facet of experience*' (Gendlin, 1971:65).

FACET 1: *Going to spend Christmas with my grown up children and feeling all of the pleasure and anticipation of meeting and conversing, of sharing, being creative and involved with these people with whom there is no question that I 'do belong'. And yet quite quickly once I am there a feeling comes that I am now making efforts to 'fit in', to meet expectations, to balance the*

status quo, so that the surface level interactions between us (which remain warm and equable) hide a deeper sense in me of 'this is not my place' so that I am glad to eventually head for home. But then, once home, there is a different kind of restlessness, being at home is less effort but my longing for a belonging contact carries a new pull towards a 'connection' that is still implicitly there but is not yet discerned clearly.

STEP TWO: Sentences and something paradoxical:

From within this writing about a specific instance TAE suggests that we now identify the central 'crux' of the experience as a short sentence. In this instance I found four short sentences that seemed to need to be considered, I then worked these into one sentence that also begins to express a paradox.

1. Belonging has a flowing movement that is never quite still
3. At the edge of this tide there is a need for something.
4. Belonging seems to quest for something.
5. The longing in belonging seems to flow towards and away from contact –

Sentence: The feeling of un-belonging has an edge of questing for something that belonging doesn't quite meet –

I seem to have been thinking about belonging as something static and solid, I have even talked about it in terms of a 'resource', but when I inquire into it using my own felt-sense in this way I find that for me it has a restless flow of un-belonging and partial belonging.

Gendlin suggests that when we come up against a paradoxical formulation that nevertheless 'feels true' – we are engaging with the edge of what is 'known' and yet remains unknown. Experience is full of paradox, and it does not respond to 'unitary' or even dualistic modes of thought – paradoxically experience can be 'this' and also 'not this'. Science usually pulls back from such a contention, in the unitary mode of thought this cannot be, because it is not logical and therefore *it does not make sense*. Paradoxes are exciting because they compel us to find a bigger way of comprehending something – a bigger kind of 'sense' or 'truth'. Gendlin (1997a:xi) describes this as: 'what is more than logical' .

This is an important juncture in terms of my project, the word 'questing' first emerged here and my original idea of belonging as a 'state' or a 'resource' – something which we can either have or not have (and ideally *ought* to have) began to be loosened as I continued to work in this way.

STEP THREE.

Step three begins with the sentence from the previous step. Two or three key meaning-words are highlighted and then taken out of the sentence to be replaced by a [...] gap. At this point we can check in a dictionary for their various 'public meanings' only to find that what we actually want them to mean *in this instance* is not quite satisfied by any of those definitions.

I start with the sentence:

The sense of un-belonging quests for something that belonging doesn't quite meet.

(unquestionable belonging becomes questioned as it is experienced)

And I remove the underlined words:

a) The sense of un-belonging [...] for something that belonging doesn't quite [...]

Dictionary definitions:

Quests: 1. A long or difficult search

2. An expedition by a knight to carry out a specific task.

Meet: 1. Come together in the same time and place;

2. See or be introduced to someone.

3. Touch or join - *Make Contact with*

4. Experience a situation.

6. Satisfy a requirement.

*Actually, in this context I want the word **Quest** to mean the longest search for something that may only be found in part, where the process of searching is more vital than the possible goal.*

*The quest is that aspect of searching which **meets a need other than the perceived objective of the search**.*

STEP FOUR.

The next task in Step Four is to write '*fresh, linguistically unusual sentences*', this is an invitation to the felt-sense and our creativity. It is rather like the experience of being given permission by an art teacher to 'stop trying to *draw the horse...* and just let the pencil and paper create *your impression of the horse*'. I wrote:

Not belonging seems to have an essential task to search for a contactful belonging place in which the movement of searching is as essential as the fulfilment of contact or belonging: and which anyway only seems to be briefly satisfied...

- Un-belonging has a task to experience belonging, but the task is not fulfilled by the experience...
- Un-belonging has a need to meet that belonging does not quite fulfil

I want these words to mean:

Meet = to touch, be in contact with, to find a place with, to be fulfilled by...

Need = a need is Some thing that is essential.

Or maybe...: a need is something that must be done (is tasked)

And also: a need is something that is currently unfulfilled

Therefore it seems that there is something ***essential*** about the quest for belonging. The word *essential* means 'necessary or needed' (thus equivalent to need) but I have another sense of the word from a **phenomenological** perspective, that it refers to an **essence of being** – something ontologically necessary – *necessary to be...* this feels like the **existential dimension of belonging** and the state of not-belonging. *My felt-sense likes this resonance.*

In medieval stories knights went off on quests – **the point was the quest itself rather than its realisation.**

[Suddenly, whilst doing these exercises with TAE the words begin to behave in a different way to normal. It is as if they are chessmen on a board which normally are constrained to a fixed number of possible moves (meanings). Suddenly they come alive! Are 3-D, full-size, numinous and begin to make moves and reveal meanings quite independently from my original intention. It feels as though I am in the magical castle of 'Hogwarts' and the staircases are moving me to where I need to go, before I actually know myself where that is.....There is a magic hidden within Hendricks and Gendlin's idea! It feels like my brain is moving in unusual ways doing this exercise.]

STEP FIVE.

Step five proceeds by expanding on some of the key resonant words or phrases, opening them and unpacking the layers of their possible meanings until I can find '*what I want them to mean here*' elaborating upon the limitations of public meanings.

The 'task' is the element of a quest that touches, through searching, something that is essential and must be done about the unfulfilled element of the quest – however the quest must also remain unfulfilled so that this essential process-element of the quest can continue to be fulfilled.

The quest for belonging is an essential task of Being therefore it must remain essentially unsatisfied for Being to continue its quest.

I have already expanded on the words 'essential' and 'task' and 'quest' but I feel I need to expand on two more words here: **Being** and **Unsatisfied**.

Being = 1 *The nature or essence of a person*

2 *A real or imaginary living creature or entity, especially an intelligent one.*

Unsatisfied = *Un-contented, unpleased, unfulfilled, still hungry.*

I have been imagining, right from the outset of my research questions and propositions, that the state of un-belonging is probably less desirable although perhaps unavoidable at times, than the state of belonging. By privileging the state of Belonging I have missed something *essential* about the experience of not-belonging...I will turn my attention to the felt sense of not-belonging rather than having my focus on the object of the quest (grail) – of belonging.

At this point in the project I began to change my focus from the 'goal' (or grail) of belonging to the related experience of not-belonging:

*My felt-sense of **not-belonging has an uneasy edginess with an anxious-sad-feeling in my body; there is a push and a pull feeling, part of me wanting to run away and to become invisible to the possibility of belonging** – of fitting in here or there, whilst another part yearns to be seen and welcomed and accepted, as I am, without question. I know that I am better at being invisible than letting myself be seen – it feels more dangerous somehow to **risk being seen as something that I am not – to be mis-taken or mis-placed in the wrong kind of way.** A part of me is actually scared that if I were to settle for 'fitting in', as if that were enough in itself, **I might suffocate or die** – that it could be **safer to stay loose** and on the edges...to keep looking for a better fit...but how would I know it if I saw it? Or more importantly how would I know if I felt it? How do I recognise the feeling of belonging when not-belonging is so much more familiar, and somehow safer?*

This last sentence was interesting for me and I was surprised to see what I had written...that it is somehow *safer* to not-belong than to be belonging in some fixed but *mis-taken* way - however much I may wish to belong. The TAE process was continuing to open up the constraints that had previously confined how I thought about this issue - revealing this illogic feeling-truth was exciting in a way that I had not anticipated.

STEP SIX and SEVEN.

These two steps involve a return to direct experience, collecting more facets of experience, what Gendlin (1997a:xx) calls '*instances of itself*'(IOFI). Each specific experience has something to contribute to the whole, and is both a facet of the whole and an example of itself . Patterns from each facet are identified

and distilled into sentences in which key words or phrases are underlined. I have not included all the facets of experience here, but the patterns are listed below.

Patterns from Facets:

- Crossing a cultural border is exciting but runs the inherent risk of being challenged
- Social contexts require a strategic response to 'fit in' somehow or else to 'disappear'
- There is a pull to conform to social expectations, but this can also feel like a scary risk to something essential inside my self.
- The pleasure of moving into contact is followed by the appearance of gaps which have to be moved around or away from

STEP EIGHT.

The next step involves 'Crossing the Patterns' (Gendlin, 2004) looking for the ways in which these patterns are implicit of each other – how they link and are related to each other. For example:

Crossing borders happens because conforming implies a risk to something essential

Moving into contact is exciting but it has inherent risks

Conforming to social expectations is a way to fit in but gaps appear and must be moved away from.

STEP NINE.

We are then invited to 'write freely' from all that we have experienced so far.

I see is that there is something inside me that feels put at risk in the context of contact within social situations - perhaps even in the more familiar situations of warm intimate family relationships. What is this deeply hidden, shy and vulnerable aspect of 'self' that seeks to protect itself by one means or another? And what is it protecting itself from in this elusive way?

I try not to look too directly at all these patterns- but rather look past or through them in the way that is necessary for perceiving the image in those 'hologram' pictures which conceal (and also reveal) a different, larger 3D image. Has this inner 'something else' got both a 'being nature' and a 'questing nature'? It feels like it can be a 'particle' or a 'wave', to use a sub-atomic metaphor – what can be like a particle or a wave? And what does that metaphor mean inside myself? What does it resonate with in terms of my felt-sense here, and why is it so exciting in this careful moment now as I hold it in my body?

Perhaps my inner something has a being aspect that wants to make the patterns of social contact with others and which finds many strategies for doing this but which also experiences itself as vulnerable in so doing and which equally has an inherent need to quest for something which becomes difficult or impossible in the fixed or patterned structures of relatedness.

So where do these 'gaps' appear from? - might they be created by the same part of my being that seeks to avoid becoming 'structure-bound' in its essential being-need to become? I will call this inner something 'Vulnerability' as a way of identifying it, though this actually seems to describe a quality of it rather than an essence.

At this point in my inquiry I was feeling energetically very charged up. It felt like being on a treasure hunt – finding cryptic clues and running on to new check points. I felt that each step was achieving something so satisfying that I was almost tempted to stop and think I had got what I was looking for. But I kept going because the process itself was so fascinating and exciting.

STEP TEN.

This step involves choosing terms from the patterns and then representing those terms by letters – in preparation for the algebraic logic of the next steps in order to begin the process of linking them into structures. This is done by first of all using the word 'IS' in order to test their *semantic equivalence* or 'sameness'.

A = Vulnerability seeks safety in belonging to structure

B = Being needs to become

C = Gaps are implicit in structured (patterned) contact

Linking:

- Vulnerability seeking safety in belonging to structure **IS** (B) because Being needs to become
- Vulnerability seeking safety in belonging to structure **IS** (C) because gaps are implicit in structured contact.

OR:

- Because Being Needs to Become, gaps **ARE** implicit in structured contact.

STEP ELEVEN.

This relating exercise is continued in step eleven by testing whether this relatedness is *an inherent* or *contextual* relationship. In this way I establish how each essential facet of the matter in question is inherently and causally related each other thing, until a logically 'stable' structure begins to emerge. After I write each statement I look at it and use both my resonant feeling-sense and my capacity for logic to ask '*Is this true?*' And if it is not quite true (or logical) – what would be a truer formulation?

- Vulnerability seeking safety in belonging to structure (A) IS INHERENTLY (B) because Being needs to become..
- Vulnerability seeking safety in belonging to structure(A) IS INHERENTLY (C) because gaps are implicit in structured contact which IS INHERENTLY (B) because Being needs to become

This sentence now feels both confusing and pregnant – it feels as though it has a loop, rather like the Lemniscate symbolising infinity, or the symbol of the TAO suggesting infinite exchange and transformation of energies. I need to unpack the relatedness held in the IS and INHERENT links in order to more fully understand how this relationship works, even though my felt-sense likes this resonance very much.

*So what is it about ‘vulnerability’s’ quest for safety in belonging that has an inherently emergent ‘gap’ loosening the possibility of staying comfortably in a place of socially patterned or relationally structured contact? What is it about ‘safety’ that is not ‘safe’? There is still a missing aspect here that I sense is connected to the element: **Being inherently needs to Become** – here is the bit that holds the implicit ‘more’ for me. The meaning behind this term for me is **‘Transcendence’** (from Step Four) the quest behind the quest which on the surface looks like a quest to find the right place to be comfortably able to belong (and indeed it does operate at this level) is a more esoteric but essential quest to become ‘more’ or to transcend what was previously possible. I need to build this idea into the linked terms so that it becomes part of the logic system here.*

B = Being has a *transcendent* need to become

I also need to un-pack the term ‘vulnerability’ or at least to find its logic linkage to the other terms here.

- Vulnerability IS INHERENTLY being in becoming (or perhaps)
- Being in becoming IS INHERENTLY vulnerable

That seems to resonate with something: if **‘vulnerability’ is actually a quality of Being** rather than a thing on its own, then the two terms are interchangeable in differing contexts. There is something about the juxtaposition of ‘transcendence and vulnerability’, and of ‘being and becoming’ and of **‘patterned structured contact** and the **unease (unsatisfied edge) of implicitly emerging gaps’**. I need a new element here to build back in the specific details from earlier steps:

D = Emergent gaps are implicit in patterned structures.

Emergent gaps implicit in patterned structures (D) IS BECAUSE (C) Being needs to become.

STEP TWELVE

Step Twelve involves choosing ‘permanent terms’ representative of the essential meanings distilled thus far. These are then ‘inter-locked’ using the same form of algebraic logic such that they begin to formulate a structured ‘Theory’ regarding the underlying workings of this aspect of experience.

I feel that my main term is ESSENTIAL BEING:

Essential Being's transcendent need to become IS its seeking safety in the creation of structured patterned contact AND IS why implicit gaps emerge.

I need to check back for other vital bits from earlier steps – obvious ones being the terms 'belonging' and 'not-belonging'!

Belonging **IS** EB's transcendent need to become in the creation of structured patterned contact;

AND

Not-belonging **IS** EB's transcendent need to become in the emergence of implicit gaps

Now these relationships appear to be stable in the EQUIVALENCE of EB's transcendent need to become expressed in both the creation of structured contacts and the emergence of gaps. The emergence of a gap has a further implication which is not expressed here – the unmet questing edge of un-belonging... however this is also the movement back into the first 'equation' so that I feel there is an inherent stability to this proposition.

STEPS THIRTEEN and FOURTEEN.

These are the 'Theory-testing' steps. Once we have a formal proposition it can be 'tried out' in diverse conditions or fields of practice to see if it still holds true. Since my proposition is an ontological one rather than something arising from a particular field of practice, it should hold true anywhere if it has a strong enough logic-structure. This exercise can also reveal small weaknesses or adjustments that may be needed in order to refine the new theory.

We write the sentence: *'Something about ...(a situation or topic) is like(my theory)...'*

I will start with the topic of **creativity**: 'The process of creativity is EB's transcendent need to become through *both* belonging and not-belonging (structures and gaps)

Relationships: 'are expressions of EB's transcendent need to become through *both* structures and gaps. (belonging and not-belonging)'

Religion: 'is an expression of EB's transcendent need to become through both structures and gaps.'
[This is interesting! Because it doesn't feel wholly true...orthodoxies are certainly structured...but they do not inherently invite or welcome the emergence of gaps...of change or of becoming something new...but I feel that this doesn't exactly undermine my theory, rather it illuminates something about religious and other orthodoxies!]

In point of fact the linking aspect of 'becoming' in my proposition may also be implicit in the word 'structure'. David Bohm (1980:151-2) explained that the word structure has its root in the Latin verb 'struere' meaning to build, grow or evolve - he wrote:

'This word is now treated as a noun, but the Latin suffix 'ura' originally meant 'the action of doing something'. To emphasise that we are not referring mainly to a finished product or to an ultimate result we may introduce a new verb 'to structate', meaning to create and dissolve what are now called 'structures'(my emphasis).

Perhaps a single formulation of my proposition could read:

Belonging and not-belonging express Essential Being's transcendent need to become by the process of *structur-ing* (structures with emergent gaps).

Step Fourteen suggests that, having road-tested the theory, we return with it to the field in which it began, to see what effect it has and whether it has something to contribute there. When I consider where my quest began, in the practice of psychotherapy this deep existential proposition feels rather far removed and abstract. How could it be helpful to someone suffering with social anxiety, low mood states, depression or substance misuse due to feelings of social alienation to learn that their alienation was just part of 'Being's transcendent need to become'? How might it contribute to theory or practice if I were to suggest that it is *as fundamentally essential* for human beings *not* to belong as it is for them to belong at the existential level? At that point in my research journey I was not able to begin formulating answers to those questions – and felt rather dismayed by where I had found myself. I had to be content with the idea that I was perhaps just holding a 'piece' of a larger puzzle, and hope that something more of its 'wholeness' would become clearer as I continued following its unfolding.

6.2 PART TWO: *Individual focusing and contemplative inquiries.*

Introduction: In this section I widen the scope of my inquiry into the subjective inner domain of 'individual' belonging and not-belonging by presenting the experiences shared by three of my research collaborators. I have taken transcripts of our contemplative and focusing conversations and again analysed them using the IPA method. I use the same basic framework³¹ of theme-clustering into super-ordinate categories however in this chapter each collaborator is presented separately, and all the categories are collated into a single text box.

6.2.1 'Arthur'.

The following contribution comes from a deeply contemplative collaborative inquiry transcribed from a research conversation which was conducted via 'Skype'. The practicalities of Arthur's offer to contribute to my research were slightly complicated because he lives in another country. We were already accustomed to speaking to each other via this electronic medium so he suggested sharing 'an official' research conversation following on from our previous informal discussions. In response I sent him the *Information for Participants* sheet which he duly returned with an emailed consent form. The choice to proceed in this manner via Skype did raise some ethical concerns for me³² which were acknowledged and which do become apparent in our

31 Six categories of super-ordinate themes - see chapter five page 84

32 My main ethical concern both before and during our conversation was to do with support for a research participant who discloses sensitive or personal material. In this instance Arthur was well aware of the issues, and is well supported in his personal and professional life.

conversation due to its high levels of mutual disclosure. It also seemed be the case that the medium of an electronic interface for the exchange in some ways facilitated an interesting additional dimension to our reflexive inquiry into the experiences of our connection and my inquiry into belonging and not-belonging.

The transcript contained three out of the six previously identified clustered super-ordinate theme categories: (2) *Interpersonal*; (3) *Intra-personal*; (6) *Interpretative/philosophical*.

Categories of clustered themes	Paraphrased extracts
<p><i>Inter-personal/relational/social themes:-</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing and being seen. • Exchange • Having or losing connection • Bodily-felt wish to ‘belong’. • Exploring the interface of ‘between’ • Relational modes • Fear of losing connection and fear of closeness <p><i>Intra-personal (self-reflexive awareness) individual identity themes:-</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between the need for connection and depression <p><i>Interpretive /philosophical propositions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The underlying dynamics of connection • We direct your experience of connection towards our own past • And seek what we ‘need’ • Is ‘being with’ always un-reflected ? • Is it possible to stay in un-reflected ‘wave’? 	<p><i>So I can look at the camera, which is for you – and I can look at your image which is for me.</i></p> <p><i>Do I disappear for you when I close my eyes?</i></p> <p><i>...to belong in a felt-sense with the experience of the border of the body – the skin</i></p> <p><i>[contact]...reaching into the interface between self and other.</i></p> <p><i>Either you are looking <u>for something</u> or you are <u>with someone</u>.</i></p> <p><i>I feared that you would disappear</i></p> <p><i>The scariness happens at both ends of that...</i></p> <p><i>Maybe one of the sources of strong depression in my youth...</i></p> <p><i>Either you are looking for something or you are being with someone.</i></p> <p><i>It creates a limitation, or a shift...</i></p> <p><i>We may see something of what we need...but not so much the other person...</i></p> <p><i>Does one lose the sense of ‘being with’ when inquiring into it...? [reflecting]</i></p> <p><i>If so we would have very few genuine contacts...most of the time we are somehow reflecting</i></p> <p><i>‘we do not know how it would end’</i></p>

Text box 6.3 ‘Arthur’

Inter-personal/relational and social themes.

We began by exploring our experience of coming into contact with each other using the camera feedback on our computer screens. Arthur pointed out that there was a discrepancy in the exchanges of *looking, seeing the other and being seen* through this media. The disjuncture was happening because the computer's camera is located above the screen where the image of each other’s faces was being projected. The effect of this was

that when we looked at the image on the screen we did not appear to 'look' at the other person because to do so would involve looking straight at the camera – which in turn would mean *not* looking at the image of the other person's face.

Arthur:...*the problem with this technology is that I either look at you – and actually I look into my camera ... or I look at you, [image] but then we also miss each other.*

Exploring what this actually felt like we considered the transaction of 'giving and taking' of this particular aspect of creating contact.

Arthur: '*...so there is a way that I can look at the camera- which is [reassuring] for you, and a looking at your image - which is [reassuring] for me...*'.

This is an interesting reflection on the exchange - and intimacy- of just making eye contact with another person. In this case Arthur felt that he was *giving something* to me (reassurance of his attention) by consciously choosing to let me see that *he was looking at me* - giving the impression of direct eye contact when he looked at the camera. At the same time he felt that he was taking or *receiving something* which he needed (reassurance that I was still giving him my attention) when he took a glance at the image of my face on the screen. We acknowledged the reciprocity of this and our mutual need for visual 'feedback' as a part of the communication processes happening between us - the wish to '*see and to be seen seeing*'.

This initial contemplation had a deep emotional resonance for both of us, and naming it seemed to create a level of trust in the 'imperfect connection' of the video which had the further effect of deepening and improving the connection between us, thereby facilitating further explorations.

Staying with the relational theme of 'contact', Arthur then directed his attention inwardly towards a felt sense he had and described having a: '*bodily-felt wish to belong*' which he interpreted as a wish for physical contact '*at the border of the body – at the skin*'. This reflection seemed to me to have the feel of a very 'primal' contact or 'attachment-need', perhaps of a new-born infant reaching out for the comfort and safety of a connection - attachment through touch. As Arthur continued into this reflection it became apparent that he was also inwardly making contact with something uncomfortable but rather compelling to him, and which appeared to hold his attention for several moments.

My own inner sensing and witnessing of his process at that moment began to develop an edge of an alarm as I seemed to sense him 'disappearing' slightly into whatever it was. I was concerned that it could be something with a level of trauma associated with it and suddenly I felt *geographically* very far away from him too. I gently tried to 'call' him back into some awareness of the present contact between us by simply 'reflecting' what I was hearing and witnessing :

Anna: *...so there is something about touching, and reaching into that interface between self and other, beyond the skin border...that feels very deep for you...*

Although both of us are very familiar with the processes of counselling, focusing, introspection and therapeutic self-disclosure, I was momentarily concerned about him accessing such a deep place in the service of my research inquiry, particularly since we were so geographically distant. I let Arthur know about this by telling him of my own inner voice which had been saying: ‘...*don’t disappear [Arthur]...*’. But I needn’t have worried, even though it turned out that I had been right about the depth and probable origins of the ‘emptiness’ of the *felt-sense* which he had been connected with. Arthur opened his eyes (in reassurance) but continued with his reflective process. Later he wanted to ask me about what had happened to the contact between us when he had closed his eyes:-

Arthur: *Do you get the impression that I ‘disappear’ then - when I close my eyes to look for my words, or into my experience?.*

I didn’t think that I had had that impression - although it is certainly possible that the fear which I had felt had come from my own need for a continuity of visual contact between us rather than his. Nevertheless, it seemed to me that I had also been *sensing*, through *empathic resonance* (Stolorow and Attwood, 1994; Decety *et al.* 2012) something of what he had been inwardly ‘looking’ at. It seemed to me that I had *inter-subjectively* been sharing something of the quality of the experience with him - without knowing exactly what it referred to.

It impressed me that this might be possible via ‘Skype’, that we were able to ‘tune in’ directly to each other’s experiencing ‘field’ in this way at such distance. But there was something more - from my side this time - to be explored about the fear I had experienced in our connection, this time for me the fear was of *closeness or intimacy*. I answered him:

Anna: *[...] I don’t think I experience you as disappearing, with or without the technology, with or without your eyes open or closed ...in fact for me there is a...and this is to do with me, not you, but there is a scariness of [your] proximity actually ...! So the scariness happens for me at both ends of this... the scariness of you disappearing - although I don’t experience that as happening here now - and of your proximity or closeness...[in this intimate exchange]*

Here I revealed that I am also a little scared at the other ‘pole’ of the contact dialectic, it seemed that as we revealed more and more of our inner *essential vulnerability* to each other, something about the ‘proximity’ or closeness of our contact began to feel a little risky in its intimacy - which was an interesting thing to notice given that several thousand miles and a large ocean lay between our *physical selves*. Arthur’s response showed me that he could be just as responsive to my vulnerability as I had been to his - and this time it was him who gently reminded us both what we were currently engaged in:

Arthur: *Yes, I understand that....well...of course... we are talking now in a very personal way about your thesis issues, aren’t we?... Are you taping this?*

I affirmed that I was still recording, and I inwardly felt very grateful to him for this careful way of re-connecting us both to the present moment, when each of us in turn had been 'finding things' inside ourselves which had seemed to call us back into some (difficult) aspect of our personal histories.

[Intra-personal self-reflexive awareness themes](#)

Arthur wondered if his bodily felt inner sense of a wish for connection might be associated with his early experience of depression:

Arthur: *'...maybe [it was] one of the deepest sources of years of strong depression ... in my youth and early adulthood...'*

This suggestion fitted with the impression that I had had whilst witnessing his process of connecting with this felt sense, I had had the impression of him being close to, and of giving his attention to, a large dark empty 'space' or 'void'- into which I feared that he could 'disappear'. It had been this impression which had prompted me to say '*don't disappear ... [Arthur]*'. It seemed to me that my impression of this dark emptiness related both to something of his experience and also resonated with something that I was personally familiar with and inwardly knew. Arthur also recognised something of this resonance:

Arthur: *...so the connection here may be...something to do with the sense that I have that you perhaps have something similar to work on...as if you could, as if we both could see the void in each other...so it's...(long pause)*

Anna: *...well...thank you for opening into that deep space ... and yes...something that came up in me when I heard you talk of that [felt-sense] was the phrase ' - don't disappear!'.....and yes, there is something in me that also knows about a pull towards disappearing....*

Arthur: *...hmm...thank you for calling me back!...*

Even using the electronic medium of 'Skype', it seemed that, by trusting the embodied *resonance* of our connection, we had created some therapeutic *holding* within which we had both been able to experientially 'look' at our own inner 'void', as well as witnessing - and sharing to some extent - each other's. The safety generated by the mutuality of this particular exchange, in which each of us was sharing something of our vulnerable selves, was supported by a previously established sense of each other's resilience and capacity to do this, but it still felt like we had been quite close to our personal 'edges'. Nevertheless, again by acknowledging the vulnerabilities and checking out with each other how we were doing, we were able to move quite easily on from the sensitivity of that exchange, and to use it as a basis for a more general contemplation about the differing ways of 'being' in relation to another.

