

**An exploration of 'holonic shifts' in groups and its possible
human ecological significance in transforming culture.**

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is a story of my exploration of a phenomenon that I have experienced in some groups that I call a 'holonic shift'. Some groups seem to be able to shift their functioning from an individual level to a group level. As the whole emerges the communication and connection is facilitated by the diversity of each individual. It is from this differentiation that the connections are made. The resulting creative emergence leads to an ever greater participation of the individuals. Shared communal meanings emerge via the 'dialogue in the group'.

It attempts to create a research methodology set within an 'extended' science and an inquiry paradigm where 'the meaning of experience' is central. I draw from my own experiences, participants reported experiences and relevant literature. Whereas analysis plays a part, description and exploration are equally valued as I indwell ever deeper into my research focus and the process of this catapults me into developing 'adequateness', a process of personal transformation necessary for me to undertake this research.

Central themes are David Bohm's implicate and explicate order (1980), Henryk Skolimowski's participative mind (1994) and the 'holarchy' (Koestler, 1967). My ever deeper participation from developing 'adequateness' means my cosmos expands as my 'spiral of understanding' expands. I structure my dissertation as 'turns' of this unfolding spiral to reflect this process.

I arrive at a tentative hypothesis that can inform future research. The human ecological significance of groups making these 'holonic shifts' is that a 'loving' culture can develop characterised by compassion, collaboration and wisdom. People can experience a cosmological shift and embrace more 'worldcentric values. And with the emergent creativity and higher level of functioning available 'dialoguing in the group' creates shared meaning which could generate cultural transformation and ways forward regarding the world's dilemmas of today.

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I dedicate this to John K Woods, who died August 2004 - an exceptional man who walked his talk in groups, in his marriage, ecologically and spiritually.

INTRODUCTION

Where to start? Yes ... I know at the beginning. Which beginning? What do you mean which beginning, how can there be more than one beginning? Well you see one beginning took place travelling back from the last weekend from Module two of the Masters, whirring with excitement because of the shift I had experienced within the group that weekend. Another beginning was when I filled in the dissertation proposal form and sent it back to the Centre for Human Ecology. Another beginning was when I attended a workshop with Victor Sanchez and at the end of the workshop he told us that he'd given us all a seed and it was now up to us what we did with it. I could write another ten alternative beginnings.

My dissertation is a story. It's a story of my exploration of a phenomenon I had experienced in some groups, that I am calling a 'holonic shift' and it's the story of the process of my research. Story-telling is increasingly being seen as 'part of an emergent paradigm of inquiry' (Reason and Heron, 1988, p.79) where 'the meaning of experience' becomes central. 'The expression of experience is inquiry into meaning' (Wilkins, 2001, p.145) through a self-reflexive process. I am locating my research within an 'extended science' where there are multiple realities and the unique is valued alongside universal laws. Here story-telling is seen as part of valid scientific inquiry. I am exploring, describing, being evocative to tell my story. Some analysis is here but it is not the foundation of my research.

Experiences of groups are so different – creative, enjoyable and effective or harmful, difficult and ineffective. As I paid more attention some groups were able to shift their functioning from an individual level to a group level. The creative potential realised by these groups surprised the participants. They reported a caring connectedness. That they

felt more fully themselves, even transformed. As the whole emerged, it was as if the group transcended to a higher level of functioning. What was happening? Why did it happen with some groups and not others? What brought it about?

The definition of a group I will be using is a collection of people united by a common purpose and it is this common purpose that differentiates the group from the non-group. (Barnst, Ernst and Hyde, 1999, p.2).

‘Holon’ is a term used by Koestler for an entity, which is both a whole and a part (whole/part). An individual is a whole individual but a part of a higher level of organisation, the group. The properties of higher orders can never be explained in terms of the properties of the lower order. Holons have two complementary properties, the whole self-asserts its differentiated autonomy and the part integrates with other parts within an existing or evolving larger whole. Koestler suggested the name ‘holarchy’ for this nested hierarchy. So a ‘holonic shift’ would be from one level of the ‘holarchy’ to the next e.g. from atom to molecule and from individual to group. During my research, I have experienced such shifts¹ to a higher level of organisation; a connecting up seems to occur through a greater participation of the parts.

My initial aims were –

- To investigate a phenomenon that sometimes occurs in groups where there is a shift in functioning from the individual level to a group level i.e. a ‘holonic shift’.
- To investigate the circumstances and conditions when the group accessing its creative potential accompanies this shift.
- With regards the problems we are facing in the 21st century, can this creative potential, through groups operating in this way, have any possible significance in finding a way forward?

¹ Within my ‘self’, my learning, my cosmology and methodology and within writing this dissertation.

However in starting to focus on writing up my research, I was catapulted into a deeper engagement with my research. I realised the multidimensionality of the learning that was going to be required of me. My cosmology and methodology acted as a container for the process of my research towards an unfolding of a deeper understanding. So clearly identifying these and articulating them became a major part of my research. In identifying these I was thrown into an ontological, epistemological and methodological exploration as a lived experience that shook my identity. I was developing what William Braud has called ‘adequateness’ the capacity that the researcher needs in order to be able to research her subject (1998, p.21).

My dissertation is located within an ‘extended’ science and central themes are David Bohm’s implicate and explicate order (1980), Henryk Skolimowski’s participative mind (1994) and the concept of ‘holarchy’ (Koestler, 1967). I have dwelled within these concepts hoping that my ever-deeper participation will draw forth a deeper meaning. The meanings of these terms will unfold within my dissertation. So many dimensions are interpenetrated here waiting to unfold through the participation of you the reader².

The spiral is a symbol of unfolding, of process – so opposite from the linear. I’ve structured my dissertation as a spiral to convey the unfolding nature of my research resulting from my extended participation. The first ‘turn’ will focus on setting the scene and my journey that brought me to the beginning of deciding to research a ‘holonic shift’. The second ‘turn’ concentrates on the multidimensionality of my learning and developing my ‘connecting/integral’ self. The third ‘turn’ concentrates on identifying and articulating my cosmology and methodology that encompasses my research focus. The fourth ‘turn’ returns the focus to ‘holonic shifts’ in groups through my expanded lens. I draw some tentative conclusions and formulate a hypothesis for future research.

Why is this shift that I had experienced significant? Einstein is reported to have said ‘No problem can be solved from the same consciousness that created it. We have to see the

² I know I have made assumptions of my reader, the breadth and depth of my dissertation is immense and embedded within each paragraph are many more pages and chapters.

world anew' (Wheatley, 1999, p.7). If the groups were not just more effective or more cohesive but actually were accessing an emergent creativity, a higher level of functioning, an expanded worldview could this be a new emergent consciousness that led to a cultural transformation and generated 'intercentric' values and worldcentric morals? This possibility of a far ranging applicability in finding some of the much-needed answers to the world's dilemmas of today is what has motivated my research.

THE FIRST ‘TURN’

Setting the scene: Arriving at the beginning

My story starts with me setting the scene, describing personal and professional experiences that have been pivotal in arriving at this point of researching this phenomenon that I am calling a ‘holonic shift’. I will use examples from my group-work to illustrate the processes that are involved in this shift and discuss the curiosity I felt concerning the relevance and significance this might have to the state of the world in the twenty first Century.

My personal and professional history

Two illustrative scenarios

The family - mother, father and three children were getting ready for their summer holiday, a caravanning trip to the highlands of Scotland. Each efficiently completed their allotted tasks. There was not the light-hearted banter of a family excited to be going on their summer holiday but rather a brittle tolerance of each other as the preparations were made. The youngest having finished what she was doing asked her brother if she could help, he sneered a reply of ‘What makes you think you could be of help?’ Upset she sought out her father who had her fill the radiator with water. Tasks were completed but with an attitude of minor hostility and aloofness. The father was cold towards his elder daughter and ignored his son who sullenly ignored everybody after being rude to his mother. As the family got into the car, finally ready, the atmosphere was tense, cold and unpleasant. The youngest endeavoured to lighten the mood by chatting about Scotland. Her mother told her to be quiet.

.....

The group was a first year of a Diploma in Counselling. This was the last but one day. The year had been challenging in different ways for all concerned. There was warmth

between most people, a lightness and ease. There were stronger bonds between some people but even where there was an unresolved tension there seemed to be still a mutual respect and tolerance of the difference and the difficulty. The task of the day was to complete self, peer and staff assessments. What happened during that day surprised many of the students. Each had unpleasant memories of exams. As each student found their strength to talk about their learning over the year they found the feedback they received from their peers and tutor drew out their own assessment, deepening and broadening it. Each person was making a different point yet a thread ran through all of the comments ever honouring the student as each contribution deepened the recognition and understanding. Many voiced being in awe of what they had achieved together and how it had culminated on this day about assessments. Some reported they felt 'transformed' and many went home stunned.

Enfolded within these two scenarios is much of my personal and professional history relevant to this research. I was the youngest child in the first scenario and the tutor in the second scenario. In many ways I had an ordinary childhood, no severe traumas of illnesses, accidents, or of major physical, psychological or sexual abuse. I knew I was loved and my physical needs were always met. My parents were the best parents they could be. Yet I don't remember my childhood warmly. I didn't feel celebrated, I didn't feel loved, I didn't feel understood or supported to become ever more of myself. I felt insecure and although I could be expansive and sociable it was motivated by my need to please and be accepted. I learnt to mask my vulnerability and how inadequate I felt. The distance, irritability, lack of caring and connection of the first scenario is indicative of my childhood memories.

During journaling I remembered a conversation I had with my mother about our family after a particular unpleasant day of bickering and competition. I asked my mother why our family was so horrible to each other. My mother explained 'It's the way we express our love for each other'. She implied this was normal and our family was no different to others. I remember feeling chilled. I understood why I enjoyed spending time with my friend's family.

What is the significance of this? Family is our first experience of a group and for most children provides the environment, which influences their development. Whereas the dyad between 'mother' and 'infant' is primary, initially, this dyad is also 'held' within the family system. As the child develops, the whole family becomes more significant and this extension of the child's environment out into the world via school, peer groups and activity groups continues, as the child grows older.

Bickering, competition and an avoidance of emotions could describe the culture of my family. It is not surprising that understanding what happens in groups and facilitating groups has been a major part of my professional (and personal life). It has been important for me to seek to create a very different group culture from that of my family i.e. one that is genuine, caring, understanding and collaborative.

I studied Economics with Ecology at University gaining a 2:1, despite inhabiting the student fringe with its temptations that soothed my insecurities and helped me to relax. I travelled, did various jobs, started nurse training when I was 28. Looking back now I'm surprised I didn't start psychotherapy earlier. I joined a psychotherapy group when I was 30. The tension between my secret internal struggles and my outgoing, passionate, questioning external life had come to a head.

I left nursing in my early thirties to become a psychotherapist. My interest in holistic health had showed me the significance of psychological and spiritual processes in the formation of disease and it's interesting that I prioritised developing my psychological understanding.

Again the significance of my unfolding life with the decisions I have made is that it has all brought me here today. During the next fifteen years I qualified as a Transactional Analysis (TA) psychotherapist, a counsellor, studied Gestalt psychotherapy, undertook an apprentice trainer-ship (learning to be a trainer) and supervision training. My professional life was divided between individual clinical work, supervision (often in groups), tutoring

on BA/Diplomas in Counselling and running short workshops privately and for the NHS, Social Services, and Adult Education. Groups were a central part of my life. All the training I received and that I delivered was group based where experiential learning and self-reflexivity was central.

From trainer to facilitator

During these fifteen years I changed from a trainer to a facilitator and I changed my theoretical modality from TA and Gestalt to the person-centred approach, developed from the pioneering work of the American psychologist, Carl Rogers. This shift from trainer to facilitator was highly significant. It was a philosophical shift away from the role of the autocratic expert who possesses the knowledge and takes control of the learning to a facilitator, who by creating an environment of genuineness, acceptance and understanding, trusts students to guide their own learning (Rogers, 1980, p.201). This is the person-centred approach to education and the philosophical assumption underlying this approach is the actualising tendency. ‘There is a directional tendency inherent in the human organism – a tendency to grow, to develop, to realise its full potential.’ (Rogers,1986, p.172). The differences in these paradigms are highlighted in the following table.