[Interpretative and philosophical propositions.](#)

Arthur's capacity for introspection and contemplation is not limited to making generous contributions towards a colleague's research activities. It is grounded in his own personal work and practice. His willingness

to 'give himself' to this inquiry in such a deeply embodied way, felt very precious and a valuable resource as the following observations illustrate:

Arthur: *Well the sense that I make of it is ...that either you are looking for something, or you are with someone And if you are with someone it almost doesn't matter how you look and how you position yourself and what you are looking at and how the other approaches you or how he or she looks at you...it is secondary But if you look for something, then you approach... well in a way of a limited experience, just something which could not be.... Well actually I don't know - but you direct the experience towards your own past...so you limit the...well I don't know - perhaps it isn't even a limitation, it is a shift...and the shift....even then we may look for what we need and perhaps even see something of what we need, but not so much the other person...*

Anna: *Ah... yes – perhaps only as an object....and you are right, that is located in our past or anyway orientated towards the past...you are right, wow! ... That is a profound observation [Arthur.]*

The qualitative distinction that Arthur makes here between 'being with' (some-one) and 'looking for' (something), felt very significant to me. During our focusing-conversation neither of us ventured towards making any links between what we were experiencing or reflecting upon and any psychological or philosophical theories – even though both of us are reasonably familiar with these discourses and in an ordinary conversation we might easily have done so.

Later on, after I had transcribed and analysed the conversation and still later when we had had a chance to further reflect upon its significance, it occurred to me that the distinction he makes is consonant with Martin Buber's (1937/2004) proposition about 'I-Thou' and 'I-It' relating. Furthermore his suggestion that the relational mode of looking for some-thing from the contact with another person is orientated towards one's own personal *past*³³ whilst the more flowing sense of *being with some-one* is based in the present, but orientated towards the future. I will discuss this further with links to theory in chapter eight.

During our contemplative conversation on Skype we tried to stay close to the phenomena of our experiencing, but at a certain point I had rather uncomfortably 'remembered' my role and responsibilities as 'the researcher' in our exchange, and so I had asked Arthur how he was feeling as 'the participant'. What followed was a couple of minutes of me 'talking about' my role and responsibilities as researcher, reminding us both of my duty of care to him as a 'participant'... but I suddenly stopped as I noticed the big change in the mode and the feeling of our connection. I had effectively *objectified* both of us and so rather abruptly changed the way we were being 'with' each other into a way of 'doing' – one unto another:

Anna: *...oh ... this part of the conversation seems like a 'looking for' or even a 'doing unto' it's not a 'being with' anymore...*

Arthur: *Right now you mean? The last two minutes?*

Anna: *Exactly...*

Arthur: *Yes...that is true... one could lose the sense of being with...but only if you ...or not necessarily actually - it depends on how you use your role and your understanding of it of course...there should be a way...that these kinds of 'meta-talk' – that is interesting isn't it? Are there ways that you can inquire into the way you make the contact without losing it?*

Anna: *The being-with?*

Arthur: *The being with...yeah...Or is being with always without a certain...is it always um – flow – always a flow? With no reflective separation? ... But if that were to be true we would have very few genuine contacts... because most of the time we are somehow reflecting and looking for another point of view rather than directly from inside the dialogue...what do you think?*

Arthur's use here of the metaphor of 'flow' as a way of describing the feeling of 'being with' made me think of the quantum mechanics proposition concerning 'waves and particles' which holds that all particles can also have a wave function and vice versa (Greiner, 2001) and furthermore, that their functional *mode* may be actually influenced by the act of observation – of focused attention (Weizmann Institute, 1998). Arthur had pointed out that '*most of the time we are somehow reflecting and looking from another point of view*' (to use this metaphor – being both particles and waves at the same time). But it seemed to me that we had been moving from one mode to the other and back again during our dialogue, within the certain 'waveband' or frequency of our connection. I considered what he had said and this is how I responded:

Anna: *So I think what you were just pondering there is actually very important and interesting in terms of just sensing the different wavelengths or frequencies of the dialogue...like different modes of it really...from flow to... to...you know the thing that came into my head as I was listening to you was – waves and particles – its like we went from 'wave motion' to being 'separated particles' being... um separate ... And your question was – is it possible to stay in the wave? - and I think that it isn't...I think it isn't...and maybe that is probably just as well because um.... otherwise you would disappear! ...wouldn't you?*

Arthur: *Why do you think it's not possible? Well we would not have...well I don't know...what do you think? ...why is it not possible?*

Anna: *How would it end?*

Arthur: *We don't know! We cannot know...is that the reason why it would not be possible, because we would not know how it would end?*

By this point we seemed to have ventured past some limit - possibly the limit of our own direct experiencing since we were now talking hypothetically about abstract concepts. We had found ourselves 'off the map' to the extent that we were both begun to guess-at rather than focusing on embodied experiencing. When I was transcribing and then analyzing this part of the conversation however, it occurred to me that as we had made this additional 'shift' into *reflecting upon what happens to the quality of contact when one reflects upon the*

quality of contact - there had indeed been a sense of me separating, not only from the connection with Arthur, but also from my embodied sense of my self.

As I strove to think in abstract terms I realized that I had somehow '*gone up into my head*' and I experienced this as a slightly 'spaced-out' feeling after the more sensory flow of 'being with' myself and another person. The inference that I made from this was that the '*flowing*' feeling had involved my being '*present*' to my embodied sensory experience. Furthermore this field of sensory awareness seemed to have been encompassing both my own body and, perhaps through empathic resonance, Arthur's body as well. It felt as if, by accompanying, or '*being with*' each other in process (flow) we had both been '*listening*' with our bodies for the resonance of both of our experiences as well as for the collaborative unfolding of meaning.

This is an important idea, important because I am suggesting that a shared 'field' of embodied experience came into being over a vast geographical distance. From within that field it seemed that we were both able to unfold meaning from experience – our own *and* each other's. In spite of the distance, during the periods that were able to feel the connection of 'being with' in the mode of 'flow', there seemed to be little perceptible difference between the two sets of experience.

6.2.2 'Ruth'.

Ruth is an individual collaborator who contributed on many occasions with informal conversations on the topic of my research. This is the transcript of a recorded *focusing-conversation* which was a more formal contribution, taking place at the university and in response to the set of *questions for contemplation* which I had earlier sent her. All six clustered thematic categories are represented in this transcript and are presented in a single text box below.

Categories of clustered themes.	Paraphrased extract
<p>1. Spatial/geographical themes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reflections on 'belonging' - The sense of everything having a place - The same place can also have the opposite effect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I thought about geographical things.</i> - <i>that feeling comes more easily in nature</i> - <i>can also come in a busy built up environment.</i> - <i>I can feel 'tight' and separated from everything there</i> - <i>I don't usually feel a sense of belonging in a group.</i>
<p>2. Inter-personal/relational/social themes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being a part of a group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>In a group I get a feeling of anxiety, I can go 'mute' and not contribute.</i> - <i>I enjoy being in a group that is doing something activity-based</i>
<p>3. Intra-personal (self-reflexive awareness) individual identity themes:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Inner sense of not-belonging and belonging.</i> - Flexible 'Chameleon-like' social strategy - A problem for individual identity <p>Strategies for social integration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>the feelings are either negative, like anxiety – or else positive like feeling good about things.</i> - <i>If it means you lose your own identity too much</i> - <i>I have slight 'chameleon' tendencies</i>
<p>4. Behaviours/strategies/physical manifestations:-</p> <p>Bodily sense of 'belonging'</p> <p>Energy of <i>belonging</i></p> <p>Bodily sense of 'not-belonging'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>I kind of fit myself to that person I am talking to.</i> - <i>It has a lot to do with 'flow', a feeling of flow.</i> - <i>It is like being elastic – like everything is inside me – I am not separate from it.</i> - <i>If I stop and think about it - it goes.</i> - <i>An amoeba in a cyst, spikey and enclosed, separated off.</i> - <i>Everything doesn't quite meet, isn't quite right.</i>
<p>5. Culturally informed meanings and values:-</p> <p>Religious systems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Destruction and the wheel of life – there is no generation without destruction. Everything is embraced within that.</i> - <i>The thing I don't like about [religion] is this kind of 'othering'</i>
<p>6. Philosophical propositions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>'Othering' is what is bad within ourselves as well.</i>

Text Box 6.2

Spatial and geographical themes.

Ruth could easily connect both belonging and not-belonging experiences to particular places - although she also recognised that these feelings were 'to do with internal and well as external circumstances'.

Ruth: ...[...] - get that sense of really feeling at ease or comfortable in nature or not only in nature, but just with anybody wherever you are, could be in a city or wherever, but that kind of feeling...you know it is something I don't have all the time, but it comes over me and then **everything just feels right and has a place**, and that feeling comes more easily in nature but it can come in a very busy built up environment where there are lots of cars, like in [country] it is fairly chaotic I can still get that feeling sometimes...

Anna: Can you describe it? Can you find it in your body?

Ruth: I think I describe it as being elastic, um...its almost as though everything is inside me, I am not separate from it, so it is a very expansive feeling, and again it is probably excitement, again located here (solar plexus) and is excitement.

Anna: Wow, that touches me in my heart when I hear you say that, something about when you say 'something elastic and expansive about it'

Ruth: But that feeling is um ...I can be in exactly the same place, in exactly the same circumstances, and feel completely the opposite, completely sort of **tight, and separated from everything and uncomfortable...**

Anna: So it is not the location, and it is not the external circumstances...

Ruth: Although they help, they contribute, I wrote in here when you asked about geographic location that [country] was one of the places where I feel most a sense of belonging ... or something like that... um and probably usually in rural places, and there are other places where I might also feel that but despite that it can completely go and so nothing to do really with the external circumstances – more like the internal ones...

Inter-personal/relational and social themes.

Ruth was thinking about a particular and current group experience context as she explored some of her inner subjective experiences of 'belonging and not-belonging with other people'. Here she is reflecting on the difficulties which she normally associates with being in groups; she had begun this reflection by commenting that a particular and familiar felt-sense of 'anxiety, dis-comfort and of 'not wanting to be there' had been notable by its absence in this more recent context. I asked her what she might associate that uncomfortable feeling with:

Ruth: Umm, I have a feeling its very hard to say...I associate it with, well usually I associate it with groups of people, I don't like being in groups, especially new groups, or even groups of people I know well, even groups made of individuals who I get on very well with individually, in a group I can get that feeling of anxiety and then I can go almost mute, and not contribute...so it isn't necessarily about knowing people, in fact sometimes knowing people makes it worse. And I cant really say...I think it is probably something in the people, that I am reacting to...but I cannot say what that is...

Anna : Yes cos as you say, individually, that wouldn't happen by the sound of it, but in a group...so I wonder what is happening there?

Ruth: It is probably something to do with feeling self-conscious...

As she *felt into* her previous experiences of being in groups, Ruth remembered something else about it:

Ruth: ...Although I do enjoy joining if there is something to do, if it isn't just going out in a social group like to the pub or something which I don't enjoy much, but if I am **part of a group that is doing something** that is activity based like the meditation together or yoga together that I do enjoy...

We talked a little further about how being engaged with a group which was engaged in some shared activity usually made a big difference to both of our sense of belonging within that group. As if **being a part of** some shared tasks or the joint commitment to a project actually facilitated a stronger sense of membership and belonging within the group. I commented that - in the case of a context we were both familiar with:

Anna [in that]...there is a nice **balance between being with and doing** ...and the doing isn't even full of all those difficulties of trying to do the same thing differently – because we are all doing different things.

Ruth returned to her own 'felt sense' of the current context and added:

Ruth: ...But I think it is something more than that as well... which I can't quite...

I encouraged her to keep inquiring into the feeling 'edge' of: 'I can't quite...[...]', since this is very much the mode of inquiry of focusing and TAE. After a couple of moments sensing into her bodily-felt 'knowing' she said:

Ruth:...Do you think it is a kind of excitement?...to me it feels like excitement and that is a **sort of solar plexus thing**, 'cos it kind of replaces a feeling of anxiety I would feel there if I wasn't feeling it! But it is felt in the same spot I think...

As we both 'tuned in' to this idea it seemed to me that the feeling of *excitement* which Ruth had identified was (for me) partly connected to the creative possibilities inherent to **being a part of something**. We began talking about our various strategies for 'fitting in' to groups and Ruth acknowledged having slight '*chameleon tendencies*' (see next category sub-section) which made us both laugh in recognition of what she meant by that. We talked about some possible advantages of this strategy as a way of getting 'into synch' with another person's opinions and attitudes. I wondered if such **social 'flexibility'** might be something which **changes developmentally** since Ruth twice qualified her reflections on these ways of adapting herself to 'fit' herself to another person by saying that she felt this was less evident now than it had been when she was younger. In response I suggested that there might perhaps be some: '*...hazards to getting into somebody's world view...*'

Ruth: Ya... if it means **you lose your own identity** too much...I think that can happen to me, but I think it is less so now with me.

In this category of themes and in the next, a tension becomes evident for Ruth between the possible creative excitement of being part of a group *doing something* and the anxiety which could result from using a strategy for 'fitting in' which compromises an inner or authentic sense of *identity*.

Behaviours, strategies and physical manifestations.

In terms of the physical embodiment of a sense of belonging, Ruth's earlier description (in the category subsection on place) is resonant and clear – she describes it as an elastic-feeling expansiveness, in which *'it is as if everything is inside me'*. Ruth's contact with and evocation of the belonging felt-sense described in this way was not the belonging-to-a-group kind of experience, she felt that for her the experience is more likely to arise when she is on her own, either in nature or else when *witnessing* rather than participating in a busy urban environment. Consulting her body she suggested that she also experienced this as an energetic release which *'put a spring'* in her step:

Anna: *When you talk about the energy, you know ... something that puts the spring in your step ... the thing that comes into my mind is to do with Joy – like there is a sort of joyfulness to that...*

Ruth: *Yes that is very true, that is the energy of joy – yes and if I feel a strong sense of belonging and rightness in a place, or with people, I feel that joy, maybe more for a place than with people...*

Still later in our contemplative conversation Ruth returned to the embodiment of this energetic quality of belonging:

Ruth: *I think it has a lot to do with flow, a feeling of flow...well I was thinking about doing more meditation recently...and that that when it works, the feeling I get from it is a feeling of flow, like some kind of energy is passing through me, so there is flow in that sense, there is also the kind of flow where you are totally immersed in something, and you are concentrating so much and sort of enjoying it so much that you are lost to everything else...like if I am sketching I can be like that sometimes...*

Anna: *Is it the same, or are you saying that they are different? In terms of flow...*

The theme of conscious attention or awareness and the effect of 'reflection' on her *inner subjective* process emerges in the next passage of exchanges.

Ruth: *[...]...if I get that flow of concentration....I mean if I stop to think about it - it goes of course, but just on that point before stopping to think about it, there is a sense of quite peaceful engagement...*

Anna: *Is there anything – and this is difficult because you are right, it is an unreflective space – that you could say about your body's experience in that moment?*

Ruth: *When I am concentrating? In the flow*

Anna: *Or in the meditation...*

Ruth: *I think it is probably very relaxed...but it is very concentrated...I mean nothing else is coming in, it happens particularly when I am sketching...*

Anna: *So your awareness of your body wouldn't be very great?*

Ruth: *No and if I become aware of my body then it means that the moment is gone...*

Anna: *And you have gone back into reflection...*

I find this a very useful descriptive of the feeling-effect of having relaxed but focused attention on something outside of the self, such that reflective self-awareness is reduced to a minimum. Ruth also helpfully differentiates this kind of outwardly directed attention to the similarly 'flowing' but qualitatively different inwardly directed awareness which she experiences in meditation states. In the next passage I am asking her about the opposite side of these 'belonging' states:

Anna: *So that is energy and it is expansion....flowing energy...that makes sense. And...what is its opposite?*

Ruth: *Sort of like an amoeba in a cyst...sort of spikey and very enclosed feeling...separated off...*

Anna: *That is it isn't it? That is it!*

Ruth: *...enclosed is the wrong word - it had positive connotations... it is a separated-off negative separation...*

Anna: *So becoming separate in an inner uncomfortable way?*

Ruth: *Everything doesn't quite meet, isn't quite right...*

Ruth describes the feeling of 'not-belonging' as being 'encysted', some how uncomfortably cut-off such that 'everything doesn't quite meet'. In the next passage she returns to the notion of 'flow' and asks again of her felt-sense whether she has used the right terminology for her experiences:

Ruth: *...And I am thinking – is that flow really? Maybe I am saying the wrong thing, because I am calling that flow because that is how it is described in some of these texts, like being in the flow as a way of describing being fully immersed in something but actually the feeling in my body is not flow...in that case it is something else, it is more of a settled feeling...*

It seems as if the energetic way in which the body participates in the environment is reflexively affected by awareness and can feel either *flowing* or more peacefully *settled*.

It is apparent from my response to Ruth's metaphor of having 'chameleon' tendencies that I had identified with this social strategy - her metaphor worked well for my experience too:

Ruth: *I think I have slight - or maybe pronounced ...well they used to be ... chameleon tendencies. So I will kind of ... though it is subconscious most of the time ... but I kind of fit myself to that person that I am talking to, and if it is a group then you can't do that with everybody, it's not possible ..*

Anna: *So I guess chameleons might also feel that experience of ...[both laughing] like- 'what colour shall I go?!' Bit like the joke about the 'tartan chameleon'I think I might call this thesis 'The Tartan Chameleon!!' Wow, I have just had another break-through! Thank you [Ruth] ...this is fantastic....because it is really, really overwhelming, that sense of trying to fit with more than one, sort of 'shade' really...*

My feeling of resonance with this extrapolated metaphor is in imagining the chameleon's *distress* whilst it tries to adapt itself to all the available back-ground colours. When I thought about this further it also occurred to me that a real chameleon's need for camouflage is probably in the interest of defence against predators rather than a wish to fit in socially with other chameleons – but interestingly this realisation somehow made the metaphor work *better* for me rather than the opposite (Koveces, 2000) . Even though the perceived threat in my case is not of being *eaten*, I am aware that the behind my own need to 'blend in' is a fear of being rejected - or *otherwise hurt* - for being different. As Andy's story evidenced, groups of human beings, (even very small human beings in primary school playgrounds) can very painfully 'bully' a small colleague just for being 'different'.

These later ruminations on the chameleon metaphor are my own, but at the time Ruth was actually exploring a different 'edge' of her chameleon-like capacity with its possibilities of *learning* through connection with 'different' others:

Anna: [...] ...so that is interesting because it also talks about the sort of strategic element of belonging – you know the way that we will try and deliberately modify what we might say or what position we might take in the interest of fitting in ... but this sounds like **there is more to it than that...like it may be also about understanding the other**, because if you have really taken a strong position on something you are not interested in what the other person thinks....

Ruth: Yes, and that kind of thing can be quite annoying ... - if there was somebody taking that position that would be equally...I would hate that, because it would mean cutting out all that is positive, and there is so much positive, to cut somebody out just because there is one possibly negative aspect, then you miss out on all that is positive...

Ruth was quite passionate in her desire to be inclusive of others, even of those whose opinions and attitudes she might find to be 'obtuse' or divisive, because to 'cut them out' would risk losing 'all that is positive' about them. I discuss this attitude of **inclusivity** as an aspect of what Curle (1972) calls 'Awareness Identity' in chapter eight.

[Culturally \(systemically\) informed meanings and values.](#)

Following the thread of 'inclusivity' our conversation ventured into a consideration of each of our senses (and experiences) of the cultural attitudes of various religious systems:

Ruth: You have to have the 'evil side' for the 'good side' to be there don't you?

Anna: If I am going to stand far enough back from it...then that has to be the case... there has to be a place for everything...otherwise I am sorting out 'sheep and goats'...

Ruth reflected on her appreciation of various belief systems, including Hinduism and Buddhism and the manner in which those systems have symbolism of both creative and destructive forces:

Ruth: *Yuh, you know, destruction and you know the wheel of life, you can't have generation without destruction, so everything is embraced within it so there doesn't seem to be that ...[split]*

As I followed her deep inner exploration and differentiation of the inner experiences she finds in both creative engagement and in meditation states - which she had described as 'flow' and 'settled' – Ruth evoked in me a Buddhist interpretation of these phenomena:

Anna: *It is a concentrated...I think you may be right, they are not entirely the same, though there seem to be elements of similarity, but I am hearing them.... because it is...ah....is it a non-self state?*

Ruth: *It is, exactly that – completely unaware of self, one is almost going into yourself so you lose that sense of self and the other is being outside of self.*

Anna: *That is it! That is it! So in that non-self place, which ever route you have taken, inward or outward, so is there a sense of...belonging? Or of not caring about belonging, like belonging is no longer an issue?*

Ruth: *Yuh, that is it!*

We are both clearly quite excited by this idea, and it seems to me like a very important insight – that there is an inner state of collectedness and connectedness in which ***belonging is no longer even an issue.***

6.2.3 'William'.

The following excerpts are from a contemplative conversation with 'William' – a core collaborator whose voice also appears the group contemplations which are presented in the next chapter. William had decided he preferred to just begin talking where ever we found ourselves (rather than by making reference to the 'Questions for Contemplation' –see Appendix D) which in physical terms was in a room at the university. We began this conversation talking by about the process of 'TAE' (I was just in the process of learning the inquiry method at that time). The following extracts from our conversation demonstrate William's own strong capacity for inwardly directed self-reflective process.

Theme	Paraphrased extract.
<p>2. Interpersonal/relational/social themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belonging in mundane circumstances - A 'bargain' between 'me' and 'belonging' - Fear of losing 'precious' me. - Experiencing a meeting in exchange of giving and taking - Acknowledgment (witnessing) of a meeting as a 'sacrament'. - 'Essence has particular way of 'connecting' - Dis-connected feels like 'rejected' <p>3. Intra-personal (self-reflexive awareness) and individual identity themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The 'daemon' of essence - Something essential is contained and preserved - Preservation and protecting 'essence' means 'living differently' <p>4. Behaviour, strategies, physical manifestation themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playing the part - The felt sense of not-fitting in - A felt sense of participation - Recognition of a felt-sense of belonging with another. <p>6. Interpretive/philosophical propositions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The heart behind the music - In singing there is transcendence, an existential belonging. - Music and poetry is a way for 'essence' to connect. - Having a peripheral position <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - life in the liminal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>How do I do belonging with individuals?</i> - <i>Why can't I cope with just being in the world?</i> - <i>A kind of bargain between me and the belonging bit am holding precious onto this me bit – which I am dead scared of losing.</i> - <i>there was a moment of meeting- like in the Eucharist</i> - <i>Because most people didn't even look.</i> - <i>It can connect with other people, but it doesn't compute most of the time.</i> - <i>I feel as if I walk around rejected because I can't do what other people do.</i> - <i>The daemon that is situated in this body but not permitted out ...</i> - <i>... a 'marmalade rendering' of what is alive and glorious</i> - <i>My encapsulating and encapsulated essence that might otherwise have lived in a different way.</i> - <i>I am playing the part of the convivial, and I am uncomfortable.</i> - <i>It crunches and crunches on me more and more until I can't breathe.</i> - <i>It is a tangible thing – that 'me' can be demonstrated to 'fit in'.</i> - <i>A point in conversation where I don't need to remember what is me and what is you</i> - <i>It is that fragile, un-encountered heart that has had to lick its wounds in quietness.</i> - <i>I couldn't <u>but</u> sing it - there is a moment of belonging in the Universe at that point.</i> - <i>I created a place to be, I was met in those expressions.</i> - <i>Something quite useful about a peripheral stance, even though it is a bit painful.</i>

Text box 6.1 'William'.

[Interpersonal/relational/social themes.](#)

Here William is talking about his reticence about 'belonging' which he interprets here in terms of his fear of losing a 'me' bit - but this is balanced, or *bargained*, against a consequent loss of a sense of 'participation':

William: [...]...there is a sense, in a variety of ways, of a kind of a bargain between me and the belonging bit and in some ways I am kind of holding precious onto this 'me' bit which I am dead scared of losing ... and the down side of me holding so tenaciously onto it is that I am erecting a barrier of distance that stops me...that robs me of that sense of sort of participation and therefore the

moments of participation I have can only be the interstices or cracks sometimes or in the strange moments when I am winkled out of my shell...

For William the protective instinct to preciously 'hold on' to 'me' is, to some extent at least, preserved at the price of full participation with others. This feeling of a tension between preserving 'me' (by holding 'me' separately) and 'joining in' felt very significant to me, it suggests that there are both potential 'wins' and 'losses' associated with 'belonging'. There seemed to be some tension too in the way that William inwardly experiences his sense of 'non-participation' or separateness:

William:... *can you see what I am saying? That, that there is this way of being - of connecting - and it is not just connecting me and literature, but it can connect with other people ... but it does not compute most of the time! Um and I feel as if I walk round rejected because I can't do whatwhat people do...*

But this difficulty appears to be juxtaposed against a clear capacity for sensitively and respectfully acknowledging others in such a way as to *create* connection with them:

William:... *I used to work at [work place] and I used to go at lunchtime to have lunch in the canteen, and you walk along with your tray and the same people would be standing on the other side and I am not sure if this is just an affectation or what, but one of the most significant moments in the day was the point where the person - who I only ever saw at that moment - put the chips on the plate...and to me there was a moment of meeting. It is like when they are serving...[the Eucharist]*

In fact this lovely evocation of a ritual of giving and receiving (of chips rather than communion wafer in this instance) has a particular quality of connection in which William is both witness and engaged *participant*. Furthermore he notices that what he is doing in this instance is not 'the norm' for his 'group' because he went on to observe that most of the other people in the canteen queue: '*...didn't even look, didn't even notice ...*'. William uses this balance of *witnessing* and *participation* in a similar manner – suggestive of an inner attitude of '*honouring the other*' - when he describes the way he had held the collective processes of a particular group experience:

William: [...] *there is a moment there where all those things can be held in the most gentle .. .there is a kind of language used... almost a focusing language for holding those things... to allow in the silence - a participation...*

Even though his capacity for 'holding the space' for collective participation and for individual *witnessing* is clearly a strong feature of his way of being *for others*, there remains for William himself something difficult, or *jammed-up* about his feeling of being able to 'bring forth' and express his own vulnerable sense of '*precious me*' into connection with others.

Intra-personal (self-reflexive awareness) and individual identity themes.

Consciously paraphrasing his words I had re-framed William's opening proposition about how he was aware of 'holding preciously onto a me bit' - referring to his holding 'precious me'. It had seemed to me that the inference he had made was of 'something precious' being held rather than just a precious manner of holding (anything). William seemed to accept this re-frame because we both went on to use 'precious me' to refer to some aspect of 'self':

Anna: ... something you were talking about a little while ago really reminded me of how much I sneakily respect clients' defenses, the defense that protects that 'precious me'...

But whilst I was initially following the idea of protecting 'precious me', William appeared to inwardly know something else of importance regarding how this protection can affect the 'expression of precious me'. As he continued to focus his attention towards his bodily-felt sense of this matter, he came up with the metaphor of 'marmalade':

William: There is this 'marmalade thing' that hinges on the fact that whilst it is being protected it is also sort of calcified in a sort of ... maintained in a sticky...and uh...so that this thing becomes preserved in a preserving pan rather than being expressed...

Focusing together now, in the following passage we jointly inquire into what this inner representation of image-sense-meaning held for William. He remembered how music had often been the medium in which his inner 'daemon', so preserved, had been '**called forth**':

Anna: So what does music do?

William: So music...so if that daemon is a marmalade-rendering of what is alive and glorious and preciously kept ...but **rendered in the process to a strong, and sweet but encapsulated sense of something that was once fresh and**

Anna: Juicy? I suddenly saw an orange! It is in a jam jar, but once it was an orange!

William: Juicy...and it sits there in this jam jar and it can't be got at **it is protected** and I have this marmalade and music somehow resonates with...**and knows precisely how to connect with that...**

Anna: What it is to be an orange?

William: With the orange-ness in that..

Anna: So let me just check if I have understood here...is the 'daemon' the jar, or the process, or the oranges...?

William: Well the daemon is simply the way that this thing is held...the way that it is conserved.. the whole thing... that I walk round and there is part of me that is **in some sense encapsulating and encapsulated essence of that which might otherwise have lived in a different way....**

Every time I re-read this passage I am struck by how beautifully William's metaphor works to evoke his inner processes of **protecting something essential** (but **vulnerable**) which nevertheless retains some knowledge of its own nature. A '**knowledge**' which *resonates with the beauty of music and literature* - and which also **longs to be safely expressed or represented**.

Behaviour, strategies, physical manifestation themes.

William described an instance where his felt-sense of not fitting-in or of being able to *participate* had been palpably uncomfortable:

William: *I am playing the part of the convivial, in a restaurant, and I am uncomfortable ...and I am eating food that I wouldn't normally eat... and there are all these 'ifs' that come together ...and somehow there is a snapping point...*

His strategy for managing such a 'snapping point' was to simply make his excuses and leave, after which he acknowledged having felt a great deal better. This is a piece of behaviour which I understand and share to some extent, although I also associate such 'self-preserving' behaviour in myself with a concomitant level of self-recrimination accompanying the idea that I may have made others feel uncomfortable by my leaving. But the alternative to 'preserving my-self' is of course '*losing my-self*' in the interest of participation and other people's comfort – I was beginning to understand what William had meant by trying to establish '*a bargain between...*' the two seemingly irreconcilable objectives.

William had already vividly described how being in certain group situations could feel in his body leading up to 'a snapping point' where he has to leave:

William: *... just at the point when I felt least able to have a voice, because I sit there... aware of all the angles going on - and what everyone is trying to do... like it crunches and crunches on me ... more and more and I get to the point where I can't breathe...*

His acute *awareness* of other people and what they are '*trying to do*' seems somehow to jar against (or *squeeze*) an aspect of him which to some extent becomes bodily-represented by physically holding in the breath. So that under these circumstances, along with the held-in breath is also the held-in voice – William described this as feeling '*so compressed*' that he needs at some point to escape.

William also had something to say about the embodiment of participation – at two levels, the first being objective:

William: *It is a tangible thing that 'me' being ...just as I am... at that moment... **can be demonstrated to 'fit in'...***

The *demonstration* of ‘fitting in’ here is in reference to agreeing with another person a strategy of communicative behavior that could facilitate William’s on-going participation at those moments when he felt *compressed* or otherwise less able to express himself verbally. This highlights something for me about the importance of *contribution* in the feeling of *participation*, even a non-verbal contribution – of being *seen* when being *heard* is not so easy for some reason.

Interpretive/philosophical propositions.

The following passage of conversation was deeply moving for both of us. William is talking about experiencing a heart-felt connection through music, in this instance a connection facilitated by the *courage and authenticity* of its performer:

William: *...it is an English folk song but it’s..... the control of the voice... there is a big round voice and there is a point where the singer allows himself beyond his natural comfort into a place of fragility and(visibly moved here)*

Anna: (quietly) *There it is again...something beyond words....*

William: *So it is ... that fragile ...**un-encountered heart** that for most of a lifetime has had to lick its wounds in quietness..and peace...no not in peace... [...] a singer stands in front of an audience and ‘declares themselves’ in an unguarded sense, and this was a declaration of...of ... from a foreigner,,, and outside source that knows me that somehow **knows that unknown**...*

Anna: *...And somehow the resonance that touches the heart, that un-encountered, tender, fragile place, there is something that the music makes possible in terms of connecting with it.*

Somehow both the ‘heart behind the music’, its composer and the expressive heart of its performer touches *and resonates with* – or *encounters* – William’s own heart. Although William himself is not making a philosophical proposition here - he is reporting directly from his inner experiencing – I felt so strongly (resonantly) affected by what he describes that I begin to make one here myself:

Anna : *...When I watch you touching into that... and there aren’t words that quite get there... you know we kind of go round it a little bit... um ...you know there seems to be something rather **ineffable** about it... but the music seems to somehow do that. Or not just the music but the **heart behind the music** – the heart behind **the creative expression in the music**... so if I think about what led us to be inquiring into this...you were talking about the expression of ‘me’, and how that can become stultified and hidden, and how incredibly important it is for the heart to be encountered, and not just to be encountered but to express itself.*

It was from this contemplation that I made the suggestion that music and poetry, perhaps all that can be called ‘art’, is something *essential* (of essence) in the heart looking for a way to be expressed – and therefore can also become a way for something equally *essential* in another heart to be understood. This is a

Transpersonal perspective (Grof, 2008, Wilber, 1995; Lajoie and Shapiro, 1992) which I pick up again for discussion in chapter eight.

The manner in which music mediates the *transpersonal* dimension for William is also clearly evident in the following passage:

William: ...there was a point where this hymn, 'Angel Voices', has a quality where I couldn't but sing it...[long pause of inner recollection and feeling-into this memory]

Anna: ...so..that sounds like your body again – participating. And the heart... this heart that has to be 'voiced'..

William: Yeah and that that there is a moment of belonging in the Universe at that point...

Listening to this there is more implicit here for me than the technicality of ontologically involved body-in-situation (Gendlin, 1997b) – there is a *conscious and sensitive heart* seeking for a way to *belong*.

6.3 Chapter summary.

From the first section my TAE project gave me the motif of a '**quest**' and a glimpse of how belonging and not-belonging are part of an existential developmental process which goes beyond physical, psychological and social development processes and stages and encompasses evolution and the **development of reflexive consciousness**.

The contemplative explorations presented in the second chapter section have helped to illuminate many experiential facets of the **creative developmental dynamic between belonging and not-belonging**. The **awareness (consciousness) of something essential but vulnerable which seeks connection** but which seems to also **need the protection of strategy and structure** is an emergent theme here – one which perhaps ties in with Sophia's sense of her '**authentic self**' needing to leave her original home in order to be expressed.

The experience of **uncomplicated belonging** have been described as an **un-reflected** sense of '**flow**', and that of **un-belonging** as '**jammed**', '**cyst-like**' or in some way '**encapsulated**' - in the interest of *self*-preservation. **Awareness of a separated self**, often very painfully felt, seems to **bring into focus a boundary between self and other**.

Interestingly it seems that this boundary can also 'collapse' or become more semi-permeable if individuals can find and share a resonant connection in the mode of **flow**. It is to this *inter-subjective* experiencing of the 'collective interior' that I turn next.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Collective Interior. Lower Left Hand Quadrant.(LLH)

To be human is to belong. Belonging is a circle that embraces everything; if we reject it, we damage our nature. The word 'belonging' holds together the two fundamental aspects of life: being and longing, the Longing of our being and the Being of our longing.

- O'Donohue (1998)

7.0 Introduction

Chapter seven is based upon my investigations into the domain of the collective interior - the inter-subjective realm of systems and their inherent cultures. The mode of presentation of data in this chapter is predominantly a 'storying' one. As I discussed in chapter three, stories play a central (if tacit) role in the culture of human individuals and systems. Here I am fore-grounding the creation of stories as a medium and a mode of manifesting human *Being* for collectives as well as for individuals. The following stories arose in the ephemeral collective instances of research groups – so they are somewhat pale shadows of the major motifs of human group experience. But the experiences being evoked and narrated by the people in these groups are nonetheless part of the fabric of an ongoing grand narrative of human Being.

In chapter-section 7.1 I present a story which I have re-woven from the transcript of a conversation with a participant who recounted his distinctive experiences of being a member of a collective with what he terms a strong 'tribal identity'. Chapter section 7.2 presents narratives from a focus-group session held with six participants all of whom were personally familiar with the embodied approach of *Systemic Constellations* (Hellinger, 1998; Ulsamer 2004). The final chapter section 7.3 contains narratives drawn from transcripts of two of the contemplative group sessions ('*talking-circles*') held with the core group of collaborators in this inquiry.

7.1 Belonging by not-belonging:

One man's story: 'John'.

This participant story sheds light upon the experience of having a strong sense of individual identity inside a social collective with a strongly protected group-identity. The italicised bits of dialogue are verbatim excerpts from the original transcript. Resonant themes have been highlighted in bold and are summarised at the end of the chapter.

John explained that, throughout his life, he had been interested to observe that he (as well as other people) could experience many difficulties in the matter of belonging in groups. Here he is reflecting with a friend about a particular context in which he had had such difficulties - and of what these difficulties taught him about himself as well as about the collective.

"I have always felt myself as an individual, and I would say that by the inclination of my personality I am not a joiner - but look how, during my life, I have chosen to live in these group situations!" John explained how he had once lived as a member of a contemplative religious community – which he described a **"...group with a common identity...and shared values and practices"**. After many years of living a contemplative life John left the religious community and was accepted into an initiation process in order to become a member of a very different kind of group. This group was a large, very tightly organised and bonded group tasked with a particular social responsibility – that of keeping social order in a particular country, and responsibility for matters of public safety.

Even at the outset of joining this new group, John explained that he had been viewed by the others with deep suspicion... **"Because I had come from quite a different background – a religious community- and I didn't look like the sort of person they expected... this was not a matter of religion at all, but that they had a sense that I was someone who would not reliably take up their 'tribal values' and identity"**...He smiled as he remembered –**"And they were right!...but nevertheless I was there by then...and – like many things - I wanted to see what it would 'taste' like"**.

The experience proved to be an interesting one ... although deeply challenging for both John and for the group. John thought that he had probably underestimated how 'odd' he would look to them, and how much they would need to try to put him outside of their group – to exclude him...just on the basis of being 'different'. However he wasn't going to make that easy for them to do. **"They saw me as a threat...and that particular group collective were of course much more threatened by me than the religious community had been...it was much more important to them to reinforce that sort of tribal bond...and so someone who might not be signing up to it from the inside...would be more dangerous to them"**.

In the face of this perceived 'threat' John told how the group had tried in various hostile ways to 'get him out'. He described many small but painful incidents in which colleagues in this very hierarchical system had tried to make him feel so uncomfortable that he would choose himself to leave it: **"You see...it was desired that some way should be found so that I could be made to give up this silly idea of becoming one of them – to resign and make them all comfortable again...!"** John went on, smiling reflectively as recalled those incidents: ... **"... those are just some of the many examples of how a 'tribe' with a very strong sense of its own values and identity behaves when it feels them to be threatened."**

But the hostility towards John from this group was something that he also understood compassionately, even though he would not let himself be influenced by it – neither would he change himself to suit their wishes. Finding themselves unable to exert any direct power over his fate, his fellow recruits tried a different tactic to get him 'in line' – repeatedly asking him to join with them in participating in various kinds of socialisation that might bring him towards being more *knowable* as one of them. But these forms of socialising were not part of John's chosen way of life, and as he was already of sufficient maturity and experience he was neither easily swayed by their bonding-need nor felt any strong need of his own for that kind of group belonging.

John recounted how eventually, in spite of all the covert and overt efforts which had been made at various times to encourage him to leave, at the time of his final confirmation as a full member of the group, one senior official had finally acknowledged the hostility saying: ***“I have never seen someone put up with so much antagonism! – how do you do it?”*** Whilst another had re-joined with: ***“Well...I have been as rude to him as I can, but it doesn't make any difference!”*** John was laughing as he said this, but his friend, who was listening to this story, was amazed: ***“So how did you cope – and why did you stay in there in the face of all that?”*** John's face grew more serious for a moment as he considered his reply: ***“Well perhaps I was trying to ...find the edges of my personality by going against its natural direction. Anyway I always viewed it as an impermanent thing ... and it wasn't a new experience for me...because of being an individual with a very poor capacity for compromise...I have very often found myself being excluded by this, that or the other group, so I wasn't on new territory.”***

But in the end the group's solidarity and tendency for 'self-protection', was something that John came to appreciate personally. A time came when John found himself in need of the group's protection - a situation where his physical safety was put suddenly at risk; he explained how grateful he had been then to find that he was included in their protection without hesitation.

John came to feel respect for the organisation that had once been so fiercely rejecting of him. In experiencing the group's protection John also felt himself as a part of the collective. He recognised a value in 'safety' that they collectively upheld. John went on reflecting on this issue of safety and protection: ***“What really matters in all that is that....the public have protection from mean or vicious people. That is what matters, and to have had a little part in that is very satisfactory for me...and all these other times wherein I had a difficult time personally, I could see throughout that it derived from my own personality and ...had nothing to do with the main aims of that group. And then there is the big collective ... the big collective of being part of a society living under law... that requires a small, very protective collective or group of people who are tasked with, and are going to be able to deal with the people who don't agree to that..”*** At the level of society - 'the big collective' John had found a meaningful way to be engaged, a role which allowed him to be a part of that collective.

The friend wondered whether in the end, after all this, John had come to really feel that he 'belonged' as a member of that collective. John pondered for a while before saying: ***“I am still less uncomfortable with the disadvantages of not-belonging than with the responsibilities of belonging. Being...rejected or unhappy or lonely or something of that sort, is more manageable...than the group-belonging responsibilities which are a thing that I have a very poor grasp of...mainly because they impose a limitation... on the freedom of actionand opinion”***

Freedom of action and thought is therefore another kind of value for John but there seems to be a creative tension between it and the more collective need for safety and belonging.

This personal narrative detailed for me one example of the tension between an individual and group identity (Hornsey and Jetten, 2004), aided by John's strong capacity for non-judgemental and compassionate observation of others and himself and his resilience to the discomfort of 'not-belonging'.

John felt that the primary task of public protection was valued within the collective as a duty or 'a role' as much as it was a job. He recognised that the group's protection of itself, including all of its members, was necessary so that it could continue to be effective in carrying out its primary task of public protection.

7.2 Family Systems workshop and focus-group.

In this section I present the narratives from a focus-group which took place the day following a Family Systems Constellation Workshop which I had facilitated. The people who took part in this focus-group had offered to do so in exchange for their place at that workshop. I have compiled what was shared into successive narrative 'monologues' from the individual focus-group members, into to which I have added any further comments made by the relevant participant in a subsequent email exchange. The group's overall focus moved between participant's individual experiences of the FSC approach itself, and more general reflections on belonging in groups and family and other systems.

Rachel.

*I have been to three workshops and ... the very first opening bit of the very first one had a really huge impact on me, because the first thing that we were asked to do was to introduce ourselves by name and say 'I am 'Rachel', and **I am the daughter of [father's name] and [mother's name]** aloud. And that was huge, I had never said my parent's names together with mine, I had never acknowledged my parents in that way. And I was just immediately impacted by that, I sort of walked in, sat down and – whoosh! I thought 'Oh God!' - you know that kind of effect, it was kind of painful and kind of swung my whole world around. It was difficult to deal with really. But I did find myself able to do it. And I was thinking about it yesterday and wondering 'why do I love it so much?' ...and **it is to do with it being in my body, and I can trust it by being in my body. It takes out the anxious mind** that I have, and the ability I have to 'over think' things [...] and then I think...you know the hugeness of it...you know last night I was thinking about all the layers, it is like layers and layers ...just in the piece of work that I did [yesterday] and then **there was a bigger thing as well because I suddenly felt 'nicely insignificant'!** You know like – none of this bloody well matters! And I could ask why on earth I let myself get so caught up in all this stuff because **I am just part of something miles bigger! And that felt really comforting and exciting and life-affirming....** Often yesterday there was something that came up about 'life' in the room...and about choosing life ...and I went home thinking 'I am going to choose life!' and that felt huge as well. ...so it is a lot but it is exciting...**it wasn't overwhelming because it is sort of contained within the universe I guess...[...]** **So I think that for me, I had a profound shift in my sense of belonging, just from saying my own name and the names of my parents,** [But I wanted to say something about my sense of belonging in these particular groups, the constellation workshops – I have had a much more profound sense of belonging in them than anywhere else...I don't know what happens to other people but it is about trust for me...Because we are all taking such risks aren't we? To just do what we feel in our body without feeling embarrassed – and **being 'out of my head' in that way makes me feel a sense of belonging** – but it is obviously a lovely feeling when it happens, but it does also give me a strong sense of not having it elsewhere – and that is really difficult...*

A key element of Rachel's narrative is the experience of 'saying aloud' her own name with those of her mother and father. This had been especially poignant for her since her parents had separated when she was a small child. Rachel experienced an inner tension connected to her family system which she felt had affected her later relationships because something always felt '**missing or incomplete**'. She realised that,

following on from the novelty of acknowledging the existential fact of her systemic 'belonging' with her biological parents, there was also a 'grief' because her step-father and half-brothers also needed to be acknowledged in order to satisfy her heart's sense of who 'belongs' completely in her system. It seems that a 'bonded' system is not limited to the biological facts of existence, it is also determined by attachment and by love (Hellinger, 1998). By placing all this worrying complexity and her divided loyalties within a large enough context she finally arrives at an experience of herself as '*nicely insignificant*' and with this she finds a '*life-affirming*' new perspective of how she is **systemically integrated into a larger 'whole'**.

Michael begins by reflecting on how the enlarging of perspective inherent to the systemic approach has impacted his work as a counsellor. He then considers how he experiences himself in group situations; and suggests that 'love' cannot be reduced to biological or psychological attachments, but for him it is a healing force which works to bring separated elements together.

Michael.

*Well I suppose the biggest thing for me has been on my work as a counsellor because it shifted enormously after even the first workshop. I started to invite people to talk about their family more, about the different generations, asking them to put their name out there, which I would never have done before, and **I have found that it is healing** you know – even though I am person-centred and all that. Just involving the different people around the problem because it could be bigger – that is one of the big lessons for me. Because **it isn't just your issue, it is probably affecting others too** – and of course it could have gone the other way as well. So that aspect was there at the beginning. [...] I think that being a representative is quite a powerful experience, and that in itself – you know that can do things for you – honestly just within yourself. So that is the second thing ... there was a third thing but I have probably forgotten it! ...um yeah, **it is just that 'love' always finds its way...that just blows me away.** Because it is the same as the work that I do, you know that is the basis of it. **Love is greater than anything**, and it will always conquer what ever you want to call it – evil, or sin or negativity. **But I think that it is always there, trying to find its way back,** and that is the beautiful thing I got from yesterday. [...] And well, in terms of this thing about 'faith'...I suppose from a counselling perspective...**it is about having faith in the client in front of you** – right at the beginning, if you believe in them, that they will find their own answer – **If you believe that love will work through the situation**, even if it might take a very long time...**but if you believe in that – it can come full circle.** But you might have to put up with a lot of stuff in the process. But just from what everyone is saying, I mean...I belong to many groups, maybe a few groups more than I should do...and some are not easy! [...] You know **it can be quite violent sometimes when people oppose what you believe in**...so accepting you know that there may be people against what you believe in, as I have experienced before...in groups, and I suppose it is just about believing in your faith and getting along with it – and hoping that others will be able to reconcile that, but it is not easy sometimes. **I don't think that groups are easy**, but I have to be there – you know, so in a round about way what I am saying is that I have to have the sense that **I have the same right to be there as every body else** – it doesn't matter about my culture or my back-ground or whatever, you know we are all in this together, and **I have got just as much right to be here as you...and whatever the conflict** or whatever the stuff that is going on...*

Michael mentions how he has faith in his client's ability 'to find their own answer', but the source of this faith seems to be 'love' which is 'trying to find its way back' and to 'come full circle'. This is an interesting idea: that love might be trying to come back to itself in some way trying to join up a broken circle. The blocks or breaks in such a flow of love are referred to as 'evil, or sin, or negativity – or whatever' but for Michael – 'love is greater'. This larger perspective seems to provide him with an inner resilience which has allowed him to participate in many groups, even when the dynamics are very difficult, recognising that whatever his own beliefs or culture, he has the same right to be there as everyone else.

Lucy.

*[...] yesterday you said something about how we all have an equal right to belong, and that touched something very deep in me, because it resonated with **my sort of journey of never belonging**. And then the other thing is about having done a lot of talking therapies, **I was so bored of my own stories**, you know, and I can talk until kingdom come...almost as if telling somebody else you know all your theories about why you are so fucked up! And so this thing of just sitting there and allowing other people to sort of do it, while you watch...it is not in your control – that feeling of just being able to surrender and hand it over to something bigger, and just to watch it unfold, and just receive that ...whatever effect that has...[...]. And then there is **the big thing about the family and the ancestors being so honoured and acknowledged and brought into that space**. When you were talking about that naming thing I was thinking 'yes...that is what doing a family tree is all about, it is about naming those people [...] and that is what this work feels like.[...] I guess that the other thing I like about constellations is that it relates to the kind of ceremonies that I and a group of friends have been doing over the years – creating our own ceremonies to mark the passing of people and to mark the various stages of our lives...and I know that we draw on native American and indigenous traditions when we do that. [...] **but it is 'soul work'** ...without being something that I react to...and think 'aargh!' which I can do...**but this feels grounded – and it is a sort of honouring of the part of soul** [...]. I was thinking about the different moments of insight I have had about **when I started to feel that I belong...to the land – the land where I now live**, rather than a sort of bigger question of 'where do I belong' – you know [country] isn't my mother-land – I don't feel that -[...] so that the **belonging has had to start at a more 'localised' level – and belonging to a particular 'fate'**. There was something that was written about a 'nation' – What is a Nation? - And it was about belonging **but it was also about what defines a nation...and it was not about being defined by the land –** because if you define it by the land then you have for instance the Jews who don't belong because of having no land – **so then there is that sense of having a shared history – that is what helps you feel that you belong. To have gone through experiences together, that gives you the sense of belonging – sharing the story of that...** And when you were talking about feeling that belonging here – I was thinking [about]...this place that I have been going for many years, where we have camps which are held in this sort of heart-full way...and with **that intention to create 'a safe space'** [...] **so I had a sense of belonging - not just to the group of people, but somehow it was the place that had held that sense of belonging together – and that feeling that I had as much right to be there as anybody else...and adding to that is having the whole history of the place, of sharing those stories...***

A motif in Lucy's narrative is her 'journey of not belonging' and of trying to find 'a place', and 'a way' to belong. There is also a powerful evocation in what she describes of the importance of telling stories of

shared experience as a way to affirming belonging, or *inclusion* – even (and perhaps especially) when the shared experience has been one of marginalisation. Lucy describes her own experience of needing to find a more 'localised' level of belonging to a place, before becoming a part of a wider shared (and storied) collective experience.

Cathie also reflected on how gaining an **embodied sense of connection to her ancestors** had made it possible for her to feel a **clearer sense of 'being alive now'**; and of having a conscious connection with the members of her family system who are 'behind her', allowed her to feel like part of an unfolding family story. It had also helped her to **make a new meaning** of some of the decisions which she has made in her own life.

Cathie

*[...] I think that one of the **key things about this work for me was ancestors**, I have spent a lot of my life thinking 'I know nothing about where I come from' You know... I knew I must come from people, **but I had no sense of anything behind me** – and that is something that has really shifted...and in one particular constellation the sort of feeling I had - you know with the whole room seemed to have my [country] ancestors parading to [music] and I think something fundamentally shifted in terms of my sense of **being alive and living now**. In terms of how it has affected my personal life - I am also going to say that the belongingness I think is huge, although I don't have a particularly larger platform that I live I as a result, but I think that it has totally...well from feeling as if **I have lived sort of 'slightly above the ground'**... **I touch it much more now**. And to the extent of commitments in my life, you know **of committing to another person, committing to things I am doing, and feeling just very different in my approach to that –and having the right to be in a situation, living or being in any group** – rather than it be, like we have touched on, always holding back. [...] But you were also asking a bit about the 'rubs' we might have... initially there was lots for me about the [religion] origins thing... or at least my sense of them...you know the sort of idea of forgiveness if it comes over as something you should do rather than being a transcendent thing that you want to do...or else is just there – but by doing more, or by watching it more...initially it felt a bit artificial, but I can also acknowledge my own [religious background] stuff in there, reacting to that, rather than what is actually happening because it does transcend it.*

The existence of recurring intergenerational patterns of trauma and loss has been described for instance by Boszormenyi-Nagy (1973) and Ruppert, (2010). In spite of its difficult history Cathie's connection to her own and her family's history has led her to feel a greater embodied connection to '*the ground*' - where once she said that she felt as if she '*lived slightly above*' it.

Lorna explained how she had found participation in the family systems workshops quite difficult. She took issue with some of the ways that other people in the group had described their sense of the FSC approach – and pointed out her own reservations. Lorna then went on to describe how she has been able to find her own way in to an embodied sense of belonging.

Lorna

On the first workshop that I went to I felt very...I felt sort of 'clunky' and I couldn't get any real sort of...well maybe that was also about where I was at the time – but I mean, I couldn't really swing to

it...I couldn't get into the dance of it...well I was just approaching it slowly I think. And then the second one I was...well things were going on in my own life...and so the water had started to 'heat up' – and it was like I had taken a bit of time to get there...but certainly yesterday I was 'in the bath' – and the water went right the way up! ...and I work with people who have had incredible traumas, and you think...well if I was to say to them: 'Love always finds its way...' ...oh no - not good! [...] but of coursethere is still a real place for the mysterious...[...] And **having a stronger sense of belonging makes me think of being 'nourished'** ...by things like that idea of a 'Mother-land' and yesterday we had [a country] as the mother-land and that was...well just looking at the importance of 'mother' as our first experience of giving and receiving nourishment, and there we have also **the land which also gives us our primary nourishment – water, air, food...** And finally you asked: How do we know in our bodies when we belong? Well, when I have felt – or feel – belonging, **I am deeply relaxed, comfortable, alert ...Feeling at peace, as if my root goes right down to beyond the ground, and I have expanded. I am myself and not myself too.** This very strong sense has happened only a few times in my life and has been accompanied by hearing music...**trusting ...able to speak from my core ... breathing is relaxed, deep...oneness...I feel my edges as soft...my movement is with ease and all a part of me...I feel held, contained...all of a oneness...open...soft...at ease...warm...simultaneously part of something and individual.** When I don't feel as if I belong I am tense...on edge...hidden inside myself – looking out as if from a watch-tower! Words come out wrong...isolated...awkward...as if I am the wrong size for where I am - too big! - or else almost invisible...fearful...stomach churning...

The last part of Lorna's narrative highlights this embodied experiencing; and it resonates strongly with data already presented in previous chapter-sections – including the sense of being '*the wrong size for where I am – too big!*' (Lydia and Grace) Likewise the belonging-sense that Lorna describes here is one of being '*open*', '*relaxed, comfortable, alert*' and '*expanded*' which is resonant with similar descriptions given by Rachel in the last chapter. For Lorna 'to belong' is to be nourished, rooted in the 'mother', to feel simultaneously '*myself and not myself*': an individual and a part of something. Rather than being subsumed by the collective and therefore annihilated as an individual – to me, this has the feel of an individuated consciousness integrating itself within a bigger system.

Petra's experience of the systemic constellation approach touches into psychological and transpersonal dimensions, and for her it feels consonant with her spiritual beliefs and practices.

Petra.