Trainer.....Facilitator.....
Structure	The group is leader-directed; learning structures are created by the trainer - check-in, lectures, paired or small group experiential exercises, skills practices and large group discussion. Usually assessment is by the trainer.	Participants and facilitator together direct the group, can be called group-directed. There are ‘open learning structures’ (Mearns, 1997, p.205) where members can individualise their learning. Assessment structures involve self, peer and facilitator.
Content	Determined by the leader to complete the groups tasks. Arrives with a plan of content, which is negotiated with the members of the group. Thus there is an agreed contract.	The content is determined by the group as a whole, often using consensus decision-making. The facilitator comes as well prepared as possible and brings books, papers, book lists, handouts, videos etc as resources.

Authority and responsibility	The leader is seen as the expert who has the authority and influence. Therefore has most responsibility for the task to be completed and outcomes achieved. Berne suggest three types of leaders held by the named leader or by different members of the group – the responsible leader in the organisational structure, the effective leader who makes the decisions and the psychological leader given the most power by others (1963, p.138).	The facilitator endeavours to share the authoritative role of leadership with all who are in the group. ‘I rely on the wisdom of the group more than my own, and am deeply astonished at the therapeutic ability of the members’ (Rogers, 1970, p.63). The facilitative culture allows others to own their personal authority and take an active part in the group achieving its task. Thus mutuality and shared responsibility is the norm.
Culture	The leader shapes the group by establishing the norms or rules that inform the group’s behaviour and interactions so that the group’s task is completed and outcomes achieved.	The facilitative culture develops from Rogers’ six therapeutic conditions and the hypothesis of the actualising tendency in a group. There is a ‘trust in the group, given a facilitative climate, to develop it’s own potential and that of it’s members’ (Rogers 1970, p.44). The culture is genuine, empathic, accepting and collaborative.
Group development	Group development is seen sequentially using Berne’s group imago (1963,1966) or Tuckman’s forming, storming, norming and performing (1965), termination added by Lacoursiere (1980)	Less attention given. Mearns offers heuristic sequence stages – of polite tolerance, confusion and disorientation, glimpsing the potential and valuing and working in the open process (Mearns, 1997, p.162-165).
Process	Process is more often vertical. Most comments are directed to the trainer and initially there is a resistance to discuss in the large group although groups can overcome this. Attending to process is often only done if group dynamics have developed that interfere with the task of the group being completed.	Process is more often horizontal between those present often characterised by dialogue. If process becomes vertical often challenged by group member. Often there is no difference between content and process. I.e. the content is the process and the process is the content.

Table 1. Differences between ‘trainer’ paradigm and ‘facilitator’ paradigm

The second scenario on p.8 is a description from a Person-centred Diploma in counselling and gives an idea of the culture created from this 'facilitator paradigm'. Learning is a 'learning by the whole person' – not only transferral of information at a cognitive level, or skills at a behavioural level but also the learning that results from uniting the affective-experiential and the cognitive in awareness (Rogers, 1980, p.265-266). This is one of my underlying philosophical assumptions, although many educationalists would contest this e.g., Dr Michael (1974, quoted in Rogers, 1980, p.297-298) and Ken Evans (1994, personal communication). I believe this 'learning by the whole person' also occurs at a value, attitude and identity level. Participants often reconceptualise themselves in a similar way to what happens in psychotherapy. I remember one student saying at the end of a year that she hadn't known that she could change, not only from being the silent one to somebody who had found her voice but also someone whose words were seen as wise by the other members. She went on to say. I can't be the same retiring person anymore (comment made during group feedback, 1999)

During the Diploma group of 1997 the group was willing to work on their perceptions, projections and struggled to trace the un-owned uncomfortable feelings that often emerge in a group. We slowly dropped our assumptions. Sometimes there developed a fluidity within the group, a 'now-ness' – that could extend to all aspects of the course. Theoretical discussions were energised and engaging. This was the first time I became aware of a group of people exploring a concept where an ever-greater understanding of the concept developed from each person's contribution. It wasn't about agreement necessarily, rather each persons' comment added to an evolving articulation and understanding, sometimes via agreement sometimes from disagreement but with an accepting and valuing attitude of what had been said, building on it rather than taking away or being in opposition. This is the nature of the horizontal structure that I mention above and it is this that I call 'group dialogue' or 'dialogue in the group.' One of the students, Dr Stephen Joseph, a psychology lecturer first used the term 'thread'. I asked him to write about his experience.

What was fantastic was the experience of people really listening to each other, people responding to what the person was saying, so that it was like a thread ran between people connecting them, and each new thing that was said built on what had gone before. That doesn't happen often, most of the time people just seem to say something that's in their own heads, which has some loose connection with what the other person has said, there is no thread, no real connection between people or listening to each other. (2004, personal communication)

More pivotal experiences

In 1994 I read the 'Celestine Prophecy' (Redfield, 1994). The story took the reader through eight spiritual insights. The eighth insight was about interpersonal relationships. The description of a 'conscious group' had a huge impact on me. This was when members in a group spoke when they had something to say and when they didn't they supported others to speak. The idea is 'each person will have a portion of the truth at different times and will know when to speak up' (Redfield, 1995, p 211). It's a similar idea to what happens in Quaker meetings and Native American groups. People sit in a circle and each person speaks their part of a shared group wisdom, which is formed from the direction (east, south, west and north) the person is sitting in (Brooke Medicine Eagle, 1991).

The vision of groups working together in this way touched a huge yearning inside of me. And even if I felt naïve, knowing that fear, control, competition and projections were often the norm in groups, sometimes we did touch this co-experiencing. Wouldn't the world be different if this was more of the norm!

In 1997 I attended a shamanic workshop led by Victor Sanchez. He was a Mexican psychologist who had researched Carlos Casteneda's (1968) reported teachings of Don Juan (Sanchez, 1995) and lived with the Toltec Indians of Mexico. One of the exercises was called 'the walk of attention' (ibid, p.140). We practised an extension of this where the group walked in single file, blindfolded with our hand on the person's shoulder in front of us, stepping in that person's footsteps. I found it difficult to find the rhythm of the group, to let go, to trust, to synchronise as one ... when I was able to synchronise, others in the line lost it ... but there were moments when the group did synchronise and

the feeling of being like one organism was profound. I didn't feel I had lost something, rather gaining something. I felt huge, vibrant and part of the universe Victor Sanchez explains the aim is to create 'a bubble of attention that envelops the whole group. ...The feeling of being an individual is lost, while at the same time there is developed awareness of being part of a group body'. The Toltec Indians used this to energise themselves so they were able to walk for days. Being part of a community is central to their way of life. Victor Sanchez's workshop, as well as facilitating us to experience the 'naquel' – the non-ordinary reality of the spiritual, also challenged our Western individualistic worldview.

I participated in several person-centred residential group events that ranged from 60 to 250 participants. They are akin to conferences except a major focus is 'being a community' with large group community meetings happening at least twice daily. I seldom experienced 'dialogue in the group' or that a collaborative culture was created, often the individual seemed to be the accepted focus. I didn't understand why some groups do the work, process their assumptions about each other and their projections, and others not? Why did the 'dialogue in the group' happen sometimes? Although the philosophy of the person-centred approach had been invaluable for me I wanted to learn about the group as a whole and the difficult processes that occur in groups – hatred, passivity, envy, scape-goating, jealousy. With this in mind I attended an introduction to group work (2000-2001) run by the Institute of Group Analysis.

Foulkes' group analysis is based on seeing an individual's behaviour within the context of the group as a whole. This was based on his understanding of individual's disturbances as being 'an incompatibility between the individual and his original group' (1948, in Barnes, Ernst and Hyde, 1999, p.23). In thinking of any individual, he was considering their complete family, he believed that the family was 'precipitated in the innermost core of the human mind.' (ibid). Thus group analysis's attention is placed on what is happening for the individuals and what is happening for the group as a whole and it is the relationship and interaction between these two perspectives that is crucial. He used the metaphor of a jigsaw. An individual in isolation is a single piece of the jigsaw and the

group is the jigsaw puzzle. Meaning is only created by the larger context. And when we join a group we endeavour to recreate the jigsaw puzzle that our one piece of the puzzle came from. We usually succeed in some degree. In group analysis this process is attended to, this reconstruction of our puzzle, so that instead of talking about the presenting problem, members of the group end up involved in a 'passionate discussion of and involvement with the shifting roles, relationships and behavioural communications which make up the system of the group itself' (Garland, 1982 in Barnes, Ernst and Hyde, 1999, 26). She goes on to explain that it is by attending to the non-problem, what is happening in the group that the 'individual becomes a member of an alternative system to the one in which his symptoms ... was generated and maintained.' (ibid).

I had been seeking just such ideas. One of Foulkes' major concepts is the matrix. The matrix is the 'common shared ground, which determines the meanings and significance of all that happens within a group.' (ibid) and is created by the web of communications and relationships within the group. Within the matrix there will be connections and silences and Van Der Kleij (1982) likens the members of a group to the words in a sentence. The meaning of the sentence cannot be found until each person contributes her words.

In 2000 I set up a postgraduate certificate in person-centred group facilitation, a ten-day group-directed programme where the group determined even the dates of the ten days! During the second course that started in October 2001 the idea of people being nodes in an interconnected web or matrix became a central image. During the group analysis introduction I hadn't seen a diagrammatic representation of the matrix. I drew Fig. 1 to represent the web and it has only been in undertaking this research that I have found two identical diagrams (Tudor, 1999, p.118 and Yalom, 1985, p.115).

We used the image to pay qualitative attention to the different connections between individuals in the group, the processes that occurred between two people, a subgroup or within the group as a whole. I introduced the idea of the web as a typology of the group and we experimented with whether this landscape could illustrate group dynamics. When

one person became the focus for example the landscape of the group became like a river channelling attention and even potentially flooding the recipient.

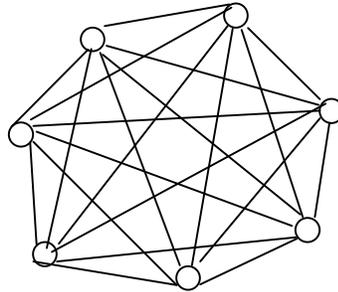


Fig. 1 The web of a group

Reaching an awareness of ‘holonic shifts’ in groups

I cannot pinpoint the first time I became aware of a shift in the functioning of groups. I knew some groups achieved their tasks more effectively, I knew members of some groups reported they were transformational. I knew the group culture was unique to each group. I started the masters in Human Ecology in October 2001. The learning culture was very different from the person-centred learning cultures I was used to. During a particular intense and rewarding weekend on Module Two it appeared as if the functioning and the culture of the whole group on the Sunday morning shifting from operating within an autocratic, expert tutor-directed culture to a mutual, connected, collaborative group-directed culture. ‘Dialogue in the group’ took place for the first time. I explored this shift in my essay. I asked staff and students to complete a short questionnaire³. It felt important to me whether others had perceived a similar shift. Fourteen of the seventeen students responded. No replies from the staff. I used a thematic analysis of the results.

³ The questions were worded to minimise my influence on how a person responded and whether a person responded. Yet I deliberately named ‘a shift’ as this was my focus.

The Questions

1. Did you experience a shift or change within the group during the last weekend for Module Two?
2. If so how would you describe the shift that occurred within the group?
3. What were the significant processes underlying the shift within the group?
4. What meaning did you and do you attach to these processes and/or shift? (Wyatt, 2002)

From those who responded all but one reported experiencing some shift during the weekend. How this was described and the processes and meaning made of this shift were very diverse with some common threads. Most described the shift in positive terms – new sense of community or synthesis, unity, connectedness, solidarity, shared identity and deepening relationship. Several people linked this ‘positive experience’ to a result of something ‘negative’ - control, pressure to perform, hidden agenda, exploitation, manipulation, oppression. For one or two the shift they experienced was more uncomfortable and their emphasis seemed to be more on the difference between individuals. The processes and meanings mentioned included sharing and trusting, deepening, speaking the truth, resolution of conflict and confusion, rejection, rebellion, uniting against, empathy and accepting, empowerment, deepening collective identity and purpose and building community and developing our values. (Wyatt, 2002).

My essay was an investigation into the nature of power in groups and one of my conclusions was that the web of the group and the power dynamics reflected and embodied the inconsistencies resulting from the different paradigms in the world today.

The web of the universe holds these inconsistencies and conflicts between the atomistic oppressive culture and the interrelated connected holistic paradigm. More research and theories need to be developed that explore(s) the effects of mind and consciousness at the larger system levels and how this affects our behaviour.

The web of our group and the power dynamics present during the weekend reflected these inconsistencies. The power dynamics did shift towards becoming collaborative; more of us accessed our personal power and felt empowered to participate. (ibid)

After this weekend and writing the essay I had a heightened awareness of when groups shifted away from an autocratic towards a co-operative culture. Within the ongoing postgraduate certificate and other one-off workshops I ran, I have experienced groups shifting from an authoritative to a co-operative power base, from what I have called ‘monologue’ to ‘dialogue in the group’, to functioning as a group of individuals to functioning as a group as a whole. When this shift happened the effectiveness of the group was enhanced, more creative potential seemed to be accessed, and members reported becoming more of themselves, that the experience had been transformative.

Chris Johnston a doctor and group facilitator who runs ‘The work that reconnects’ workshops (Macy and Brown, 1998, p.57) offered the term ‘holonic shift’ when I was discussing my work with him. ‘This is a term coined by Joanna Macy, an environmental and spiritual activist. She explains a holon as

... both a whole in its own right ... and simultaneously an integral part of a larger system
Each new holonic level – say from atom to molecule, cell to organ, person to family –

generates emergent properties that are nonreducible to the capacities of the separate components (ibid, p42)

A 'holonic shift' is then a shift from one holonic level to another holonic level. I felt excited that I had found a concept for the shift in organisation from the individual to the group that I had experienced. Could it also be the concept that included the other aspects of the shift I had identified – the shift in power base, monologue to dialogue, greater access to creativity, increased effectiveness?

A possible significance of this for the world today

If we are to survive at all we can no longer put off the day when the psychological, the politico-economic and the socio-cultural contexts must meet operationally in a unified field. Patrick de Mare, 1975

We live in complex times. Ecologically our planet is crippled by the pollution and diminishing natural resources resulting from the incessant drive for economic growth and technological advances. Our societies buckle from the stress of so much change including secularisation and the demise of the family. Little new meaning beyond consumerism has been found to replace more traditional values and attitudes. Politically the ramifications of 9/11 have had horrifying consequence of intensifying fundamentalism, terrorism and pre-emptive military initiatives. Psychologically we lurch and reel from these societal, political and ecological effects.

After the weekend and writing my essay I contemplated the possible personal, professional and social/ecological significances of this 'holonic shift' and decided to make it the focus of my dissertation.

Colin Lago has addressed the need for people to experience 'connectedness and community'. He says

... our cultural beliefs in individualism, intensified in recent decades by political and economic forces, have had an alienating effects upon our society. The pathology which we ... see in individuals is also manifest in society. Group work ... offer[s] a forum in which ... complex issues of community, relatedness, the management of power, decision-making and active democracy can be explored. (Lago, 1994, p.123).

Kreeger has coined the term sociotherapy (1975 in Lago, 1994). Patrick de Mare's (1991), Rogers and John K Wood (1999) on large groups, Scott Peck's work on 'building

community' (1990), Mhairi MacMillan and Lago's 'we-intentionality' and 'experiential communality' (1999) and others have researched the 'group as a whole'.

I was struck by the profound difference that occurred when I experienced the 'holonic shift' in some groups. There seemed to be simultaneously a caring of the self, relationships and the group as a whole. By the diversity of each person being recognised and prized, creativity seemed to emerge that led to heightened functioning. Groups functioned more collaboratively. I was curious about the possible role of groups and the 'holonic shift'. The world seemed to need the outcomes I had experienced in these groups – higher level of functioning, a more generous, compassionate culture and accessing emerging creativity.

THE SECOND ‘TURN’

Getting started, the multi-dimensional learning required for ‘adequateness’ and a ‘holonic shift’ in my ‘self’

My story continues with how I started my research and my initial difficulties in structuring my research and clarifying my cosmology and methodology. Two themes from the First ‘Turn’ – ‘whole person learning’ and ‘developing the self’, reappear in this ‘turn’ and provide the way forward through my initial difficulties, as I expand my understanding of them.

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Getting started

The nature of groups is multi-dimensional including the psychological, the sociological, the political, the philosophical, the ecological and the spiritual. It includes the different levels of – individual, group, organisation, culture, society and global. It involves all aspects of an individual – personality, perception, memory, the mind, consciousness, the body and all of its physiological processes. Issues like power and authority, dependency and autonomy, oppression or transformation are embedded in every group. How was I going to research such a complex interconnected multi-dimensional subject and how was I going to write it up? For eighteen months I carried on monitoring my experiences of groups as a participant and as a facilitator, making notes in my journal. Every book and paper that I read, whether from the new physics, ecopsychology, group analytics, consciousness studies, anthropology, philosophy or spirituality, I read with my experience of groups in mind. I asked participants to record their experiences. I talked to colleagues who would engage with me on these matters.

The multidimensional learning of developing ‘adequateness’

Break the pattern which connects the items of learning and you necessarily destroy all quality. (Bateson, 1979, p.16)

When I research something I am thrown into learning about who I am in relation to the subject chosen. The gestation for this dissertation has been lengthy and painful, as I have needed this time to undergo a journey, a transformation in order to be able to do this research. This has not just been in relation to seeking an understanding of the nature of ‘holonic shifts’ in groups but also at the level of expanding and developing my world view or cosmology and developing a methodology that would both work for my world view and for the multiple dimensions of groups. Thus the nature of my project has catapulted me into the underworld of my psyche. What followed is at times a roller-coaster ride through my history of related experiences. I have learnt all I can do is to open to the full assault of the resulting turmoil. To let go, as my existing perceptual and conceptual reality is ripped apart until eventually I gain a deeper understanding of myself and of my project

William Braud, a research director of transpersonal psychology, who has investigated innovative transpersonal research methods, writes about the researcher developing adequateness. ‘The knower must have *adaequatio* with respect to that which is to be known’ (Braud and Anderson, 1998, p.21, author’s emphasis). And similarly Henryk Skolimowski declares ‘The universe reveals nothing to the unprepared mind’ (Skolimowski, 1994, p.82). This is the process that I have been immersed in – developing the ‘adequateness’ to research ‘holonic shifts’ in groups and to allow a suitable research methodology to unfold. Thus, my personal development is an integral part of gaining knowledge. Schumacher explains ‘...to know, apprehend, or experience within any realm, the knower and his or her organs, faculties, and capabilities must be appropriate to and appropriately prepared for the knowledge, apprehension, or experience.’ (Schumacher quoted in Braud, 1998, p.21).

As I planned writing up my research, I noticed a process I would undergo – of engagement and interest and then struggling to articulate to find a coherent way to express my experiences, my ideas and the research of others, deteriorating into feeling a mixture of lost, overwhelmed, disconnected and incapable. Then as I open to my internal struggle and pain there is a shift, I find a way through the chaos through contemplation, journaling and dialoguing. I regain a sense of connectedness within myself. My creativity flows and I am able to make connections within my thoughts, ideas and experiences, my conceptualisation shifts. There is both a clarification and an expansion. I realised that the process that I am describing reflects a similar process within groups where a group cycles through passive, chaotic, disconnected times to access a connected, energised, flowing and creative process.

My understanding of the significance of making connections was deepening and Gregory Bateson's phrase the 'pattern that connects' (Bateson, 1979, p.19) began to take on a new meaning for me as I began to look for and find 'the pattern that connect[ed]' within my research. I realised that my learning was not only going to be about 'holonic shifts' in groups but would occur on several different yet intricately interpenetrative dimensions.

- My self, who I am, my history, my patterns.
- My world view, how I see reality and the epistemology that is related to my ontological view
- Research methodologies and finding a suitable one.
- The subject – 'holonic' shifts in groups
- Articulating my learning.

This sort of multi-dimensional learning goes beyond skills or knowledge based learning, and becomes transformational learning. There is a connection between the different dimensions of learning, thus involving the whole person that creates a fundamental change or a quantum leap or perhaps a 'holonic shift'. Robert Hargrove says 'it leads to deep and pervasive shifts in the learner's perspective and understanding' (1995 p.22). The Transformative Learning Centre co-established by Ed O'Sullivan refers to

... a deep structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world. This shift includes our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations and our relationships with other humans and with the natural world. (no date available, The transformative Learning Centre)

Developing a ‘connected/integral’ self

Being fragmentary and incomplete beings is the source of many of our agonies. But also of some of our ecstasies – that is, when, through our own work, through new illuminations, we become less fragmentary and more completed. (Skolimowski, 1994, p.140)

Mezirow’s (1991) main point about transformational learning is about transforming ‘meaning perspectives’ by the person reflecting on their epistemic, socio-cultural and psychic assumptions. This next excerpt arises from my attempts at ‘meaning making’ whilst identifying and articulating my cosmology. I experience a profound shift within me, which leads me to extend the idea of ‘holonic shifts’ in groups to within the person, as the ‘connected/integral’ self is realised.

I am stuck ... I don’t feel clear about my world view, my reality, my cosmology ... and what is the actual difference between these closely related yet different concepts. I’ve read many books over the last three years and what I read effects me ... I open to encounter the material and this starts a process, of learning about myself, how I perceive and conceptualise the world around me. Why can’t I get started? Is it because I am still immersed in a process? This makes it hard ... how to capture in words a phenomenon that is in constant flow?

The risk in finding my ‘truth’

I realise I have been scared that what I am trying to do is too maverick and that my work will be misunderstood and rejected? I have an uncomfortable familiar feeling. I nearly do not want to open to this feeling, to this awareness taking form at the edges of my consciousness ... of holding myself in, restricting myself, trying to make myself smaller and more acceptable.

I decide to redraft my work, to take a risk and see if I could let myself be more expansive in how I write and the structure I use. I felt good and I looked forward to restarting the next section.

Freeing 'stuckness' with acceptance

Shit ... here I am again! ... I feel overwhelmed and disheartened with all of the possible information that I can draw from ... how am I ever going to weave the different threads and dimensions that are necessary for my work into some coherence? So now as well as fearing that my work would be rejected I also am experiencing 'I can't do this'. How did I arrive here so quickly from initially feeling good and eager to restart? . As I struggled sitting in front of my computer I spontaneously pick up the phone to Nick, my personal tutor at CHE. He points out that as well as the external voice re rejection that there is probably an internal one too.

After our call I realised that the internal voice was saying 'I'm not acceptable'. Not a newly discovered part of myself! A recent event had triggered the part of me that hungers for love and acceptance and is so fearful of rejection. The distress and pain I had accessed had been nearly intolerable. As I found and heard this part of me again I opened my heart to this forlorn and often desperate part of me who yearns so much for love and recognition. And feeling seen and understood and loved this part of me felt soothed.

Opening to another level

I thought that was it ... surely that was enough ... I wanted to get on! I planned to make an early start to my writing but woke up a little lethargic ... as I was waiting for my coffee to brew I read a paragraph in a book about psycho-somatic medicine. I had suffered with colitis on and off for the last 7/8 years. I had read earlier that people who suffer with colitis often have an inner conflict within their personality, one part working against another part. At the time I felt the ease that flows from the recognition of 'yes' that is how it is. The point in this book went further, no punches were held ... it spoke of people who were 'slimy' ... of their need to be symbiotic ... of their fear to real-ise their own lives and personalities... that to take up their own position in relation to other people would entail separation to give up the symbiosis (Dethlefsen, 1990, p.136-137).