*I first came across constellations during my training as a therapist, a weekend was put on and I was the first one straight in there - which was a surprise to everyone - because it was something that I trusted almost before I had even experienced it ... in the form of constellations because of my particular work is also to do with intergenerational healing in a [religious] context with the church. [...] And there is something about the 'great belonging' to the family, but **also to the 'greater whole'** as you named in the workshop yesterday – which brings this sense that **what I do really matters, and can affect people** in Syria, in Afghanistan in Nigeria, wherever and whatever is going on. [...] And I have definitely experienced a knock on effect from working at the level of my family system on*

*the way I feel I belong in the wider context. [...] I feel that the embodied sense of belonging is intimately bound up with a deep spiritual and psychological belonging which is why it cannot easily be expressed in words. The spiritual belonging is perhaps the foundational bond which connects the psyche and the body which leads to the opening of heart and soul to all that is true, ordered and holy in human beings. [...]. It was perhaps surprising to me in my recent constellation that I uttered some words about **wanting to belong in my self/body**. At the time it did not really make sense as to why this came to the fore and it is difficult to remember. I find when I sit on the chair to discuss the issue that nothing seems to come out right in words. Often it is because of a deep shyness and fear of not being heard in the group and that my words, thoughts, feeling may be mocked and undermined and most of all misunderstood. On another level it is perhaps because words cannot express what I essentially wish to communicate at the level of the felt sense and of the heart - a sense of knowing...but I have a great fear of not being accepted in groups so for me the most difficult part of Family Constellations Work is to actually ask for and state what I need in front of a group – that is how I have always felt within my own family.*

*Spiritually I have a deep sense of belonging in the heart of God and hence in his created world. This belonging in the heart of God thus connects me with all peoples of all nations. I belong to [country] and to [country] by virtue of my birth place and ancestry. I belong in a family by virtue of the union of my father and mother. I belong in myself/my body by virtue of being thus called, created and incarnated into this world. **I most experience this sense of incarnational belonging when I feel deeply accepted. It is then that my body remembers and can express and release the hidden wounds of wounded belonging at a personal, familial, intergenerational and global level.***

Petra's narrative is a deeply personal one. In it she shares her experience of the constellation approach, of being a part of her own family and about her sense of *belonging* to 'the greater whole' which she describes as being "In the heart of God". It feels significant that for Petra, belonging comes from 'feeling deeply accepted' in a group, and that this experience allows her body to re-member its 'hidden wounds'.

7.3 'Talking Circles'.

In this final chapter section I present individual narratives from the first talking circle. I opened this first contemplation by suggesting that we initially could focus on each of our experiences of coming into the group.

7.3.1 Narratives of belonging and not-belonging in groups.

The following 'monologues' are again collations of sequential contributions from each person in the talking circle. Because they were originally interspersed with each other, in places I have needed to add in a word or a linking phrase at the beginning or end of some of the extracts in order to *weave* them into single narratives. The phrases in bold highlight any meaning-making phrases which become relevant to theory-linking in the next chapter.

Grace.

Following my invitation to everyone to create whatever adjustments they needed in order to find their 'right place' within the group, Grace had moved her chair backwards a couple of centimetres - the result

was that she now occupied a slightly peripheral position, although still clearly a part of the same circle. She reflects on this action acknowledging that there was 'a lot of pushing and pulling going on inside' regarding finding her place and joining in with the group. Grace talks here about her sense of the physical spaces and of her participation in the collective activities of the 'institution' to which she feels also connected by: 'history...my history'. Her recognition of belonging as a part of one's own and a larger story seems to be a significant facet of experience:

*Grace: ...[say] About this group, this experience? Well...when we first came in here...and we sat in the circle...I got the urge to push my chair back, it was strong...I don't feel it now...but **it was definitely in my body** at that point. So that felt like a '**pulling away**' feeling...but it is not the only thing there...I know that I also have...well I am not exactly keeping it down, but it is a particular feeling...it is a long time since I have been in a group like this and...I have got that sort of 'bubbling' going on inside me...of 'what is going to happen?'....so that is there also...knowing that...it is not a feeling of danger...no...it's not 'danger'...it's not being scared...but it's...I don't know, it's a bit:... 'Am I saying the right thing?'...that is there too....so there is **a lot of pushing and pulling going on inside me...***

*But in terms of **my feeling of belonging to this place** - this institution...I feel a bit of reluctance to say this...but it is there...that it feels...that **I do feel connected to it...by my history of being here...in this absolutely beautiful place...and I do feel that I belong here...place...history...my history...and the reluctance to acknowledge that is becauseI will leave it...so there is a sadness knowing that...but I feel that I belong now...***

*But I know that it is not like that for everyone...and I hear people saying that they don't feel that the institution actually encourages people to belong here...but somehow that just makes me realise something else about me...that **I am best on the edge...that is where I belong...**it seems to me that...I think I have been allowed here...**somehow to just be on the edge...**I don't know...as if **that is where I am most comfortable...**I think...and so it has been a place where maybe...I have just been able to be...I am not sure of the words really...oh! Yes...**I have been able to BE...***

*And there is a particular place here...it almost makes my hairs prickle when I think of it...I can describe it to you...just walking along the [path] on a spring evening...where the tree arches over and there is a black bird singing up in that tree...it is just getting dark...that is where I feel most intensely...**how much I love being there...**and...thinking about that...the belonging is almost like - **it is a right to be there - but it is not belonging to anything...**though I know that the word has to have a qualifier...but it is not as though I belong to anything...'cos the 'institution' in a way doesn't exist...I suppose it is being...as somebody was saying earlier...**those moments of feeling 'at the centre of everything'...and yet...it is still on the edge...!**"*

Mark.

Mark's narrative is also formed by four successive commentaries which were actually made (in this sequence) near to the beginning, around the middle and close to the end of talking-circle process. In this sense they reflect the movement of the 'whole thing', but they also cohere as a description of his personal experience of joining and being with the group through this process.

When we began...well um...in fact my initial reaction to your question was **a feeling of...motion-less-ness...** not wanting to contemplate the idea of 'moving away'...because what **I am most aware of in my body is a strong movement 'towards'...**in actual fact... and my first instinct when I got here into the circle was to be perfectly symmetrical so as not to be away - more away or more towards- any one person than anybody else... and in my body there is **a feeling of excitement of being able to "come in"...**

There is something else...before I think about it too much...about the feeling that I have at the moment which is... **of being right at the centre of absolutely everything...**And I am aware... sitting here...that I often feel as if 'it is happening somewhere else'...I don't know quite where...But the feeling, I don't think it **but I feel that...this is right at the centre...**and I feel quite pleased....I feel more than quite pleased...**I feel deeply joyful... at being right at the centre...**

And...again this is quite unformulated...but it is that...I have been aware of **a feeling of fullness...**like 'I have had enough now'...bit like between courses in a meal...**of a sense of wanting to go away and come back...**and there were thoughts in my head about how **I like to go away on little adventures, but I like to come home as well...and er...returning is as exciting as going...**just as exciting as going...In the sense of responding to whether it is to do with either 'coming towards or going away', for me I have more of a feeling of...**'am I full or am I empty?'** and if I think about the institution...it is almost like I daren't...with the institution I daren't come in too much...because I feel like I am already full and I will overflow...and in this particular room right now.....**I feel it...a wanting to hold back a little bit...for fear of getting too full...sort of feeling sick...of overdoing it, eating everything too quick and getting indigestion!.....there is also a feeling... in the holding back...of ...'will I... will I be rejected?...'of the risk...the push and the pull...**I had a great **sense of risk...**of 'will it be alright... to go closer?' ...therefore maybe just hold back...

And if I can say quite quickly - **my sense of belonging right now...**it is like being in **a shape which fits...**and um it is a little bit like having...so if it was something you could do...it is like **having a role as opposed to a job...**and it seems **very transportable in terms of place...of geographical place to me...**

Mark's comments, arranged as they are here as a monologue, seem to illuminate not only his process in the group, but they also **reflect something of the shape of the collective's process**. In several places he is interpreting and meaning-making directly from his felt-sense and narratively these create some beautiful descriptions of his individual experience but also seem to echo something of the group process as a whole. From the feeling of 'excitement at being able to come in...' to his sense of being '**joyful at being right at the centre**' and then of being '**full**' and of '**having had enough now**' – recognising a need to move away.

The two metaphors that Mark uses in his final comment also feel full of resonant meaning for me: the idea of '**being in a shape which fits**' as a description of belonging evokes for me the sense of how I can feel comfortable in certain groups without feeling 'bent out of shape' whilst in other situations I am aware of either the need to 'change shape' considerably or else to sit in awkward disconnection. His idea of '**having a role rather than a job**' evokes for me the way that I can make myself more comfortable in a group when I become involved with a shared project this strategy was also identified by Ruth in the last chapter.

Eleanor.

A strong feature for me of Eleanor's narrative is her awareness of, and sensitivity to her environment: natural environments in which she feels able to 'be' and more pressured workplace contexts which feel 'oppressive'. Very interestingly Eleanor also talks about a sense of the 'belonging of being lost in nature' – an image which has been articulated in previous data chapters, and it is also one which is echoed by William in the next narrative. Eleanor is not sure whether this quality of belonging through being 'lost' in nature is the same for belonging with people, but it evokes for me the unreflected sense of inter-subjective experiencing mentioned by *Ruth* (Chapter Six) and *Joe* (Chapter Five) and *William* (below and Chapter Six).

Eleanor: When you asked the question, I found my body sitting upright, feeling...I am not sure exactly what...sort of proud...independent...and..I was quite comfortable with it...being separate....and, perhaps you can see by my face...I am not terribly sure I am happy with saying that.

[after a long silence...] ... *I continue to feel very **aware of the quiet and the grass and the sky and the birds, so a sense of place** which...and...it was taking me to other places where I would go for walking...so..I had **a sense of connectedness and belonging to ...natural spaces...and that is staying with me because it is so quiet here...and away from the main buildings and ...so I am **enjoying that feeling of being connected to that....quiet natural world, and realising other places that I have been to... walking...and it is about connecting with that natural world rather than with people...and I don't want to draw away from....that natural world actually...I enjoy **that sense of being....almost lost in it....belonging in a sense of being lost in it...it doesn't seem quite the same as when I think about people.....*******

[re-joining after another long pause] *People have been talking about the institute...particularly what you were saying about the 'ants' and things... I have been very conscious of my feelings about the corridors ...and the sense that is really getting stronger and stronger...is of them being oppressive and dark...and being hemmed in and not...and because of all the things being said...**actually not being able to 'be'** ...just being busy, busy, busy, just like ants scurrying up and down the corridors...and being oppressed...and one of the things I love to do is to sit and stare....and then...then there is the big space in the middle of [building]...and the walkway across it...which I love going across and a lot of people wont go across it, and the big glass windows there and the light coming through...and I love that space...I love it...and I am beginning to think maybe it is because it is not corridors and it is light, but I do feel ...**I can feel the sense that I can 'be' there...**I am not sure why...it is sort of beautiful...whereas the corridors aren't...and a lot about the corridors and the rooms isn't, so I can't 'be' ...so **it is that pushing and pulling that people were talking about...there are things about the place that pull me, that draw me...and there are things that make me feel very pushed away...***

William.

In this narrative William refers to his feeling of the '**freedom of not-belonging**' as a '**whoosh of independence**'. William also mentions an 'edge of comfort/discomfort' in respect of coming into the group, to some extent perhaps paralleled by his sense of un-ease within the collective of the institute. By naming this tension – what he refers to as his 'stuff' - he opens up to a deeper reflection on the 'at-home-ness' he

can have in being 'lost' and the way that for him this is neither 'towards' nor 'away from' but rather is a state where he no longer has to 'keep my-self going'. The effort of maintaining a 'self' and of 'keeping it going' is perhaps relinquished to some extent in the liminality of 'lost-ness' – for William this can happen in connection to being with another

William: *Two things struck me...one was that at the start, when you asked that question, there was a jump of excitement about the idea that...of a freedom of not belonging...and there was a sense of 'fresh air' about that...Like I felt a sort of a whoosh of being independent and the second thing I noticed was that I was reluctant to pick this thing up, to participate in the rules of the game, and I was reluctant to speak because the longer I didn't speak the more I could keep my own self distant - and independent from – this... and however nice people you might be...and even if I knew you I wouldn't necessarily feel comfortable sitting here...so I am still at that edge of comfort and discomfort..."*

[later] *"For a while I have sat here, not knowing whether I could or should speak...and I felt a bit of release from those last comments...because there...what I heard to be...warm appreciation of this institute as a place to belong...ugh...it affected me...um...and a quite a bitter sense of...that as far as I am concerned..I have tried to belong to the institute and it always shows itself to be unwilling...or not interested in...in my attempts to become part of it...so I have always felt a sense that...there isn't a place...and I am allowed to come in...to pay money and to..and to wander about...but somehow there feels to be an 'in crowd' that I have never penetrated..and that the rules of how you get into the in crowd are...somehow hidden...So I am disturbed to be saying this...and I am uncomfortable to be sort of saying something that reveals my ... 'my stuff'...But before that...there was something about the 'coming towards and coming away from' question ...which seemed to me to be the wrong question...um...that I am not sure that I am more... but there was a point...a comment about...about a sense of lostness...that I am most comfortable and 'at home'...when I am lost...I can be lost with a person and therefore I don't have to 'keep myself going'...I can be myself...or just lost in a place...like getting lost on [a mountain]..and somehow that lostness is neither 'towards' nor 'away from' but it is a place that seems comfortable to me..."*

[finally] *"...I feel myself making a grab for the pear! And holding it tightly...and I notice that...at the start of this process..there was something about me 'sitting in my own juices' so to speak...and brewing away and feelingerr...and you were all in the room...but I didn't take much notice of you...and then somehow...during the process...I allowed myself to listen to what you were saying in a much more straight forward way...and that released me from...the burden of sitting in my own juices...and I felt suddenly lighter and more comfortable...by not feeling the burden to be... [makes constricting movement with arms] ...I cant express it...there is no word for it but you see what I mean..but to be held by what was happening in the moment...that was alive...and I could live...I could dance around in that...like a gnat in the breeze of that... and feel a place...that I felt denied of...always....thank you..."*

7.3.2 A Triangular Circle-Story: 'Belonging to Gaia'.

I have created a slightly different kind of narrative with the transcript of this 'talking circle'. I have woven my own commentary (non-italics) through the successive contemplative contributions (in italics) of those who were present in this talking circle, in order to preserve something of its 'wholeness' and of the unfolding shape

of this process, whilst also analysing and presenting it narratively. The data presented in this way is single spaced and indented.

Grace began by referring to the effect of reading the question in my email: “*what is the longing in be-longing?*”:

‘I had an immediate reaction, my body had an immediate reaction...it was deep... down here...’ she indicated an area of her body below the solar plexus...***in response to the word 'longing'...it is an ache...right deep down...quite a hurt I think...it is a sort of hurt...’***

Lydia had also noticed a physical response to the word 'longing', and her reaction to it:

*‘I recognised a longing when I received the email, but I was busy at the time and I pushed it away...and yesterday...I was sitting watching the sunset over the river...I had a feeling which I relate to belonging or not belonging and I said:...’’this feeling...its like – **I want to jump in the river and swim**” – **I feel disrupted – when I hear that word, or see something that makes me feel that I want to belong...I had a similar feeling when people at work were all going off on a training session and I was going into my office to sit alone for the day, and I felt disrupted, physically disrupted...and my expression was....I wanted to ...if you will excuse me...’Kick Ass’ ...so it is a very disrupted feeling...’***

The images of water, flowing water and a river, had a particular effect on me – they evoked my own familiar longing to 'disappear' by merging into a natural environment such as a forest or a river-becoming like a pebble or a bit of weed, or just hanging in the current like a fish...After a pause a reflection from Grace seemed to illuminate something of this:

*‘I have a similar thing...about the moon...on water – on the sea, late at night...where **I have felt that longing. And what I was feeling then is a sort of angry feeling...and that is where the 'being' and the 'longing' is so interesting, because that anger is about “why can’t I just 'be'.** I just love 'being' in this ...beautiful, beautiful place...why do I have to long?’ ...and **it is about belonging to the whole, to Gaia...it is...the longing for being...’***

This description seemed to create an expansion in my sense of the scope of the contemplation. Although we stayed with each of our direct personal experiences as they were individually evoked and inquired into... it seemed that slowly something larger had begun to be unfolded. Lydia said:

‘I really relate to that...to the anger...it is what I felt...when I was looking at the sunset...and I remembered being able to look at the sunset and...feeling ok – not disruption and anger - so there was some sort of pain attached to that...but the overwhelming feeling I had...was to cause trouble...change things...make a statement...I don't know...I just wanted to act...to do something!’

I was beginning to see that we were describing two ways of responding to this *longing-hurt*, **one is an impulse to disappear or merge into a flowing state, and the other is an impulse to 'make waves', to really manifest 'being' by acting (kicking 'ass') or 'doing'**. This idea seemed to crystallise still further as Lydia continued:

*‘...I am wondering whether...’**disruption' is about just wanting to 'be'...it is an interesting thought...perhaps I have never felt that I had the right to 'be'- so I just had to make a disruption...which I have done...and changed everything around me when I have done it...I quite like the thought of just learning to be...’***

I was reflecting on my own ways of experiencing, or expressing my individual sense of 'being' - but it seemed that another facet from the *opposite* side of the dialectic had emerged for Grace as she described the experience of being a patient during a stay in hospital:

'[then]...I don't have to worry about anything, I don't have to hold myself together because somebody else is going to do it...all the irritations come around...but there is something about returning...to not having to think...to being looked after...to being told what to do...all the things that I have to do...but which put a barrier between me and...I don't know what it is....'longing' for...'

This was an interesting, but challenging idea for me since *hospital* is one context in which my urge to disappear by merging or blending-in gets turned on its head. In hospital I usually get the impulse to be disruptive, to make my presence felt, to wear my ordinary day clothes rather than the prescribed night-gear, to ask difficult questions and to want to co-ordinate my own 'care'. I really do not like the feeling of 'disappearing' into the collective called 'hospital'. Rather fascinatingly however this facet of experience also pivoted Lydia's next reflection – but for her in the opposite direction to mine once again:

'The thought of hospital is interesting...it makes me think of a completely different kind of...when I walk into a hospital - I am home! That is my comfort zone...I went back to nursing after 21 years...and I just loved walking into the hospital, I loved walking down the corridors...I just felt great...and I didn't want to cause any trouble either...quite the opposite!'

So...although we had established that each of us seemed to have a longing for a non-disruptive flowing or merging kind of belonging in some situations- equally we had found that in both similar and completely different situations, we could each find the need to become manifestly 'there' by exercising our freedom to 'act', or 'disrupt'.

Grace had found another 'facet' of experience – in the context of a community project, where she had experienced some blissful moments of belonging:

'..it feels like an absolute sense of belonging there...such a beautiful area of dereliction and growth...and everything...I don't have any longing... .. I can stand and listen to a blackbird in a tree and...maybe I can 'just be' there...and the longing has gone...'

We sat in silence for a long time after this; the faint sound of a clock ticking in the room and the occasional sea-gull calling outside mediated the stillness of the spaces between us. My own inner space was less still, although not uncomfortably so because I was back in flow-mode, embodying the feelings that I also get when I tune into the rhythms of nature and simply bear witness to its beautiful intricate minutiae- I thought to myself: “yes, that is my comfort zone of belonging”. It seemed that something different was happening for Lydia, she had been sitting with, and at last spoke about having had an impulse to retreat away from this contemplative group contact. She said that although she wanted to say things, there was also an inner voice telling her that perhaps what she might say would not be welcomed. She had inwardly reminded herself that sharing in the contemplation was what she had come here to do and so had at last managed to prompt herself to re-connect once more with us through speaking. This inner movement– away from, and then back towards contact which was established through speaking - seemed really significant to me, I felt very grateful that it had been articulated.

Grace began speaking of recognising a feeling of sadness now because she wondered if the 'blissful' and uninterrupted belonging-feeling she had felt in the community project was also a factor of 'having a role' there, and if so perhaps that diminished it in some way... I suddenly remembered that in a previous talking-circle Mark had said that *'having a role'* had seemed to him a good way of becoming part of a group – making 'a shape that fits' he had said. I commented that this role-thing had also been instrumental in helping Lydia to re-connect with this group when she had earlier had the impulse to retreat from it. Perhaps the pull towards disconnection from a group can, at least temporarily, be quietened by having a good 'role' as a part of a creative group project. But it seems that **there is creativity and innovation also in the more liminal 'lost-ness' of having no-role when we de-part ourselves from a group.**

There followed a further deep silence, into which a new level of this contemplation emerged. Lydia said:

*'I have been reading quite a bit recently **about people that became contemplatives...gone off to live on their own...I am drawn to it in many ways... .. and I am amazed that it is an alright thing to do... .. because...what is the purpose of it? Because I suppose I feel that the purpose of living is ...to be relating to people, to be creating something...in a role...'***

The effect of this reflection, on the utility of *a contemplative life*, was really expansive for me. It seemed that a bigger context came briefly into view as we considered a life lived contemplatively - beyond the borders of the hub-bub of the creative and relational endeavours of the rest of society. It seemed to me to definitely be a role, one which perhaps served both the individual and the collective in different ways and which might take collective 'belonging' to a different level. Lydia said:

'That does kind of bring us back to just being...and being a part of the human and non-human community of life...of this planet in this universe...which as you say is a much broader sense of belonging... .. we do...simply by being here...belong...we are belonging...we count..'

This expanding perspective seemed to resonate around the sunny spaces between and beyond us, but something else had come sharply into view for Grace as she said:

*'What I immediately thought when you said that was that...**'this thing called consciousness gets in the way!'** Grace had immediately noticed *within herself* how her self-reflexive awareness – consciousness- can disrupt, or separate, the more flowing inter-subjective sense of connection with *'the human and non-human community of life'*.*

There was another period of silence as we held the space for it a little longer, a space that felt at first a little uneasy to me but which again gradually settled. I felt my body moving between its knowledge of a 'belonging' of the Universal kind referred to by Lydia and the idea that at the level of the smallest particle we are made of the same material. Into the deepening stillness Grace re-joined with:

'...the saying that deep down...I know that if I go down...through all the layers...right in the depth of me somewhere...I know that I do belong...I belong to other people in their purest state...and in the layers above that...it is as though there are disruptions and that is where the difficulties are...but right deep down...not only belonging...but linked...the sort of feeling that right deep down...I am linked in this Jungian type of...flow'_

After re-reading both the original transcript, and then this story several times - re-entering its resonance whilst trying not to break-up its overall shape - it seemed to me that there may be a 'meta-story' here.

The meta-story which Grace articulates right at the beginning suggest that, in essence we were investigating a story about **'belonging to the whole - to Gaia...[and also]...the longing for being...'** in with a sense of 'coming together' into connection. Significantly however, Grace also has the insight that **'...this thing called consciousness gets in the way'**.

I am reminded here again of the *quest* motif. This quest includes two seemingly *opposing* movements – 'away from' and 'towards' *belonging* - but together they form a creative dynamic which manifests both evolutionary diversity and self-reflexive awareness (consciousness).

7.4 Chapter summary.

The 'Talking circles' gave rise to many insights:

- Belonging has a joyful sense of *'being at the centre of absolutely everything'*.
- A sense of belonging can result from ***sharing experience and history with people or places*** (even a difficult history of *not*-belonging).
- *Belonging* as an experience can feel like *'being lost'* to the self ('at home') without any 'edges', and with no effort or need associated with *'keeping my 'self' going'*.

Significantly however:

- **Somehow consciousness can 'get in the way' of that (unified sense of belonging).**
- The experience of not-belonging in collectives can have an energetic edge of creative independence and freedom coupled with a sharpened sense of individual identity and *self-consciousness*.
- The sense of not-belonging feels like a 'liminal place' - on the edge of the culture of the collective - or else somehow *encapsulated* within it.

From the systemic constellation focus group:

- Belonging pertains to the *scope* of the membership within the culture of a particular family system.
- ***Belonging* is expressed in an embodied and heart-felt way – experienced as 'flow', 'relaxation', 'opening'.**
- **Patterns of belonging and separation (sometimes the result of trauma and loss) may be repeated (re-presented) inter-generationally.**

- Love seems to work through groups and systems in a way which brings such separated elements back into relationship with each other - if the heart-felt consciousness of the system can be expanded sufficiently to include and integrate them.

The narrative from John's story provides an illustration of the tension which can arise between a strongly-felt individual identity and a strongly defined collective-identity. In this case, it seems that having a role through participation in a collective endeavour based upon shared values facilitated a working integration.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Linking Findings to Theory – looking for patterns

The misconception which has haunted philosophic literature throughout the centuries is the notion of 'independent existence.' There is no such mode of existence; every entity is to be understood in terms of the way it is interwoven with the rest of the universe.

And

The art of progress is to preserve order amid change, and to preserve change amid order.

— Alfred North Whitehead

8.0 Introduction

In this chapter I collate the themes from the previous chapters and identify the significant features of this study in order to relate these to existing theory. I then consider how the identified phenomena may be considered to be dynamically related to each other within an embodied integral paradigm.

Overall, this phenomenological inquiry has taken in some of the subjective and objective experiential qualities and contexts of belonging and not-belonging. Now I look at these in the light of theories from diverse discourses and discuss their differing perspectives. Reference is made to studies from the disciplines of psychology, sociology, neurology, philosophy, existential and transpersonal psychotherapies.

Text box 8.1 (overleaf) presents a summary of the themes and categories from my IPA analyses, along with some of the significant features from all four data chapters. Dominant themes and categories are highlighted in bold and are numbered in the order in which they are then discussed in later sections of this chapter.

The manner in which such aspects of experiential phenomena are dynamically related to each other cannot however, be portrayed in terms of these categories. In order to represent and discuss these relationships and processes I return to a narrative mode in chapter sections 8.9 and 8.10 respectively.

Text Box 8.1 Chapter Sections and Categories of collected Themes.

	Situation & environment		Inter-personal & social		Intra-personal psychological		Behaviour & The Body		Culture and meaning-making		Philosophical Existential
8.1	<p>Social situation - community a place to go Safety Structures Belonging.</p> <p>Place Nature Landscape</p>	8.7	<p>Family systems Attachment Secure-base theories. Intergenerational patterns</p>	8.3	<p>Life-stage and development Individuation Growth and change Transitions</p>	8.2	<p>Migration Needing to leave Curiosity Adaptation</p>	8.4	<p>Identity Shared values beliefs, practices and roles. Occupation Participation Integration</p>	8.10	<p>Two faces of belonging and not-belonging Janus' Transcending Inside/outside Individual/collective Creativity</p>
8.10	<p>Aesthetic response</p> <p>'Gaia'</p>	8.1	<p>Community Development Resources Place Membership Exchange Identity Passion, Respect Boundaries....</p>	8.5	<p>Self-reflexive awareness consciousness of 'self' and 'other'. Subjectivity Fear of rejection, judgement, ridicule</p>	8.6	<p>Disruption & Trauma Isolation Encapsulation</p>	8.9	<p>Stories: of staying and of leaving home. Narrating belonging</p>	8.10	<p>Individual and social integration and marginalisation creating 'fractal' patterns out of belonging and not-belonging.</p>
8.2	<p>Homelessness marginalisation alienation not-belonging</p>	8.2	<p>Power Dominance Marginalisation Alienation Resilience Innovation</p>	8.9	<p>Narrative-self</p>	8.10	<p>Anxiety Depression Addiction Suicide</p>	8.10	<p>Love Acceptance Recognition Respect</p>	8.7	<p>Soul – a sensitive field of awareness 'Flow'</p>
				8.10	<p>Essential 'Self' Creativity Agency</p>					8.2	<p>Existential migration</p>
										8.8	<p>'Home' - is where the heart opens</p>

8.1 Environments of belonging and not-belonging.

8.1.1 Community.

The case study of Thetford began with a brief historical narrative about the place and some of its people. [T]his-story is inextricably woven between the landscape, its geology and ecology and successive migrations and waves of human inhabitants (Bateson, 1972).