I stop ... in shock ... my whole self is transfixed, frozen in the onslaught of this possible 'truth'. Is this me? ... Can I bear to see myself in this way? Is this the ultimate place where my need for love and recognition takes me? My colitis is not severe so maybe the full brunt of this doesn't apply to me. The amount of personal transformation I have already experienced does effect how I will use this information but I have still known deep inside that there is still something in me that holds me back, that limits my ability to realise myself ... in reading this and feeling the truth and again opening my heart to my rawness I feel a shift.

(written between 8-12th August 8th 2004)

Eugene Gendlin's (1981) concepts of the 'felt sense' and 'body shift' when the 'felt sense' changes, has facilitated my understanding of this process and helped me open and accept it. He describes the felt sense as a 'deep down' physical experience that comes as a whole thing like an 'internal aura that encompasses everything you feel and know about

the given subject at a given time' (Gendlin, 1981, p.32). The shift that I referred to is definitely at a physical level but I would extend this to include energetic, emotional, behavioural and spiritual dimensions – in fact all aspects of myself within my social and ecological context.

The following are the different ways or levels in which my difficulty had manifested

- My fear that I was unacceptable,
- My panicky feeling that I can't do this,
- My paranoia that my work would be rejected,
- Feeling overwhelmed and disheartened,
- My inability to express myself and write,
- My inability to find a structure within to write about my worldview.
- My loss of my vision, what this all means to me and our world.

Was the difficulty regarding my cosmology triggering different developmental levels and activating the residue of psychological disturbances within my 'self'? Eric Berne uses a 'stack of pennies' to illustrate the instability and incoherence that can result when one or more pennies are out of skew (Berne, 1980 in Clarkson, 1992, p.46).

Before the shift, these different manifestations seemed to have separate realities, they were like separate parts of me – like Rowans 'sub-personalities' (1991) and Mearns 'configurations of self' (2000). My journaling, contemplation and dialoguing allowed first for the un-integrated experience to be identified and then to be integrated up through all of these different levels. My core issue of needing love and recognition and being willing to self-sacrifice in order to obtain this had been re-stimulated. The resulting disturbance I have processed at the different levels of my being, by sensitively hearing the voice and message of each level, connecting it up i.e. making sense of it and warmly loving it. Thus I heal my narcissistic injury by providing myself with the love and recognition that I yearned for.

This shift is like a ‘holonic shift’ from a disconnected self to a ‘connected/integral’ self. Rogers’ concept of congruence – one of his six ‘necessary and sufficient conditions for personality change (1957, 1959) is defined as a matching between a person’s experiences, their awareness and their behaviour within the self. When there was this matching the person was said to be congruent. Jules Seeman (2001) and later followed by Ivan Ellingham (1999) and myself (2001a, 2004) emphasised the whole person and organismic nature of the concept. Jules Seeman emphasises the connection and communication that is required between the different levels within a person to reach the ‘organismic integration of the ...person’ (2001, p.211). When there is this ‘harmonious rhythm of connection and communication throughout the organism’ (ibid) we have the ‘connected/integral’ self (Wyatt, 2004). This ‘connected/integral’ self has a higher or deeper dimension that allows disconnected parts of the self and disturbances to be re-integrated by this connection and communication into a coherent unity.

Ken Wilber writes about Beck and Cowan’s spiral dynamics, a developmental model of the self (Beck and Cowan in Wilbur, 2000, p.7-13) Each of the first tier’s (Archaic-Instinctual, Magical-Animalistic, Power Gods, Mythic Order, Scientific Achievement, The Sensitive self) view of reality is the only one, whereas the second tier (integrative and holistic) has made a ‘momentous leap’ across ‘a chasm of unbelievable depth of meaning’ (Graves quoted in Wilber, 2000, p11) enabling them to see the positive qualities of all the stages. Wilber refers to a ‘glue’ in describing a ‘higher or deeper dimension [that] provides a principle ... a pattern, that unites and links otherwise separate and conflicting and isolating parts into a coherent unity’ (Wilber, 2000.p.26). Is the glue the dimension of connectivity that maintains some level of unity while the disturbance is being processed? It is as if this ‘glue’ has an inter-subjective, interpenetrative, participative nature that facilitates communication, connection and participation and a becoming and emergence of ‘wholeness’

So is the shift that I experience while I am struggling to write, a shift from the first level tier into the second tier? When I am embedded in the first tier have I temporarily lost

access to my 'connected' self⁴? Thus re-finding access to my 'connected' self requires a 'holonic shift'. Developing my 'connected' self that is capable of making 'holonic shifts' is part of the 'adequateness' that my research required of me. This 'connected/integral' self with its 'glue' or higher dimension that can connect plays an important role in my research

⁴ This 'integral', 'holonic/connected' self would include and transcend what Arne Naess called 'the comprehensive' self (Palmer, 2001, p.214).

THE THIRD TURN

My cosmological foundation: Clarifying my assumptions and values and finding my methodology

*I've heard it said that there's a window that opens
From one mind to another,
But if there's no wall, there's no need
For fitting the window, or the latch.
(Rumi, 1984, p.10)*

There is no more to reality ... than our sensitivities can render to us. Sensitivities are articulators of reality. The emergence of every new form of sensitivity is a new window on the world. (Skolimowski, 1994, p13).

Every method of inquiry is embedded within an inquiry paradigm, 'a basic set of beliefs' about the nature of reality, how it can be known and how it 'guides action' (Guba, 1990, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.19). These pre-suppositional philosophical beliefs arise as answers to questions of ontology – what is the nature of reality and the nature of being?; epistemology – what is the nature of knowledge and the relationship between knower and what can be known?; methodology – how do we learn about the world and gain knowledge?; and axiology – what knowledge is of value and gives meaning? (Heron, 1998, p.236)

Denzin and Lincoln refer to the net that contains the researcher's 'epistemological, ontological, and methodological premises' and they go on to describe four major interpretative paradigms that structure qualitative research – 'positivist and post-positivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical and feminist-post-structural' (2000, p19-20). I am attempting to write from a holistic or integral paradigm, a development from these four. This is because of the nature of my research; it needs this 'expanded' paradigm to show up in. The following writers' works have all played a part. Bohm's implicate order (1980), Skolimowski's participative mind (1994), Macy's exploration of Buddhism and general systems theory (1991, 2000), Bortoft's exploration of Goethe's science (1994), Braud and Andersons' (1998) development of an integral research methodology, and

Heron's lived inquiry and clarification of different dimensions of spirituality – the transcendent and the immanent (1998).

Locating my cosmology within 'extended' science

Indwelling in these writers' work and my experiences has taken me ever deeper into myself and the universe. My universe has become bigger. Opening and connecting ecologically and spiritually has profoundly affected me. Gaining clarity of this process and bringing my internal world into the external world has been scary. It takes me away from the majority, the portrayed safe world of my parents and the dominant culture that can be controlled and predicted. My journaling in the previous 'turn' demonstrated some of this process. My stuck disconnected self has a fragmented, restricted worldview, each of the levels of stuckness I identified, saw and knew a different world. As I connect within myself I expand out into an extended worldview, it's like letting go of the banks of a river and letting myself flow with the river's current.

Before making explicit my cosmology, epistemology and identifying the values and assumptions underlying and embedded within my dissertation, I want to take a brief look at the major characteristics of conventional Western science based on the reductionism of the Modern cosmology.

- Western science has one reality and one truth.
- Analysis, rationalism and positivism are the credible approach.
- Scientific knowledge is objective, empirical and quantifiable.
- The universe is deterministic – causality is effective, uni-directional and at one level.
- The material universe evolved through random physical processes (non-teleological) with consciousness being a product of material evolution.
- Science is seen as value free and socio-culturally neutral and the outcomes sought are control and prediction. (Braud, 1998, p.7-12)

Over the last century the assumptions and values of this science have been challenged by many different forces – the new sciences (quantum, systems, chaos and complexity); evolutionary biology; neuroscience; psychotherapeutic studies; new trans-disciplines (consciousness studies, human ecology, ecopsychology, integral, peace and future studies); post-modern theories including critical theory, feminist and cultural studies; and wisdom traditions (Buddhism, Shamanism and Islam). This has led to what some call a ‘complementary’ (Lorimer, in Braud 1994, p.19), ‘extended’ (Josephson and Rubik, in ibid, p.24), ‘or whole’ science (Harman, in ibid, p.22). My cosmology and epistemology falls within this ‘extended’ science⁵. Brian Swimme draws out the possible unique and differentiated nature of this science.

‘Certain philosophers of science will say that until a science becomes mathematicized, it isn't really in its mature state. It's a bias that pushes the scientific towards a study of abstract mathematical laws. But there is a whole tradition in science that goes in the other direction. It goes to the unique, and the historical, and the differentiated’ (Swimme, 1997, p.10-11).

With the acknowledgement of the ‘unique’ there is a role for storytelling beyond the story-making of ‘thought experiments as in Schrodinger’s Cat (Gribben, 1996). Here ‘science is story-telling’ (Pinkus, 2000). It is not ‘the antagonistic process of dissecting and dissembling the universe; it is the process of finding the truest, most beautiful stories to describe the world.’(MacGuire, 1999).

My cosmology

My journaling describes an experience of mine that illustrates my cosmology.

I wanted to make an early start this morning but decided to drink my coffee in bed and have some contemplation space. I re-remembered how fruitful this sort of time is ... to have space to allow thoughts, connections, images, ideas to float into awareness ... to feel, to sense ... I felt alive and relaxed ... and excited as I realised how crucial contemplation time is for who I am and how I research ... I realised that every time I need something to emerge or to ‘fall into place’ that if I give it time ... it does ... I

⁵ I am not implying reductionist science – ‘bad’, extended science – ‘good’; rather the point is that our world needs both. The trick is to discern which needs to be applied when and where.

realised how different this is from when I am struggling, feeling stuck, pushing, working hard at making something happen.

As I stay with this feeling I feel blessed. I have a sense of the universe unfolding within and around me. I have an ever greater trust that what needs to be happening is ... its OK. I can relax and this 'being' becomes my 'doing'. A couple of days ago I made a couple of difficult decisions that meant I needed to find my deepest truth for myself, even if that meant that I might hurt another. I realised that if I didn't maintain my integrity in this way, the hurt for the other would be greater. And of course necessarily the hurt for my self too. Each time I act from this depth of integrity my colitis symptoms disappear. In a way these decisions were not enormous. Yet embedded within those decisions was my shifting in a fundamental way. A 'holonic shift' into greater coherence and connectedness ... and more beyond this ... a greater sense of participation ... shifting into a lightness, an ease of being in synch with the universal flow. My back tingled delightfully, as a burst of energy effervesced along my spine. I wouldn't describe this as the oceanic feeling often described as a spiritual experience rather I felt a 'belonging' ... like I was coming home ... (October 17th 2004)

The universe is enfolded, as portrayed by the sentiment '...to see a world in a grain of sand' (Blake, in Erdman, 2001). This enfolded world unfolds through my participation. My contemplation (a form of participation) is a way I give myself time and space for more of the universe to unfold within me. I may feel blessed; or depressed by our consumer society, or realise a conceptualisation that reaches a deeper understanding. Each new awareness seems to unfold within me as if from Bohm's implicate order unfolding into the explicate order.

... the whole of the universe is in some way enfolded in everything and that each thing is enfolded in the whole. From this follows that in some ways, and to a certain degree, everything enfolds or implicates everything. The basic proposal is that this enfoldment relationship is ...active and essential to what each is. It follows that each thing is internally related to the whole and, therefore to everything else. ... The explicate order, which dominates ordinary experience as well as classic physics, is secondary, however, in the sense that ultimately it flows out of the primary reality of the implicate order. (Bohm, 1986, p.114-115).