Thetford's history has a very strong motif of settlement and migration, of needing (and of struggling) to accommodate and 'integrate' migrants. Thinking about the whole 'autopoietic' system of Thetford, and of the individuals (including myself) and groups within it, has helped me to envision some of the dynamics of exchange inherent in community growth and development. In Chapter Four I learned that communities need boundaries in order to protect vulnerable people, and spaces (environments) in which social exchange can take place. It takes people with passion, vision and commitment to have the resilience necessary to both sustainability and growth. A desire for community-based socialisation was endorsed by the settling migrants that I spoke with at META; as well as identifying a priority need for the exchange of information and for help to overcome language barriers so that they might find ways of participating at the level of community.

8.1.2 Belonging in a place.

Many contexts and situations associated with the sense of *belonging* have been described to me in the course of this study. Interestingly contexts of belonging did not necessarily concern social relationships with people at all; Sophie, Mark, Joe, William, Ruth, Eleanor have all described experiencing a bodily-felt sense of *belonging* whilst being alone- especially in the beauty of nature. My own research journal also reflects something of this.

Research Journal entries: 12/4/2011

walking around the earth ramparts of the Iron-Age castle in Thetford today I was feeling an expansion of my sense of 'Where I Am' - geographically and historically and in my own life and being - but also of feeling **at home** in this place ...my little house, this neighbourhood, its human and ecological history [...] I noticed that in this **at-home-ness** feeling my edges almost **disappear** ... like an expanding bubble whose membrane thins to absolute translucency.

Mark described his sense of feeling 'rooted' in the landscape and culture of his childhood and explained that after living in many other areas, he had not found an equivalent sense of *belonging to a place*. Sophia's experience was the other way round: she had felt no strong belonging connection to the place of her birth (where her family still live), but she described having found a heart-felt and loving sense of connectedness to the landscape of an island where she had gone to live and work. Joe, Sophie, Eleanor, Mark, Lydia, Grace and

Ruth all commented upon their embodied responses of *belonging* (and also of *not-belonging*) in the context of landscape, environment and place.

Relationship to place and having a sense of *belonging* in a particular environment is therefore an important theme in this inquiry, it also plays a significant role in identity (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996), Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001), Hay (1998), Whiston-Spirn (1998) and also in self-reflexive awareness (Ikemi, 2014).

The environmental belonging of the body is clearly stated in Gendlin's Process Model (1997b). For Gendlin (1997b:26) there is actually *no body* separate from the environment because the body is regarded as a set of environmentally determined processes and sub-processes interacting with each other, since the environment is also (partly) determined by the body.

The sub-processes and parts happen in many larger systems, not just those within the skin or the skin demarcated body. Therefore what we call "the body" is a vastly larger system.

An embodied connection to the environment and to a particular place is central to the *Indigenous Paradigm* described by Shawn Wilson (2008) as well as in *Contemporary Panpsychism* (Laszlo, 2004:11; Mathews 2003, 2005) and in Gregory Bateson's (1972) *'Ecology of mind'*. From these paradigmatic perspectives, *belonging* can only be understood in terms of humans being fully integral to a whole ecology and cosmology.

Ikemi (2014:7) articulates this idea very simply: *'The universe is "in" the body, and the body is "in" the universe'*. The bodily experience of *belonging*, even in the absence of other people, has the relational sense of *'being with'* (or integral to) the environment. This sense was described by Ruth, Lydia, William, Arthur, and Lorna and included a bodily feeling of relaxation, expansion, opening and energetic *'flow'*. Csikszentmihaly, 1990, 1996) has also used this term to describe the *'happiness'* of being *'absorbed'* in creative activity.

Research collaborators told me how their bodily sense of *Belonging* and of *Not-belonging* could alter in various environmental and social situations. William described his bodily *not-belonging* feeling like being *'pressed in'* or *'crunched down'* whilst also essentially *'preserved like marmalade'*; Ruth described a similar sense of being *'encysted'* or *'encapsulated'* while Lydia said she could sometimes feel as if she were trapped in a cardboard *'cake'*, just waiting to jump out.

22/6/2011 Research Diary.

Talking to 'Ruth' about embodiment and wondering how closely a sense of belonging is linked to this - seems a bit obvious perhaps - but I am excited to think about it. I have been writing and reading about embodiment - mainly as a way of justifying my choice of methods - but now I wonder if it is actually also central to the capacity to feel belongingness? First of all to be able to inhabit the body fully - to feel as if one has the right to belong in it (to exist) and be at-home in its connectedness to a bigger home.

Grace and Ruth described an expansive bodily feeling of *belonging* to a greater ecological, environmental and organismic 'whole'. Grace interpreted this as a sense of *belonging to Gaia* (Lovelock, 2000). The sense of unquestioned belonging within a wider systemic 'cosmos' was evoked for Mark in the pleasure of '*feeling at the absolute centre of everything*'. For Ruth such a cosmic sense of connection could also be found when meditating or directing focused attention on an activity (e.g. sketching) – suggesting that **the sense of 'belonging' is a primary state of being** which can be accessed in a number of ways **but which can only be known about through separation and reflection of some kind.**

8.2 Leaving 'home'.

The themes of migration, of leaving home and of home-less-ness have been recurrent in this study. One of the ways that I have considered these is in terms of John Bowlby (1959, 1969, 1976, 1988) and Mary Ainsworth *et al.* (1978) '*Attachment and Secure-base*' theories. Bowlby (1988:62) pronounced that:

All of us, from the cradle to the grave, are happiest when life is organised as a series of excursions, long or short, from the secure base provided by our attachment figures.

Many psychological and sociological studies (e.g. Horney, 1945; Sullivan, 1953; de Rivera, 1984; Epstein, 1992; McSweeney, 1999; Fromm 2001; Waters *et al.* 2002) lend support to Bowlby's ideas. What remains less clear is why certain individuals, who have had desperately insecure and even traumatic attachment experiences, can still demonstrate the *resilience* (Werner and Smith, 1980; Maston *et al.* 1990) and the motivation to make successful and creative excursions into the world.

In this study, Mark described himself as '*a bit of a nomad*' but also commented on how securely '*rooted*' he feels by his early experiences of home. In one of our talking circles he further commented: "*I love going away, but I love coming home even more*".

Bowlby (1988) determined that our original relational attachments continue to be the '*secure base*' (or not) from which we are increasingly able to move away from as the world becomes knowable and navigable. This need for relational security is not necessarily confined to infancy according to Luke *et al.* (2012:721). They conducted three studies confirming their hypothesis that secure adult love attachment relationships not only lead to '*feelings of security*' but also to '*having increased energy*', and (significantly in terms of Bowlby's secure-base theory) a '*willingness to explore*'. However, in the current inquiry this has been one of the areas in which I have encountered the rather paradoxical nature of human beings. Joe, Andy and Pete gave some insights into their early life experiences - which did not seem to have offered them a very secure base - nevertheless they all recounted enjoying a sense of freedom and increased energy and wellbeing when travelling.

Helen had felt that it was partly the rupturing of her parents' marriage, when she was a small child, and her sense of having been '*the disputed territory*' between them, which had given her the impulse to leave her native land to travel at the earliest opportunity. Travelling had become something of a way of life for her and her adaptability and creativity had also enabled her to become a highly motivated achiever in her field.

Social commentator Malcolm Gladwell (2013) observes that historically it has often been the '*underdogs and misfits*' of society (his terms) – those who have been initially disadvantaged in some way – who have seemed to do rather better than they should according to the 'secure-base' theorists. Perhaps the experience of feeling 'marginal', of being socially disadvantaged, or 'not-belonging' can also mobilise the creativity, innovation, resilience and determination to go beyond the security of a fixed identity and a sense of belonging. Even if such a positive outcome is the exception rather than a more commonplace 'rule', Gladwell points out that these are often the resilient individuals who seem to help change the 'old orders' and contribute to the evolution of radically new social patterns - thereby influencing the lives of many.

In this study it has seemed to me that the motivation behind the movements of migration can neither be wholly explained in terms of having a secure-base nor by the lack of one. Greg Madison's (2009) concept of '*Existential Migration*' offers one alternative hypothesis. He suggests that, at an existential level, the need to leave home can be motivated by an inner search for '*authenticity*' which is guided by '*orientating values*' and which may continue to lead the existential migrant onwards towards what Madison (2009:183) refers to as a more fulfilling experience of 'home' :

The concept of existential migration clarifies the possibility that 'home' in its conventional sense constitutes true exile from values such as authenticity, awareness, pursuing self-potential, freedom and the ineffability of existence. One's orientating values determine which process is considered exile and which is 'home'.

Madison's ideas have certainly resonated with many of the stories of migration that I heard in this study, such as Sophia's and Helen's - but not with all of them. Several of the people that I spoke with at META (see Chapter Four), those who had left home out of economic necessity, seemed to have held on to dreams of returning to an original 'home' which would have remained unchanged for them in their absence. However, Roberta and Marco had discovered that, after living and working in the UK for several years, both the physical and the social environment of their old homes, and their own social identity, had changed significantly in that context. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1995:1) observed something of this when he returned to towns where he had lived and conducted research over forty years previously:

The two towns of course have altered, in many ways superficially, in a few profoundly. But so, and likewise, has the anthropologist.

With the passage of time and the unfolding of experience and environmental adaptation, it seems that no pristine configuration or 'structure' of either '*self*' or '*home*' remains in either the interior or the exterior

domains of identity. What does seem to remain is an essential and experiential felt-sense of what *belonging* is – which perhaps becomes defined by its absence.

According to Cox (2013) the environmental adaptive capacity of living organisms is fundamental to the success of biological life on Earth. Life seeks ways, means and contexts in which it can safely 'belong' and reproduce itself - thereby creating social and other 'structures'. There certainly seems to be an aspect of human living which is *essentially* creative and adaptive in this organismic way. However, a further essential aspect of human being seems to be 'called forth' in order to go beyond existing structures in search for something of its-self.

Carl Rogers' (1963:1) *Actualising Tendency* proposed that there is an innate drive in all living organisms for differentiation and self-production (autopoiesis):

The directional tendency in every living organism of maintaining, enhancing, and reproducing itself is seen as fundamental to the question of motivation.

Rogers (ibid) continues here by emphasising an individualistic motivation towards 'autonomy', and the establishment of a separate identity from the collective:

This "actualizing" tendency involves development toward autonomy and away from heteronomy, or control by external forces.

I am not convinced by the idea that 'autonomy' is an organismic fundament, even amongst human beings; some groups of individuals (for instance indigenous peoples and Oriental cultures) seem to be more 'motivated' by collective development than by a drive for individual autonomy (Wilson, 2008). What Rogers describes may be primarily directed towards the psychological process of individuation (see section 8.3), or it may be a feature of the 'mind' of Western industrialised nations (Tarnas, 1991); or, if taken as a human whole, what he refers to as 'autonomy' may be an expression of a collective quest for self-reflexive awareness.

In this respect I suggest that migration may be necessitated by environmental or traumatic circumstance (Papadopoulos, 2002), or else instigated by an innate curiosity and creativity, representing an existential search for both 'authenticity' (Madison, 2009) and reflexive self-awareness.

8.3 Developmental processes: belonging and *not-belonging*.

8.3.1 Theories of Development and 'Life-stage'.

In order to understand how the experiences of *belonging* and *not-belonging* might fit into a developmental framework, I considered various theoretical perspectives (Crain, 2011; Gordon and Gardener, 2006). A number of people in my study, for instance Mark, Lydia and Diane, made reference to specific periods of their earlier lives when they had experienced either an urge to leave, or else to return 'home' (both instances being associated with the sense of *not-belonging*). My data is not particularly rich in what I can identify as 'life-

stage' or developmental phenomena. Nevertheless, as a theme it forms an important theoretical backdrop for other more prominent issues, such as 'identity', 'self' and 'reflexive sensory awareness'.

Object Relations Theorists (such as Fairbairn, 1954; Klein 1975; Winnicott, 1957, 1960; Rogers, 1991), have proposed that a baby's psychological development of a representational sense of 'self' and 'world' are constituted by means of a process of interiorisation (introjection) of external '*objects*'. 'Objects' is in the philosophical (subject/object) sense of the object or 'target of attention' (Gomez, 1998:1-2). A baby's attention is given to 'objects' 'other' (not-belonging) to the subjectively experienced self; it can be directed towards people but also 'parts' of people (e.g. 'breast' or 'hand') as well as qualities of relationship (e.g. 'punishing', 'withholding', 'rewarding'). The implication here is that the 'self' is essentially a dynamic, relational (inter-subjective: inter-objective) structural process.

In Jungian psychology (Jung, 1971:757), *individuation* is a process of psychological differentiation of the individual psyche from the collective:

In general, it is the process by which individual beings are formed and differentiated [from other human beings]; in particular, it is the development of the psychological individual as a being distinct from the general, collective psychology.

Wilber's (1995) integral model of psychological development also draws into itself a number of stage-models, including the cognitive stages model of Jean Piaget (1962, 1976), the multiple intelligences of Gardener, (2006), Gebser's (1985) spectrums (or waves) of consciousness evolution (Holland, 2006), Beck's (2003) Spiral Dynamics, as well as Freudian (1919; 1961) and Eriksonian (1950; 1959) developmental ideas. Each of these models variously suggests that developmental stages need to be fully integrated (or resolved) sequentially otherwise they may potentially manifest dissociated or repressed and regressive psychological phenomena (Wilber, 2000:9).

Wilber (2000:92) proposes ten developmental stages with transitional 'fulcrums' which an individuating 'self' experiences as he or she moves through new levels of psychological and spiritual development. Each fulcrum involves the same basic motif of differentiation and then integration. Wilber suggests that each time a fulcrum is encountered will pose a particular challenge to the developing self - especially difficult if earlier transitions have not yet been successfully integrated (ibid). Therefore, from this perspective a sense of *not-belonging* may be associated with a developmental transition or fulcrum – and the need to integrate a new level of consciousness, or to more fully integrate an existing one.

Creating a more social emphasis for this theme of individual development, the *Life Course Framework* (LCF) theory (Elder, 1998; Elder and Shanahan, 2006) proposes that individuals move through sequences of socially patterned, culturally defined, and age-specific roles and social transitions. From this perspective the

role of human agency in determining life-course patterns of development is emphasised, even though such choices are also seen as informed, resourced *or* constrained by circumstance:

...human agency states that individuals construct their own life course through the choices and actions they take within the opportunities and constraints of history and social circumstances. (Elder and Shanahan, 2006:4)

The Life Course perspective also suggests that social and developmental transitions, for instance during adolescence or following situations of loss, often contain significant 'turning points'. Such turning points may be relatively abrupt, or even traumatic events which can radically alter a life course. Transitions themselves are defined as changes in social state or developmental stage often marking the beginning or the end of a particular role (Silver, 2007). From this perspective, the painful rupturing of Lydia's marriage, and my own, could be regarded as such a significant 'turning point' requiring us to re-organise many aspects of self-concept, roles and identity as well as the circumstances and '*trajectories*' (ibid) of our lives.

8.4 Identity, Society and belonging.

Erik Erikson (1968:22) proposed that the problem of identity is '*all pervasive*' and concerns a: '*process located in the core of the individual and yet also in the core of his communal culture*' [my emphasis]. Erikson's terminology suggests that identity is a fluid process rather than a fixed structure or social artefact - a process which links the communal culture of the collective with the self-concept of individuals.

According to the seminal systematic review by Baumeister and Leary, (1995) the human need for a sense of *belonging* to a social group is a 'fundamental and universal' motivation; studies by Osterman (2000) and Mellor *et al.* (2008), Gere and McDonald (2010) find strong accord with this proposition. The idea is grounded in Maslow's (1987:20) contention that, in common with other animals, human beings have the need for security and: '*to herd, to flock, to join, and to belong*'.

McSweeney (1999:13) explores what he considers to be the related concepts of identity with that of '*security*' in terms of nationhood, observing that: '*like peace, honour and justice [...] security denotes a quality of relationship which resists definition*'. Mc Sweeney goes on to suggest that both identity and security have positive and negative connotations and points out that national protectionism creates safety for some whilst alienating or oppressing others. The duality of expression for security and identity highlighted by McSweeney is significant here, as both security (safety) and identity seem to inhere in descriptions of belonging.

In the current study, Diane felt sure that her sense of national and cultural identity (D'Andrade, 1981, 1984; Danemark *et al.* 2002; Rose, 1998) was a positive psychological resource. Lucy also touched upon this issue in the focus group when pondering the question '*what is a nation?*' reflecting on the situation of displaced peoples (Papadopoulos, 2002). Diane could also recognise the potential for what she called '*negativity*' or

aggression sometimes concomitant with group belonging and National Identity, giving the example of her own country's history of being invaded and occupied by hostile nations during that time of war.

For Diane, National Identity lends strength to a personal as well as a collective sense of who one is. For her this was particularly noticeable subsequent to her migration to the UK. Diane had also acknowledged tensions within herself, as well as in her nation (and more globally), pausing to wonder whether: '*...we are ready for globalisation?*' The phenomena of globalisation and the implications for identity, security and *social inclusion* have been highlighted for instance by Iyer (2000); Hermans (2007) and Cox (2004).

Curle, (1972) has described two 'faces', or modes, of identity which he denotes as '*Belonging-Identity*' and '*Awareness Identity*'. Curle (1972:29) suggests that Belonging-Identity tends to resist the threat of change, demonstrating: '*...a strong conservative streak. It draws strength from, and in turn supports the status quo*'. He goes on to explain that individuals can demonstrate differing combinations of each identity-mode and further emphasises the potential for aggression inherent to 'belonging-identity', which he considered principally creates possessive and exploitative inter-group relationships. According to Curle (1972:32) when this kind of identity mode is dominant it may be fiercely defended because: '*...in the case of belonging, our most important possession (that is belonging) is our own identity*'.

From the current study, Andy's childhood experience of alienation following his family's migration to Thetford would seem to illustrate Curle's thesis. However Curle goes on to suggest that with 'Awareness-Identity' mode less threat is perceived from potential changes to self or from difference in others; rather there is the sense of being able to: '*recognise the contradictions and limitations of our nature*' (1972:32).

Curle, (1972:28) proposed that the processes of identity construction are reflexively impacted by occupation and role: '*What I am determines what I do; what I do contributes to what I am*'. This reflexivity was evoked for me by the narratives of the people I spoke with at the Matthew Project concerning the impact on identity of the shared behaviours and experiences of drug-use – and subsequently in the supportive recovery community of the project and twelve step fellowships. Roles were important for Mark who described belonging as: '*being in a shape that fits*', while Ruth explained that, for her, being part of a group was best facilitated by a shared task or purpose and Helen recognised that her purpose for being somewhere constituted her belonging to that place.

The significance of the social embodiment of *roles* and participation in society has been stressed by Engler (2006:158) who writes that the feeling of anxiety and identity confusion stems from an: '*inability to conceive of oneself as a productive member of one's own society*'. She suggests that a dynamic relationship exists between society as it is externally enacted by roles, occupation (Collins, 2010), policies and practices (Lanski *et al.* 1995) and identity.

Other theories of Social Identity (Tajfel , 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, *et al.* 1987; Breakwell, 1986, 1992, 2000; Cahill, 1998), have suggested that 'identity', at the individual level, has two parts which, according to Brewer (1991), involves both a personal and a social aspect. For Brewer (1991:476), personal identity is

the: '*individuated self*—those characteristics that differentiate one individual from others' whereas social identities are: '*categorizations of the self into more inclusive social units that depersonalize the self-concept*' [original emphasis].

Kreiner, Hollensbe and Sheep (2006:1031) considered issues of identity, occupation and group membership, suggesting that:

Today's society is replete with social groups such as organizations, clubs, churches, and vocations that ask their members to submit, surrender, and succumb to the needs, values, or identities of the collective.

They found that those in particularly challenging and defined social roles (such as priests, police, teachers and doctors) are likely to experience tension between their personal and social identities. Kreiner *et al.* (2006:1032) go on to suggest that even after a full 'membership' has been established: '

An on-going process takes place in which the individual negotiates the "Who am I?" question amidst social "This is who we are" messages.

John's story is quite distinctive in that his sense of individual identity was already well accustomed to a peripheral position and his internal resources were strong enough not to become immediately subsumed by his a role in a collective with what he called a strong 'tribal identity'. Even so he describes a process through which he had needed to establish sufficient shared values to be able to identify himself with a collective purpose rather than with the group itself. This process has been described by Snow and Anderson (1987:1348) as '*identity work*' which they define as the:

...range of activities that individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept.

This again suggests a reflexive process in which identities are socially constructed in negotiation with a more essential sense of self. According to Sveningsson and Alvesson, (2003:1165) identity work involves:

...people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness

Schmid (2001:226) claims that the '*authenticity*' (the authoring of the self) of identity is bodily established by its experiential sensory awareness:

Authenticity also has eminent bodily aspects: there is no emotion without the body, no thought, no experience. Experiences are always organismic, basically grounded in bodily processes and sensations — and, in the same sense, communication does not exist outside of the bodies involved.

The reflexive and embodied awareness of 'self' (and others) seems to be at the very heart of the experience of *belonging* and of *not-belonging*.

8.5 'Self' and self-reflexive awareness – *Consciousness*.

In the current inquiry it has been interesting to note the effect of belonging and not-belonging on the subjective perception of 'the self'. For Lydia, Grace and Lorna, the more 'self-conscious' feeling of *not-belonging* could manifest itself in the uncomfortable perception of being '*too big*' or '*too tall*' (or otherwise *obvious*).

Schmid (2001:226) emphasises that it is the body and its skin borders - or at least our **awareness of it** - which defines both separation and connection to an-other:

It is the body of the Other which 'stands counter' to my body, which I can feel and which thus makes the connection between two persons, but which on the contrary also sets the limits between the Other and me.

Nick Crossley (2010:87) suggests that the human desire for recognition stems from the early childhood discovery of other consciousnesses:

Our awareness of their awareness of us generates a paranoid tension and alienation, an insecurity, which can only be resolved if we win their recognition.

In this sense it would seem that our awareness of others and our sense of being a separated 'self' calls for some *mutual recognition* to alleviate this fundamental tension.

This feels important since in English the word 'recognition' can be used to refer to the giving of an award or 'a prize' acknowledging somebody (usually for contributing something) and the term 'prizing' has also been used, for instance by John Dewey (1929/1998) and Carl Rogers (1961), to denote the relational qualities of acceptance, unconditional positive regard, or love. Thich Naht Hann (1997:13) teaches that in Buddhism *recognition* is one of the four key aspects of true love: '*To love is to recognise; to be loved is to be recognised by the other.*'

For Ruth, Eleanor, Lorna, Grace, Mark and William, the experience of *belonging* seemed to be associated with a reduction in self-consciousness, or at least a reduction in the discomfort of assessing one's 'self' as not-fitting in. Joe had experienced a kind of un-reflective, outwardly directed, awareness when he was walking in the forest; and Ruth described having both a sense of '*flow*' and reduced self-awareness with a sense of *belonging*, and when completely absorbed in her sketching.

Research diary: 8/4/11

I bought a copy of the 'Big Issue' today and in it was a book review about a man who spent 5 years living in almost complete isolation in a cottage in West Wales (*Deep Country* -by Neil Ansell). A phrase in it jumped out at me: "I imagined that if I could [live in such isolation] it would involve a great deal of soul-searching and introspection and a growing self-knowledge. What I found was just the reverse, I became so at ease with my own company that I almost forgot myself."

(Big Issue No. 943 page 16)

The experience of becoming absorbed in an activity, or an environment has been commented upon by Watts (1974:109) who noticed the way that focused attention changes subjective awareness of the environment and how we experience ourselves:

... one of the highest pleasures is to be absorbed in interesting sights, sounds, places and people. Conversely one of the greatest pains is to be self-conscious, to feel un-absorbed and cut-off from the community and the surrounding world.

Even the word 'absorbed', used in this way, evokes something of the way that self-reflexive consciousness changes when attention is given to some aspect of the surrounding world. Harre (1987) and also Gillespie (2007) reviewed the social basis of such self-reflection, both concurring with Lev Vygotsky's proposal that individual consciousness and self-reflexive awareness are a product of the social dimension.³⁴ For Vygotsky (1979:30), the social dimension clearly precedes the individual:

The social dimension of consciousness is primary in time and in fact. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary.

Internal dialogue is therefore a feature of the thought processes of reflexive consciousness (Hermans and Kempen, 1993).

Parallel and reflexively related processes between the psychological development of the individual and the social collective were suggested by Jungian analyst and philosopher Erich Neumann (1995/1949). Neumann (1951) considered that the evolution of human consciousness is an integral aspect of that of the organismic archetype which he referred to as the 'Great Mother' ('Gaia' of Lovelock's thesis). His thesis is consonant

³⁴ In his *integral theory* Wilber (1995) does not hold that the social dimension has precedence over the individual, rather he suggests that each is implicit in the other and represent facets of a unified whole.

with the larger macrocosm of Laszlo's (2004) evolving '*Akashic Field*' – which encompasses an evolving and conscious universe rather than stopping short at the 'border' of Earth's atmosphere³⁵.

The complexity of human reflexive awareness in interaction with the environment has been discussed by Ikemi (2014). Ikemi (2014:7) gives examples from the environmental living of plants (*sunflowers*), animals and fish (*sardines*) to illustrate the fact that the human body is, in a similar way, also a representation of its own environmental and social living. Ikemi's use of these symbolic representations (comparison, metaphor and simile) narratively illustrates the fact that, like other living organisms, humans live co-existentially with the environment. By extension, Ikemi points out; this includes our self-reflexive awareness and our experiencing of the social world of human symbolic representation:

The human body is vastly more complicated than the [*previous*] examples ..., because humans also live "in" a symbolic world, and the symbolic world is "in" the human body.

The current study provides an endorsement of the complexity and reflexivity of human social and environmental 'living-in' suggested by Ikemi. Maturana (2008) suggests that self-reflexive awareness and the shared and collective activities of symbolising experience into communicative action - and language – can be considered as the very '*origins of humanness*'.

8.6 Disrupted and 'stuck' belonging processes

Thus far I have mainly considered the experiences of *belonging* and *not-belonging* in terms of normal development, psychological individuation and in the course of moving through life-stage transitions. However, the experience of *not-belonging*, and the symptoms of both social and intra-psychic dis-integration are also strongly associated with trauma (Ruppert, 2010; Rothschild, 1998; Levine, 1997) as well as other psychopathologies. Gendlin (1964, 1978) has referred to certain problematic issues as 'stopped' or 'structure-bound' processes. Geiser (2009) observes that a 'stopped process' may be a momentary pausing, in which case it can just give rise to a new set of possibilities; or it may become more deeply entrenched and 'stuck', perhaps as a consequence of trauma, now manifesting as an addiction or some other kind of repeating pattern or 'pathology'. Gendlin (1996:38) maintains that:

According to my theory, a "pathological content" is nothing but the lack of a certain further experiencing.

Ruppert, (2011:iii) suggests that the psychological survival of trauma involves a kind of 'splitting':

The natural way that human beings manage traumatic experiences involves a splitting of the psychological and emotional structure of the person. While this splitting helps the person survive the traumatic experience, the required strategies of avoidance, control, compensation and delusional thinking will in time cause much stress and discomfort to the life of the sufferer.

³⁵ The environmental stability of conditions supporting Life on Earth is considered to be dependent on its proximity to the sun and its position within the constellation of the Solar system. Cox (2013)

Such strategies, and the energy invested in maintaining them, may be implicit in the 'stuck processes' already described.

Trauma has been implicit in several participant narratives - such as the '*fracturing*' described by Eleanor, Lydia's sense of the existence of intergenerational patterns of violence and Grace's recollection of her father's apparent '*not-belonging*' after he returned from the Second World War. Andy's traumatic head injury, and the way that his parents had struggled to cope with its consequences, had led to ongoing personal and relational difficulties for him - difficulties which for years he managed with the addictive use of substances before he became ready to look for some alternative forms of 'creative adjustment'.

Addiction

Substance abuse and dependence clearly have a cumulatively damaging effect on human relationships; however Marco remarked upon the '*terrible beauty*' of its capacity for rapidly facilitating cross-cultural integration. At this level, drug use is not just a strategy to ameliorate the pain of alienation and the effects of trauma: it is a way of belonging – albeit a marginal belonging.

Referring to a consensus statement by Hall-Flavin & Hofmann, (2003), Gabor Maté (2010:136) creates a concise summary of their definition of addiction:

The key features of substance addiction are the use of drugs or alcohol despite negative consequences and relapse.

Maté goes on to suggest that the phenomenon of addiction really needs a much broader definition – one which extends beyond the abuse of chemical substances. He points out that many compulsive behaviours involving food, sex, gambling and shopping (*etc.*) can have equally harmful consequences for the individual. He concludes that there is a '*fundamental addiction process that can express itself in many ways and many different habits.*' (ibid). For Maté (2010:136):

Addiction is any repeated behaviour, substance related or not, in which a person feels compelled to persist, regardless of its negative impact on his life or the life of others.

There is an increasing body of neuroscience, e.g. Noel *et al.* (2013), which now sheds some detailed light on the mechanisms of addiction. For instance, it is recognised that dopamine plays an important role in addiction to many drugs (Volkow and Li, 2004; O'Brien, *et al.* 2006). Dopamine is involved in the neural pathways associated with pleasure, also the fine-tuning of motor control, cognitive function, attention, learning, memory, bonding and attachment, planning and motivation. Maté (2010) suggests that addictive disorders represent repeated attempts (stuck processes) at regulating chronically dysregulated stress physiology, notably the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis. Ehlert, Gaab and Heinrichs (2001:141) offer support for this contention:

One of the best-known stress-related endocrine reactions is the hormonal release of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis. Dysregulations of this axis are associated with several psychiatric disorders. Profound hyperactivity of the HPA-axis has been found in melancholic depression, alcoholism, and eating disorders.

Maté (2010:240) relates such dysregulation to the effects of trauma and/or traumatic attachment, he summarises by suggesting that all addictive behaviours, including eating disorders (Armstrong, 1989) represent a search or '*inner thirst*' (Grof, 1993) – but also a poor substitute - for connection and love. One of the many aphorisms of the '*twelve-step*'³⁶ recovery fellowships is: "*If you have got drugs you don't need people, and if you have got people you don't need drugs*". Self-help groups such as the '*Twelve-Step*' programs of recovery create opportunities for people suffering with various addictive disorders to have the mutual support of others sharing similar experiences. Pete told me how, in addition to the support he was accessing at the Matthew Project, he had found a sense of '*belonging*' in the meetings of *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Suicide:

Perhaps the ultimate expression of a sense of *not-belonging* is the act of suicide. The seminal 'suicide hypothesis' of Durkheim (1897/1963) proposed that suicide could frequently be explained in terms of a *lack of social integration* and studies conducted over a hundred years later still point towards this conclusion (Trout 1980).

Francis told me how in one of his more serious '*come downs*' after a Rave Party he had experienced a strong suicidal impulse. It is perhaps interesting to note, in terms of its '*come down*', that the main effects of taking the drug *Ecstasy* (MDMA) include³⁷:

- An energy buzz that makes people feel alert, alive, in tune with their surroundings, and with sounds and colours which are often experienced as more intense.
- Users often develop temporary feelings of love and affection for the people they're with and for the strangers around them.

Consequently, one aspect of the appeal of this particular substance is that it facilitates the sensation of being more readily able to find relational connection with others. Conversely the rebound effect, or '*come-down*', of this drug is likely to include a more profound sense of disconnection or isolation. A large scale investigation into the underlying causes of violent deaths in America by Karch *et al.* (2006:22) found that:

For homicides and suicides, relationship problems, interpersonal conflicts, mental-health problems, and recent crises were among the primary precipitating factors

36 Including Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous.

37 <http://www.talktofrank.com/drug/ecstasy>

Their findings concluded that a lack of social integration, relational break-down or marginalisation on the basis of race, ethnicity or mental health issues may lethally combine with substance abuse.

Depression,

The term 'depression' is commonly used as a blanket-term for all low-mood states; however as a clinical diagnosis it has a more complex aetiology (Ehlert, *et al.* 2001). Francis told me that he had stopped using Ecstasy (MDMA) because of what he called '*the serotonin thing*'. He was making reference to a study first published by Kish (2000) on the effects of prolonged or heavy use of MDMA on the levels of available serotonin in the human brain. That study built on Schildkraut 's (1965) classical linking of depression with deficiencies in levels of certain neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin. Kish (2000) concluded that the serotonin levels in the brains of individuals who had used MDMA over a prolonged period, or else in very large amounts, showed between 50-80% depletion compared to the brain of a non-MDMA using individual leading to a propensity for clinical depression.

Francis' depression had not begun with his abuse of stimulants - he felt that he had: '*always suffered from depression*' - and according to him, so had his mother. This suggests another possible way of interpreting both his stimulant-seeking behaviour and the connection-seeking behaviours of the 'rave party' scene. According to Gerhardt, (2004) a depressed mother is unlikely to spend as much time playfully engaging with her baby as a happy one. Gerhardt (2004:118) cites studies which demonstrate that a lack of positively rewarding interactions between mother and baby can have a negative effect on the development of the baby's brain, specifically relating to affect regulation:

An unhappy early relationship can also constrict the capacity for pleasure and reward in later life, due to fewer dopamine receptors and opiate receptors in the baby's brain, especially in the pre-frontal cortex where they are usually very densely present.

Reduced early social interaction, and poorly moderated stress in the baby are also linked to lower levels of norepinephrine and a reduction in available dopaminergic receptors in the baby's brain, leading to underdeveloped neurological apparatus for dealing with the demands of socialisation (Gerhardt, 2004). Furthermore, a child with socialisation difficulties is likely to experience loneliness during childhood and adolescence - the links between *loneliness* and depression are already well established. Baskin *et al.* (2010:627) assert that:

Depression is a significant and persistent public health problem for children and adolescents (Weisz *et al.* 2006), and one of its root causes is loneliness.

Meanwhile Kendal *et al.* (2004) propose that the consequences of childhood anxiety disorders, if left untreated, can include *substance abuse, depression* and *chronic anxiety*.

Anxiety

Eleanor had discerned that her felt-sense of emotional pain was different to the one which she identified as pertaining to 'anxiety'. She also had identified that '*the anxiety is caused by me thinking about it...*' apparently because of the meanings that she attributed to those particular thoughts. Joe, Grace, Ruth and Lydia all commented upon social contexts where the feeling of *not-belonging* could give rise to the feeling of anxiety.

Several psychological studies, including Baumeister and Tice, (1990), Baumeister and Leary (1995) Barden, Garber, Leiman, Ford and Masters (1985) Tambor and Leary, (1993) link social exclusion to anxiety. Eisenburger (2003) used fMRI images to demonstrate that anxiety is heightened when people are excluded from social groups, and that subsequent inclusion seems to counteract these effects and lessen the anxiety; MacDonald and Leary (2005) correlated the neurology of this exclusion response to physical pain. Randall and Thevos (2001) make links between social exclusion, anxiety and alcoholism; while Kendall *et al.* (2004) suggest that early treatment of anxiety and depression in adolescents ameliorates the risk of them developing problematic substance misuse issues.

Paradoxically the creative possibilities sometimes engendered by the experience of alienation (commented upon by Gladwell [2013] and in section 8.2 of this thesis) have also been existentially linked to anxiety. Rollo May (1967:72) has stressed the importance of anxiety and feelings of '*powerlessness*', suggesting that it is these which engender the motivation to act '*courageously*' and to instigate change rather than merely conforming within uncomfortable (or even comfortable) social 'norms'. In this respect they represent a conscious gateway for human agency (Ellis and Newton, 2005) and the freedom to go beyond the constraints of existing structures.

8.7 Intergenerational patterns of belonging.

According to Boszormenyi-Nagy (1973/1984), human family systems are formed, patterned and maintained inter-generationally through emotional and psychological attachment-bonds. He proposed that the integrity of such bonded systems is maintained by dynamics he referred to as: *Invisible Loyalties*. Families are patterned by collectively experienced group dynamics which reflexively inform their culture (Handell and Whitchurch, 1994; Laing, 1961, Laing *et al.* 1964).

Joe was very aware that his early experiences of growing up with an alcoholic mother had significantly impacted the way that he now relates to others and to the world. Grace, Lydia, Eleanor, Joe, Andy and Francis also made reference to the extent that they felt their experiences of their own family systems had had a strong bearing on their sense of belonging; this theme was also central to the discussions of the constellation focus-group in chapter seven.

Bert Hellinger (1998) has suggested that humans become systemically bonded by biological relatedness, attachment (love) and also by the effects of traumatic injury and loss. According to him, family and other social systems are thus bonded together, but are also constrained, by dynamics which Hellinger has dubbed the '*Orders of Love*'. These dynamics affect group belonging by producing intra-psychic effects that are directly experienced as '*conscience*'. In Hellinger's (1998:7-10) theory, conscience also operates at differing '*levels*'. At the first level – referred to as the '*Personal Conscience*' – guilt and innocence pertain to the '*right to belong within a given system*' (ibid).

At the level of an individual, conscience is culturally determined and in this sense is interpreted in terms of the feelings of guilt or innocence (Hellinger, 1998:7):

In the service of belonging, conscience reacts to everything that enhances or endangers our bonding. Our conscience is clear when we act so that our continued belonging to our group is assured, and we have guilty conscience when we deviate from the norms of our group and must fear that our right to belong is jeopardised or damaged.

Hellinger (1998:10) proposes that at this level, under these powerful normative social forces, the exclusion of 'others' is justified because: '*Belonging demands the exclusion of those who are different*'. He goes on to suggest that it is in this context that acts of atrocity can be perpetrated by one group against another with a sense of 'innocence', moral justification and therefore '*a clear conscience*' (ibid).

At another, broader and *more inclusive* level, Hellinger further describes the '*systemic conscience*'. This works as an organising and '*in-forming field*' (Ulsamer, 2003) which maintains the integrity of the whole system and which is not contingent upon social mores or conventions - no matter how violently they may have been enforced. Following on from Boszormenyi-Nagi *et al.* (1973/1984) Hellinger has demonstrated that when a person who belongs within a bonded system becomes excluded from it (either through the group social pressures *or* through traumatic loss), the organismic dynamic of the system itself seems to re-create (inter-generationally) the pattern of loss as a way of *re-member-ing* its 'wholeness'.

Hellinger (1998:5) proposes that the Orders of Love represent dynamics which can also be expressed as 'needs', which when met, best support the nourishing flow of love in human systems. He summarises these needs as (Emphases in bold added):

The need to **belong** - that is for *bonding*.

The need to maintain a balance of **giving and taking** - that is for *equilibrium*.

The need for the **safety** of social convention and predictability - that is for *order*.

Human groups and social systems are thus bonded, ordered and self-renewing (autopoietic). Our belonging within them is thus socially determined at one level, and systemically unquestionable at another. However, the subjective experiences of *belonging* and *not-belonging* seem to fluctuate in concert with awareness and external environmental conditions.

8.7.1 'Soul': an experiencing field of awareness.

'Field' and 'System Theories' (e.g. Lewin, 1951; Lipton, 2005; Sheldrake, 2009; Capra, 2002) point towards the suggestion that the experiencing body constitutes a field of sensory awareness which is responsive to environmental situations. Gendlin (1997b:26) also suggests that experience extends beyond the body's '*skin borders*' and is inherently connected to environmental processes.

In terms of awareness, Ikemi (2014:10) explains that: '*The body responds to our awareness*' [original emphasis] and points out that directing awareness to the body's structured-patterning, (which is partly shaped by past experiences and environments) can facilitate a new process of re-shaping of those patterns, in ways that may be novel and which are organismically adaptive. According to Gendlin (2012) such shifts are always directed 'forward' - both in terms of time (towards the future) and adaptively towards an '*organismic valuing*' of itself (Gendlin, 1978; Ellis and Newton, 2005; Barnett and Madison, 2012). Ikemi (2014:10) uses the term '*combodying*' to describe the creativity of our embodied responsiveness to self-reflexive awareness:

It is not as if reflexive awareness only explains or uncovers the unchanging order of nature. The body does not remain the same after our concepts or experiential awareness about them. Combodying is responding to our awareness about them.

Another way of interpreting this bodily responsiveness to reflexive awareness is to use the term 'soul'. Almaas (2004:22) proposes that soul is the embodied sensory field of experiential awareness:

We can imagine the soul as completely coextensive with the body, forming its experienced interiority. Whatever we perceive as happening within us, whether a thought, an image, an emotion or a sensation, occurs within the body, but more intimately within the soul, because the soul functions as the sensitivity or awareness of the body.

What he writes would seem to suggest that soul is confined to an individual bodily interior; however Beaumont (2012:3) points out that some aspects of experience cannot be reduced to either their cognitive or their physiological components - for instance '*...yearning, hope, loneliness, grief, hate, anger, joy or love*', reminding that such experiences can also be empathically shared (Decety and Ickes, 2009) as well as collaboratively articulated (Purton, 2013). In this sense the soul can be thought of as the medium of subjective and inter-subjective experience, but also as an essentially conscious, transcendent and immanent transpersonal dynamism (Washburn, 1988).

Leijssen (2009:22) states this idea very clearly:

The soul is the invisible, forming and organising principle in life, which can show itself in various experiences. [...] It gives direction and meaning to the individual life. It is bodily felt knowing that is different from intellectual insight. This inner felt process transcends the limited self through the experience of belonging to a larger process.

William James (1983), cited in Myers (1986:350), considered the experiencing psyche or 'soul' in a collective, transpersonal sense rather than as something confined to the interior of an individual:

... I find the notion of some sort of *anima mundi* thinking in all of us to be a more promising hypothesis, in spite of all its difficulties, than that of a lot of absolutely individual souls. [*Principles*, 1:346]

Following on from this, Beaumont (2012) suggests therefore that we participate 'in Soul' collectively and have '*en-souled*' bodies rather than being in possession of an individual '*embodied soul*'. In this sense individual experiencing and reflexive awareness may be interpreted as aspects (holons) within a bigger collective awareness – or soul.

For Liejssen (2009:22) soul's individual manner of 'knowing' also develops reflexively with awareness, and follows both an inward and an outward movement:

So, on the one hand, the soul is tangible as a sort of inner compass, a bodily felt "inspiration". On the other hand, that inward-orientated movement is inseparably linked to an outward-orientated movement of connectedness with something that transcends the person. These movements go together like the process of breathing in and breathing out.

This feels like an important observation for the current study, lending weight to my sense that self-reflexive awareness – or consciousness – develops through the dynamic processes of belonging and not-belonging.

Beaumont (op.cit.) describes something of the embodied experience of soul:

When we attend closely to soul as actual sensory experience, we may begin to notice her subtle movements, perhaps at first a sense of opening and closing in the chest, like a flower.

The current study links such a bodily-felt sense of '*opening*' with the experience of *belonging*, suggesting to me that it is with the sensory field of 'soul' that we experience our belonging and our not-belonging. It also suggests to me that the **bodily-felt, soul-sense of *belonging* illuminates our fundamental, primary connection with the Universe.**

8.8 'Home'.

One of the major themes emerging from my analysis of the data has been that of 'home'. Early on in this inquiry I became curious about the significance of 'home' and wondered if it might be best considered as a place, a structure (physical or psychological), a concept – or as an experience. Home certainly has meaning at each of these levels, but when taken at the level of experience it appears to me to be a special instance of *belonging*.

In all four data 'quadrants' collaborators and participants have referred to home in particular ways. Some of the European migrants that I spoke with at META told me that they had left their original homes out of economic necessity, and that somehow, many years after leaving, neither the newly established ex-patriot communities here in the UK nor those of their countries of origin now felt entirely like *home*. How then should the belonging of 'home' be understood?

8.8.1 Philosophy of home: leaving and then seeking home.

Historically the theme of 'home' has occupied philosophy in various ways (Mugerauer, 2010; Dreyfus, 1991; Todres, 2007; Steinbock, 1995). Heidegger (1962) uses the word '*hause*' to denote home for 'Da-Sein'. Like Da-sein itself, 'home' for Heidegger has both a situated and a psychological (functional) aspect. But Da-sein's 'home' is not fixed in time or space as I will further explain. At various times Da-sein encounters home behind, within and before itself, which would suggest to me that for Heidegger too, 'home' was essentially an experience.

Heidegger (1962:178) informs that Da-sein's first way of being-in-the-world is a comfortable and *familiar* '*at-home-ness*' (*zuhause*) which is ordinarily '*taken for granted*'. Heidegger considered the familiarity of this at-home-ness to have a '*tranquillised comfort*' which is brought about by Da-sein's primary involvement with the all pervasive influence of the already-interpreted world of the collective (normative social forces) or '*the they*' as Heidegger called it:

The they [...] brings tranquillised self-assurance, 'being-at-home' with all its obviousness, into the average everydayness of Da-sein. Angst on the other hand, fetches Da-sein back out of its entangled absorption in the 'world'. Everyday familiarity collapses. Da-sein is individualised, but as being-in-the-world. Being-in enters the existential 'mode'; of not-being-at-home. The talk about uncanniness means nothing other than this. (Heidegger, 1962:189)

Heidegger suggests that Da-sein is both '*called by conscience*' [Da-sein's own conscience] and driven by a '*primordial curiosity*' (ibid) to leave home. Heidegger's concept of what he termed 'not-being-at-home' (un-zuhause) has this sense of the 'uncanny' (angst) - of 'home-less-ness' – in which an edge of uncertainty and restlessness importantly allows Da-sein to discern, (more authentically) what is there for itself and also about itself (Mugerauer, 2008:23).

From this philosophical perspective, leaving home – and '*wandering into apartness*' (Mugerauer, 2008:41) is in answer to a fundamental need in Da-sein – the need to discover its own individual *authenticity*. By this means Da-sein also comes to recognise its '*finitude*' as an individual – what Heidegger called its *Being-toward-death*. Heidegger refers to this movement as Da-sein '*coming home to itself*'. However, there is a further movement for Da-sein, one which orientates it back towards the collective (also called 'home' by Heidegger) where it becomes part of the collective's sense of '*on-going-ness*'.

When Da-sein distances itself from the collective 'they' by wandering in to a-part-ness it also develops its own reflexive '*listening and symbolising*' aspect, which is a mode of being which, according to Mugerauer, (2002:384) together with the '*wandering, speaking*' mode - constitutes Da-sein's inherently *dialogic* nature:

This faculty, the listening and speaking-of somehow creates an intimacy – a between – of these different states, therefore facilitating a sense of the larger context in which both the human being (the they) and being (Da-sein) may be understood as one thing. [my emphasis]

Heidegger metaphorised these dual aspects of Da-sein as the '*Wanderer/philosopher*' and the '*Poet/friend*', and, according to Mugerauer (2008:42), it is with this capacity for reflexive self-awareness that Da-sein is

finally able to return to the collective and thereby '*come home to itself in the world*' as a self- and world-aware part.

Somewhat paradoxically therefore, Da-Sein leaves home in order to come home to its-self and its own 'authenticity' (and knowledge of death) before returning home to the collective with this new level of reflexive self-awareness. Heidegger's propositions sensitise me to the presence of home-related themes which affect individual development, reflexivity and consciousness. Furthermore, along with the integral and hermeneutic nature of the current inquiry, they also raise questions about the possible reflexive influence for the collective of individual developmental processes.

8.8.2 Psychology of home.

Turning to a psychological rather than a philosophical lens, Freud (1919:15) determined that the human experiences of '*home nostalgia*' and of '*love*' can be interpreted as pathological symptoms of un-resolved conflicts between the drives of individual 'ego' and social development and the more hedonistic or infantile drive to 'go home' – in which *home* is configured as a psychologically undifferentiated (or 'merged') state with the mother. As a basis for understanding the phenomenal complexity of the experiential qualities of 'home', 'belonging' and 'love' this seems to me to be an overly simplistic interpretation.

Renos Papadopoulos (2002:24), who has studied the experiences of migrant and refugee populations over many years, considers the matter of *home* to be of fundamental importance in terms of psychological wellbeing:

Whenever the home is lost, all the organising and containment functions break wide open and there is a possibility of dis-integration at all these three levels: at the individual-personal level; at the family-marital level; and at the socio-economic/cultural-political levels. Seen in this context the homecoming nostalgia acquires additional dimensions and refers to the yearning not only to the physical house, but also for a psychological need to re-establish that unique container within which the opposites at all these three levels can be held together.

For Papadopoulos, 'home' is a central organising motif acting psychologically as a 'container' for development and wellbeing. The longing for home is equated then to a psychological need for both containment and social integration, it seems that 'home' provides an *inner* as well as an outer structure.

Papadopoulos' (2002:24) suggestion is a helpful one in terms of this integral inquiry, he suggests:

Once we accept that home occupies a pivotal position in our approach to psychological development, then a new epistemology emerges where the sharp boundaries between inner and outer, physical and psychological, individual and collective, lose their impermeability.

Sophia explained that she had left her childhood home because she already felt 'different' and somehow *inauthentic* in that original family situation. Helen had felt a similar need to leave home at a young age, partly in order to escape the constraints of a family system in conflict, and partly it seems in pursuit of *recognition* and a deeper sense of connection. On reflection, Sophia decided that her most authentic sense of home is in

the company of those people that she loves and feels loved by. Greg Madison (2010:208) helpfully proposes that for the *'existential migrant'* it is the quest for an *'authentic home'* which motivates their movement away from more traditional levels or categories of belonging.

Existential migration emphasises the psychological, philosophical and spiritual motivations of the journey that originates from 'home' in the traditional sense in search of the 'authentic home' in the existential sense.

This research quest has repeatedly raised a question for me regarding the directionality and temporal location of home. Must 'home' always be located in the past? Freud clearly felt that it was, and Papadopoulos' proposition of home as an inner structure created by previous experiences, would seem to endorse that idea. But if all 'home experiences' are only recognisable as patterned facsimiles of an existing motif - how can I reconcile an existential imperative of a quest that is forever orientated towards the past with an organismic tendency which always carries life 'forward'?

My own sense now of this question of where 'home' lies is that - notwithstanding the embodied and psychologically patterned consequences of experience (including those of maternal attachment and perinatal life), which continue to configure particular categorical meanings for 'home' - as an *experience* home always signifies something more than these past echoes. A clue to this question lies in the characteristic *'aesthetic response'* to the experience of home-coming - described here by James Hillman (1981:31):

This link between heart and the organs of sense is not simple mechanical sensationalism; it is aesthetic. That is, the activity of perception or sensation in Greek is *aesthesis* which means at root 'taking in' and 'breathing in' - a gasp, that primary aesthetic response.

Hillman's words evoke again for me Leijssen's (2009:22) portrayal of the *'inspiration'* in soul's movement towards reflexive awareness. Almaas' (2004) has described an *'inner journey home'* for soul in which 'home' is soul's fully realised consciousness of unity.

8.8.3 'Home is where the heart opens'.

In this study, descriptions of just such a bodily sense of *'opening'*, relaxation and expansion, of *'taking-in'* (or of being recognised and received), have been associated with *belonging* and home-coming. Conversely, being *'shut-in'* (or *'shut-out'*), *'crunched'*, closed or *'encapsulated'* have been associated with *not-belonging* and with not-being-at-home.

Research diary: 12/7/2011

I have been transcribing the focusing session with William - where he talks about 'precious me' feeling bottled like 'marmalade'. And also thinking about what Ruth was saying about the feeling of 'opening' she gets when she is in [country]. I find myself wondering:

"Do I feel a sense of belonging when my heart is open?" - I am curiously excited by this idea.

If such an aesthetic response to home - whether it is in the *flowing* feeling of an open-hearted, unconditional, exchange of love, or in response to a familiar or beautiful landscape – then it is my contention in this thesis that: **Home is where the heart opens.**

8.9 Stories of belonging and not-belonging.

There seems to be a very human ‘meta-story’ emerging from this thesis which broadly involves: leaving home, getting ‘lost’ (to some extent or another) and then trying to find ‘home’ again – this time with a greater consciousness of individual self and a greater collective ‘self’. This is the basic ‘quest’ motif of a great many myths, poems and stories - for instance Homer's *'Odysseus'* and J.R.R Tolkein's *'The Lord of the Rings'*.

Stories play a central role in the development of both individual and collective identity - McAdams, (1997:5) wrote that: *'Identity is a life-story'*. Myths, legends, parables and folk-stories often seem to contain both cultural and universal themes and the quest-motif may psychologically represent one of these ‘meta-stories’. From my own *Thinking At the Edge* (TAE) project I was curious to find the quest motif expressed in connection with my experiences of belonging and not-belonging; and the ‘*story-ing*’ of belonging and not-belonging was a theme in every data quadrant.

Research diary: 4/4/2012

Clifford Geertz (1973:28) recounts an anecdote in which he describes the ‘infinitely regressive nature of narrative cosmologies by means of an Eastern teaching story. The story-teller explains: *'The world sits upon an elephant which stands upon a turtle...'* – when Geertz inquires: *'so what is underneath the turtle?'* The story-teller replies: *'...after that it is turtles all the way down!'*

Geertz explains that this is the narrative nature of experience – Human history is *woven in the embodied fabric of stories upon stories upon stories...*

Bruner, (1987) has also suggested that narrative represents one of two possible ways of understanding the world and our experience of it, the other being ‘scientific’. I would go further and contend that, if the term ‘*narrative*’ is used inclusively of all forms of expressive story-ing (art, music, dance), it is actually the only way of understanding and communicating experience. Even the expressive art that we call ‘science’ has to be symbolised and narrated in order to have any comprehensible meaning.

So it is with the dynamic of belonging and not-belonging, finally I must abandon my categories and just tell the story.

8.10 The dynamic of Love and Consciousness.

During the course of this inquiry I have repeatedly posed the phenomenological question: '*what is essentially going on here?*' At different times along the way I have observed how movements seem to naturally occur both *towards* and *away* from connection and a sense of *Belonging*. What has become apparent to me is that the experiences of *Belonging* and *Not-belonging* each produces a particular set of psychological and sociological effects. However it is the movement between these two which has come to have the most significance for me –for it is within it that an essentially creative dynamic became unfolded.