... And the participatory universe of Skolimowski. I create my reality. I manifest my experiences and the world around me through the quality of my participation determined by my mind. The inner walls of my mind define my 'spiral of understanding' and the 'outer walls of the cosmos are the inner walls of the mind (Skolimowski, 1994, p.81).

This is subtly different from the post-modern social constructivism or pluralistic relativism because there is a universe that is ‘open and mysterious’ (p.90) allowing a creative openness to newness and providing an unfolding deeper meaning.

The creative openness

The spiral of understanding

The walls of the cosmos

Fig 2. Adapted from the spiral of understanding
(From Henryk Skolimowski's *The Participative Mind*, 1994, p.80)

This ‘creative openness’ I see around me – when I need a deeper conceptualisation to unfold, it does, as long as I stay open, set my intent and don’t push. This is a very different world than the materialist one ruled by entropy. A creative tendency has been posited by many including Teilhard de Chardin’s cosmogenesis, (1969); Maslow’s actualisation (1962); Rogers’ actualising tendency, (1959, 1963); Prigogine and Stenges’ dissipative structures, (1984); Skolimowski’s becoming, (1994). Whether it is termed as emergence, an unfolding or becoming, all these words postulate a creative process and it is this that I embrace.

The ‘self’ is a multi-levelled, multi-dimensional whole person concept that defines an individual’s coherence and identity as he/she participates within the whole universe. The ‘self’ creates the world, the cosmos that the person resides in. Each time there is a

‘holonic shift’ within me to greater connection and coherence, my cosmology widens as I move along the spiral of understanding enabling more of the whole to unfold within me. My journaling provides a ‘lived experience’ of what Skolimowski is expressing

We simply cannot find see or envisage in reality more than our senses, our intellect, our sensitivities, our intuition ... allow us to find and see. The more sensitive and knowing we become, the richer and larger becomes our reality. (1994, p.15)

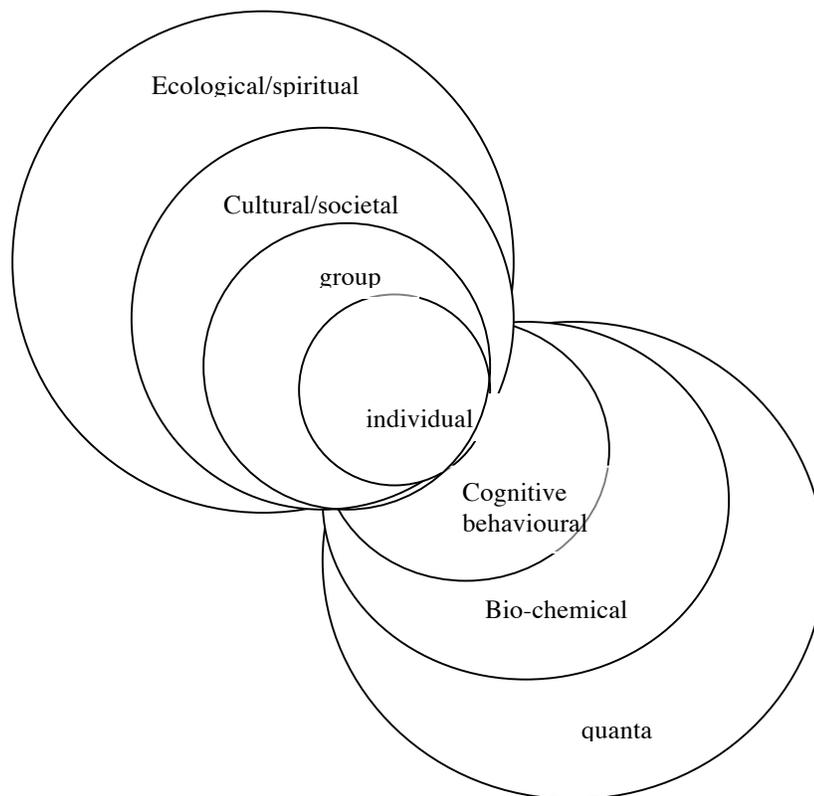
In this enfolded universe, which unfolds through participation, ontology, epistemology and methodology, are all co-created and my use of the ‘holarchy’ (see Fig 3) is my attempt to represent this. The term ‘holarchy’ is used in different ways by Macy, who situates it within a Buddhist, systems, ecological perspective (1991) and Wilbur, who situates it within an integral perspective (2000). The ‘holarchy’ is a ‘natural hierarchy’ of holons at different levels of organisation – particle, atom, molecule, cell, organism, group, society. At each level of organization there is a growing number of dimensions interpenetrating the holon. There is an interconnectedness within a holon and between the different levels and dimensions. Buddhism’s ‘*paticca samuppada*’ brings together this interconnectedness and mutual causality of co-dependant arising (Macy, 1991, p.18)

The 'holarchy' is a central concept to my cosmology as it aids my understanding of the multi-dimensionality and interconnectedness of the universe. The concept has been used in different ways. Michael Zimmerman has assessed the various usages and explains Wilbur’s critique of what he calls spiritually-orientated deep ecologists (SDE’s) use of the 'holarchy', that the concept has been ‘flatlanded⁶’ by their emphasis on the natural world and the sacred ‘web of life’. Thus emphasising ‘descendence into nature/matter and disregarding transcendence (Zimmerman, no date).

Zimmerman (ibid) explains Wilbur’s concern that the ‘higher’ dimensions, up through the ‘holarchy’ if used in a ‘flatland’ way, will not have their meaning and transcendence quality recognised. Wilbur would be concerned that I am conflating the ecological with the spiritual as I represent this by one circle in Fig 3. For me this is to acknowledge both the transcendence and immanence of spirituality – ecological here is given an integral

⁶ This is where a multi-dimensional nature of something is shrunk to two dimensions.

meaning which encompasses the material ecosystem, embodied immanence and the extended mind. The way I am using the ‘holarchy’ and the way I am showing it ascending upwards and descending downwards is to include both descendance and transcendence. When I am speaking about dialoguing and connecting to reach a ‘connected’ position and deeper level of understanding and conceptualisation I now realise, from discussions with my supervisor, this is Wilbur’s ‘include and transcend’



Fig, 3. Holarchies from the individual to the ecological/spiritual and to the quanta.

(Wilding, 2004). This is a lived experience of my transcendence. Is what I am meaning by ‘holonic shift’ the same as Wilbur was meaning by ‘include and transcend’?

Just as Wilbur has critiqued the SDE’s, John Heron has critiqued Wilbur for placing a higher value on transcendence over immanence. My experience and my reading has led me to believe that I cannot transcend without descent, they are interdependent on each

other as my journaling within the second turn testifies. As one transcends, one is required to descend. The complexity of this intricate dynamic needs to be balanced at the heart (Hawkins, 2002) Kornfield's words gives us a glimpse

The opening of the heart can be slow or fast, occurring a petal at a time, or with great explosions of feelings. In the end, the heart can encompass the whole universe with love and compassion. It can become the centre that moves things.'(Kornfield, 1994, p.127).

I agree with Wilbur that for us to develop a 'worldcentric' moral perspective this requires 'interior growth and transcendence' (Zimmerman, no date). What I am emphasising, and I believe is crucial, is the significance of '*heart-based living*' in developing a 'world-centric moral perspective. Kornfield says 'It is simply bringing to every circumstance a spirit of love, openness, and freedom. Then our very being transforms the world around us' (Kornfield, 1994, p.302). This generates heart-based values and meanings, which are relational, compassionate, caring and collaborative.

There will be no limitation to what knowledge is valid in this paradigm. The arena is everything (Braud, 1994, p.31). It can be sensorial, experiential, rational, intellectual, intuitive, imaginative and spiritual, from the body, mind, heart and soul of the person as has been represented by Ibn Al Arabi's three forms of knowledge – through information, through experience and through being (quoted in Braud and Anderson, 1998, p.49). Different perspectives are welcomed from traditional disciplines and different paradigms and orders. Knowledge from an ancient wisdom tradition, Descartes' reductionism, Gebser's integral consciousness and a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke will have their place and relevance depending on the research and its context.

The cultural context of knowledge needs to be acknowledged (Bohm, 1988; Bortoft, 1996; Skolimowski, 1994), as it is the cultural context that gives any observation or discovery it's meaning. Culture is an organisation. What is considered to be new observations and discoveries is a 'new organizing idea'. This places 'what is known into a new pattern of relationships and thereby changes it's meaning.' (Bortoft, 1996, p.153). My shift into an unfolding 'connected/integral' self described in the second 'turn' allowed me to make the cosmological shift that enabled me to write this third 'turn'. 'This new conceptualisation is a new 'organizing idea' as is 'heart-based living'. These

now informs my research. If enough people develop the new 'organising idea' this can influence culture formation.

My Research Methodology

The process of finding my methodology

I have demonstrated how my cosmology and broad, multi-perspective knowledge base is situated within an extended science. I have needed this extended paradigm and its related epistemology to be able to research my subject, to ensure that my research does not violate or distort my subject (Braud, 1994, p.1). Valerie Anderson explains how a research methodology needs to be able to 'accommodate the topic of enquiry' and the stage needs to be set 'for the phenomena to show up!' (Anderson, 1998, p.90). Its similar to a vessel being required for the alchemical process, the methodology founded on these philosophical premises becomes the container within which the research can occur. Braud points out that where there are 'complex psychological systems characterized by volition, purposes, awareness, self-awareness and consciousness ... '[n]aturalistic' methods become more suitable' (ibid, p.9) rather than the quantitative/positivist methods suited to the material world. My research methodology needs to accommodate the phenomena of 'holonic shifts', which includes these 'complex psychological systems'.

Clarke Moustatakas's heuristic methodology (1990), Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Brochner's auto-ethnography (2000), Goethe's scientific method (Bortoft, 1996), William Braud's integral methodology (1994,1998), John Heron's lived inquiry (1998), Henryk Skolimowski's participative methodology (1993), Rosemary Anderson's intuitive research (1998) and Clements, Ettling et al's organic research (1998) have all influenced me. This I knew. But travelling from researching their methods, to identifying, clarifying and clearly expressing my own methodology to you the reader, has been a hard process.

Initially I was confused, I tussled with whether my methodology was an integral, or pluralistic methodology. Pluralistic methodology didn't seem to fit because I didn't intend to undertake different research tasks, each using a different methodology. Then I realised that each of the methodologies I had researched had become a whole and each had their characteristics, their elements that gave them their identity. As I read about them I resonated with elements of each of them. Sometimes an element was a characteristic of many of these methodologies. For example 'indwelling' plays a significant part in heurism, integral, participative, organic, feminist and intuitive research, and compassionate awareness or knowing is a characteristic of participative, organic, feminist and intuitive. So what became clear was that I needed *to take these different elements/characteristics that resonated with my self and my focus and make my own coherent and cohesive methodology.*

I held these different elements within myself. These elements have both consciously dialogued within me and undergone an unconscious – a 'chthonic process' as the connections and creative emergence have allowed a 'holonic shift' to occur within the plurality of elements to create a whole – my methodology. As yet I am undecided whether to call my methodology – integral, participative, or organismic.

Story-telling as the 'glue, the higher dimension for my methodology

Out of the blue a colleague sent me a PhD thesis whose methodology was story-telling. As I read, my consciousness shifted to facilitate a greater depth of understanding about story-telling. She pertinently asked 'Was it possible that this could provide me with an ontology, epistemology and methodology which made sense of my own experience?' (Walton, 2004, p.122). A voice inside of me replied 'YES'. I realised that story-telling was the 'glue' that would make my dissertation whole. I felt a kinship with her, even though we hadn't met. Via synchronicity the universe had brought me what I needed.