The seminal psychological review of Baumeister and Leary (1995) determined that for human beings the need to belong is a '*fundamental motivation*'. My research suggests that, whilst this certainly remains true, the movement towards 'not-belonging' is an equally fundamental need for the processes of individuation and collective development. In this respect it is essential to the development of identity, self-reflexive awareness and the reflexive sense of 'other'.

I have symbolised the movement towards *Belonging* as 'Love'. Its effect is to 'bring-together', to 'cohere', and to 'unify'. This 'bringing together' movement is inherent to the creation of pair-bonds, human family and other systems and the social structures within which we may belong. This movement of love, towards *Belonging*, is also the sub-text of the process of psychological integration of fragmented aspects of self (individual), or community (collective) where such separation has been caused by trauma.

The movement towards *Not-Belonging* has the effect of 'separating', 'defining', 'objectifying', 'differentiating', 'breaking-out', and of going beyond existing structures. By following it we may: get hurt, survive this (or not) but if so then we may learn, innovate, go beyond the constraints and injuries to integrate the experience of separation - and thereby manifest more complexity. Thus the experiences of separation and of *Not-belonging* are inherent to the creative processes of individuation, innovation and the development of self-reflexive awareness (*self-consciousness*). I have symbolised this movement towards *Not-Belonging* as 'consciousness' as a short-hand in this thesis, although I realise that self-reflexive awareness may in fact only be a type of consciousness.

So between the movements towards *Belonging* (love) and *Not-Belonging* (consciousness) a creative dance unfolds, one which would seem to serve the evolution of human psychological and social structures - in increasingly intricate and complex forms; whilst at the same time also serving the process of individuation and the development of self-reflexive awareness.

Existentialist Rollo May (1975:132) interprets Plato's ideas and considers 'Love' to be the creative force which '*brings forth wisdom, truth and beauty*'; May (ibid) felt that for human beings, *creativity* is an expression of this Love. Nevertheless, something essential about this human creativity also seems to continually strive to go beyond the 'boundaries' and seeming 'safety' of social structures and cultural conventions in order to

'differentiate itself', to 'seek its own authenticity', and also to 'know itself' in the context of some greater whole. In other words, this essential 'something' about Human Being continually seeks love through Belonging and creatively participates by becoming self-reflexively aware through Not-Belonging before finding a bigger context (or story) in which to belong.

The two faces of belonging and not-belonging.

Like the double-helix of DNA, the movement between *Belonging* and *Not-belonging* seems to contain the code for endless diversity. My study has also revealed something of the dynamic way in which they are enfolded together for it has seemed to be the case that, like the Roman god *'Janus'*, human belonging and not-belonging each has two faces. In Roman mythology, *'Janus'* has one face which looks towards the future and one orientated towards the past, he is described as the god of beginnings and endings, of transitions, gateways, passageways and time (Makay, 1956).

The first face of *Belonging* is one of recognition and is found in the experience of being unselfconsciously *'known'*. It engenders a feeling of *'comfort and safety'*, of *'being a-part-of'*, *'integrated'* and *'loved'*.

Belonging's other face can be found in the sense of being *'appropriated'*, *'restrained'*, *'mis-taken'*, *'mis-understood'*, *'confined'*, *'shut-in'*, or *'stuck'...*

Paradoxically a situation that might appear (categorically) to be a social context of *'belonging'*, such as the family, may actually be experienced as one of *Not-belonging*. In this case a feeling of stuck-ness becomes associated with the pain of feeling separated from an inner sense of an essential *'authenticity'* (Madison, 2009) – or else of being a *'social mis-fit'*, of *'feeling vulnerable'*, *'lost'*, *'encapsulated'* - but also, often uncomfortably, more consciously of a differentiated *'self'* and *'other'* . .

However *Not-belonging* does also have another face. It is expressed by the *'freedom to pull away'*, to be *'un-constrained'*, and to be *'creative'* in the search for both authenticity and belonging. Furthermore, by becoming more conscious of *'self'* and of *'other'* - *'Not-belonging'* can paradoxically bring about the possibility of developing a deeper level of conscious awareness in which the *'self'* is understood as connected to a greater whole and experiences a sense of *Belonging* to it.

A Möbius strip (described in Chapter One) also appears at first to have two *'faces'*. However, when one face is followed it becomes the other. The *'inner'* aspect becomes the *'outer'* in a continual evolution which moves through time and space. Thus it is with *Belonging* and *Not-belonging*, as I unfolded what I thought were the *'inner'* and *'outer'* dimensions of these experiences, I found they were part of the same process – a dynamic movement that was continually expanding through structuring and re-structuring fractal patterns of consciousness and love.

CHAPTER NINE.

Key theoretical findings and practical applications.

"The world that we have made as a result of the level of thinking we have done thus far creates problems that we cannot solve at the same level as the level we created them at."

A. Einstein.

"Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go"

T.S. Eliot.

9.0 Introduction (*and finally*)

In this final chapter I review the whole journey of this inquiry. I highlight and discuss the essential findings which have contributed to the crystallisation of my final thesis and which I am now able to clearly state.

Lastly, I make some suggestions regarding the relevance of this thesis to a number of contexts, including the theory and practice of psychotherapy.

Birthing a 3D Jigsaw-puzzle of a baby elephant (with six legs).

As I neared the end of this research I began to have the worrying idea that I was trying to make one whole 'picture' out of at least three different 'jig-saw puzzles'. Everything seemed to be in such a complicated jumble; there were just too many pieces – and they simply didn't fit. A doctoral colleague informed me that writing up a thesis is "*like giving birth*" – to which I remember thinking: "*Unfortunately, in this instance I seem to be trying to give birth to a baby elephant ... and this one has got rather too many legs!*".

But somehow, emerging out of the gestational and heuristic processes of inquiry, little by little, a shape did begin to appear. Okay, it was a multidimensional shape; and it was a moving shape; actually it seemed to be a *dancing* shape - or shapes: shapes which were apparently creating intricate and fluid *fractal* patterns (Mandelbrot, 1983).

9.1 Key Findings.

1. **A creative dance.** The experiences of *Belonging* and *Not-belonging* together form a dynamic which is linked to individual and collective development. At the level of an individual, the reciprocal movement between experiencing *Belonging* and *Not-belonging* plays a central role in the processes of psychological individuation, the development of identity in terms of the self-reflexive awareness of an individual and a collective sense of 'self'. At the collective level this dynamic is also a feature of cultural and societal change and thus of human evolutionary innovation and growth. The movement

between our longing for *belonging* and a sense of 'wholeness' - together with our desire to be recognised and 'received' as an individual - lies at the heart of the process of therapeutic healing and psychological and social re-integration after traumatic loss, separation or dissociation.

2. **Being 'At Home' in Belonging.** The experience of *Belonging* has certain characteristic qualities. Participants have described feeling '*safe*', '*recognised*', '*received*', '*welcomed*', '*valued*', '*prized*' and '*loved*' in *belonging*. In terms of belonging within in a place (rather than with other people), the experience has been described in terms of an aesthetic response – an opening of the heart and a sense of both '*taking-in*' and of '*being taken-in*' – along with a feeling of '*flowing connectedness*' with-in, a particular place or environment. Self-reflexive awareness (consciousness) in *Belonging* has also been described in terms of '*flow*', and significantly of '*disappearing to the self*'. *Belonging* and the sense of '*Being at Home*' become synonymous giving rise to the finding (stated here as an aphorism): '*Home is where the heart opens*'.
3. **Leaving 'home' and Not-belonging.** The experience of *Not-belonging* also has its own distinctive characteristics. These include the sense of being '*shut-in*' (or '*shut-out*'), '*encysted*', '*too big*', '*awkward*', '*clumsy*', '*wrong*' or '*badly fitting*'. Behavioural strategies may be deployed in order to find ways of '*fitting in*' – or alternatively to break out and '*escape*'. Escaping the feeling of *Not-belonging* in a social context brings a sense of freedom, release, and also of greater '*authenticity*' as if something essential about the 'self' has been liberated to seek a better '*belonging*' elsewhere.

Self-reflexive awareness in *Not-belonging* is sharply defined by separation - often painfully so – with clear distinctions being made between 'self' and 'others'. Without this process of separation and differentiation there would be no possibility for the ongoing development of self-reflexive awareness (consciousness). However '*something essential*' always seems to seek a further integration following fragmentation, or an experience of alienation – as if looking for the way in which what has become separated may be remembered and experienced as 'belonging' in a newly expanded 'whole'.

4. **The story of belonging.** Narrative and other forms of consensual communicative action are the central medium and mode of human '*belonging*' and of human psychological and social existence. The creation and the sharing of stories enables us to have a knowable 'self' which can belong or not-belong within larger collective narratives. In this way, even when our individual experience has painfully been one of separation and *not-belonging*, we can become 'storied' in. All of human experience can be contained within a big enough 'story.'

9.2 Reflecting on design and method.

9.1.1 Design.

In Chapter Two I acknowledged some of the distinctions between the discourses of Participatory and Integral paradigms and explained why I chose to bring them together for the purpose of this inquiry. Reflecting on this decision I am satisfied that it has been, both methodologically and philosophically, a useful integration. In a sense, they have been ‘crossed’ (Gendlin, 1995), giving rise to a paradigmatic position which has helped me to find a new way to think about – as well as *from* - my engaged participation with the AQAL model itself. My difficulties in trying to categorize experiencing solely in terms of the AQAL quadrants have finally led me to re-configure its basic diagrammatic framework. The adaptation below (Fig. 9.1) is intended to be symbolic of the blurred boundaries and interpenetrating, *implicit* nature of embodied experience: (with respectful apologies to Ken Wilber).

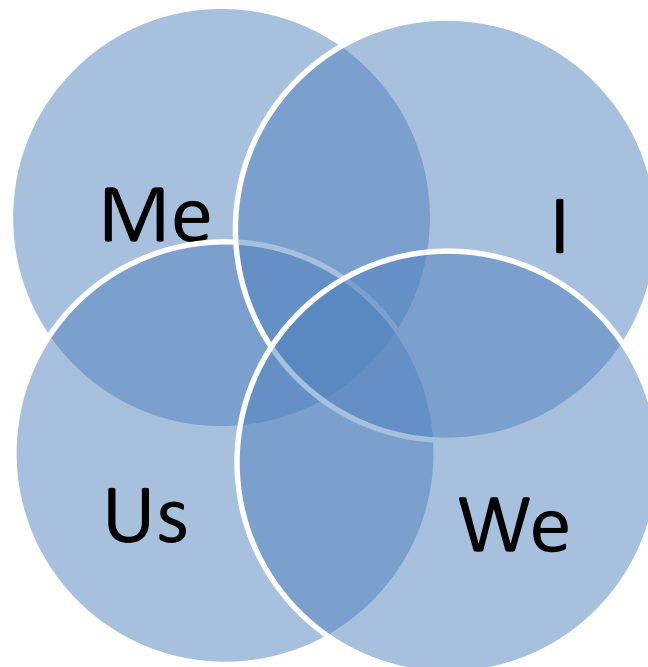


Fig. 9.1 Revised ‘AQAL’ – my experiential version

Of course experience still cannot be represented by a diagram - for that I would need a story rich in symbol or metaphor, and an empathically ‘listening’ body. However this representation emphasises the fact that all the quadrants are implicit in the embodiment of experience, I could perhaps have further illustrated this meaning by placing the diagram inside the silhouette of a body... but there really is only so far one can go with a diagram and the categories it creates.

My decision to utilise Wilber’s AQAL model for the purpose of research design and as a theoretical organising framework, has had both advantages and some disadvantages for me. The main advantages have been that it has kept my focus moving between individual and collective dimensions of the same phenomena in

question and that it has allowed me to identify distinctions and categories which has helped me to work both conceptually and pragmatically in this research. The main disadvantage has been that *experience* (my chief focus of interest) simply will not stay divided up neatly into either quadrants or categories. Like all models, the AQAL Model is a symbolic 'map' for illustrating an integration of concepts whilst also attempting to point towards inherent processes. With a focus on the processes of experiencing in this study, I must now agree with Laszlo (2004) – that although the AQAL model does well in terms of its capacity to bring together diverse concepts, it does less well in terms of its process elements.

Reviewing its use in other studies, Esbjorn-Hargens (2010) suggests that *Integral Theory* and the AQAL model creates a useful theoretical framework for studies across many disciplines (Ballard *et al.* 2010; Ingersoll, 2010; Silow, 2010); inclusive of the current one, I still find myself in agreement with him. However, without the additional, more embodied dimension of the *Participatory Paradigm* (Heron, 1996; Heron and Reason, 1997) I consider that my experiential inquiry would have been very limited. The discourses pertaining to embodiment and Gendlin's (1992, 1991, 1997a) *Philosophy of the Implicit* have opened a way for me to base my inquiry directly in experience itself.

9.1.2 Reflecting on methods.

Collecting data for the case study of Thetford deepened my understanding of that community in particular as well as opening my eyes to the issues of 'community' more generally. Even though mine was necessarily a very cursory visit to the inherent complexity of community, I consider that the Case Study points the way towards further inquiries and I remain curious about the possibilities and limitations of gaining a sense of *Belonging* in virtual and on-line communities. Ethnographic and auto-ethnographic approaches have had a particular relevance in this inquiry since they are inherently situated and narrated – both being strong features of *belonging*.

I have already written about my decision making process in respect of the systemic constellation approach. As I now reflect on the whole process I feel that the inquiry might have benefited had I felt able to do more with this, particularly in terms of investigating the integrating power of love in conflict resolution for intergenerational and systemic trauma. This is an area which is ripe for further investigation.

The method of group contemplation - the '*Talking Circles*' provided me with a powerful and fruitful mode of inquiry. I particularly valued the sense of ritual it involved (Driver, 1991; Wilson, 2008; Leijssen, 2009). Taking place over a period of eighteen months, these group contemplations became a resource for reflection on emerging themes as well as for generating new insights. The individual '*Focusing Conversations*' which I shared with my core collaborators also contained some pivotal moments where insights emerged in respect of our personal processes as well as of the research itself.

The IPA method of attending to the narratives has worked well for me. Having used other qualitative methods of analysis in the past, I am content that it was an appropriate choice in this instance. However, my most startling methodological ‘discovery’ has certainly been Gendlin’s (2004) *‘Thinking At the Edge’* – which opened up the possibility of *‘thinking from experiencing’* for me in a very radical and illuminating way. Overall I would say that it is my application of Gendlin’s *Philosophy of the Implicit* in this inquiry, particularly in respect of the hermeneutic relationship between experiencing and meaning-making, which has guided me towards being able, finally, to describe the ‘elephant.’

9.1.3 Limitations.

I would suggest that the biggest ‘limit’ of this piece of research is that it became too big – which is paradoxical in itself. I suspect that if I had imposed conceptual limits upon what could be considered (for instance) in terms of belonging and not-belonging, my journey and its story would have been very different. During the early stages of this inquiry a post-graduate medical researcher suggested that I would first need to establish definitions which stated exactly what I meant by the terms ‘belonging’ and by ‘not-belonging’ – in order to be able to discuss any subsequent findings in the light of that ‘base-line’. This would certainly have been a more scientific approach – but it was not the path that I chose. For me there have been no ‘base-lines’ or limits beyond those that I have personally been able to think and experience in concert with those who have shared this journey and their experiences with me - the final constraints have been imposed by time and word-count. The limitations created by my lack of limits meant that the inquiry quickly launched itself into some very deep philosophical and existential waters as well as opening out into a plethora of experiential phenomena which in turn meant that I ended up giving a scant amount of attention to many disciplines, each of which would perhaps have benefitted from a more in-depth review. This may be a limitation which is inherent to an integral design, and if so then it is to be anticipated to some extent. Certainly the scope of the project proved very challenging at times for me to navigate and to bring back together into some final coherence.

I originally had the idea of extending the inquiry towards including the experiences of homeless people - in order to listen to what I referred to then as the ‘voices from the edge’. It felt important to be able to position some of the experiences and social circumstances which had led people to be living ‘homeless’ - on the margins of more mainstream society - alongside those of more socially integrated individuals. Working in drug rehabilitation centres, I have from time to time contributed to initiatives aimed at ‘getting people off the streets’ and into treatment. In this context I am familiar with the stories of homelessness told to me by combat-stressed veterans of war, youngsters on the run from abusive and violent homes, traumatised women working as prostitutes, the lost, the bereaved and those whose lives had been wrecked by combinations of financial ruin and drug addiction. I felt then, and still feel now, that such stories of homelessness do need to be told - and heard - as part of the bigger collective narrative; on reflection however, I do not think that their inclusion in this thesis would have radically altered its outcome.

9.3 Empirical observations and further propositions.

9.3.1 Place and environment.

The experience of *belonging* seems to have some characteristic environmental conditions pertaining to differing qualities of safety. Contexts of safety have varied in this study and did not necessarily need to involve other people. Indeed, for some of my research collaborators it was the very absence of other people which helped constitute the safety of the context. For these people there could be a very deep and uninterrupted sense of their belonging in nature or in the deep un-reflected immersion in an activity. In such a situation the bodily sense of *belonging* has been qualitatively described as: '*opening*', '*connection*', '*joy*', '*flowing energy*', and sometimes also the feeling of being '*lost*' or of '*disappearing to self*'.

In a more social context, when other people are inherent to experiencing of a sense of '*belonging*', there were further characteristic relational qualities, such as feeling: '*welcomed*', '*recognised*', '*received*', '*accepted*', '*respected*', '*valued*' or '*loved*' by those people. The experience of *belonging* seems to require a sense of safety from the risk of being judged, ridiculed, rejected or *mis*-taken (taken wrongly). Respect for difference and the feeling of being accepted form a key relational condition. The feeling of inclusion involves recognition and an awareness of what is *essential* (transpersonal or 'spiritual') about us and also of what is *particular* – including all the injured, traumatised, 'ugly' or persecuted (marginalised) parts of ourselves. Therefore the contexts and qualities inherent to the experience of *belonging* may be summarised as:

Being in a context of safety (feeling physically, mentally and spiritually safe).

Responding aesthetically (with love) to the beauty or familiarity of an environment.

Participating in activities with a group of people who have shared values – and/or

Being creatively absorbed or expressively occupied with an activity.

Being respected and prized - Feeling loved as an individual being - whilst also: -

Feeling accepted and included as an integral part of a greater systemic 'whole'.

9.3.2. The Belonging body.

In '*belonging*', the breathing deepens as the diaphragm and abdomen relaxes. Subjective awareness of the body seems to change, becoming less focused on perceived 'objective' bodily attributes (the body is less objectified in awareness). The body's relaxation in *belonging* may be felt as the aesthetic responsiveness of '*opening*' and expansion. A context of belonging can thus engender the feeling of being able to '*take in*' or '*receive*' but also reciprocally to agree to being '*taken-in*' (integrated) in what may then become flowing exchanges of love. In this state of 'flow', self-consciousness is reduced and internal dialogue (making

representations about the self or about the situation) becomes less objectifying of both self and other. Human reflexive awareness seems to have evolved in such a way that it has become able to represent itself (symbolise) *to itself* as an abstract entity – and as such an abstraction it can also be conceived or re-presented as separate or ‘not-belonging’ (Seigel, 2010).

9.3.3 ‘Flow’

Many people in this study described the experience of *belonging* using the term ‘flow’. ‘Flow’ has also been used by Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and also Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2001:195) to describe the *happiness* experienced in creativity – a state of ‘*single minded immersion*’. When attention is given in loving recognition of an-other or towards something in the environment, to a certain extent the ‘self’ may be experienced as being unified with this situation or with the ‘other’ giving rise to a connected sense of ‘we’ rather than of a separated ‘I’.

9.3.4 Consciousness and Not-belonging

The contemplative approaches used in this inquiry have clarified how strongly self-awareness, consciousness and attention are influenced by the experiences of *belonging* and *not-belonging*. In *belonging*, attention tends to be directed away from the self, flowing outward towards the environment or the ‘other’. In this un-self-conscious state it seems that, as the body relaxes, the edges or boundaries of ‘self awareness’ also become relaxed and even dissolve to some extent, giving rise to a feeling of expansion and ‘opening’. There can then be an un-reflected sense of being part of the group or the environment – of *belonging to it* as an integral aspect.

Even a ‘good fit’ in a particular collective situation may only ‘work’ temporarily for a number of developmental or circumstantial reasons. A new ‘edge’ of *un-belonging* can spontaneously appear, seemingly inviting or prompting a further movement away from belonging. Subjective changes to awareness seem to become most noticeable in the situation of *not-belonging* in which the body can be experienced as ‘*too tall*’, ‘*awkward*’, ‘*clumsy*’ or else wrong in some other objectified, but often hard to define way. The sense of being ‘*separated*’ or ‘*cut-off*’ (from self and others), ‘*encysted*’, ‘*spikey*’, ‘*numb*’, ‘*jammed up*’ were also ways of describing the discomfort of ‘*not-belonging*’.

As a behavioural strategy, the choice to ‘not-belong’ in a social situation can paradoxically become a way of releasing the ‘jammed up’ ‘encysted’ experience of *not-belonging* - so that a more authentic sense of ‘self’ becomes free once more to seek *belongingness* in a new context. Where this is not immediately possible, many adaptations or ‘*creative adjustments*’ may need to be made in order to ‘fit in’ –so that not-belonging then becomes a way to belong to a bigger picture.

The awareness of being 'different' – or differentiated – is therefore a normal part of the experience of not-belonging, and the strategies adopted for managing that separated-ness seems to depend on a number of complex factors.

Finding, or else positioning oneself 'on the outside' of socially normative group forces can have particular advantages for some people - but reciprocally, also for the collective. It may represent a kind of 'deep-field' position in which such lives, lived on the periphery, provide the whole with a wider (and deeper) view of the whole. Philosophers and mystics typically seem to take up such a position, thereby 'holding the space' and also *narrating the story* for the rest of us. The freedom of 'not-belonging' within the constraints of normative social forces allows pioneers and innovators - Gladwell, (2013) uses Richard Branson and Barack Obama as examples of this - to express their creativity in ways that pave the way for collective change. From the field of quantum physics, but nevertheless pertinent here, Talbot (1991:41) writes: '*If you want to know where you are, ask the Non-Locals*'.

9.2.5 Identity and 'Self'.

A key observation of the current inquiry is to note that the movement between the experiences of *belonging* and of *not-belonging* plays a central role in the development of Identity and in gaining the reflexive sense of an individual and a collective self.

Some of the data in this inquiry supports the connection made by Maalouf (1999) and by Curle (1978) between Belonging-Identity and the potential for marginalisation and violence. John's story evoked something of this collective-tribal identity dynamic, as did the voices of Joe, Francis and Andy who had all felt socially marginalised as a result of being 'different' in some way – because of being 'in-comers', as a result of their ethnicity, traumatic injuries or substance abuse. Roberta, Irena and Marco also expressed the feeling of being painfully 'outside' a more dominant social 'in-group' following their migration between countries. Curle's other 'face' of identity – *Awareness-identity* – has also been evidenced in this study; for instance in the attitude of the community agencies highlighted in Chapter Four, and the self-reflexive awareness demonstrated in the focusing conversations; many spoke of a desire to work towards the inclusion and integration of others as well as of 'aspects of self'.

9.3.6 Development and transitions

Instances of feeling the sense of *not-belonging* were also associated with life transitions, normal developmental processes and during changing circumstances. In transitional or 'marginal' states, identity seems to become slightly fluid or less 'fixed', and - at the same time – so can the mode of self-reflexive awareness. In this respect '*not-belonging*', to some degree, and at particular junctures, can be said to be inherent to the psychological processes (or 'journeys') of individuation, maturity, personal growth and developing consciousness.

9.3.7 Community.

The case-study presented in Chapter Four highlighted some particular issues concerning community and belonging. In this inquiry I have considered community as an organismic autopoietic entity comprised of many disparate (similarly autopoietic) groups and individuals who are always engaged in the dual processes of integration and differentiation (growth). The living of a community is supported by basic resources which have been summarised in this thesis as: *'Place, people, property and passion'*. Following on from this, the health, strength and resilience of a community relies upon the presence and involvement of resilient people. People who are passionate about place and about other people support community by working collectively in the sharing of information and the exchange of resources, which in turn helps to promote wellbeing and sustainability (Alexander, 2002). Resilience and growth are also promoted by the processes of integration and continuing adaptation or specialisation during the changes necessitated by difficult times or restricted resources (Hobfall and London, 1986; Paavola and Lowe, 2005; Stott, 2010).

Communities need to have boundaries which help establish social identity and create social order as well as creating safety for 'vulnerable' elements. These boundaries also need flexibility and to be semi-permeable if they are to be able to grow and negotiate change; such organismic responsiveness to prevailing environmental conditions has been described by Maturana and Varela, (1979; 1997) and Lipton (2005) as the processes of cognition or 'consciousness'. However, the extent to which a community, or social system may become reflexively 'aware of itself' –conscious of its fragments, its history, its trauma and its inherent living resilience is an interesting question which finds no answer in my data.

9.3.8 Narrative: a 'sacred' discourse.

In the course of creating this thesis I have listened to and also taken part in, the telling and re-weaving of many stories. Dialogue and narrative have thus been both the means and the mode of this research.

In common with scientific proponents of quantitative method – I would agree that stories are often contingent on a particular context. Furthermore, they do not behave themselves in the manner of the 'units' of measurement more favoured by science: a story's meaning can quickly slip out of the grasp of its author and go running abroad in the world where it may be re-worked to suit other ends (this is especially noticeable if the story includes some *statistics*). However, it is their very agency and creativity which suggests to me that stories should be taken more seriously (not *literally*, just 'seriously').

The development of a coherent self-narrative has been identified as the primary substrate of the individual psyche of personal identity (Brockmeier and Carbaugh, 2001); it is possible that the coherence of communities may be similarly strengthened by the creation and enactment of their own stories of struggle, diversity and integration - although Seaton (2008) warns that dominant social narratives are as likely to become oppressive and divisive as a source of coherence. In a sense, according to my thesis, such divisions

do not matter in themselves, being the source of diversity and of differentiation; but an evolving meta-narrative needs to be able to encompass difference and emergency, even those which are born out of personal or even global crisis, since separation and wounded-ness is implicit in wholeness and healing (Collins, Hughes and Samuels, 2010) and both are implicit in growth.

The seriousness of stories for me is that all of their ephemeral threads, and all of their *possible* meanings, (and all of the implications of those possible meanings) are somehow part of the fabric of our collective social 'hi-story'. That story would be a grand meta-narrative indeed. Perhaps "reality" is just an anthology of random facets and disparate bits which have no overall 'order' or coherence – and which are merely strung, piece-meal, along a ribbon of time - but that doesn't really make sense either scientifically or narratively. Physicist David Bohm, (1980) and philosopher Eugene Gendlin, (1997, 1997a) have both striven to convey an implicit coherence to reality in which it is possible to weave a whole 'piece' out of all of the parts. Gendlin (1997b:16) points out:

Since we humans are here, we can be certain that we are not impossible. A conceptual model of "reality" that makes us seem impossible has to have something wrong with it.

I whole-heartedly concur, but I would go further in order to suggest that we humans may find it more possible to narrate ourselves back into such a coherent and embodied (unified) version of reality, rather than by means of counting or measuring.