The role of storytelling in research is central in lived inquiry (Heron, 1998), auto-ethnography (Ellis and Brochner, 2001), organic research (Clements and Etting, 1995), and co-operative inquiry (Heron, 1998), I've already written about science as storytelling

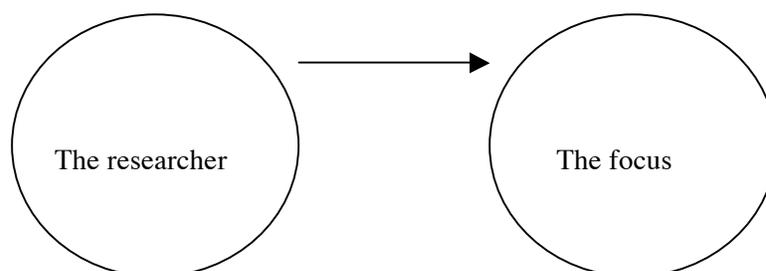
and my lived experience as a story unfolding. Telling my story and telling the story of my research is both the method and the methodology of my dissertation. This unfolding story is how I have made sense of my experiences. The value of storytelling is one of my ontological, epistemological and methodological premises.

The characteristics of my research methodology

The person of the researcher is central in this methodology. This is true for all of the research methodologies I researched. I bring all of myself to my research – my senses, my compassionate heart-knowing, my access to the spiritual (both immanent and transcendent), to the ecological (a natural knowing) and my not-knowing. My life is embedded within my dissertation and my becoming emerges from my research. As Joan Walton similarly says ‘I felt that my life was my inquiry, and out of my inquiry, the form of my life emerged.’ (2004, p.121).

The researcher indwells into the research focus, seeking the subject of the research to reveal its mysteries. The researcher intuitively ‘leans in’ to an experience (Moustakas, in Anderson and Braud, 1998, p.76), opening all of her senses and ‘bringing the compassionate heart’ (Anderson, 1998, p.71), allowing the phenomenon to take form inside his/her self (Bortoft, 1996). The researcher resonates, learns the phenomenon’s language, is altered and transformed as it reveals its qualities and characteristics.

There is a continual interplay and relationship between the self of the researcher and the subject of the research. This mutual influence unfolds via the transformational process of the researcher. This transformational process of the researcher is part of heurism, participative, feminist, intuitive and organic methodologies. This facilitates the researchers’ openness and receptivity that allows an ever deeper, broader and more penetrative knowing and understanding of the research focus.



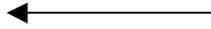


Fig. 4. The interplay of researcher and the research focus.

Over time the research focus and the researcher can interpenetrate each other sufficiently for the circles to become one (Lago, 2004).

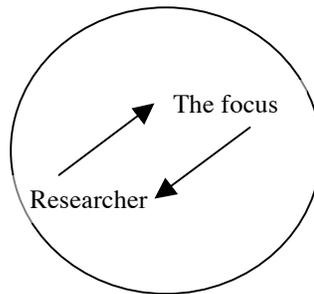
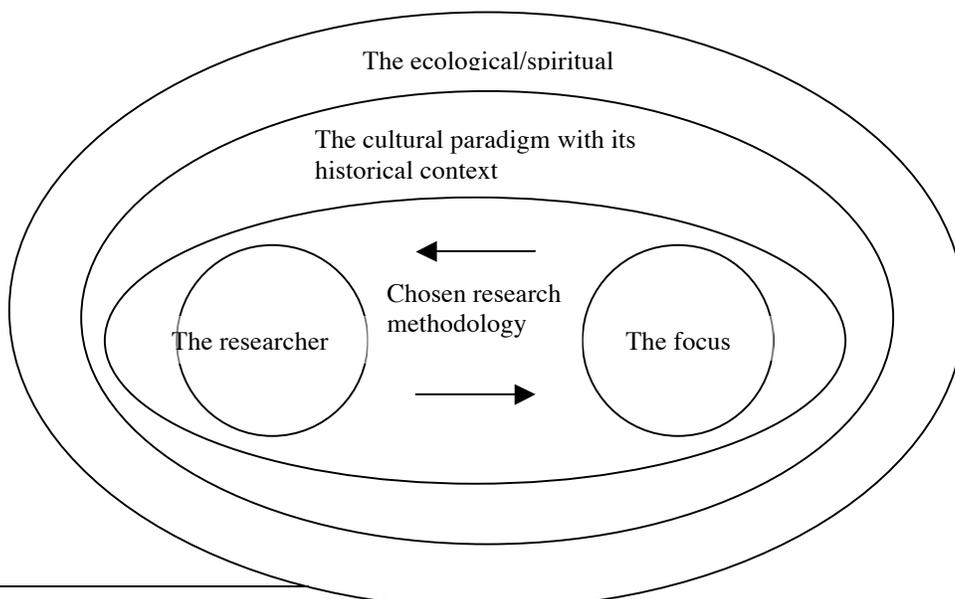


Fig. 5. Interpenetration of Researcher & research focus

As well as the interpenetrative nature of the researcher and the focus, other interpenetrative dimensions will be the research methodology itself, the cultural⁷ and the ecological and spiritual context.



⁷ See Bohm (1980), Bortoft (1996), Braud and Anderson, (1998) for a deeper exploration.

Fig 6. Adding in the research methodology, the ecological/spiritual to the research methodology

A spiral of deeper understanding unfolds. As consciousness and cosmological boundaries expand from indwelling in the research focus and the resulting personal transformation there is a spiral of unfolding understanding. This is Skolimowski's spiral of understanding (1994,p.75) and his participative methodology. As my cosmology has expanded and my 'connected' self has developed this has facilitated a greater understanding of 'holonic shifts'. I use this spiral of unfolding understanding as I participate ever more deeply in my research, as a structure for writing up my dissertation. The 'turns' of the spiral replace chapters. Thus a non-linear process is attempted within the linear structure of a dissertation. The process within each 'turn' tends to include a process of descending into chaos and then emerging having made connections and found a new reconceptualisation or 'organising idea' which prepares me for the next 'turn'.

The method

I used the auto-ethnographical technique of keeping 'field-notes' (Ellis and Bochner, 2001) by journaling about all of the different 'raw data

- My experiences undertaking this research
- Relevant academic research and literature,
- My experience in groups both as participant and as facilitator
- Participants' reported experiences in groups⁸.

and then made notes from my field-notes and then notes of my notes (ibid) which enabled the 'raw data' to dialogue within me, helping me to make connections and discern

⁸ Participants' permission were gained.

patterns. This process has been central to the creative emergence of so much of my research. Identifying the themes and then sensing the connections as the strands dialogued within me allowed a whole to emerge e.g. when I identified the multidimensionality of my learning (p.22).

To honour the sacred and invite its participation I made a ritual. A circle of pebbles, placed by the Buddha in my garden represented a 'holonic shift'. I set my intent of researching 'holonic shifts' and offered myself as a vessel for a deepening understanding to unfold.

The question of validity

The light of the special insight ... suggests that the more meaningful the participation, the more truth it reveals. The deeper the participation, the deeper you enter into the mysteries of life until you arrive at the deepest contest of participation, which is God. Skolimowski, 1994, p.316.

Validity concerns whether the research and its findings are true to the subject being studied. Skolimowski develops a participatory theory of truth where truth, epistemology and the universe are constantly evolving. He explains 'truth is a "happening" – not a frozen state of being' (p.313) and it is 'the context of participation [that] determines the truth' (p.314). 'Participatory truth is always partial, is always fragmentary, is always incomplete, for every context of participation is fragmentary and incomplete' (p.314). What he means is that the act of participation creates a 'fragment of truth'. This truth does not exist until we interact and participate but it is not subjective. These 'fragments of truth' is the universe becoming through our participation.

As I have indwelled, participated ever deeper in my research, each experience, thought and idea – my data – is a 'fragment of truth'. Within me these have dialogued and I have observed patterns and connections – a 'holonic shift' occurring in a group, within my consciousness, in my methodology and within this dissertation. Does this suggest a

consensus or coherence that would support ‘validity judgements’ (Braud in Braud and Anderson, 1998, p.223)? Bohm talks about the importance of relevance (1980) and Braud the importance of significance, he quotes John Polkinghorne saying ‘The test of the validity of [an] exercise ... will be in its ability to discern pattern, to offer coherent understanding of human experience at its most profound’ (Braud and Anderson, 1998, p.224)

Anderson reminds us that the commonsense understanding of validity is ‘just telling the whole truth of what occurred in lived experience’ (1998, p.72). She says too often ‘the rich human experience is lost ...[in] experimental investigations’ (ibid). She amongst others gives ‘sympathetic resonance’ a primary place in determining validation. When we start to cry while watching a scene in a movie this is resonance, like a note from one violin vibrating another. I suggest we can use resonance as a validity process for thoughts, ideas and images as well as rich experiential descriptions. I have wanted to craft my dissertation so that my experiences, my self-reflexivity, all my different ‘data’ and the connections and meaning I make, all resonate within me – until it feels ‘true’ within my heart. This is like a resonance inside me.

I am asking for a lot from my reader. I am asking for your ever deeper participation so that you may resonate with the ‘fragments of truth’ that have unfolded within my research. Ernest Keen speaks of four criteria that maximises the communication of experience from researcher to reader – ‘vividness, accuracy, richness and elegance’ (Keen in Braud and Anderson, 1998, p.229).

THE FOURTH TURN

Returning to the ‘holonic shift’ and generating a tentative hypothesis for future research

... amongst the various forms of psychic inter-activity animating the noosphere, the energies we must identify, harness and develop before all others are those of an ‘intercentric’ nature, if we want to give effective help to the progress of evolution in ourselves. ... Which brings us to ... love. (Teilhard de Chardin, 1955, p.290)

This is another beginning. I allow recent group experiences, participants reported experiences and my readings to dialogue and make connections within me as I seek the emergence of another level of organisation that can hold the interpenetrative influences of the individual, the group, culture and the needs of our global society for world-centric values, characterised by collaboration, compassion and wisdom. I pose questions that arise, many of which future research will need to answer.

Developing my thread: making the connections

An example from a one-day workshop

I recorded the afternoon’s process on my way home. I have changed names to provide confidentiality.

The discussion after lunch was about whether to do an experiential exercise or have more in depth input from me. Within this wider focus a more specific focus emerged that seemed to hold the group's attention – this was about appropriate expression of realness by the counsellor. I spoke about how with one client; it might be appropriate to be 'in their face' whereas with another their fragility might mean that I would be gentle and sensitive, only using their own words. ...

John responded 'So we express our congruence through the frame of reference of the client'.

I said 'Yes' ...

Sam said 'Um yes the frame of reference is important but that doesn't seem to be the whole picture' ...

'What about the counsellor?' asks Sarah ...

Peter replied 'It's the culture of the relationship that shapes the congruence'.

People seemed fully engaged; fully present ..., which meant what happened next, was a shock.

Mary a little sharply said 'what happened to the suggestion and discussion to do an exercise?'

Writing Mary's words does not convey the stunned quality within the pause that followed. I think those of us who were energetically engaged in building a thread felt stopped and the strength of that feeling was a result of our creative engagement. At the time I didn't speak of how I felt, rather saying

'I wondered too but decided to go with the flow'.

Lyn said 'I'd also wondered but I felt what was happening was so alive'.

The discussion turned to the process that was happening, regarding how the focus had shifted from 'whether to do an experiential exercise,' to 'appropriate expression of realness' and now to 'this process'. Some people said because it was an energised creative process, it over-rode the last thread. The metaphors of spiral, expansion and wave were offered.

Mel threw in angrily 'I must be in a different group, all this talk of riding waves. I feel jerked around, I was engaged and its been interrupted.'

I offered 'I'm glad you're telling us that you're in a different place than those of us "on the wave"'. ...

She replied 'I'm glad too; normally I'd be sulky and difficult'.

Mary who had initially broken the first thread said 'It was if I was riding both threads ... I felt a connection to both'.

This seemed to facilitate Mel in exploring deeper, realising her difference from Mary. 'When I am expecting something to happen I become really disconcerted when what is planned is changed ... I'm really seeing for the first time how attached and rigid I can be' ...