9.4 Putting things together: Seeing a bigger picture.

In this study I have determined that although belonging is both a fundamental state and a psychological need, not-belonging is equally fundamental in terms of evolutionary growth and development – significantly of the development of reflexive awareness. Through his consideration of Heidegger's (1955/1971) concept of human 'dwelling'³⁸ Gendlin (1988:133) tells us that, for Heidegger, in essence human experiencing is *poetic*. In this instance I have understood 'poetic' to mean: *expressively creative* – as well as – *aesthetically representative*. Gendlin quotes Heidegger on this matter:

... dwelling can be unpoetic only because dwelling is essentially poetic. To be blind, the human must remain a seer in essence. (Gendlin *op.cit.*).

As I complete this study I believe that something along the same lines can be now said of the human experience of *belonging*- so I have arrived here at a derivative statement:

Human beings can be un-belonging only because we essentially belong.

38 In the word 'dwelling', Heidegger brings together conceptual aspects of 'building' the creativity of language, thought and the situated-ness of human *being*.

I propose that what I have been discussing here in the experience of '*belonging*' shares the same 'poetic' quality of '*dwelling*' that Heidegger has described. Furthermore, together with (as well as being defined by) '*not-belonging*' – *belonging* is an expression of the same creative and aesthetic essence. John O'Donohue (1998:3) might have agreed with this premise. From his own deeply contemplative inquiries into the human experience he wrote:

To be human is to belong. Belonging is a circle that embraces everything; if we reject it, we damage our nature. The word 'belonging' holds together the two fundamental aspects of life: being and longing, the Longing of our being and the Being of our longing. Belonging is deep; only in a superficial sense does it refer to our external attachment to people, places and things. It is the living and passionate presence of the soul.

This research has suggested that it is only through the process of experiencing the many facets and contexts of our *un-belonging* that we become conscious of ourselves as finite beings in the world. Finally it is only by taking our *belonging* and our *un-belonging* together - experiencing them as a creative dynamic - that human Being (individually and collectively) can become reflexively aware of its-self as integral to an ongoing unfolding bigger 'story'.

9.4.1 A couple more turtles...

Consciousness. Using terminology from quantum physics, I have metaphorised two modes of conscious awareness, a '*wave mode*' (flowing, dissolving boundaries, connecting) and '*particle mode*' (focused, separating, self-defining and differentiating). In the experience of not-belonging, consciousness tends to be in 'particle mode' – making sharp distinctions and differentiating in various ways between self and other (or environment) but also with a sense of 'looking for' or 'questing'. However, consciousness does not disappear altogether in the experience of '*belonging*' – it simply changes its mode towards a more wave-like function – and the sense of absorption or '*being together with*'. Directing awareness, 'mindfully' (Tolle, 2002; Zajonc, 2010) towards these subtle changes, reflexively creates further changes in the body and the experience of connectedness (Ikemi, 2014) or unity. For me this is also the effect of Love.

Love and the human heart. Tolle (2002:84) writes that: '*Love is a state of Being*' and affirms that connection with it can never be lost because it is not 'outside', nor dependent on any external condition, he goes on to observe how the practice of mindfulness and presence – of bringing compassionate and non-judgemental attention to experiencing – can therefore have the effect of bringing this inherent unity into conscious awareness.

In the stillness of your presence, you can feel your own formless and timeless reality as the un-manifested life that animates your physical form. You can then feel the same life deep within every other human and every other creature. You look beyond the veil of form and separation. This is the realisation of oneness. This is Love.

Martin Buber's (1958:11) deeply reflexive framing of what he referred to as the 'primary word': '*I-Thou*' the respectful awareness and recognition of this 'other' person gives rise to an inter-subjective space – that Buber called the 'sphere between' (ibid). This is a very particular quality of awareness and love which is extraordinary in that it has two effects: – it both differentiates *and* it connects by recognising the 'other' as a separate being whilst also lovingly acknowledging both 'I' and 'Thou' as equally intrinsic parts of human *Being*.

In this inquiry it has appeared to me that love *unites* and consciousness *differentiates*. Buber's proposition coupled with my own research experiencing now makes clear how both consciousness and love can co-exist in the spaciousness and the connection which can arise between human hearts in the experience of *belonging*. This is an unfolding universal story, and by cultivating reflexive awareness of our relationships with each other and with the environment we may create enough space for both integration and growth.

9.5 Applications.

The experiences of *belonging* and of *not-belonging* have emerged as being more complex and also - at another level - simpler than I had originally imagined. Further work and relevant publication is envisioned in the following discourses.

At the level of community, issues of individuation, growth, integration, health and sustainability are pertinent to this inquiry. The recognition of local resources and the provision of spaces and opportunities for meaningful human exchange are significant here. Respect for difference and boundaries which protect the vulnerable are seen in the context of larger environmental systems and the co-creation of inclusive social narratives are indications of the relevance of my thesis to community development. Collins (2010) has brought a transpersonal perspective to the subject of human occupation and health; in this thesis I have recognised that the issue of Belonging and Not-belonging, of individual and social integration, may be facilitated through participation, occupation, and creative or expressive engagement and the collective enactment of social narratives. Further inquiry and the application of key findings to the context of virtual and on-line communities is envisioned.

9.5.1 Therapy.

This inquiry arose primarily in the practice of psychotherapy and eventually, I hoped that it would be of some relevance and application to this field. People turn to therapy at different times in life and for a multitude of reasons (Cooper, 2008). In spite of the unique intricacies of personal and situational contexts, Geiser (2003), points out that there are also underlying patterns of similarity in our human experiencing. It is these patterns along with our capacity for empathic resonance (Decety and Ickes, 2012) and the 'linguaging' of stories (Maturana, 2008; Purton, 2013) which help to make experience comprehensible - without which we would have no chance of understanding or of being understood - therapeutically or otherwise.

My thesis is that *Belonging* and *Not-belonging* frame two essentially creative and inter-related dimensions of experience – both are dynamically implicit in normal growth and the development of consciousness. Nevertheless, the experience of *not-belonging*, inherent to social isolation, marginalisation and alienation, can also be felt as a consequence of psychological ‘splitting’ in the course of a traumatic disruption to ‘normal’ development (Ruppert, 2011).

The re-integration of psychological aspects, thus separated by trauma in the interest of survival, is therefore a healing therapeutic goal. Particular conditions are conducive to the integration of separated intra-psychic aspects Ruppert (2008; 2011) and may be similar to those required for the social integration of marginalised groups at the collective level - namely: ‘safety’, ‘space’ and ‘holding’. Important too is understanding and respect for what is particular or personal as well as ‘receiving’ or recognition of what is essential and transpersonal.

In Chapter Four Neil Stott suggested that, at the collective level: “...community developers are like the new priests - without the religion.[...] people that held the community together...” in our predominantly secular society, he may have a point. At the level of the individual, perhaps the same could be suggested about therapists. In faith-based societies individuals have the external and internal resources of religious figures and their belief-systems to explain or give meaning to experience. As the influence and security of these structures has become less powerful, particularly in the post-industrial West (Tarnas, 1991), individuals seem increasingly to address their need to make coherent narrative meaning out of life’s experiences by seeking some kind of therapy. Therefore one interpretation of the role of therapy is the facilitation of intra-psychic integration through facilitating conscious awareness of inner ‘belonging’ for the client by creating safety and a holding space for recognising and receiving all their conflicted or seemingly marginalised ‘parts’.

Therapists who can receive, value and explore their client’s experiences of ‘lost-ness’ and *not-belonging* as the potential treasure of self-reflexive awareness, rather than viewing them solely as ‘presenting problems’, may be more able to assist them in the integration of what has previously felt ‘marginal’ or un-acceptable.

If a deepening reflexive-awareness of ‘Self’ and of integration within the organismic ‘whole of Gaia’ is understood as the experiential quest of moving between *Belonging* and *Not-belonging*, then this could become the basis for a collaboratively narrated ‘better story’ (Purton, 2013). On the collective level, such a story would need to have enough scope to weave together all the strands and fractals of collective human experience into an evolutionary narrative of love and consciousness.



Fractals.

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INFORMATION FOR COLLABORATORS

Introduction

Thank you for expressing an interest in participating in my research which is an enquiry into the issues relating to *a sense of belonging*. The contemplative group collaboration will form a fundamental part of the data collection for my doctoral research. As a member of this group you would be contributing to this research in a very important way. The learning from the collaborator's group will help direct my inquiries with other participants into various aspects and contexts of these experiences.

Collaborator Involvement

The proposed group will consist of between 6-12 collaborators who can individually and/or collectively explore the themes of *belonging* and of *not belonging* in a number of embodied and experiential ways. Over a period of 12 months the group will come together on perhaps six occasions in order to:

1. Use focusing, 'thinking at the edge' and talking circles as a means of deepening embodied inquiry.
2. Record individual insights and experiences in a variety of ways.
3. Look for resources or strategies that may be further worked with by the group, or offered into the next phase of the project.

I will be guided by the energetic possibilities of the group itself (which may be greater or less than these initial ideas suggest). I intend record the group sessions so that I can capture and further study the contributions and developments within the group. Transcriptions will then be circulated and permission sought before the inclusion of anonymised extracts into my thesis

Consent

If you wish to participate and feel that you have enough information regarding your involvement you can sign and return the attached consent form. Signing the form does not oblige you to continue your involvement with the research and you may withdraw at any time. If you have any questions about possible involvement prior to agreeing to participate, please contact me directly (see below) and I will be happy to discuss any concerns or queries. Once I have your written consent to participate I will send you some questions for your consideration, and we can arrange a time to get together to talk more fully about your involvement and your responses to the questions, that session will be audio-taped. An additional written consent to for audio-visual recording will be sought before we begin in the group context. All written, audio and visual recordings will remain the property of the person concerned until a 'consent-to-release' form has been signed indicating that I may use specifically identified extracts within my thesis or other published work, once it has been anonymised by name and any identifying detail. All data collected will be securely stored in locked premises, and any unused data returned or destroyed after completion of the research. I will at all times respect the needs of participants over any possible adverse effects on the research process.

Complaints

To lodge a complaint about any part of my conduct during this research you may of course contact:
Dr Nalini Boodhoo, Head of School – Education and Lifelong Learning. UEA.
N.Boodhoo@uea.ac.uk

Voluntary participation in this project is for the purpose of the identified research and is not therefore intended as a therapeutic or self-help group, however I do hope that involvement with the project will provide insights and experiences that may prove valuable to those involved. Any difficulties that may arise either directly related to your involvement in the research or which may affect your ability to participate in it will be treated with respect and discretion on an individual basis. I am resourced to make signposting suggestions to local appropriate agencies should additional support be requested by research participants.

Anna Magee 2011 Email: annamagee123@gmail.com Mob: 07917301336

Consent to collaborate in contemplative research group.

Name:.....

I have read the '*Information for Collaborators*' document and agree that by signing this form I am acknowledging that I understand the nature of my involvement in Anna Magee's research. I further understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any stage for any reason should I so wish. As a collaborator I have recourse to my own support resources, however I can inform Anna should I feel a need for additional support connected to this collaboration and she will offer signposting to relevant services, which would be at my own expense. I understand that I may use the complaints procedure outlined in the information sheet.

All written and audio-visual recordings that involve me will remain my intellectual property until such time as I sign a further 'consent to release' document for identified aspects only of that data. Thereafter they may be used by Anna Magee for the purpose of completion of her thesis and possible inclusion in academic papers or other subsequent publications.

Signed.....

Date.....

Information for Agency Participants

Research type: Doctoral study at the University of East Anglia by Anna Magee

Title: An Integral Inquiry into the experiences of belonging and of not-belonging.

Introduction: The research is aimed towards improving understanding of the complex, and for some people difficult issue of 'belonging' and 'not-belonging'. My interest comes from working as a therapist with people who for various reasons have experienced themselves as 'outsiders' in certain contexts, and who sometimes suffer as a consequence. Although the need to belong has been described as a fundamental one for human beings, it seems that for some people it can feel easier or perhaps even *preferable* to occupy an outsider position, regardless of the difficult consequences of that. At another level it is clearly the case that changes in social circumstances or in cultural expectations can make even a strong desire to 'belong' become a difficult one to fulfil. In our increasingly 'globalised' world social and cultural borderlines become blurred, perhaps this effects our sense of *where* we belong, but I am also interested in the '*how's*' of belonging, the '*whys*' of not-belonging and in seeing if there is to understand this complexity so that suffering may be reduced.

Research Design: The first phase of my research involved talking to individuals and groups about their experiences of belonging and not belonging. I have also been listening to people who are involved in community based organisations which support socially marginalised individuals. In this second phase I have begun to learn something about how various agencies encourage and support engagement with the service, and how they might understand and work with disengagement. I have listened to the views of both staff and of service users about the kinds of internal and external resources they most value in terms of gaining a sense of belonging. Now in a third phase of inquiry I am inviting contributions from individuals who may be experiencing some kind of social marginalisation, I hope to learn something more about the internal and external support resources that can be helpful in a particular situation.

Participation: Participation is on a voluntary basis and by signed consent. All those who do participate may subsequently decide to withdraw any or all of their own discussion points without prejudice or explanation until a second consent is given to include identified extracts.

I will present a summary of my research findings to participating organisations or groups within an organisation on request.

Complaints: Any one wishing to make a complaint about my conduct of this research may do so in writing to: University of East Anglia- School of Education and Lifelong Learning.

Head of School: Dr Nalini Boodhoo. N.Boodhoo@uea.ac.uk

Contact Information: All other enquires about this research can be made directly to me in the following ways
- email: A.Magee@uea.ac.uk mobile: 07917301336

AGENCY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the document '*Information for participants*' regarding Anna Magee's doctoral research and I am willing to volunteer my participation in a discussion with her on the topic of belonging and not-belonging.

1. I understand that the conversation will be recorded and transcribed and that the verbatim transcription will be given to all those involved in the discussion for further comments or amendments.
2. I will be free to withdraw any or all of my discussion points at that time.
3. I understand that my permission will be sought before Anna can use identified extracts of the conversation.
4. All extracts will be included anonymously.
5. Once I have given my permission for the release of the identified extracts, Anna may use these in her thesis or other published work.
6. I understand that I have recourse to a complaints procedure through the UEA.

Signed.....

Date.....

AGENCY PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read the document '*Information for participants*' regarding Anna Magee's doctoral research and I am willing to volunteer my participation in a discussion with her on the topic of belonging and not-belonging.

1. I understand that the conversation will be recorded and transcribed and that the verbatim transcription will be given to all those involved in the discussion for further comments or amendments.
2. I will be free to withdraw any or all of my discussion points at that time.
3. I understand that my permission will be sought before Anna can use identified extracts of the conversation.
4. All extracts will be included anonymously.
5. Once I have given my permission for the release of the identified extracts, Anna may use these in her thesis or other published work.
6. I understand that I have recourse to a complaints procedure through the UEA.

Signed.....

Date.....

FOCUS-GROUP ON THE SYSTEMIC CONSTELLATION APPROACH.

CONSENT FORM.

January 27th 2013.

I have read the attached information regarding Anna Magee’s research using a focus-group approach to discuss the therapeutic approach called ‘systemic constellations’ (Family Systems Constellations).

I am familiar with this approach and have attended at least one workshop or constellation seminar OTHER than the one that Anna Magee is holding on the 26th January 2013.

I understand that the purpose of the focus-group activity is to inform Anna’s doctoral research into the experiences of belonging and not-belonging, and that it will be taped and transcribed for this purpose alone.

I understand that I can ask to see the subsequent transcript and that I may edit or delete any of my own contributions prior to the inclusion of extracts in the thesis (or other published work) and that I will not be directly identifiable from any such included extracts.

As a research contributor I am being offered a place free of charge on the constellation workshop being facilitated by Anna on the 26th January 2013. I may use this workshop to work on my own issues or I may choose only to be a representative for other people in exactly the same way as a fee-paying attendee.

Even though, in this instance, I am not required to commit to the workshop by means of a payment or deposit - I do agree to attend and also to be present for the research activity - insofar as I am able to do so – and if I am unable to attend, I will give Anna as much notice as I can of this.

Signed:

Date:

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE:

You have the right to raise any concerns that you may have regarding my conduct of this research with the Head of School of the **School of Education and Lifelong Learning** at the UEA: Dr Nalini Boodhoo.

CONTACT - **N.Boodhoo@uea.ac.uk**

Information for Focus-Group Participants.

This focus-group activity is designed to contribute to my doctoral research into the experiences of belonging and of not-belonging. My research has thus far included individual and group contemplations looking at various facets of these experiences; interviews with staff and service users of community-based agencies working with marginalised individuals; and a localised case-study into the policies and practices regarding such individuals. I have been particularly interested to learn about the embodiment of experiencing belonging and not-belonging, and to learn how it gets played out in terms of individual and collective behaviours.

As a practitioner of the Systemic Constellation approach - initially called Family Systems Constellations by its instigator Bert Hellinger – I am aware that this therapeutic method can directly address the issue of not-belonging, and that it does so by means of the embodied experiences of the representatives within the ‘constellation’ itself and of the person bringing their ‘issue’. My own experiences both of being a representative in the constellations of others, and of being an issue-holder myself for my own constellations, suggests to me that the embodied shifts thus facilitated do have on-going and beneficial effects. However I would like to bring together a group of people who have themselves also got some direct experience of this approach (and preferably who have experienced at least one constellation of their own family or other personal system) to discuss this possibility.

In the focus-group I will invite reflections upon the way that people have been impacted by the approach (both the positive and any negative experiences encountered). I hope to explore via these direct experiences whether (or in what way) people’s involvement with the constellation approach has actually affected their experiences of belonging and of not-belonging in the context of family and other systems. I would like to reflect upon the approach itself and consider its nature and process in the light of individual and collective experiencing, in other words - the inter-relatedness of experience and of situations. I am also open to the possibility that the focus-group may itself determine what must be discussed in the light of the workshop which will have been held on the previous day. The focus-group discussion will last no longer than 1.5 hours (11 am -12.30) and will be at the same venue as the workshop: 14-15 Cathedral St. The Priory Clinic, Norwich. It will be taped and later transcribed by me; all contributors will be anonymised at transcription. Transcripts will be sent to any contributor who indicates that they would like to have sight of it - at this point they may identify extracts that they would like to be edited or deleted. Once agreed, the transcript will be used as data for my thesis; as such it will be in the public domain and may be subsequently used in published work by myself. On the basis of this information a consent form to participate in the focus-group activity is attached.

As I will be facilitating both the workshop and the focus-group I have felt it vital for myself to separate these two very different functions and ways of being, which is why the focus-group is being held on the day subsequent to the workshop (27th Jan). However I do appreciate that this necessarily involves an additional commitment of time and travel for research participants for which I am most grateful and therefore offer the workshop on the 26th Jan free of charge.

FORMULÁRIO DE CONSENTIMENTO

Eu li a informação sobre pesquisa de doutorado Anna Magee, e eu estou disposto a oferecer a minha participação em uma conversa gravada sobre o tema de pertença e não-pertença.

- Eu sou livre para recusar-se a participar da pesquisa.
- Ao assinar este termo de consentimento Eu concordo em participar e oferecer meus pensamentos sobre a questão da pertença e não-pertença.
- Eu dou a minha permissão para Anna usar extratos identificados da nossa conversa, em sua tese.
- Todos os tais extratos serão incluídos de forma anónima - Eu não vou ser identificáveis a partir dos extratos gravadas.
- Eu entendo que se não ficar satisfeito com a maneira que Anna tem abordado esta parte da pesquisa que pode fazer uma denúncia através do contato UEA listados abaixo.

Assinado

Data

Reclamações podem ser feitas para: Dr. Nalini Boodhoo. Escola de Educação e Aprendizagem ao Longo da Vida. Universidade de East Anglia. E-mail: N.Boodhoo@uea.ac.uk

Questions for contemplation;
Collaborators and focusing conversations

Introduction:

The following questions are offered to create an opening for your own inquiry into a felt-sense of belonging in a number of differing contexts. We may use them as the basis for conversation when we meet, or the exercise may simply be a way of 'tuning in' to the issues of 'belonging' and you may want to approach our conversation from a different direction.

Before responding to the questions set out below, take a few moments to create a connection with your inner *felt-sense*. You may have your own good way of doing this, but if not simply bring your attention for a short while to any physical sensations you may have just now, and 'make room for them'. Create an inner space for how you experience the present moment, including and acknowledging information that comes from sensations or feelings in your body as well as from any thoughts you might have, whether or not they seem to be relevant. This is not exactly 'focusing' in its full process (you may like to deepen a particular aspect of your inquiry by using focusing at a later point) but it has in common with focusing a basic attitude of attentiveness to bodily sensations and arising thoughts as well as giving a space for the 'whole' of the matter.

Take each question (not necessarily in numerical order) and spend a moment or two just *sensing and feeling* the strength of the belonging you feel in each relational situation or context. The line is simply a way to indicate subjectively how 'strongly' you feel able to experience belonging in that case (towards the right hand side) or perhaps how 'weak' or difficult your belonging sense is (towards the left side). In each case it is an overall or general sense of belonging rather than on a specific occasion that may come into your mind about that context. Then make a mark on each line indicating your current sense of it. As you go along, see if you notice any sensations in your body, or ideas in your mind that accompany your own sense of belonging or not belonging, perhaps making a note of things that seem significant.

N.B: It is not 'strongest' relative to anyone else, only your own inner subjective sense of how things seem for you now.

Try to 'feel' what the answer is rather than 'think' too hard about the question.

Leave any questions you do not feel able, or inclined, to answer.

QUESTIONS for CONTEMPLATION.

5. Family of origin:

a) Parents *(if you feel your belonging differently to each one, indicate and use the separate lines)*

M-weak-----strong

F-weak-----strong

b) Siblings

weak-----strong

c) Extended family

weak-----strong

2. Current family/relationship:

weak-----strong

3. Friendship groups.

a) same sex

weak-----strong

b) mixed gender

weak-----strong

4. Professional peer group:

weak-----strong

5. Community (where you live)

weak-----strong

6. Special interest group (or religious group).

weak-----strong

7. National/ Cultural identity:

weak-----strong

8. When travelling or faced with a new situation:

weak-----strong

9. In a context where you experience a weaker sense of belonging, how are you currently likely to behave? (in general rather than on a specific occasion)

.....
.....
.....

Are there any particular kinds of environment where your sense of belonging is affected in a positive way?

.....

Where (geographically) do you feel able to belong most strongly/easily?

.....

What words describe the experience of belonging in that place/situation?

.....
.....

Think of a time when your belonging felt jeopardised in some way, what do you remember feeling about that time?

.....

13. Have you ever experienced, so that it was a problem for you, any of the following?:

(you may choose to say how you have been affected, or just decide to indicate Yes/No.)

a) Anxiety.....

.....

b) Depression (or low-mood states).....

.....

c) Substance misuse/dependence.....

.....

14. What, for you, would would be a good outcome of your collaboration in this study?

.....

END

Thank you for giving your attention to this form, the information it contains will be treated as confidential it will not be presented as data within my thesis (although I may refer generally to base-line data across the whole study). The main purpose is to give both you as an active collaborator, and me as the researcher, an initial picture to which we may refer in order to evaluate experiential learnings. My hope is that a bigger picture may emerge that will deepen our individual and collective understandings about the nature of how we belong.

Your response to the final question is very important to me, as it is my hope that our collaboration will be mutually beneficial as well as generating information for my research. I will take a responsible attitude towards endeavouring to support you in your own interest regarding belonging.

Anna Magee. School of Education and Lifelong Learning. UEA. 201

Agency/organizational semi-structured interviews: - Sample Questions.

1. Is a sense of belonging still relevant in our increasingly 'globalised' world?
2. What are the conditions that support belonging, and what makes it difficult?
3. How do you know when you are able to belong in a situation?
4. Are there times when it is better not to belong?
5. Is there anything positive about the not-belonging state?
6. What activities, in this organization, create a sense of belonging?
7. In the wider community, where is it most possible to get a sense of belonging?

Appendix B [iii].

Organizational setting - Sample Questions.

1. Is a sense of belonging still relevant in our increasingly 'globalised' world?
2. What are the conditions that support belonging, and what makes it difficult?
3. How do you know when you are able to belong in a situation?
4. Are there times when it is better not to belong?
5. Is there anything positive about the not-belonging state?
6. What activities, in this organization, create a sense of belonging?
7. In the wider community, where is it most possible to get a sense of belonging?

Appendix C : AQAL of research activities & proposed activities. Anna Magee. Jan 2012

Colours:

Blue= underway/done

Red=not started

Purple = engaged in.

<p>Upper Left Quadrant- Individual interior. (Thoughts, impressions, felt-sense) <u>Methods:</u> personal reflexive inquiry including TAE project. Individual focusing/contemplative conversations with research collaborators. <u>Data:</u> Narrative excerpts- (use some form of narrative analysis...relational and preserving integrity of 'wholes') TAE project inc final two 'steps' for theoretical</p> <p>[Listen for internal resources, at various levels & contexts of belonging]</p>	<p>Upper Right Quadrant –Individual exterior. (Behaviour, physiology, strategies – really language also as a representation of UL) <u>Methods:</u> as for ULQ, also literature review regarding empirical studies of pathologies e.g anxiety, depression, addiction in socially excluded & marginalised individuals.</p> <p>Written contributions from those who experience a level of social exclusion – e.g (perhaps) Big Issue vendors, migrants, long term unemployed, (third level data).</p>
<p>Lower Left Quadrant –Collective Interior. (culture, norms, experiences in systems)</p> <p><u>Methods:</u> Collaborative contemplative inquiry (talking circles). Exploring various dimensions of experiences of 'belonging' in systems.</p> <p>Conversations within organisational settings, with both staff and service users (listen for cultural 'norms' and prevailing beliefs at the systemic level)</p> <p>Theories here – include Hellinger's intergenerational patterns of trauma/loss.</p>	<p>Lower Right Quadrant – Collective Exterior. (social practice, political policies, interventions at the level of statutory and non-statutory services)</p> <p><u>Methods:</u> Interviews with CEO s of community based services, NGOs and charities (e.g CRISIS)</p> <p>Review literature on policies regarding inclusion. Strategies and interventions e.g. occupational health theories (Collins papers – interface between being and doing)</p> <p>Facebook –Question.... [look for external resources at various levels and contexts of belonging]</p>

APPENDIX D [i]

PERMISSIONS.



Anna Magee< annamagee123@gmail.com>

Permission and draft chapter section.

Neil Stott< neil.stott@keystonetrust.org.uk>
To: Anna Magee <annamagee123@gmail.com>

Thu, Dec 5, 2013 at 12:13 PM

Anna,

Permission freely given. Enjoyed reading it and looking forward to seeing the final. I don't think you sent the full interview transcript.

Good luck with finalising the draft and I hope your supervisor enjoys it.

I attach my DProf Context Statement which may be of use – the Keystone literature in the references may be of interest.

Neil Stott

Chief Executive

Keystone Development Trust

The Limes

32 Bridge Street

Thetford

Norfolk

IP24 3AG

01842 754639

www.keystonetrust.org.uk

Appendix D [ii]

PERMISSIONS.



Chapter section.

Nicky Lambert< lambertwn@

Sat, Apr 19, 2014 at 9:37 AM

Reply-To: Nicky Lambert <

To: Anna <annamagee123@gmail.com>

Cc: "Lambert Nicola (NSFT)" <Nicola.Lambert@

Dear Anna,

I am happy for you to use this, I have made a couple of factual corrections (dates and my role) which I would ask you to correct, and a couple of comments- more by way of ongoing conversation.

I would be interested to read your whole thesis when it is ready and in particular I would be interested to read your reflections having met my service users.

yours,

Nicky