My sense was of the group being attentive in a warm, caring understanding way, valuing Mel's honesty and openness to her unfolding process ... in talking through how one thread had been dropped in favour of another thread, the group had united around this third thread.

The discussion continued about threads and I introduced that if enough people are riding a wave then I believed a ‘holonic shift’ could occur. The group were willing to carry out an investigation about the threads so we carried out a straw poll to assess the relevant strengths of each thread. Only a few people were involved with the thread about ‘appropriate expression of counsellor’s realness’, two thirds were involved with ‘this process’ and this had increased during the straw polls and ensuing discussion which roamed from creativity to evil, to America’s politics and the role of the United Nations to Maharishi meditation. Was a critical mass required for the creative process to kick in? Was it possible for everybody to be in synch in this way? Wasn’t it dangerous, couldn’t the group access an equivalent destructive process and energy? Hitler was mentioned. During this dialogue each person’s contribution was listened to, difference might be questioned but out of curiosity, people did not agree with each other, but each person’s contribution was embraced as a communal understanding developed. This was the group functioning as a whole.

The web of a group

In the first ‘turn’ I explored a ‘web’ as an image that illustrated the interconnectedness of individuals and a metaphor for the ‘group as a whole’ illustrating and aiding understanding of the qualitative nature of the dynamic structures and processes between two people, between several people and within the whole group.

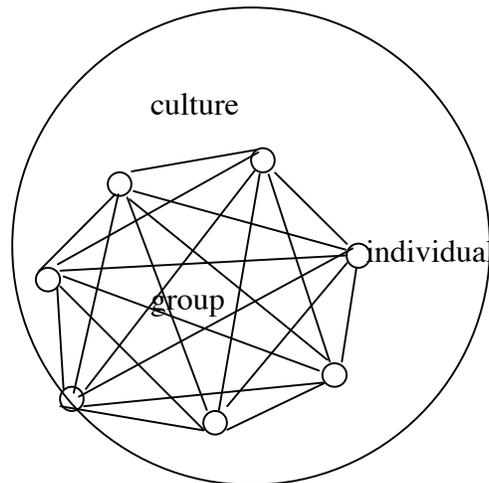


Fig. 7. The web of the group demonstrating influence of the ‘personal matrix’ and the wider culture

This diagram shows a later extension of the web that I developed to highlight the influence of each person's 'self' or 'personal matrix' (Van der Kleij, 1985, p.103) – how an individual's history and personality is both the glasses through which they perceive themselves, the group and the world, and is what shapes their behaviour and their influence in the group. The lines radiating from the person illustrate these two vectors – the influence from their past on which they are, and the influence of who they are on the present, as it effects themselves and the rest of the group.

The group creates its own culture through its values, intent and the meaning that is created by the dynamic processes of the group (Similar to Foulkes' dynamic matrix, *ibid*). There can be a wide range of qualities from democratic to autocratic; from collaborative to competitive; from connected and compassionate to fragmented and cold. The facilitator will play an important role in creating and influencing the culture of the group, as will the participants via their personal matrix. The culture of the group is also interpenetrated by the wider culture (Foulkes 'foundation matrix, *ibid*) represented by my outer circle. Ecopsychologists, among others, have written about how personality is influenced by our atomistic and materialistic culture devoid of connection with spirit and nature (Kidner, 2001; Conn, 1995 and Greenway, 1995).

Fields

Fields are a way of exploring these interpenetrative influences. From understandings of the quantum world, we now know that there is more space than matter in a particle and the space between particles of matter is full of invisible fields 'that occupy space and influence behaviour' (Wheatley, 1999, p.15). Rupert Sheldrake has written controversially about fields. His hypothesis of creative formation suggests 'form' develops due to morphogenetic fields that act like a 'pooled or collective memory' that determine the form of an organism (Sheldrake, 1988, p.108). Morphic fields are a more general term for other kinds of organizing fields of information such as animal and human behaviour, social and cultural systems and mental activity (p.113). He discusses how behavioural fields extend beyond the organism 'into the surrounding environment,

linking the body to the surroundings in which it acts'. Margaret Wheatley says 'It might be that our communal space is filled with these "interpenetrating influences and invisible forces that connect"' (Wheatley, 1999). So are the lines in Fig. 8 symbolising the 'personal matrix' a representation of morphic fields and the circle representing culture, a larger cultural systemic morphic field?⁹

Openness of the 'self'

Why was Mel able to step into awareness and behave with 'genuine novelty'?

She was clearly angry and felt 'jerked around' and 'interrupted' and instead of behaving in her usual way of 'sulking and being difficult' she spoke out about her angry confusion that plans have been changed. She listens to Mary talking about 'riding two waves' and instead of defending against that difference she instead opened to look at her patterns within her 'self' and how she normally behaves in groups. She sees for the first time 'how attached and rigid' she can be. Was the web, the dynamic matrix, the culture that the group had created during the day sufficient for her to break the influence of her behavioural morphic field and relate to people differently?

In contrast Karen over a couple of modules (during the PGC) started to subtly criticise me. I could barely detect how, but I would end up feeling 'got at', 'put in the wrong', a poor facilitator. I first assessed whether perhaps I was making errors of judgement and checked this out with the group, being sensitive to Karen's situation¹⁰. The process intensified over the last three modules and several times myself and other participants voiced the dynamic to investigate the meaning for the group and each participant, including Karen. The level of fear and anxiety was tangible during some of these explorations. Different people made some personal discoveries of the significance to them of this dynamic but Karen could never tolerate fully participating in this process.

⁹ Many of my questions are indicators for future research.

¹⁰ This could be a process of 'projective identification', where one person uses another person, out of their awareness' as a vehicle for a feeling they cannot tolerate (Barnes, Ernst and Hyde, 1999, p.26-27).

From my experiences in groups this factor – the openness of participants to learn about their assumptions, that influence their cognitive/perceptual processing and related behavioural and psychological patterns, plays a crucial role in the qualitative nature of the culture that the group creates and its subsequent level of functioning. The culture of the group discussed above was influenced by not being able to resolve this dynamic. The shape of each person (their ‘personal matrix’) influences the web and culture of the group. It appears that unless there is openness within the group to challenge and learn about people's self-limiting assumptions a ‘holonic shift’ to a group level of organisation and functioning is far less likely. I hypothesise that participants with ‘connecting/integral’ self’s will have this capacity. Wood has written that what a group needs is ‘good participants’ and acknowledges that one person can prevent a group from functioning effectively (Lago and MacMillan, 1999, p.39).

Scott Peck draws a similar conclusion with regards ‘community building’. He talks about a stage in community-making called emptying that follows after the need to heal, convert, fix and the need to be in control (Peck, 1990, p.97-103). These two ‘needs’ stages are similar to what I mean by working with somebody’s assumptions or ‘self constructs’. I suggest the needs that restrict people are more complex than those named by Peck. Yet the process of ‘emptying’ that he identifies is similar to what I have experienced – that is when people communicate these deep, often unmet needs, there is, an emptying of past patterns of thought, feeling and behaviour and therefore a space and openness for ‘genuine novelty’ (Keen in Peck, 1990, p.212).

The role of disequilibrium for self-organising

Wheatley in her discussion of disequilibrium within chaos and complexity theory describes our western culture as seeking and valuing equilibrium over disequilibrium (1999, p.79). Instead of disturbance and disequilibrium being avoided, chaos and complexity theory suggest that the two states of order and chaos necessarily contain each

other¹¹. The implication is that chaos is a necessary part of reaching higher levels of organisation and functioning. Prigogine's work on 'dissipative structures' supports this conclusion. Dissipative structures are self-organising systems that 'dissipate or give up their form in order to recreate themselves in new forms' (p.80). In response to increased levels of disturbance, they reorganise to cope with the new information – 'they are adaptive and resilient rather than rigid and stable' (ibid).

Through the lens of chaos theory, it could be argued that Mel and the group were open to new information and subsequently self-organised. Mel experienced a disturbance, opened to new information and the ensuing chaos, reached a 'bifurcation point¹²' and reorganised. The group similarly when interrupted (disturbance) entered the chaos, sought new information from all of its members and re-organised around another thread and then re-organised around a third. Karen and the group experienced disturbances but were unable to open to new information and the subsequent chaos at the level that was needed for the group to self-organise. Karen and others defended their original organisation. Whereas the culture of the first group felt connecting and collaborative, the unresolved fear in the second group marred what at other times was also a caring and co-operative group. This seemed to both influence the culture and meant the group less frequently making a 'holonic shift' to a higher level of functioning. Participants from the second group reported –

I have learnt a great deal about myself in groups, how I sabotage myself by being silent. I have overcome a lot of fear in groups during this course. ...fear is not helpful for me and I have to be more accepting of the fact I will be frightened from time to time. (DM)

My own individuality became more apparent to me as the group progressed; I feel I was able to be more a part of the group as a result. The group can be limited by any of the participants if one of their 'hurdles of life' presents itself by the interaction of the other members of the group, it will not be intentional by the other members as they cannot know what those 'hurdles' are. (PC)

¹¹ Strange attractors and fractals can be seen as two examples of this. See Gleick, 1998.

¹² A point between chaos and order where the system's future is wide open, it can seek out a new form in response to the new information. In humans 'it is known as a moment of great fear' (Wheatley, 1999, p.88).

I at times took myself out of our web of connections through fear and had to work to get back again.

The power of love

What determines an individual's capacity to cope with disturbance and disequilibrium, to be able to tolerate chaos in order to realise self-organising abilities and be a caring, social adult? Sue Gerhardt's new book 'Why love matters: how affection shapes a baby's brain' synthesises recent ground breaking research on neuroscience, psychotherapy and infant observation. She proposes that adequate positive parenting influences the neuronal connections made by the infant that later informs social, emotional patterns of behaviour.

...most parents instinctively provide enough attention and sensitivity to their babies to ensure their emotional security. But what seems to be most crucial for the baby is the extent to which the parent or caregiver is emotionally available and present for him (Ende 1988), to notice his signals and to regulate his states (Gerhardt, 2004, p.21)

Caregivers who are uncomfortable with their own emotions will not be able to find the balance between their own emotions and dealing with the infant's emotions. These inadequacies can be subtle or gross and they can be classified as 'neglectful' or 'intrusive'. These infants will end up regulating their parents' emotions, developing insecure, avoidant or disorganised attachments (p.21) and consequently have a poor emotional development. This is because inadequate parenting effects the development of the nervous system and brain development. Gerhardt further elucidates

When parents respond to the baby's signals, they are participating in many biological processes. They are helping the baby's nervous system to mature in such a way that it does not get overstressed. They are helping the bioamine pathways to be set at a moderate level. They are contributing to a robust immune system and a robust stress response. They are helping to build up the prefrontal cortex and the child's capacity to hold information in mind, to reflect on feelings, to restrain impulses, that will be a vital part of his or her future capacity to behave socially. (p.210)

Here we are given an explanation of how early infant/parent relationships influence the neurochemical structure and processes of the brain, nervous system and immune system. And how these in turn influence our emotional intelligence and our sociability, how we relate to others, and how we balance our needs and our emotions with the needs and emotions of others. Synthesising Sheldrakes 'morphic fields', Foulkes 'personal matrix' and the neuroscience findings, could there be a social field that emanates from each

individual that plays a part in creating and influencing the culture in which we reside? This would acknowledge the interpenetrative influence of individuals, groups and culture.

Facilitation and creating the culture of a group

Rogers' hypothesis for groups was that there is a 'trust in the group, given a facilitative climate, to develop it's own potential and that of it's members' (Rogers, 1970, p.44). I have written earlier about the threefold roles of the facilitator in creating this climate.

- The facilitator, who holds the attitudinal qualities of genuineness, empathy and unconditional positive regard (UPR), attends and sensitively responds.
- The participant, who expresses herself as a whole, self-aware and self-reflexive person.
- The reflector who comments on the dynamics within the group, bringing new information to closed dynamics that may become open (Wyatt, 2001b).

As facilitator I caringly hold the image of the web of the group and use it to sense and hypothesise about individuals, relational dynamics etc keeping in my awareness who is participating and who isn't. This is not to change anything but rather to resonate with the dynamic processes within the group. I endeavour to be open hearted and grounded. (Kornfield, 1994).

Alan Coulsdon highlights the facilitative nature of resonance. This is when a connection or expression leads 'those involved feel[ing] more deeply in touch with themselves than before and more closely linked with another' (1999, p.193). Resonance 'fosters a greater sense of overall connectedness and a stronger communal feeling (p.174). Wheatley proposes that 'vision and values act like fields, unseen but real forces that influence people's behaviour (1999, p.15). She talks about 'beacon towers of information, standing tall in the integrity of what we say, pulsing our congruent message (p.57). Sheldrake suggests that after a certain number of a species have learnt a skill (he gives the example of blue tits learning to peck open milk bottles, (1988, p.178), the form of the behaviour resides in the field and when an individual's energy combines with the morphic field, 'the field patterns the behaviour of that individual ...they pull it from the field ... they learn it through morphic resonance, a process that Sheldrake describes as individuals being

influenced by others like them.’ (p.53). Could this mean that if the facilitator puts in the field – realness, compassion and sensitivity, that the participants can pull these values into themselves? What influence do I have by holding the images of the web and ‘holonic shift’? In discussion with a colleague we wondered whether a facilitator could act like a ‘strange attractor’ that shapes the emerging order and chaos? (Haugh, 2003).

The way disturbance was processed and chaos tolerated during Mel’s process and the development of ‘dialogue in the group’, implies a culture had developed within the group characterised by connectedness, safety, realness, understanding and acceptance. More evidence would be required to check this and ascertain the role that person-centred values of group-directedness and the qualities of empathy, congruence and UPR might have played in the connectedness of the group that developed and the shift that occurred.

Returning to ‘holonic shifts’

I explained this as a shift from one level of a 'holarchy' to another. Each level of the 'holarchy' is a holon and what defines a holon is its whole/part nature (Koestler, 1967). My research started with a shift from individual to group so the focus for my exploration has been the whole/part nature of an individual set within a ‘holarchical’ context. This has meant to understand the individual, descent down the ‘holarchy’ is necessary to the sub-parts of the individual and beyond; and ascent up the ‘holarchy’ as the group becomes a part of other evolving complex wholes e.g. cultures.

Differentiation and integration

Individuality, not individualism, is the cornerstone of community. Individuality is synonymous with uniqueness. A healthy community strengthens the opportunity for each individual to express her or his unique talents, experience and point of view and those contribute to the vigour of the whole. Malidoma Patrice Some

Many philosophers, psychologists, etc., have focused on the motivations of humans to individuate and belong to a community, to be autonomous and to be inter-dependant. Theorists who have investigated groups have often identified these same two motivations

within the group. Adlerians talk about ‘love and will’ (Lago, 2004). Group analysts build from Freud’s pleasure and reality principles (de Mare, 1991, p.7).

My focus is the two complementary properties of a holon – differentiation/self assertion ‘to preserve individual autonomy’ and dependant/ integrative ‘to function as a larger whole’ (Capra, 1983, p26). These properties are opposite in nature yet there needs to be a balance between differentiation and integration for the system to be healthy. The whole/part nature of an individual means the parts of the individual¹³ self-assert to differentiate *and* connect/integrate to become whole¹⁴. At the level of the ‘group’, its whole/part nature means that the parts of the group (the individuals) need to self-assert and differentiate *and* to connect/integrate to become whole.

The ‘holonic shift’

It is my belief that when I have experienced a ‘holonic shift’ there has been a balance of these complementary properties of differentiation and integration. I have asked participants on some of my workshops about their experience of being both a whole individual and their experience of being part of a group. I have chosen these as they illustrate different positions.

I experience myself mainly as an individual in the group. Actually I don’t believe that “the group” exists as an entity in itself. (SP)

I am very aware of myself as an individual – my differences (e.g. being an immigrant). Yet this strangely enables me to feel my way into being part of a group too. ... this changes all the time; sometimes I feel separate, sometimes very connected and immersed. (CL)

I always find learning and challenge in groups in a way that isn’t always possible one-to-one. It seems connected with a concentration of energy in the room, and a sense of interconnectedness, which can create community in which I value the difference, and uniqueness of each person. The creativity comes from what goes on ‘between’. (RO)

¹³ Whether sub-personalities, or developmental stages or levels of functioning – bio-chemical, emotional, cognitive-perceptual, behavioural etc.

¹⁴ The second turn demonstrates this and the section ‘Why love matters’ in this turn.

I also asked some participants whether they had experienced shifts in groups where they had felt a part of something larger. All participants who responded had experienced this phenomenon (a self-selecting process perhaps?).

I felt I was part of a process of people trying to be fully open to each other, which allowed us each to contribute from our own uniqueness and create a dialogue/process of meeting which took us further than any of us could have done alone. There was also for me at times a sense of being a part of something mysterious, greater than any of us which we had tapped 'into' by being present together ... being part of what felt like an organic process, flowing ... feeling grounded and very equal, feeling free to be myself. (CS)

Yes there were moments when I felt everybody's needs were met and that the energy within the group at these times increased. The group had reached its potential albeit only for a brief period. ... I know that it has something to do with nobody exerting control over anyone else. Having witnessed it I know now it is possible ... (PC)

I felt a kind of group entity or consciousness or field. On a few occasions it felt like it shifted up a level into a higher finer vibration/consciousness. ... Maybe I shifted into a more connected open place with others, or maybe we all connected together more closely. ... A bit like being up a mountain, purer more rarefied air to breathe. (JW)

Dialogue and this 'holonic shift' seem to be interwoven, bringing about a sense of community, which has a compassionate, collaborative and wise culture. de Mare has used the term Koinonia to convey what I am referring to by 'holonic shift'. He refers to the group moving through fear to hate and through the process of dialogue to reach Koinonia, the 'impersonal fellowship of spiritual-cum-human participation ... a form of togetherness and amity that brings a pooling of resources. (1991, p.2). He explains

Dialogue marks a different way of thinking and communication – tangential and analogic, as distinct from the binary digital logic of the one-to-one dyad. It is articulate, circular, laterized as distinct from linear, meaningful as distinct from causal. Dialogue has a enormous thought potential: it is from dialogue that ideas spring to transform the mindlessness and massification that accompany social oppression, replacing it with higher levels of cultural sensitivity, intelligence, and humanity.' (p.17)

Bohm also became very committed to dialogue and wrote with Peat

a form of free dialogue may well be one of the most effective ways of investigating the crisis which faces society, and indeed the whole of human nature and consciousness today. Moreover, it may turn out that such a form of free exchange of ideas and

information is of fundamental relevance for transforming culture and freeing it of destructive misinformation, so that creativity can be liberated (2000, p.240).

What de Mare, Bohm and myself are referring to is not psychotherapy but a 'transformation of culture' (p.240).

Generating a tentative hypothesis

In late September I saw *Blind Flight*, a film directed by Johnny Furse, about Brian Keenan and John MacCarthy as hostages. The contrast between the terror and fear of the hostage culture, with the tender love that developed within their relationship strongly impacted me. A few days after seeing the film the metaphors of 'river of fear' and 'sea of love' unfolded within my consciousness. I felt stunned by all that was embedded within these metaphors. Did a culture of love develop within my 'holonic shift', de Mare's Koinonia, Peck's Community building and Bohm's dialogue? The power of love is nothing new. James (1902) said 'I saw that the foundation principle of the worlds, of all the worlds, is what we call love' (Quoted in Patterson, 1984, p.8). Frankl said 'the salvation of man is through love and in love' (1902 in Patterson, 1984, p.8). Patterson says 'when one brings together the facilitative conditions ... it becomes apparent that they constitute love in the highest sense, or agape' (1985, p.91).

Gerhardt findings told us how important love is for the neuronal connections of an infant that later defines the cognitive /perceptual processes and related behavioural patterns of the adult. Wheatley and Sheldrake has shown us the importance of fields and how mental, behavioural and cultural fields influence us. Some individuals work on their interiority and self organise while other stay closed and defended. Some groups reach an ability to dialogue by each individual becoming more fully themselves, aspiring towards their 'connecting/integral self' and by their deepening participation a communal meaning unfolds within the group through dialogue ... each person 'presencing the whole'.

I believe fear is buried deep beneath the values of Western culture. I think it underlies the pursuit of materialistic goals and the lack of meaning in our societies and our

communities. I think the 'aggressive individualism' of Kingdom's research on the 'sociology of the individualism' (Lago and MacMillan, 1999, p.41) is driven by this collective mostly unconscious fear. Ecopsychologists have written about the psychological damage caused by our culture and its disconnection from nature. Greenway says our culture is itself 'the source of our pervasive sense of being disconnected' (Greenway, 1995, p.131). Kidner refers to the colonisation of the self as 'the creeping reduction of alternatives within the psyche' (2001, p.124) caused by authoritarian structures of our culture that deny 'otherness'. Conn has coined the term 'materialistic disorder' (1995, p.162).

It is no wonder that groups and teams of people find it hard to become a whole through balancing their self-assertion and their integration. On the one hand culture has this strongly fragmenting, narcissistic, individualistic influence that Kidner calls the colonising influence of culture (2001). And on the other hand many adults have had inadequate positive parenting (Gerhardt quotes 35% of people with an attachment disorder, 2004, p.88). This in turn would affect their self-structure and instead of evolving a 'connecting/integral' self that balances and connects internal needs with the external world, a 'colonising self' could take form whose self-assertion colonises others to meet its own ego-centric needs or becomes passive falling prey to the charismatic 'colonising self'.

My hypothesis is that a culture of love facilitates openness, connection and communication that leads to a healthy balance of differentiation and integration. At an individual level this leads to the development of the 'connecting/integral self'; at a group level this leads to a group becoming a whole, accessing a creative emergence through an ever greater participation of diverse and differentiated individuals; at a societal level this means that 'intercentric' values and 'worldcentric' morals are embraced and inform the structures and processes of our global societies. The current state of the world means we need a transformation of our culture and working with groups to generate dialogue and 'holonic shifts' might play a part in the cosmological and cultural transformation that is needed in the twenty-first century.

AFTERWORD

I have run out of time and words. I am about to print this, draw a diagram and go and get it bound. Continuing one of my themes, this end is a new beginning. There is so much more I could have written – well actually did write – and then had to edit to keep within the word count. I apologise for the resulting denseness of my writing in places and hope it hasn't prevented your participation. I am curious what will unfold within your consciousness as you read my manuscript.

At the end of my research I know a shift can occur within groups that lifts the group onto a higher level of functioning where there is a creative emergence from the fuller participation of differentiated individuals. I am unsure whether 'holonic shift' is the best term to use or changing the 'organising idea' or being 'self organising'. When I say know, I mean I have some experiential evidence (mine and others) that suggests this and I know it inside of myself, it resonates in my being, it feels true to me. Future research by me and others, with further confirmation by others will take this research further.

The factors that seem to help a 'holonic shift' to occur are

- A group-directed structure where people participate
- A facilitative culture of safety, realness, understanding, acceptance and care (maybe we can call this 'love')

- A willingness by the participants to be open to new information and challenge their self-assumptions, to be willing to reorganise.
- A healthy balance of differentiation and integration within the individuals

Again more research will be needed.

I have learnt so much from so fully participating with my research, particularly these last six months. It has thrown me into my inner chaos demanding me over and over again to reorganise my 'self'. The whole learning that I have experienced has brought me to a 'bifurcation point'. I am closing my therapeutic practice at Easter and probably selling my house. I have no firm plans ... I know I will work with groups facilitating 'holonic shift' and the transformation of culture away from 'fear' towards 'love'. I don't know how, where or when. I have no doubt this will unfold. I came to CHE to undergo a transformative process – I wanted to find a new direction for my life. I am satisfied.

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